

SCA Step workbook draft – January 18, 2022

Preface

SCA has produced this workbook to help members use the Twelve Suggested Steps of SCA to support their recovery from sexual compulsion. Each Step contains three parts: SCA's approved commentary on the Step, further reflections on that step, and a series of self-examination questions. We can use this workbook in varied ways, including shared reading during meetings and workshops, working with a sponsor, or in a step-writing group. They may also be a resource for individuals during any part of the Step process.

The Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) are the foundation of the Twelve Suggested Steps of SCA. AA's Twelve Steps first appeared in the First Edition of *Alcoholics Anonymous* (1939). The Twelve Suggested Steps of SCA are the spiritual principles by which members can achieve and maintain sexual sobriety. Phrases like "working the Steps" or "living the Steps" might be heard in meetings. It is up to each member to determine what "working" and "living" mean to them concerning these Steps.

Many Twelve-Step fellowships and other Recovery-based organizations have produced their Step commentaries and workbooks. SCA members are always free to choose a version that works best for them. This workbook focuses on the Steps from an SCA viewpoint, but members of other fellowships may also find it helpful.

Some of us may ask questions, such as: *What is the "best" way to work the Steps? Is there a recommended time frame to finish them? What if I need to take a break after working on a few steps?* There are no definitive answers to these and similar questions. Just as members are encouraged to define sexual sobriety for themselves, we are free to work our recovery using the tools that seem best for us. We may find guidance from a sponsor, other members, or wish to join a Step-writing group.

This workbook also includes an Appendix which contains worksheets and instructions that may assist those working Step Four, Six, Eight, and Eleven.

Step One

“We admitted we were powerless over sexual compulsion — that our lives had become unmanageable.”

A sense of defeat was common for us before we even decided to go to our first meeting. It might have come after being caught having an affair, feeling the shame of being arrested, or being fired for viewing porn. The decision to come was sometimes ours alone. However, many of us chose to go at the insistence of loved ones, therapists, or the courts.

As we approached the meeting, our anxiety level rose. We feared entering a room where we were sure every seat would belong to some kind of “pervert” or sexual predator. *There is no way I belong here!* We just needed to get through this one meeting so we could tell our therapist, loved one, or probation officer we had given it a try.

Once we overcame the fear of opening the door, we usually saw what so many of us see in meeting spaces across the world. There were folding chairs, sparse decorations, and harsh lighting. People were chatting with each other and expressing pleasantries. The feeling in the room seemed calm and as pleasing as any such room could be.

Some of us may have had a strategy of where we would sit in our first meeting. We may have chosen the seat with the best view of the most attractive person in the room. On the other hand, it could have been the seat with the most obstructed view of the most desirable person. Perhaps we chose the chair closest to the door for a quick escape. Whatever reasoning we used, we took our seat and started to hear about Sexual Compulsives Anonymous (SCA).

Powerless? Unmanageable? We had difficulty with these terms and concepts. *Powerless can't possibly apply to me! I am not an animal! I don't walk down the street like a drooling lunatic ready to grab anyone to have sex! I have standards and morals. My life works just fine most of the time. I pay the bills. I take care of my errands. My house isn't a complete sty. I get to work. Things get a little crazy once in a while, but whose life doesn't?*

Maybe the light bulb went on right away, or perhaps it took some time. The stories we started to hear began hitting close to home. The guy who lost his job for having porn on his work computer. A woman who lost her marriage because of an online romance that she told herself would never be consummated in real life, until it was. The person who felt imprisoned by their use of hookup apps. Those few questionable images of young people on someone's computer. The person arrested for trying to have sex with someone underage. The fear in the voice of that man anticipating the result of an HIV test. Stories about abortions, abuse, and the secrets about children conceived through affairs. The stories started to sound like our own. Not every detail resonated with us, but enough to know that we were in the right place.

Once we admitted to ourselves that we needed the help of an SCA program, others in the program suggested that we find a sponsor. Many of us initially rejected the idea outright. *I'm an adult. I can do this myself. Nobody's going to tell me what to do.* Whether we found one right away or after some time in recovery, most of us eventually learned the benefits of working with a sponsor. To find one, we asked someone who was in the program long enough to have completed some of the Steps and who maintained some sexual sobriety.

Sponsors may take different approaches to this work. They may recommend that we read and begin working the 12 Steps from the Alcoholics Anonymous “big book.” Another might suggest various other 12-Step workbooks or authored works focusing on recovery. Others might have the sponsee write about powerlessness, unmanageability, *The 20 Questions*, or *The Characteristics* of SCA.

Often, our sponsors ask us to write a sexual history. “Acting out” is used to describe the behaviors that brought about the unmanageability and powerlessness in our lives. “Acting out” can also refer to actions used to escape from our feelings. This sexual history is a list of these activities. Writing our stories exposed how much time and money we spent on “acting out.” It might have been on prostitutes, pornography, massage parlors, strippers, drugs, sex toys, bathhouses, treatments for sexually transmitted diseases, internet-based sex, or legal consequences. We can see how many hours, days, years we spent in obsessive thinking about sex: either compulsively seeking or avoiding sex.

The SCA program suggests that members develop a Sexual Recovery Plan (SRP). Suggested SRP formats contain elements using different names: e.g., “bottom line,” “grey area,” “inner circle,” or “first column.” The SCA program strongly encourages new members to ask for assistance from a sponsor or others in the program when writing a plan. The written sexual history can be a useful tool in informing the development of a Sexual Recovery Plan. Every member's sexually compulsive activities are different. One person may struggle with sex in public places, another with online pornography, and still another with romantic intrigue. Because sexuality is such a personal part of a member's life, SCA believes the definition of sobriety is individual as well. We are rigorously honest about behaviors we want to stop, one day at a time. Those prohibitions give us a start on our SRP and help define our abstinence from people, places, and things that we consider harmful.

Sexual compulsion is a progressive disease. We were mostly in denial, especially in its earlier stages. As the disease progressed, we began to bargain with ourselves, hoping to find ways of controlling our behaviors. Whatever rules we set, we eventually broke. *I will only do this once a month. I will only spend this much money. These activities will only happen outside of my home.* No matter how hard we tried to keep them, we always broke our promises. We felt confused and frustrated, wondering how it could happen yet again.

It took more attempts at trying to stop our sexually compulsive behaviors than we cared to admit. Time after time after time, we found ourselves in that bewildered state. Nobody could tell us we were powerless; we had to come to that realization on our own. That moment of pain and desperation is what the program calls “hitting bottom...”

The SCA program asks us to be rigorously honest. Without honesty, we remain in denial. Denial tells us that our lives are manageable, that our sexuality is under control. Honesty begins to break that bubble. Living outside the bubble feels very uncomfortable, even foreign, at times. The wisdom of the program tells us to keep coming back to meetings. We find it possible to survive the transition to living outside the bubble of denial when we come to meetings and talk about our dis-ease.

A simple acronym, **HOW**, **H**onest, **O**pen, and **W**illing, tells us how the program works. Writing our sexual history is an act of honesty. Sharing parts of it with another person or at a meeting demonstrates openness. And trying to follow the program of SCA shows a willingness to live life differently.

The actions of Step One begin to rebuild trust, something most of us lost in our active addiction. Even with the smallest amount of trust, we can now turn our focus toward Step Two - a Step that connects us to hope. If we stay in Step One, we miss the experience of the healing power of the program. So, we bravely look ahead.

5. List your unhealthy “acting out” behaviors over which you admit you are powerless.

6. Describe how you may have tried to control or stop unhealthy sexual behavior (acting out/acting in)?
How successful were your efforts?

7. How has my disease affected me physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally?

Step Two

“Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves
could restore us to sanity.”

With Step One, we began to learn about powerlessness and unmanageability and their ties to our acting out behaviors. But those behaviors did not have to control our lives. There is hope, and we find it in Step Two.

“A Power greater than ourselves” sounds like a veiled attempt to avoid saying the word God while meaning just that. We came to accept our powerlessness and unmanageability: now, we had to embrace the concept of God. Was this the God who let us suffer in active addiction, who failed us time and time again? The very God who judged us as unworthy of love? Fellow members told us that this was not a religious program, and yet here was God. The center of religion and all its piety.

But the term mentioned in this Step is a power greater than ourselves. For some, this might evoke an image of God. However, our newfound willingness helps us focus on the simple concept of a Higher Power. This Higher Power may equate to a “traditional” understanding of God, a newfound conception of God, or even the collective wisdom of the group. Some program members focus on finding a Higher Power that has a positive attitude toward sex and sexuality.

The most significant notion to grasp is that we are not that higher power. Self-will was useless in the face of our compulsion. Step One and our endless experiences taught us that. No, we need to go beyond ourselves. If we are to have any hope at all, we find a power stronger than self-will. Do we dare believe that such a Power exists? That we let this power be of our understanding, and not that of an unknowable God?

