

STEP EIGHT

Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

We continued our journey toward our one-day-at-a-time reprieve from nicotine addiction in the Eighth Step by preparing ourselves to make amends to all of those we had harmed and by becoming willing to make amends to them. The purpose of this Step is to achieve freedom from guilt over our past actions and interactions with other people.

We define "harm" as any form of physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual damage that our actions may have caused others. If we kept our Fourth Step inventory, we may already have a list of people with whom we have had negative interactions. Many of us used this as our starting point for Step Eight. We surveyed the whole area of personal relationships and searched our memories for the people to whom we had given offense. The more recent and damaging the relationship, the quicker the memory surfaced. We went back through our lives, asking for guidance and direction from our Higher Power and put the names of these people on paper.

While preparing this list of amends due, the addict within sometimes attempted to color our thinking with all sorts of rationalizations. This seemed especially true if we prematurely anticipated the actual making of amends that takes place in Step Nine. Step Eight suggests that we make a list and become willing. It is not the direct amend-making Step. We stayed in the Eighth Step and worked the Ninth Step in its proper turn.

As we looked on the list of people to whom amends were due, we put out of our minds the wrongs, perceived or real, that others may have done to us. Our purpose was not to evaluate the behavior of others but to look only at our part of the interaction. We had to keep in mind that we were here to clear away the wreckage of our past, not to make others accountable for their wrongdoings.

Some instances of harm were directly related to our nicotine use, especially if we had been inconsiderate or selfish in our addictive behaviors around family, friends, or co-workers. We looked at the impact of our second-hand smoke or spit tobacco

on those who had been in our presence, remembering both the individuals we knew and all the strangers who crossed our path. We also looked at the pollution we added to the environment with the cigarette butts or spit tobacco that we left on city streets and mountain trails. We looked at the subtle harm we may have caused in our relationship by the ways we have used cigarettes as a barrier to intimacy, creating a true smokescreen to maintain an emotional distance between us and those in our lives. If our nicotine use in any form caused harm, such as cigarette burns or tobacco wad stains, we listed the restitution that was due.

We then made note of harm we did that was not directly related to our nicotine addiction. This included those we harmed due to our anger, fears, pride, and other personality traits that we had explored in our Fourth Step.

Some of us found it valuable to place ourselves on our amends list. So much of the damage caused by the use of nicotine and the defects accompanying our addiction, such as isolation and low self-esteem, were the greatest harm to our own bodies and lives.

We found that we made little progress in our new way of living until we backtracked and made an accurate and unsparing survey of the wreckage of our past. We were not able to develop the best possible relations with every person we knew until we "came clean" to ourselves, to God, and to another human being, and now -- to the people involved in our tornado-ridden path.

There was a long period of reconstruction ahead. A remorseful grumbling or mumbling that we were sorry was not going to work. A sponsor or trusted friend could help us achieve the objectivity in preparing to go to these people. We did not hesitate to seek advice from our fellows and we asked our Higher Power for the willingness to proceed to Step Nine.

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