

STEP SIX

Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Before we began Step Six, many of us found it useful to meditate and consider our work thus far. If we had been thorough, we had done a great deal of work, some of it very difficult.

In our meditation, we reflected on the first three Steps. Once again, we accepted our powerlessness, reiterated our faith, and recommitted to our decision to surrender to the care of our Higher Power. We realized we had to deepen our understanding of the process of recovery. After concluding that the examination of our lives in Steps Four and Five was as complete a job as we were capable of making, we were ready to take Step Six.

Step Six is a transition Step. It is where we really began to change. We needed to consider what this change meant to us. Through Steps Four and Five we came to know ourselves more deeply than we ever had. We came face to face with what had worked for us and what had not, as well as with our effective and ineffective traits. We came to understand that there were reasons for our behavior. In Steps Six we examined the reasons and our motivation for our behavior. With this additional knowledge, we began to consider healthier ways of meeting our needs. In other words, we were ready to have God remove our defects, or ineffective traits of character.

We saw that each of our character defects was two-sided. Each had the potential to hurt us, as we saw in Step Four, but each could also bring us pleasure, or a sense of acceptance, or perhaps the means of avoiding stress, fear, or pain. Now, we learned how to incorporate pleasure into our lives in healthier ways. We came to see how our need for acceptance could be met without injury to ourselves. We realized that, once acknowledged and accepted, stress and fear could be greatly diminished. Our newly found faith did not explain away pain, which we accepted as an integral part of life, but it did give us the courage to face it, and to feel it, instead of using nicotine to stuff it or avoid it.

In working Step Six, we found it helpful to recognize the benefits and penalties we got from acting out our character defects. We began to understand why we did certain things, and

what it was we were trying to get from the process. We learned to recognize that, in the process, we also got many things we did not want.

We realized, for instance, that our overly-judgmental approach to life worked as a way of boosting our own sense of self-worth and helped us cover up our feelings of inadequacy or fear. At the same time, we came to understand that this approach kept us separate from those we were judging. It locked us into a false sense of superiority. It deprived us of honesty in relationships with others.

Once we understood what we really were attempting to accomplish, we developed new methods for getting the same results in ways that were not self-destructive. In our pursuit of authentic self-worth, we acknowledged our own positive attributes and built on them. We were no longer concerned with how we were perceived by others. We refused to allow our self-worth to be determined by others' opinions.

In our attempt to deal with our feelings of inadequacy and fear, we came to realize that these were normal human feelings. We understood and accepted our limitations. Sometimes we were not old enough. Sometimes we were not young enough. We were not supermen or superwomen. We could not do everything. Furthermore, we live in a sometimes dangerous world and fear is a legitimate emotion.

Once we realized that these feelings were acceptable, we focused on them in a different way. We examined what it was that made us feel inadequate. We learned what it was that frightened us. Armed with the information these efforts provided, and with the help of our Higher Power, we could prepare for situations in new ways that reduced or eliminated feelings of fear and inadequacy.

When we came to understand the concept of being "ready" to have our character defects removed, we were able to consider being "entirely" ready. We became willing to let go and to change. The notion of "entirely" was a goal we worked toward.

We were comforted by the thought that we sought progress and not perfection. We thought back to the Third Step when we decided to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood God. We confirmed that we meant our *total* will and our *entire* life.

In Step Six we moved from one period of our life to another. We learned the difference between holding on to the past and letting it go. We began to learn to stop living in the pain of yesterday and to start living in the pleasure of today. We were now truly ready, with a clear conscience, to ask our Higher Power for help.

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