What is that Power supposed to do for us anyway? Restore us to sanity? That is a lot to believe. *I've accepted that I am powerless over my acting out. I can see some unmanageability in my life: but labeling me insane just won't fly! I don't need a straitjacket! I don't see imaginary people or hear voices in my head! How can insanity possibly describe me?*

One definition of insanity is “doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.” This pattern sounded familiar. How many times did we expect that the next sexual experience would be the best of our lives? That the next pornographic image would fulfill all our desires? The next romantic entanglement, the next obsession, the next relationship? Our addiction always told us that what we really wanted was just around the corner. If we could endure the soul-crushing journey a little longer, the magic would happen.

Continuing to listen to our compulsive thoughts was insane. Hadn't we collected enough evidence to know that our addiction was lying to us? Yet despite all the evidence, we still wanted to act out. We forgot about the consequences. In our insanity, they did not matter. *I want what I want when I want it – even if it kills me.*

Being restored to sanity means we do something different to get different results. We acknowledge our powerlessness, unmanageability, and insanity. We talk about our lives in meetings, on the phone, or with another sexual compulsive. Compulsion thrives in secrecy; we take action to break that cycle.

Shattering the wall of isolation takes time and effort. Admitting our powerlessness and unmanageability begins to open cracks in this wall that surrounds us. To help support this opening process, we find a way to connect to hope – a hope that our lives can be different.

“A power greater than ourselves” becomes the bridge out of isolation and into hope. Creating a practical understanding of a Higher Power can be useful. Some sponsors suggest writing down the qualities we want in a Higher Power: for example, friendly, compassionate, directive, strong, funny, forgiving, gentle. Describing the qualities we find most desirable in a Higher Power may help overcome the harsh attributes some of us previously associated with God, like judgmental, stern, authoritative, damning, or severe. We look for a Higher Power – someone or something – we can trust. Step Two leads us to build trust in a Power greater than ourselves.

With the seed of trust planted, we begin to believe our lives can be different. As we continue to work Step Two, our faith in a Higher Power grows. We start to see that we might be able to let go of the need to control our addiction. That will be an act of courage. We will find that courage in Step Three.

Further reflections:

Step Two: Believing is the cornerstone

--If we come to believe that no human power can relieve our sexual compulsion and that God (Higher Power) can and will, then we have done Step Two.

--Why do we keep coming to meetings? Do we think we can find something here to help us? Can we believe this?

-- If so, we have come to believe that a power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity.

1. What does the concept of a “Power greater than ourselves” mean to you?

2. Describe any unpleasant feelings or experiences you may recall from religious traditions associated with your family of origin. How have these feelings/experiences affected your acceptance of a higher power?

3. What qualities do you experience or wish for in a Higher Power? Describe how you would be able to trust a Higher Power that has such qualities?

4. How has your concept of a Higher Power changed since you have begun your recovery from sexual compulsion?

5. How did you first react when you heard the phrase “restore us to sanity?”

6. How has your definition of insanity affected your sexually compulsive behaviors in the past or the present?

7. Recall the phrase H.O.W. (Honesty, Openness and Willingness) from the First Step. Describe ways in which these practices may help the process of “restore to sanity.”

Step Three

“Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood God.*”

We looked at our powerlessness and the unmanageability in our lives in Step One. We started to form a concept of a “Power greater than ourselves” in Step Two. All that Step Three asks us to do is to make a decision. A decision to start trusting the Higher Power we came to understand in Step Two.

We take some actions in working Step Three that seem odd or counterintuitive. It was hard to believe anyone in their right mind would do these things. It is easy to lose trust and not to believe what we were being told. Step Three asks us to do something that we never imagined doing. But we looked to others in our meetings and listened to them describe the things they did to maintain their sobriety. They spoke about making phone calls, doing Step work, going to more meetings, and doing service work, and they seemed to be in a better space. We see that others have taken the actions we fear, and they survive and even thrive. Their testimony provides evidence that trusting in a Higher Power works.

And so we begin, sometimes slowly, to build trust. Many of us find it in witnessing consistency in other program members. We see the same people showing up at meetings. Members are showing up to do service work to keep the doors open; members are expressing concern for others, doing the same readings. We hear the consistency in the shares. This consistency leads us to start trusting that these people will do what they say. That is a big leap for us since many of us grew up in households where people said one thing and did another, laughing one minute and yelling at us the next. There was no consistency, therefore, little trust.

We build trust over time. Consistency allows us to predict what others are likely to do. While we recognize that no one is entirely consistent in their actions and mood, eventually, we gravitate toward those who are most dependable.

The concept of a caring God is an essential part of the Third Step. For many of us, control mistakenly replaces the word “care” in our minds when we read this Step. Growing up, “care” might have been said, but the actions spoke “control.” In SCA, we mean care. No one likes being under the thumb of someone else’s control. The relationship with a Power greater than ourselves is a partnership based on being cared for throughout our lives.

At first, the phrase “turn our will and our lives over” can create images of giving up everything we hold dear. Some of us have found it helpful to think of this in simple terms. As we gain trust and actively surrender control, we turn our thoughts and actions over to the care of the God of our understanding. These actions help build our faith by trusting our Higher Power to take care of us. Our fears do not vanish – we simply develop a faith slightly deeper than our fears.

Can we believe that we will be taken care of if we live our lives differently? If we let go and trust that the world is an abundant place, will our needs be met? We find that we do not need to take action based on the fear of scarcity. Our world is full of abundance for everyone.

Once we build up some trust that the God of our understanding cares for us, we start taking actions to change our lives. We go to more meetings, make phone calls to people we do not know, share our stories more openly, and do service work to help meetings thrive. These are all actions that may have once felt like “punishment” or “chores” that our sponsors told us to do. After some time in Twelve Step recovery, the benefits of taking these actions become apparent. We start to feel more comfortable with ourselves and others. The process of recovery opens us up to be stronger advocates for ourselves and gives us compassion for others. That sense of being alone in the world, of being unlovable, starts to fade.

We know we are making progress when honesty feels like the best response, rather than yet another lie. Our interactions with people rely on openness instead of shutting down. We respond with a willingness to say yes to the program.

Grounded by the first three Steps, we are ready to go out on a limb. We are willing to begin an honest self-examination and decide to start working on our Fourth Step.

Further reflections:

--Harming ourselves and others, holding resentments, fears, and showing remorse doesn't make us feel good. The only we can do something about this is to ask for God's (HP's) help.

--All human beings have self-will and tend to create conflict for themselves and others. Sexual compulsion is self-will run riot.

--Quit playing God (HP). It hasn't and doesn't work. If we want peace of mind, serenity, and happiness in the future, we cannot "force" ourselves to be better. Only God (HP) can overcome self-will. Let God (HP) do that job by giving us some direction and care.

--Step One: Willingness is the foundation

--Step Two: Believing is the cornerstone

--Step Three builds the doorway that lets us pass through to freedom.

--Step One: I can't

--Step Two: "they" can

--Step Three: Let them.

Alternate Step Three prayer:

"Higher Power, let me learn to trust. Take my will and my life, guide me in my recovery, show me how to live."

Questions for self-examination

1. Now that you have accepted the concept of a Higher Power, describe how you feel about placing your trust in that Higher Power?
2. Describe how your experience of observing others in recovery gives you the hope and strength to place your trust in a Higher Power.
3. What does the phrase “turn our will and our lives over” mean to you?
4. Does “letting go” feel threatening to your way of living? How do you react to the concept of “letting go?”
5. What does “surrender your will to the Care of God (HP)” mean to you?

6. How did exercising “control” work in dealing with your sexual compulsion?

7. Being open to change gives us a choice to live differently. How ready are you to believe that “you will be taken care of” with this new way of living?

8. Describe how the concept of trust in your Higher Power could allow you to take actions that may lead to change?

9. As you turn your will over to the care of God (HP) as you understand God (HP), what are your hopes for change?

Step Four

“Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.”

Working the first three Steps took courage, acceptance, and willingness. We had the energy to move forward into our new lives of recovery. However, in our honest sharing and reflections, it quickly becomes apparent to us that there is past wreckage blocking us from moving forward. There are damaged relationships, self-sabotaged careers, significant debts, and a bundle of resentments, hurts, and regrets of every variety. Any of these can block us from making progress inside and out. If we are to become happy, joyous, and free, we deal with this baggage. We don't want to return to our acting out behaviors. We set out to do a searching and fearless moral inventory.

When we hear the words “moral inventory,” it can stir flashbacks of negative experiences or religious dogmas from the past. The “moral inventory” referred to in Step Four is about facing the truth – helping to clean out the cycle of shame that fuels our obsessive thinking and compulsive behavior. It is not about becoming “pure” or being worthy of a deity's praise. The SCA program asks us to do this because experience has shown that the spiritual principle of cleaning house will help us stay away from our sexually compulsive behaviors.

