

[AA Agnostica](#)

A Collection of Alternative 12 Steps

Introduction

There are many versions of the 12 Steps. In fact, there are about as many versions as there are alcoholics in AA who use the program to get sober and to maintain their sobriety.

The founder of AA, Bill W, discovered early on that individuals and groups adapted the 12 Steps as found in *Alcoholics Anonymous* and he encouraged and supported them. In 1957, Bill recounts that when AA was started in countries where Buddhism was the dominant religion, the new AA groups being formed there felt that in order to join AA they needed to replace the word "God" with "good" so that the practice of the Steps would be compatible with their non-theistic beliefs. After hearing about the changes to the Steps by these Buddhist AA groups, Bill wrote:

To some of us, the idea of substituting 'good' for 'God' in the Twelve Steps will seem like a watering down of AA's message. But here we must remember that AA's Steps are suggestions only. A belief in them as they stand is not at all a requirement for membership among us. This liberty has made AA available to thousands who never would have tried at all, had we insisted on the Twelve Steps just as written. (Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age)

In keeping with Bill's encouragement, agnostic groups in AA often create their own alternative 12 Steps, replacing religious words like "God," "Him" and "Power" (all capitalized in the Steps) with secular alternatives. These versions are not meant to replace the original 12 Steps, but are solely for the use of the group, based upon the conscience of its members.

We are happy to present a fair sampling of versions of the Steps in this document, used and written by both individuals and groups. It's just one way to help the suffering alcoholic understand that the Steps - adapted as need be - can be an important tool in the process of recovery from the terrible affliction of alcoholism.

You will no doubt like some more than others. Which, of course, only confirms our point: Interpretation is an inescapable part of working the Steps.

Gabe's 12 Steps

(This Collection of Alternative 12 Steps was inspired by Gabe S, who had assembled a similar collection, and so it's only fitting that it begins with his version. Gabe's story is on the AA Agnostica website: [A Higher Power of my Understanding.](#))

1. We admitted we could not control our drinking, nor do without it, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that others who had had or understood our problem could help us return to and maintain sanity.
3. We decided to accept what they said and act on their suggestions.
4. We made a searching inventory of our bad feelings, of those aspects of our own character that had contributed to these and of the harms we had done. We noted occasions where we had done well and were glad of these.
5. We showed the inventory to at least one other person and discussed it with them.
6. We accepted our moral and personal weaknesses, and accepted that they needed to change.
7. We became willing to admit those weaknesses to others, where appropriate, and to heed any advice that they might offer.
8. We became willing to make amends to those we had harmed.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory, when we were wrong promptly admitted it and when we had done well, recognized this.
11. We adopted a practice of meditation and one of reflection upon our place in the world and how we could contribute to it.
12. Having experienced a psychic change as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Beyond Belief Agnostics

(The group held its first meeting on September 24, 2009 in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.)

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol - that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to accept and to understand that we needed strengths beyond our awareness and resources to restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of the A.A. program.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to ourselves without reservation, and to another human being, the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were ready to accept help in letting go of all our defects of character.
7. Humbly sought to have our shortcomings removed.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through mindful inquiry and meditation to improve our spiritual awareness, seeking only for knowledge of our rightful path in life and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

AA Agnostics of the San Francisco Bay Area

(This version can be found on the area agnostic AA [website](#).)

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe and to accept that we needed strengths beyond our awareness and resources to restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to entrust our will and our lives to the care of the collective wisdom and resources of those who have searched before us.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to ourselves without reservation, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were ready to accept help in letting go of all our defects of character.
7. With humility and openness sought to eliminate our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through meditation to improve our spiritual awareness and our understanding of the AA way of life and to discover the power to carry out that way of life.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

We Agnostics

(This version can be found on the [We Agnostics](#) website. These 12 Steps originated in Cleveland and are described as “training wheels” for the recovering alcoholic seeking his or her own spirituality.)

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol-that attempts to control our drinking were futile and that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that even though we could not fix our problem by ourselves, circumstances and forces beyond our personal control could help restore us to sanity and balance.
3. Made a decision to accept things that were outside our control, especially what already is and to do the best with it.
4. Made a searching examination and a fearless inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to ourselves with total openness and to another human being, the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Became willing to let go of our behaviors and personality traits that could be construed as defects and were creating problems.
7. With humility we acknowledged that we had these shortcomings and with openness we sought to eliminate these shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through contemplation and meditation to improve self-awareness and adopted a spiritual approach to life as our primary purpose.
12. Having had a profound change in consciousness as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Humanist Twelve Steps

(B. F. Skinner, 1972 Humanist of the Year Award Winner, and a researcher and writer at Harvard University, drafted these Steps.)

1. We accept the fact that all our efforts to stop drinking have failed.
2. We believe that we must turn elsewhere for help.
3. We turn to our fellow men and women, particularly those who have struggled with the same problem.
4. We have made a list of the situations in which we are most likely to drink.
5. We ask our friends to help us avoid those situations.
6. We are ready to accept the help they give us.
7. We honestly hope they will help.
8. We have made a list of the persons we have harmed and to whom we hope to make amends.
9. We shall do all we can to make amends, in any way that will not cause further harm.
10. We will continue to make such lists and revise them as needed.
11. We appreciate what our friends have done and are doing to help us.
12. We, in turn, are ready to help others who may come to us in the same way.

The 12 Steps of Realistic Recovery

(Created by Mike H. and found here: [Realistic Recovery](#).)

