

What are the 'Twelve Steps'?

The “Twelve Steps” are the core of the A.A. program of personal recovery from alcoholism. They are not abstract theories; they are based on the trial-and-error experience of early members of A.A. They describe the attitudes and activities that these early members believe were important in helping them to achieve sobriety. Acceptance of the “Twelve Steps” is not mandatory in any sense. Experience suggests, however, that members who make an earnest effort to follow these Steps and to apply them in daily living seem to get far more out of A.A. than do those members who seem to regard the Steps casually. It has been said that it is virtually impossible to follow all the Steps literally, day in and day out. While this may be true, in the sense that the Twelve Steps represent an approach to living that is totally new for most alcoholics, many A.A. members feel that the Steps are a practical necessity if they are to maintain their sobriety. Here is the text of the Twelve Steps, which first appeared in *Alcoholics Anonymous*, the A.A. book of experience:

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.