The culture we live in might discourage introspection; the idea of writing down all this personal information may seem risky, too hard, or just plain crazy. Procrastination leads many of us to do an “addict's waltz,” where we work the first three Steps, then act out, repeating indefinitely: 1-2-3, 1-2-3, 1-2-3....

How do we muster the courage and willingness to do a Fourth Step? There is no need to do any part of the SCA program of recovery alone. In Step Two, we learned to ask for help, and now we seek guidance, usually from a sponsor. Reaching out to other members of the fellowship who have completed a Fourth Step encourages us and bolsters our willingness. Meeting in a group with other members working the Fourth Step may also provide mutual support.

We do not expect to finish an entire inventory in one sitting. We work the Fourth Step at our own pace, but the idea is to keep working at it. We ask our Higher Power to support us with the strength and initiative to move forward.

One tried-and-true method of doing a Fourth Step comes from the book Alcoholics Anonymous. This method asks us to write out our Fourth Step using several columns. We start by focusing on resentments. In the first column, we write down each of our resentments. We list them all, leaving nothing out. Their “size” does not matter. If it comes to mind, it is meant to be written down. We may have resentments against ourselves, other people, an institution, a place, a disease, an act of nature, or a conception of God. These feelings are part of life, but writing them down is a crucial element of the Step. We may be surprised at how many we have been holding onto.

Once we complete the first column, we think through each resentment. In the second column, we write down why we have that resentment. The reasons will vary. However, as we go through each one, patterns

may start to come into focus. These revelations can be very painful. Bringing emotions to the surface can send many of us back to acting out, so we stay in contact with our sponsor and other trusted members of SCA during this process.

We then fill in a third column, listing how the resentment affects us. What aspects of our lives are being hurt or threatened? Here are some possibilities:

- Our self-esteem
- Our sense of pride
- Our finances
- Our ambitions
- Our relationships
- Our sexual relations
- Our emotional security
- Our physical security

We write down all that apply.

It is easy to conclude that we are simply a victim of this insane world. *Everyone is out for themselves: they don't care who they hurt.* The spiritual program of SCA asks us at this point to stop. Take a deep breath. Shift our focus from being a victim. We start a fourth column, which challenges us to look at *our* part in the resentments. Were we selfish, dishonest, self-seeking, or frightened?

If we are rigorously honest with ourselves, we find that we had a role to play in most of these resentments, even if it was merely allowing ourselves to feel hurt. If our resentments arose from childhood trauma, our only role might have been to allow them to block us from moving forward with our lives as adults. This process does not ask us to take the blame for what occurred.

The process of acknowledging our part in these resentments is a hard pill to swallow. We have become comfortable holding onto them. They are close friends, and we can't imagine a life without them. We certainly struggle to recognize our part in them while completing the fourth column.

After we complete the inventory of our resentments, we begin to examine our fears. We write down a simple list of our fears, large and small. Once the list is complete, we return to each and write precisely why we have that fear and the purpose it serves. Maybe something occurred in our lives that cemented the fear in place. There may be some that have no basis in actual events, that seem to exist with no cause. Completing our inventory may reveal the basis for these fears.

The next part of a moral inventory is to look at our sexual behaviors. An accounting like this may seem like a big task for us sexual compulsives. We attempt to write down every person with whom we had sex. For those of us with long histories of anonymous sex, we may not remember every person's name, so perhaps we list them by a physical feature. In some cases, we group them, like "men in a certain park," "women from a particular app," "people we met at bars," or "men in that bathhouse." The essential point is to be thorough and rigorously honest with ourselves.

Some sexual compulsives have a history with fantasy-based acting out, rather than physically acting out. In these cases, writing down the object of our fantasy can be helpful. We may have the name of a person we know. There are other cases where the person is simply an image in pornographic material. Whatever the case, we write down all that we can recall.

We now look at each incident and ask ourselves if it was selfish, dishonest, inconsiderate, or hurtful? In some cases, all will apply: in other cases, none will. Even as active sexual compulsives, sometimes our sex was not addictive. We still need to take responsibility for our actions and remember that honesty is key to any inventory.

Next, we ask ourselves this: did our sexual activity arouse jealousy? Suspicion? Bitterness? If so, what part did we play in it? We contemplate if there was a better way to approach the situation. Was there a healthy way to have engaged in the activity without bringing about harm to ourselves or others? Should we have engaged in the activity at all?

The sexual inventory ends the approach to a moral inventory we have been discussing. This can be a good time, as sexual compulsives, to stop and review our Sexual Recovery Plan. Many of us had only listed the things we *could not* do to stay sober. It can be a valuable exercise to start considering healthy sexual activities for ourselves. Just as every member defines their acting out behaviors, we also define our ideal sexuality. It is not uncommon that this ideal definition changes over time as we grow and change. Working with a sponsor may give us more insight and support throughout this process.

There are other methods of working the Fourth Step. We can look at other areas in our lives, areas where we were not powerless, but where we experienced unmanageability to one degree or another. This unmanageability could have involved money, alcohol, food, or any number of other potential pitfalls. The important aspect is to consider when we have been selfish, dishonest, inconsiderate, or hurtful in that area of our lives.

Focusing just on resentments, fears, and wrongs for some of us is not a complete picture of our “moral inventory.” We also look at our strengths. An inventory, after all, involves taking stock: counting the stock, good and bad, assets and liabilities. Indeed, some of our actions resulted from being self-centered, but not all.

We find that our moral inventories are most effective when written out. The *act* of writing helps us to be honest and makes our Fourth Step searching and fearless. Many of us unduly worry that we might leave something out. Connecting with our Higher Power in these moments helps create the trust that everything necessary for us to consider will find its way into “this” inventory. When we stop thinking of this being “the inventory to end all inventories,” we relax, knowing we can return to this Step when we have new revelations.

Our fellow sexual compulsives warn us not to dally at this point. We have unearthed a motherlode of shame, which can drive us to act out. We want to unload what we have dug up. We moved on to Step Five.

Further reflections

--Completing Step Three puts us on the threshold of change. In Step Four, we start to “take stock” of the things that have held us back.

Some of us may hesitate to work the Fourth Step. We can remind ourselves that we don’t need to do this alone, but with the support of our sponsor, our fellows, and our Higher Power.

The Step 4 Worksheet(s) - please see the Appendix.

Step Four helps us self-explore and identify past events, resentments, and traumas. As we search through our minds to identify everything that has affected us, it can be difficult to keep track of everything we may uncover. Step Four worksheets can help us organize the information that had only existed in our minds beforehand. They can give us a broad view of the significant events that affected our lives and compulsive behaviors. You will find these worksheets and their instructions in the Appendix.

Questions for self-examination

1. How difficult was it to accept the notion that the purpose of doing the 4th Step is to face the truth, not become “pure”?

2. Describe the concerns or misgivings you may have felt when you began to do this Step?

3. How did you find the courage and willingness to do this step?

4. If your list had many entries, how surprised were you at the number of people, institutions, places, diseases, acts of nature, concepts of God, etc., that you listed on that “First column” of the worksheets?

5. What patterns did you begin to find as you completed the “second column” of the worksheets? Did you discover a lot of repetition?

6. Describe how you may have sometimes thought of yourself as a victim before you began this step. Has that thought process changed at all?

7. How difficult was it to do the “fourth column”—your part in the resentments, fears, etc.?

8. How did you feel about listing those times when you had been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking, or frightened?

9. As a child, did you experience trauma from adults? How did it contribute to your addictive/compulsive behaviors?

10. Describe how have these experiences may have blocked you from moving forward with your life as an adult?

11. Describe if you had a sense of “pride” or “being the victim” while holding such resentments. Did taking this inventory change your feelings about them?

12. After completing the five columns, how did your recollections or feelings about fears begin to change?

13. Taking sexual inventory may seem daunting, especially if we have had anonymous sexual experiences. Besides individuals, can you list the types of people you objectified through your acting out? For example, “men in a certain park,” “women from a particular app,” “people we met at bars.”

14. Did you include fantasy-based compulsions, whether it involved an actual person or not?

15. Now that you have done this inventory, do you feel the need to adjust your list of bottom-line behaviors? If so, how?

16. Identify those positive things that are part of your life:

17. List some kindnesses you may have shown to other people; some accomplishments that have helped you and/or helped others.

18. What qualities do you like about yourself?

19. Now that you have completed this **“searching and fearless moral (truthful) inventory,”** are there any lingering feelings that might impede your readiness to move onto Step 5?

Step Five

“Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human
being the exact nature of our wrongs.”

Many of us grew up in households that taught us never to show weakness. Weakness was exploited and used against us time after time. Are we now supposed to bare all only to have it thrown in our faces once more? Our inventories, after all, include things we swore we would take to our graves with us.

SCA is a spiritual program that asks us to take actions that might feel uncomfortable or seem counterintuitive. We are not undergoing this process to punish ourselves but to heal ourselves. Our goal is to integrate healthy sexuality and to become the people we have longed to become - living useful lives, happy, joyous, and free. The process of admitting our wrongs begins to unburden us from the wreckage of our past. Facing these patterns of behavior requires honesty, humility, courage, self-love, and compassion.

“The exact nature of our wrongs” are those patterns of behavior that became clear in our Fourth Step. They stem from the resentments, guilt, shame, and fears that fuel our sexual compulsion.

The God mentioned in this Step is the concept of a “Power greater than ourselves” from Step Two and the “*God as we understood God*” from Step Three. The spiritual program of SCA asks us to admit the exact nature of our wrongs to this understanding of God. Some may find a prayer practice from their religious background helpful. Others might find writing a letter to their Higher Power admitting the exact nature of their wrongs useful. If the collective experience, strength, and hope of the fellowship is our Higher Power, we can share honestly at meetings about the patterns of our behavior revealed in our Fourth Step.

Admitting to ourselves the exact nature of our wrongs can be done in a letter to ourselves. We also might read aloud our Fourth Step in front of a mirror, where we are face-to-face with ourselves. We do not undertake this step to make us feel bad about ourselves. When we honestly admit to ourselves the exact nature of our wrongs, we begin to develop humility, honesty, and integrity, so we can become the people we wish to be.

The idea of telling another human being the exact nature of our wrongs might arouse fear and shame and trigger us to act out. Those who have taken this Step reassure us that we will not face ridicule or rejection from the person who hears our Fifth Step. The solidity of our Third Step helps us trust the process, even if we fear its outcome. We don't need to take any part of our SCA journey alone.

We want to find someone with whom we feel safe to hear our deepest secrets. We find someone we can trust not to repeat what we say and who will not judge us. If our behavior was illegal, we might seek out someone with whom we can be entirely honest without fear of consequences. Usually, however, we choose our sponsor, who already knows much of our story and our motives.

We choose a place and a time where distractions and interruptions will be unlikely. The person hearing our Fifth Step can offer support and understanding, while also pointing out blind spots to our patterns of behavior, of which we might be unaware. This person can also share their own experience, strength, and

hope. Sometimes taking our Fifth Step requires more than one session. Thoroughness counts more than speed.

When we complete our Fifth Step, we feel that a heavy burden has been lifted from our shoulders. It may be wise to decompress for a time or process whatever feelings arose. In any case, we feel gratitude for the opportunity our Higher Power gave us to delve into how our personalities led us to commit wrongs. We can now explore a different path.

The work of the Fourth and Fifth Steps eases the burdens of our resentments and fears. This process prepares us to focus on those traits which keep us from growing spiritually. We are ready to begin Step Six.

Step Six

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

We bared our souls in Steps Four and Five. It took a lot of energy to engage in all that honesty. Nothing was left unsaid. There are now people in the world who know everything about us, yet these people don't run away or abandon us. Surely the program isn't going to ask more of us!

At first glance, Step Six looks like it might be simple and easy. We can sit back, relax, maybe pray, and perhaps meditate. This will be easy!

This Step certainly requires self-examination, prayer, and meditation. First, we define the phrase “character defects.” It is easy to get caught up in the negative connotation of the word “defect.” It sounds like we are somehow broken people. The program uses the phrase “character defects” to call attention to behaviors we engage in that no longer serve us. They prevent us from growing spiritually.

For many of us, it takes time to realize that there are parts of our personality that prevent us from moving forward. Our problems do not just revolve around the sexual behaviors that brought us to SCA. Those behaviors are but symptoms of the underlying spiritual disease. On some level, we felt entitled to these behaviors. They had come to define who we were. *Nobody knows what I have been through. I have a right to be angry. Look how many idiots roam the earth. Success means taking what I deserve without worrying about others.*

A variety of defects may show up for us: arrogance, perfectionism, anger, self-pity, dishonesty, impatience, bigotry, blaming others, and more. The central theme of our defects is fear. Fear is a basic human survival mechanism. It's instinctual for us as humans to be afraid of things that will hurt us. This mechanism is core to our being, but the ways we interpret it sometimes make us adopt a “survival mindset” when dealing with everyday life. Although some of us do face physically violent circumstances, the majority of us live in relative physical safety. Yet fear persists, telling us that the universe is a dangerous place, and we are on our own.

Fear takes on many forms. We may see an authority figure correcting us as a threat to our intelligence. Someone cutting in front of us is taking advantage of us. *Rules are a way to oppress me. Successful people always break the rules anyway. People of another culture don't respect my ways and only want to hurt me.*

Writing down our defects of character is essential to working this step. We have a written list so we can refer to it in those times when we would rather forget these defects. As we progress through the program, this list changes. New defects become apparent, and old ones are removed through the grace of our Higher Power.

We consult our sponsors or trusted program friends, who provide us insight on the accuracy of our lists. Those who heard our Fifth Step may have gained a special perspective on what defects might be getting in our way. They point out times when these defects show up. We add these instances to our lists.

Once we feel we have a thorough list of character defects, we observe how they affect our lives. We take note of what happens when the defects come to the forefront. What are the rewards and unwanted consequences? How do we feel, and who else is affected? Does a resentment develop? Do we want to act out?

Taking all this into account, we focus on a character defect and begin to see the negative impact. We come to understand that life would be better without this defect. It may happen quickly. It might take time for the pain to reach the tipping point. Eventually, we reach the point of becoming entirely ready for our Higher Power to remove the defect.

God doesn't always remove a character defect in the way we might anticipate. Sometimes the character defect is removed by providing us the opportunity to be confronted with it head-on. Financial insecurity is a common character defect. In a "worst-case" scenario, we might lose our job, triggering this defect. Could we survive? Would the God of our understanding continue to take care of our will and our lives?

The sexually compulsive behaviors, the romantic obsessions, and the fantasies begin to subside. Even with these subsiding, though, we can see that our character defects still have the ability to make our lives unmanageable. Are we ready? Maybe we are simply in a state of willingness. Willing does not necessarily mean ready. We may be willing to have our character defects lifted, but we may not have done the work to allow this to happen. We can be willing to climb Mount Everest, but to become ready for the task means we endure physical training, hire expert guides, and purchase specialized equipment. Becoming ready for the task of Step Six means we develop a trust that the Higher Power of our understanding is capable of removing the defect.

Removing the defect isn't just exercising self-discipline or self-help. We had tried those many times before, and they did not work. This Step tells us the defect is not ours to remove; that God will remove it. The evidence becomes more apparent as we work the Steps, listen to others, pray, and meditate. These are all actions that help us gain this trust.

We come to understand that this Step is not reached at a single point in time. All we need to do is be as ready as we can. Maybe we can only focus on one or two defects at a particular moment. Like all the Steps, this is a process, not a one-time event. Slowly, with the help of our Higher Power, we become ready to see our lives transformed. We are ready for Step Seven.

Further reflections:

--Sometimes, we would rather sit in today's pain than take a chance on change.

--You cannot be your own higher power. It's what got us here in the first place. If we want peace of mind, serenity, and happiness in the future, we cannot "force" ourselves to be better. It is only in surrendering to the wisdom of the program that we can recover.

-- A defect of character can also be described as a shortcoming (Bill W. interchanged these terms along with "wrongs" from Step Five in writing the AA Big Book).

--Whatever term you use to describe them, are you ready to have God remove them? If you have, then you have done Step Six.

--If you're not willing now, are you open to "become willing?"

Step Six Prayer

In this moment, I am entirely ready to be freed of all my shortcomings. In this moment, I am ready to surrender these defects of character to God, knowing that the power of willingness to heal is great.

--Review column 5 from our Fourth Step worksheet, labeled "**which character defects were involved.**" The categories include *selfish, dishonest, self-seeking, frightened, & inconsiderate of others*. Examine the ones that kept coming up in your list. Some of these character defects were mentioned in the text we just read. This text also includes other defects such as *arrogance, perfectionism, anger, self-pity, impatience, bigotry, blaming others*, etc.

Note: The Appendix includes a Step Six worksheet that lists many of the character defects described here, along with column space for you to list how you relate to them. There are also blank rows to add additional character defects that you may discover.

Questions for Self-examination

1. Write down the character defects that keep coming up for you. Feel free to use the worksheet located in the Appendix.

2. We often speak of *character defects* as "behaviors we engage in that no longer serve us." These behaviors affect our lives. List some of the consequences you may have experienced from one or more of your character defects?

3. Now that you have identified these character defects, are you reluctant to be freed of these behaviors? If so, explain.

4. What reservations do you have about being entirely ready to have God (HP) remove these character defects? Please list any character defects that you aren't ready to have removed.

5. How are you feeling about "letting go" and being entirely ready in terms of accepting changes in your life?

6. Trusting in God (HP) to remove them, in what ways can we counter some of our defects? [for step seven]

Step Seven

“Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.”

If we were honest in writing down our inventory in Step Four, we became able to address our character defects in Steps Five and Six. Step Seven asks us to be in a state of humility when asking God to remove our shortcomings. Humility is not humiliation.

Humiliation is about being shamed or being made to feel foolish. Our past may be filled with episodes of being humiliated, harangued, belittled, and made to feel we were “wrong.” Sometimes this happened in front of others, making us feel embarrassed and small. Admitting we had aspects of our character that were defective could seem like giving in to the bullies, opening ourselves up for more ridicule.

Humility is a state of realizing we are not in control, that we do not have all the answers. It is a state of being fully prepared to accept the “how, what, why, and where” of what happens rather than believing we can control the outcome.

Working Step Six helped us to build a strong foundation of humility. In this state, we took our list of character defects and wrote ways we could counter the defect. Although humility does ask us to be vulnerable, it gives us an opportunity for real growth. Some think of this as learning to take contrary action to our learned impulses. Doing so is one way to humble ourselves and meet our Higher Power halfway in removing our character defects. For example, instead of retaliating against someone who cuts in front of us, we take a deep breath and count to five to center ourselves. Rather than reacting with the anger welling up inside, we take a moment to let the anger pass. One of the hardest contrary actions to take is to pray for those people or institutions we resent.

When we get stuck, we ask others for help. Consulting with our sponsors and other trusted program friends provides new perspectives as they share their experiences with similar character defects.

Sometimes we are confronted by a particularly tough character defect. Self-will exerts itself, and we reject all suggestions to take contrary action. We dig in our heels and return to feeling entitled to behaviors that we have determined to be objectionable. This behavior is not unusual for us as sexual compulsives. Talking to others, writing, and praying helps us become “entirely ready” once again. Some of us continue to experience this struggle indefinitely to varying degrees. We realize that we are not the only ones to struggle with character defects. However, in those moments when our character defects are lifted through the grace of our Higher Power, we feel a great sense of peace and serenity.

The more we experience this sense of peace, the more we grow spiritually. We learn that our character defects keep us self-centered and apart from others. When our character defects are removed, we feel “right-sized” – neither better nor worse than our fellows. We learn to feel compassion for ourselves, and most importantly, compassion for others. The more we work this Step, the greater compassion we feel. This growth helps prepare us for the remaining Steps.

We begin to see the miracle of having our shortcomings transformed into character assets, which we can put to use in service to others. We learn the importance of taking actions to enrich these character assets,

confirming faith in the God of our understanding who removes our character defects. If we are stubborn, for example, we learn that this behavior is a shortcoming when it leads us to refuse to work the Steps. Instead, this same behavior can be transformed into persistence when used to carry the message of recovery to the sexual compulsive who still suffers. Witnessing this process inspires us to move forward, as we wonder how the next Steps can enhance these miraculous feelings.

Steps Four and Five helped us deal with resentments and fear. Steps Six and Seven helped us deal with character traits that prevented us from growing spiritually. We are now ready to rebuild fractured relationships by moving forward and beginning Step Eight.

4. Describe how “giving up control” can achieve a sense of balance and “right-sizing” for you, and can this process be a sign of humility and strength?

5. By accepting change and taking the right actions to support your new behaviors, you might feel your shortcomings gradually evolve into character assets. Can you describe an example?

Step Eight

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

Step Eight seems simple enough. We just make a list. We have already had some advice: *First Things First*. We begin by writing our name at the top of the list because we have done grave damage to ourselves as a result of our compulsion.

In working Step Four, we had created a list of people and institutions we resented. Now we start a new list with these names, and next to each name, we write down what harm we have done. Next to that harm, if there is a way we can make an amend, we write it down and describe it. Reviewing our Fourth Step helps fill this list out.

Although this is a good start, the simplicity seems to slip away. A thousand urgencies begin crowding into our life. We take our list out of the desk drawer, look at it, and put it back. Occasionally we might add a name to it, but this Step seems to recede in importance as compared with all the other demands we face. After all, the rent is due, or there is another meeting to attend, or yet another stressful relationship demands time and effort.

Step Eight is again asking us to take a counterintuitive action. It feels as if we are being asked to show weakness to those with whom we already have difficult relationships. Saving face and keeping up appearances had been a habitual coping mechanism in our active addiction. *What is this going to accomplish? These people don't care about me.*

A fog descends over our program. Everything had seemed so clear just a short time ago. Where had our vision gone? It seems as if we are slogging through the mud. Putting one foot in front of the other seems enormously challenging. How can we possibly figure out how to reach our goal of completing this list? Many of us didn't realize it at the time, but we have hit a roadblock, a spiritual desert. Our thirst for the program has dried up. Some of us stop going to meetings, or go only occasionally, fed up with hearing the same sob stories over and over again. *What's going on? Why is there such resistance to moving forward?*

Using the principles from the proceeding Steps, we learn to ask God to remove our resistance. Bringing our Higher Power into our consciousness increases our willingness to take the next right action. The next right action often is in calling our sponsors and telling them what is going on, holding nothing back. They offer a sympathetic ear, and occasionally some advice, but mostly all they can do for us is bear witness to our struggle. They cannot take on the task of completing the Eighth Step list for us.

Often, we are blocked by our fear of having to make face-to-face amends in Step Nine. Maybe there is a lingering feeling of resentment that those on our list are the ones who harmed us, so they should be making amends to us! Our faith in the spiritual program of SCA is being tested. Resisting and procrastinating on this Step denies us spiritual growth. Hiding out in the spiritual desert feels easier than moving forward.

Even so, the spiritual desert we now occupy feels scary and uncomfortable. Many of our old tried-and-true methods we used before program were stripped away doing the work in the proceeding seven Steps.

But really, what had been stripped away? Not our comforts, not our reliance on others, not even the basics of life. No. What had been stripped away were our false beliefs.

Exploring those false beliefs is one way to move forward - a way to break the resistance and to continue with Step Eight. We can discover false beliefs by filling in the blanks in this sentence: "If only I have enough _____, I can _____."

We write it in two columns:

If only I have enough	I can
Money	Pay the rent Live in luxury Travel the world Help the poor
Sex	Satisfy my desires Have lasting relationships Gain power over others
Healthy food	Avoid fatal diseases Live a long life Lose weight

How are the above examples of false beliefs? We commonly accept money, food, sex, and the accumulation and abundance of these as measures of success. Upon reflection, we can see this misses the point. As we review these measures of success in the reflected light of our Higher Power, we can see how false they are. All the medicine in the world won't keep us healthy if we get an incurable disease. Our beliefs about sex may be thoroughly distorted, even if unconscious.

We then add a new column, one that brings us back to some of the self-examination we did in our Fourth Step: "How this false belief worked in my life..." We may have adopted these beliefs as our truths, or way of living, which often led to conflicts, frustrations, and unhappiness. For example, our beliefs about money might have produced workaholism. We sometimes put our career ahead of our closest relationships, including those with our Higher Power and ourselves. Our beliefs about food as a source of comfort and escape rather than nourishment might have led to health problems. Our beliefs about sex led us to disaster, time and time again. Other false beliefs also had devastating consequences.

Next came a fourth column, "How acting on this false belief harmed others." Now we are on our way to completing the list of people we had harmed. It flows like water, or more like tears. It becomes easy - painfully easy - to see how we had caused harm, sometimes grievous harm, in pursuing our false beliefs.

There is an underlying principle of Step Eight. That principle is one of forgiveness. Expecting or demanding perfection from ourselves and others often led to wrongs and resentments that have burdened us. Most of us find the notion of forgiveness frightening, if we feel we have to ask for it, or condescending,

if we feel obliged to forgive others. Allowing our Higher Power to be part of the process can change our awareness and attitude. It becomes so much clearer that to be forgiven, we forgive.

Reviewing our list of resentments that many of us compiled in our Fourth Step is another place to look for harms we have done to others. Resentments often create a sense of entitlement. In this entitled state of mind, with our sexual compulsion activated, we may have caused harm to others, which seemed perfectly justifiable. In trying to make amends rather than confronting them, we could write a letter of forgiveness to the person or entity that we resented. We don't need to send this letter to anyone, though we might read it to our sponsor or a trusted friend. The letter writing itself can be very revealing. While writing the details of our specific resentments, we often learn more about the part we played in the story, and this gave us more clarity about how to make our amends, both generally and specifically.

Making it a “forgiveness letter,” rather than a litany of complaints against past hurts, also helps to focus on an integral part of recovery. We can't change the past. While we may have real, justified resentments and even lasting damage that we may have suffered, our willingness to forgive can help free us from some of the burdens of past baggage. It is one way of opening ourselves up to accepting the present. Also, the actual process of writing such a letter, along with reading it out to someone, often allows us to “right-size” the resentment. Forgiving can be difficult, perhaps impossible for major traumas, but writing down the resentments can give us clarity about their real impact. We may even find that some of our grievances now seem petty as we begin to accept who we are today.

There are various approaches to completing an Eighth Step. Each of us encounters varying degrees of resistance and struggle with working this Step. The important thing is to focus on our actions and how they caused harm. The spiritual program of SCA tells us that we ought to attempt to make things right whenever possible. This process is not a punishment. We have a spiritual malady that will continue to thrive if we do not remove the “fuel” it feeds on. These harms stoke the fire of addiction. If we do not make things right, our addiction will continue to burn, causing us to act out.

The mess is ours alone, and ours to clean up. We become willing to make amends to all those we have harmed. We move on to Step Nine.

3. How did your false beliefs affect your life? For example:

- Our beliefs about money might have produced workaholism.
- Our beliefs about sex led us to disaster, time and time again.

4. How did your false beliefs harm others?

5. Are there people on your list who harmed you in some way, and does your recollection of that make you less inclined to make amends to them?

6. Consider making a list of people with whom you have resentments. Write letters to those people and be willing to read them aloud to your sponsor or another trusted friend without sending the letters to anyone.

7. Do you find it possible to forgive the wrongs those people did to you? Explain your thoughts.

As we move onto Step Nine: There may be people to whom you feel you may owe amends, but you can't bring yourself to make those amends. You might wish to discuss these fears with your sponsor or another trusted friend.

Step Nine

“Made direct amends to such people wherever possible,
except when to do so would injure them or others.”

When we first understood the meaning of the Steps, the Ninth seemed the most daunting. It tells us to make direct amends for the things we may have kept hidden for years. Just the notion of making ourselves vulnerable to imagined negative reactions - or attacks - from others can make us feel uneasy.

Step Nine is not about apologizing. It is about making amends. While there is often nothing wrong with apologizing, and apologies are sometimes appropriate, making amends is a different process altogether.

Our Fourth Step brought up shame, which our Fifth Step helped relieve. But those Steps did not free us from our negative feelings such as guilt, anxiety, and shame. Working the Eighth Step brought these feelings to the forefront. Before beginning recovery, how many times did we apologize to assuage our guilt? Did we buy flowers for our loved ones? Did we tell people that we were sorry and would never do it again? And did those people learn, time and time again, that our apologies meant nothing? We need more than apologies to work Step Nine.

Making amends is a process of change. The entire spiritual process of recovery allows us to be open to change. Step Nine comes relatively late in the process for a good reason. Until we have made significant changes in our behavior, our amends mean nothing. In taking Step Three, we turned our will and lives over to the God of our understanding and began the process of making changes. With Step Six, we became ready. In Step Seven, we trusted our Higher Power to put these changes into practice, converting our shortcomings into assets. Step Eight helped show us specifically how our behavior had hurt ourselves and others. And now, in Step Nine, we take what we have learned and confront our pasts.

From experience, we know that we need to work closely with our sponsors or other trusted spiritual advisors. We are long past trying and failing to work the Steps on our own. Our sponsors and others help us to decide when direct amends might cause harm. They help us determine what appropriate amends might look like for each person on our Eighth Step list. We try to imagine what effect our amends might have on the other person, not in a codependent way, but with compassion and insight. At the same time, we remember the phrase “wherever possible,” working this Step each time the opportunity arises and not making excuses based on an unwarranted fear of causing harm.

Direct amends can take a variety of forms, each one tailored to the circumstances under which we harmed others. Sometimes the opportunity presents itself by chance, but in most cases making amends requires careful deliberation and planning. We often begin without going into specifics by asking to meet to discuss our past behavior. The other party's response can be unpredictable. Sometimes we are told to get lost; in that case, we respect their boundary.

Often, the other person wants to know details before agreeing to a meeting; in such a case, it is appropriate to say that we have changed our behavior based on a new outlook on life and that we want to make amends. Rarely, when the other person is in recovery, they might ask if this is a Ninth Step amends? In that case, our joyful reply is: yes indeed.

It is important to determine if approaching someone after a long time of being absent from their life is appropriate. Such a request might seem odd or even threatening to the other person. Social media makes it easier to find old flames, friends, and acquaintances. Popping up in their life after 25 years of no contact can be shocking. It can be disingenuous to reach out to them to say we wish to make amends when there is no intention of wanting to be acquainted with them other than the amends. Receiving guidance from sponsors and trusted program friends is critical.

When we meet the other person, we avoid speechifying. We are brief and to the point. We lay out what we did and why. We don't try to explain addiction since, in the majority of cases, this is a person outside of recovery, more interested in our behavior than our spiritual wellbeing. Explaining addiction can seem like an excuse not to take ownership of our past behavior. We explain how our behavior has changed. Sometimes our amends is about living our lives differently one day at a time. In referring to such "living amends," we do not promise what we cannot deliver. We simply share our own experience, strength, and hope.

After we say what we feel the need to say, we ask, "Have I left anything out?" This question gives the person receiving the amends an opportunity to speak from their perspective. This process ensures we obtain a better understanding of the actual harm we have caused, rather than merely making amends we feel comfortable making. It matters little whether they praise us, harshly criticize us, or do something in between. We have no power over how others react. The purpose of the amends is about our wreckage. It is not about the other person's reaction. We are not asking for their forgiveness, which may or may not be forthcoming. Instead, we rely on God as we understand God to take care of the situation, and we avoid interjecting our ego. A good practice is to talk to our sponsor before and after making amends. This practice of bookending our actions gives us another person's perspective and can provide us with support in the case of unexpected consequences. It is important not to be alone in doing this difficult work.

In some cases, direct amends are impossible. We might have no idea how to reach the other person. They might have died. In those cases, we take appropriate actions to remember those we can no longer see or touch. Perhaps we simply talk to them or talk about them. We can write a letter to them and read it to our sponsor or other trusted members. We might honor them through a charitable donation or some other acknowledgment. There are even those for whom we simply write their names and put them in a "God Box." The "God Box" contains things we symbolically turn over to a Higher Power. There might come a time when we choose to ceremonially burn the papers from the "God Box" as part of making amends through prayer.

If the person died when we were children, we might have carried long-simmering grudges or an unwarranted load of guilt. We may even have imagined we were somehow to blame. Resentments that started at a young age often became intertwined into our lives as adults. These are particularly hard to release. We work Steps Four through Eight again before trying to make these amends. If there is a feeling of guilt, we can make amends to ourselves.

No two people's experience of working Step Nine is the same. However, the majority of members feel a miraculous restoration of relationships and release of shame under the care of their Higher Power. The energy put into making amends is worth the miracle stated in the Ninth Step Promises found in the book

Alcoholics Anonymous. Among these promises: we will come to know a new freedom; we will not regret the past, nor do we wish to shut the door on it; we will lose our fear of economic insecurity and realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves. Working Step Nine allows us to let go and let God.

Once we have completed cleaning house in Step Nine, we find a practice to keep ourselves spiritually fit. We need a daily practice to make sure resentments and harms don't fester into full-blown addiction again. We are ready to explore Step Ten.

Further reflections

--There are three parts to doing the Ninth Step.

(a) *Making direct amends*; face-to-face (if possible), or by phone, letter, etc., if not possible.

(b) *Whenever possible*. There usually isn't a reason to delay it. Talk to your sponsor or trusted friend.

(c) *Except when to do so would injure them or others*. Discuss making the amend with a sponsor or other trusted friend. There may be other ways of making an amends. As long as you are willing, you will find a way.

--After working the first nine steps, many members can reflect on their journey with a brief summing up: we have *made things right with God (HP)* by working Steps One, Two & Three; we have *made things right with ourselves* by working Steps Four, Five, Six & Seven; we have *made things right with others* by working Steps Eight & Nine. It might be helpful to read the Ninth Step *Promises* from the AA Big Book and SCA's *The Gifts of Recovery*. We can think about how our spiritual growth has been influenced by working these steps.

The 9th Step Promises of Alcoholics Anonymous

(from pages 83 and 84 of "Alcoholics Anonymous," 4th edition)

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are halfway through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us—sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.

(from SCA's *The Gifts of Recovery*)

The Gifts of Recovery

When we each work the Sexual Compulsives Anonymous program to the best of our ability and find a Higher Power on which we can depend for recovery and healing, our collective experience has shown us that we can expect the following results:

When confronted with the void within, we will be able to decide not to act out, at least not today. We will realize that we are not our addiction and find we can stop obsessing about sex and romance, or avoiding them compulsively. We will let go of sexual compulsion as our higher power and discover in our own way a faith that works. We will grasp the concept of God as we understand God.

We will find it progressively easier to stay on our Sexual Recovery Plan and discover that sexual sobriety is more rewarding than compulsive sex. We will stop pursuing those who are unavailable, or who would reject or abuse us.

We will lose our fear of other people and our fear of our own sexuality. We will learn to recognize the difference between sex, love, and affection. We will discover ourselves, our spirituality, and our connection to our Higher Power.

We will find it easier to entrust outcomes to our Higher Power, and at the same time, we will begin to gain an understanding of God's work in our lives. We will allow our Higher Power to be our guide in relationships, even if this means no relationship for now. We will surrender to the possibility that if we do not have a life partner, this is not a punishment or deprivation, but God's will letting us know what is right for us at this time.

We will experience a rebirth of our relationship with ourselves and our Higher Power, then with others. We will become relaxed enough to be attractive to others instead of coming across as desperate and needy. We will rekindle hobbies and interests we had lost to addiction, and discover new ones. We will trust in a Power greater than ourselves that loves us and wants us to be happy.

We will develop patience and trust for our healing process, and continue to benefit from witnessing others recover. We will stop seeing ourselves as victims; instead, we will learn that we can take responsibility in our lives with the help and grace of our Higher Power. We will realize we are not empty; in fact, we have always been whole. Our character defects are wounds to be healed, not something innate.

We will discover prayer and meditation, and find spiritual renewal through doing acts of service within SCA and beyond. We will seek spiritual progress, not perfection, comparing ourselves not to others, but to the people we used to be.

Our lives will gain new meaning, whether we are in a relationship or out of one.

Our lives will become manageable, and we will experience increasing serenity and recovery. We will finally find peace with God, ourselves, our loved ones, our fellow human beings, and our sexuality.

Questions for self-examination

1. What fears and expectations do you have about making amends to people?

2. Think about the essentials of the previous steps: admitting our powerlessness and unmanageability, accepting that a higher power can restore us to sanity; turning over our will and our lives, taking a fearless and moral inventory, admitting the exact nature of our wrongs, being ready to have God remove our defects of character, humbly asking God to remove our shortcomings.

--Describe character changes you may have noticed in yourself. How do they relate to your recovery?

--Are you open to the notion that doing this step will add to your recovery?

3. After making amends to some of the people on your list, has this increased or decreased your anxiety about this Step?

4. Were you surprised by some of the reactions from people to whom you made amends? Did any of them also try making amends (in some form) to you?

5. If there were financial issues that created the need to make amends, were you able to calmly discuss them with the person and work out a way to make restitution? Have you chosen to make an indirect financial amend, such as donating to a charity?

6. Did anyone reject your amends or refuse to see you? Explain how that might affect your willingness to make amends.

Step Ten

“Continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.”

The personal inventory mentioned in this Step can be considered a brief moral inventory similar to Step Four. When we took Step Four, we took a long look at ourselves, possibly for the first time in quite a while. We searched hard, evaluating the good and the bad. Step Ten, however, requires us to look outward, not just inward. We see how we affect others. Staying aware of how our thoughts and actions affect ourselves and others is an integral part of working the program.

This Step calls for us to “promptly” admit when we are wrong. Promptly is not defined for us, but many consider it to mean as soon as we become aware of a wrong. A guideline often used is to take a daily inventory to keep our awareness current and not to let wrongs fester. This process could mean taking stock at the end of each day, reflecting on our thoughts and actions. When had our ego interfered with turning our will and our life over to the care of God as we understood God? In which situations had we acted based on fear or anger?

Step Five clearly says that we admit the wrongs uncovered in the Fourth Step to God, to ourselves, and another human being. The Tenth Step does not give us this specific direction. Who, then, may receive this admission? We need to admit the wrong to ourselves. Without self-awareness, we are unable to proceed to acceptance and then action. But who else might receive this admission? Many of us find it helpful to consult with our sponsor or another sober sexual compulsive. They can give us another perspective. Perhaps we were too hard on ourselves, or we were not wrong at all. They can help us determine if admitting the wrong would cause injury to ourselves or others.

Often the answer comes to us in prayer and meditation. It may come as we “sleep on it” after taking an inventory at night. As we discovered in Step Seven, with clarity comes the need to act, and with practice, the action becomes intuitive. Anchored in Step Nine, “We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us,” as promised in the book Alcoholics Anonymous. The action might be to make amends. It also may take the form of asking for our Higher Power to remove a character defect. Taking these actions without undue delay keeps our spiritual fitness clear of fear, resentment, and regret.

After working Step Ten for some time, we find ourselves getting in the habit of taking a spot inventory. This habit may be triggered when we find ourselves taken up in a wave of fear or anger. It can be triggered whenever we feel the need to take control, get even, or seize the spotlight. We have enough recovery under our belts to ask ourselves what's going on? Where does our ego feel threatened?

The more we ask our Higher Power for guidance in challenging situations, the more they seem to crop up. And the more they crop up, the more sensitive we become to the slightest effort on our part to try to evade, cover up, or ignore the truth. Rigorous honesty becomes a steadfast companion. Dishonesty, either through omission or commission, becomes less tolerable.

At this point, the Tenth Step fits us like a glove. Feelings that we previously considered “negative” are now simply guideposts to action. Afraid? Angry? Proudful? Jealous? We ask ourselves at these times for God to show us how we can be of service. And when that happens, we can put aside our ego and promptly admit when we are wrong. This newfound freedom from the burdens of our ego will allow us more room to accept a new sense of purpose in our lives. We will be open to finding and developing this as we move into Step Eleven.

Further reflections

--The Tenth Step is a growth process, not merely maintaining. Change is a constant. Doing a Tenth Step is a way for us to adapt by growing rather than coasting, which may lead to a slippery slope.

--We can think of Step Ten as the ongoing practice of Steps Four, Five, Six, Seven, Eight & Nine. Step Ten provides us with a way of staying current with these steps.

- Consider the exercise of doing a Tenth Step at the end of each day for the next month.
- It can be in written form, or perhaps you would prefer to make a daily call to your sponsor or another program member.
- Going forward, you might wish to continue your Tenth Step practice by journaling or by sharing verbally.
- Or perhaps you prefer to focus more on taking a “spot check inventory” from time to time.
- Your Tenth Step might be helpful as a tool we can use to set things right within ourselves when we feel the need to do so.

Questions for self-examination

1. How do you feel about working a daily Tenth Step (written or verbal). Do you regularly share your Tenth Step with another member?

2. In doing this exercise, do you find that this method works for you, or do you feel there may be other methods for taking personal inventory? (for example, anniversaries, retreats)

Step Eleven

“Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood God*, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.”

Many religions prescribe a form of prayer or meditation. But SCA is not a religious program. It is a spiritual program. We have come to know the value of praying and meditating. It was hard at first for most of us to pray or meditate regularly. However, we discovered their value by trying and found a restored ability to live in the present. Over time we found it easier to integrate them into our daily lives.

We might start the day with a Step Three prayer or a meditation before going to work. Perhaps we end each day with a prayer of gratitude or add a second meditation. With practice, we learn to speak to our Higher Power throughout the day. Any emotion we have provides us the opportunity to deepen our relationship with God. When we are troubled, we stop and ask for our Higher Power's guidance. When we are grateful, we thank our Higher Power for grace. Most importantly, we take a breath and listen for our Higher Power's response. Talking is the essence of prayer. Listening is the essence of meditation.

Step Eleven suggests we focus our prayers on “only” knowing God's will for us. This guidance helps clear away the laundry list of things we would like or think we deserve in our prayer practice. Accepting this guidance may change the way we pray because we are trying to connect with our Higher Power's will and not our own.

Like many of the Steps, the word “us” is prominent. The program of SCA is a “we” program, not a “me” program. In time, we stop being so self-centered. This Step shifts the focus with this prayer: “God, I pray for knowledge of your will for us and the power to carry that out...”

One thing we notice is that our world expands when we are “on the beam” of recovery. And it narrows when we are not. Before taking the First Step, we suffered from tunnel vision, or even no vision at all, only fantasies and nightmares. Through prayer and meditation, we broaden our connection to the real world. The real world includes everyone. The more we practice connecting with others, the more we improve and expand our conscious contact with God.

Little by little, we gain knowledge of God's will for us. With that knowledge comes power: not “my” power, but real power. It is the power to act in alignment with God's will and the power to carry it out. It strengthens our spirituality and nourishes our recovery.

Once we have successfully connected to a Higher Power on a regular basis, we are ready to practice everything we learned while working the program in our daily lives. Having accomplished all that the program has asked, we are ready to bring what we have learned to others. We are now ready for Step Twelve.

Further reflections:

--From working steps 3-10, we have learned how to overcome self-will. By removing self-will, we have become more conscious of a Higher Power working in our lives.

--Perhaps we might try creating a list at the end of each day; start by dividing a sheet of paper in half. On the left-hand side of that sheet, we write down thoughts we had and actions we took that generated from "Self-will." We write down our thoughts and actions generated from our Higher Power on the right-hand side.

--On waking up, take a few minutes to ask Higher Power to direct our intention to take the proper thought or action throughout the day.

--How to meditate? Sitting quietly in a quiet space, perhaps with meditation music, is one way. Burning incense is one option. Or perhaps we can meditate while doing a simple task, such as washing the dishes, mowing the lawn, taking out the garbage, going for a walk, or even taking a bath or shower.

11th step prayer— [Many of us prefer the term Higher Power (HP) instead of "God" in addressing these prayers

MORNING PRAYER

God, direct my thinking today so that it be empty of self-pity, dishonesty, self-will, self-seeking and fear. God, inspire my thinking, decisions and intuitions. Help me to relax and take it easy. Free me from doubt and indecision. Guide me through this day and show me my next step. God, show me what I need to do to take care of any problems. I ask all these things that I may be of maximum service to you and my fellow man. In the spirit of the Steps, I pray. AMEN

NIGHTLY PRAYER

God, forgive me where I have been resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid today. Help me to not keep anything to myself but to discuss it all openly with another person - show me where I owe an apology and help me make it. Help me to be kind and loving to all people. Use me in the mainstream of life, God. Free me of worry, remorse or morbid (sick) reflections that I may be of usefulness to others. AMEN

--Step Eleven is putting into action Step Three's "Turned our Will and our Lives over to the care of God, as we understood God."

Note: You may wish to refer to the Eleventh Step Worksheet in the Appendix. It lists two columns:

(1) Thoughts we had and actions we took generated from "Self-will."

(2) Thoughts we had and actions we took that generated from "God (HP)-will."

Questions for self-examination

1. Describe how you feel about the conflict between self-will and God's (HP's) will.
2. As you speak to your Higher Power throughout the day, can you identify those thoughts and actions driven by self-will and those driven by God's (HP's) will?
3. How do you feel now about prayer and meditation? What are your feelings about doing this regularly?
4. If you have already tried prayer and meditation, describe any changes you may have noticed in your patterns of thoughts, attitudes, or actions.
5. How has a prayer and/or meditation practice given you closer contact with God (HP)?
6. Describe how closer contact with God (HP) has given you more "power to carry that out," meaning to take the right actions you need at this time.

Step Twelve

“Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to sexually compulsive people and to practice these principles in all our affairs.”

In our addiction, it seemed as if we were sleepwalking, stumbling around with our eyes shut, bumping into others. We went places where we didn't belong, and often, we did considerable damage to ourselves or others. Every once in a while, we would open our eyes and see the wreckage that was our life. The reaction we had before recovery was to blame others for the mess we saw. “Clean it up the way I want, and fast,” we told them. And then we shut our eyes tight once more.

One day, we opened our eyes and found ourselves in a room with a bunch of sexual compulsives. “I'm not like them,” we told ourselves. But of course, we were. Our denial of reality didn't change the facts.

The journey to reach this Step has been a long one. We have expended a tremendous amount of energy. Our comfort zones have been expanded. Trust and faith are a part of our lives once again. It might have taken months or years before we “got it,” but eventually, we learned that the Steps provide a path to our Higher Power's gift of sexual sobriety.

Have we had a “spiritual awakening?” This term likely elicits a different response for each member. Those with religious backgrounds may believe that God causes the awakening. Some will admit their lives are dramatically different and have no explanation of how it happened. Others will consider their “destruction of the ego” to be this awakening, and that they find grace in their humility. Paraphrasing AA's Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions: the most important meaning of a spiritual awakening is that a person has now become able to do, feel, and believe that which they could not do before on their unaided strength and resources alone.

It has been said that each of the Steps works to deflate the ego. While this is true, it is not the goal. The deflation of the ego allows the spirit to awaken, grow, and thrive. A spiritual awakening is the only result that the Twelve Suggested Steps promise. Whatever our belief about a spiritual awakening, the program tells us it comes about by working the Steps. Sexual sobriety is a gift given to us by our understanding of God because we work the Steps. We want to hold on to this gift. Step Twelve suggests that to keep it, we try to give it away.

What does “try” mean? It is not “trying,” as we did before we came into SCA. It is not making a half-hearted effort before giving up, saying, “Well, I tried...” Consider this nugget of wisdom: When praying for something, believe that it already exists. So, when Step Twelve says, “we tried to carry this message,” we take the action and let go of the result. We believe we have carried the message, not necessarily that anyone heard it.

So how, exactly, do we take action? The program of SCA does not provide any specific recommendations about what actions constitute “carrying the message.” The wisdom of the program, however, suggests that this means being of service to the still suffering sexual compulsive.

The still suffering sexual compulsive exists both inside and outside of the fellowship. There are so many ways to carry the message within the fellowship: greeting newcomers, putting out chairs, speaking and sharing at meetings, doing a reading, sponsoring another member, and writing literature. This is just a short list.

Carrying the message to sexual compulsives outside of the fellowship is a bit riskier. Some of this work can be done anonymously by working on the website, responding to emails, or answering phone calls. The riskier service involves breaking our anonymity in some cases - things like talking to the media, working at an SCA booth for an event, putting our names on leases for meeting spaces. The riskiest service can be doing a Twelfth Step call.

A traditional Twelfth Step call is two sober members of SCA responding with compassion to a sexual compulsive who still suffers. Sometimes this meeting might take place in a hospital or a courthouse. This intervention may bring up thoughts and places we have been before, but this time we see them with sober eyes.

We do not preach. We do not proselytize. We use attraction rather than promotion. We briefly summarize our stories so that the other person knows that we, too, have suffered and that we have found a solution that works for us. But we do not try to fix the sufferer. That is the job of their Higher Power.

We encourage the person to attend a meeting, and we offer to bring them to one. We understand that the potential newcomer probably thinks as we once did, "I'm not like them..." We do not try to knock down that notion. We simply state our case. If we have succeeded, we have planted a seed, which may or may not eventually thrive, in God's time, not ours.

The more we work Step Twelve, the better we get at it. We used to see the world as a place with scarce resources and full of personalities set to clash with us. We now see the world as it is – a place of great abundance with people struggling as we are to live their lives one day at a time. The world is a place guided by principles under the watchful care of a loving Higher Power. We become more present in our lives and connected to the wisdom within us. We live happy, contented, and useful lives.

Just as our compulsion affected each part of our lives, so too our recovery affects all areas of our lives. As we practice these principles in all our affairs, we discover that recovery has transformed our lives from a set of parts into an integrated whole. We become whole, passionate, recovering human beings, able to accept our mistakes, and transcend them. We increasingly want to be a part of the human race and have a commitment to give back what we have freely received. Our lives go from being centered on compulsive sex to being centered on service. We become increasingly useful instruments of our Higher Power.

May you, too, be happy, joyous, and free.

Further reflections:

-The Twelfth Step has three distinct phrases that express thoughts and actions that sum up our program of recovery.

1. *Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps...*
2. *We try to carry this message to other sexual compulsives...*
3. *And to practice these principles [steps] in all our affairs.*

--The commentary talks about making a Twelfth Step call to someone not in our fellowship who is suffering. Such calls vary, including making and receiving program calls from other SCA members. They might seek information or help solve a problem or just talk to another member in recovery. Whatever the case, we may share our story and refer to our previous “hopeless” condition. After getting the other person’s attention, we might briefly talk about why a spiritual change is so significant and how we used the tools of recovery to achieve a spiritual awakening.

Questions for self-examination

1. Perhaps you have experienced a spiritual change since you began working the Steps. Describe your experience.

2. Describe some of the barriers that might be blocking you from experiencing a spiritual awakening.

3. One popular 12-Step slogan is: “in order to keep it, you have to give it away.” Describe ways you have tried to carry the message of Recovery to others, both inside and outside the rooms.

4. Describe some examples of practicing these principles in your daily life (“in all our affairs.”)

5. Now that you have completed this workbook, how do you feel about working some of the Steps again in the future as you get new insights?

Step Six:

Character defects	comments (make additions/changes to list as conditions change)
Arrogance	
Anger	
Bigotry	
Blaming others	
Dishonesty	
Domineering	
Frightened	
Gossip	
Grandiosity	
Greed	
Impatience	
Inconsiderate of others	
Low self-esteem	
Perfectionism	
Pride	
Procrastination	
Selfishness	
Self-seeking	
Self-Pity	

Step Eleven:

Thoughts we had and actions we took that generated from “Self-will.”	Thoughts we had and actions we took that generated from “God-will.”