1. I can no longer deny I have an addiction, and *admit* my addiction can make me *feel* powerless, and that my choices and decisions while unaware or in denial of my addiction were destructive.
2. I came to *believe* that realistic and rational thinking could restore me from the insanity of addictive thinking.
3. I will *let myself be helped* by myself and others by using realistic and rational thinking and will never again turn my will and life over to addictive thinking.
4. I will make a realistic and rational *evaluation* or “inventory” of my thoughts, feelings and behaviors, both positive and negative. This is not to induce guilt and shame, but to evaluate where my attitudes, actions and decisions were not realistic or rational.
5. I will now admit to myself, the exact nature of my thoughts, feelings and behaviors, both positive and negative. I will share and *review* this evaluation with another willing person if I choose, unless where to do so would put myself or others at risk.
6. I am entirely ready to allow realistic and rational thinking to *reveal* my destructive patterns of addictive thinking and behaviour.
7. I will apply realistic and rational thinking and behaviour to *replace* my addictive thinking and behaviour.
8. I will make *a list* of all person’s I have harmed, or been harmed by, in a way that might have enabled my addictive thinking.
9. I will take the responsibility of *making amends* and give the opportunity of receiving amends, except when to do so would put myself or others at risk.
10. I will *continue to evaluate* my life, and when my thoughts, feelings and behaviors are not realistic or rational, I will promptly admit it.
11. I will seek *to improve my conscious awareness of reality*, striving for the knowledge of what is real and rational and for the ability and determination to stop my addictive thinking and behaviour.
12. Having had *progress* towards a realistic and rational self-awareness away from addictive thinking as a result of what I have accomplished with these principles, I shall practice these principles in all areas of my life, and will be willing to *share* these principles with others who think they might gain from them.

SOS

(This alternative was created by “anonymous” and appears on the SOS - Secular Organization for Sobriety or Save our Selves - [website](#).)

1. I have a life threatening problem. My past efforts to establish sobriety have been unsuccessful. I believe that I have choices and that my life no longer need be unmanageable. I accept responsibility for myself and my recovery.
2. I believe that a power within myself in tandem with supports and strengths beyond my own awareness and resources can restore me to a healthier, more balanced, and positive state of mind, body and soul.
3. I make a decision to entrust my will and life to the care of myself, the collective wisdom of those who have struggled with the same problem, and those in support of me.
4. I make a searching and fearless inventory of myself, of my strengths and weaknesses. I choose not to permit problems to overwhelm me, rather to focus on personal growth and the unconditional acceptance of others and myself.
5. I admit to myself, and if I choose, to another person or persons the exact nature of the negative, injurious aspects of my thinking and behavior. I explore the goodness within myself: the positive, courageous, and compassionate.
6. I focus on healing, abolishing self-blame and shame, and understanding the boundaries of my responsibilities. I remain open to the help and support of others as I address the challenge of change.
7. I embrace introspection and work towards alleviating my shortcomings. I strive for personal growth and fulfillment over perfection, and to become integrated with collective humanness.
8. I will consider those that I have harmed and those that have harmed me. I will become willing to explore my feelings regarding those harms.
9. I will make direct amends, as I deem appropriate and not injurious, to those whom I have harmed or negatively impacted and to myself.
10. I will continue sincere and meaningful self-evaluation, and strive for personal betterment.
11. I will seek to improve my awareness and understanding of myself, my addiction, and of other individuals and organizations with the common goal of arresting alcohol addiction.
12. With newfound acceptance and insight I will try to keep awareness, and compassion for others and myself, in the fore.

White Bison

(White Bison developed [The Medicine Wheel](#), a culturally appropriate 12 Step program for Native American people. It uses a single word version of the Steps in which “each of the 12 Steps is presented from the perspective of the value that it reflects.”)

1. Honesty
2. Hope
3. Faith
4. Courage
5. Integrity
6. Willingness
7. Humility
8. Forgiveness
9. Justice
10. Perseverance
11. Spiritual Awakening
12. Service

Single Word (Virtue or Principle) Steps

(Single word versions of the 12 Steps are not unusual. They have been printed in local area AA newsletters and are commonly reproduced on pocket cards. Several single word versions have been organized by religion at [Sacred Connections](#) and we have reproduced three of these.)

Step	Judeo-Christian	Buddhism	Islam
1	Powerlessness	Suffering	Disease
2	Belief	Cause of Suffering	Belief
3	Surrender	Letting Go	Surrender
4	Moral Inventory	Eightfold Path	Righteousness
5	Confession	Right Speech	Purification
6	Willingness	Right Intention	Self-Restraint
7	Humility	Right View	Humility
8	Forgiveness	Loving Kindness	Gratitude
9	Amends	Right Concentration	Almsgiving
10	Daily Examination	Five Precepts	Repentance
11	Prayer Meditation	Mindfulness	Prayer
12	Service	Sangha (Community)	Community

A Buddhist's Non-Theist 12 Steps

(These Steps were created by Bodhi, from Sydney, Australia. They can be found on the [Realistic Recovery](#) website.)

1. We admitted our addictive craving over alcohol, and recognized its consequences in our lives.
2. Came to believe that a power other than self could restore us to wholeness.
3. Made a decision to go for refuge to this other power as we understood it.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to ourselves and another human being the exact moral nature of our past.
6. Became entirely ready to work at transforming ourselves.
7. With the assistance of others and our own firm resolve, we transformed unskillful aspects of ourselves and cultivated positive ones.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed.
9. Made direct amends to such people where possible, except when to do so would injure them or others. In addition, made a conscientious effort to forgive all those who harmed us.
10. Continue to maintain awareness of our actions and motives, and when we acted unskillfully promptly admitted it.
11. Engaged through the practice of meditation to improve our conscious contact with our true selves, and seeking that beyond self. Also used prayer as a means to cultivate positive attitudes and states of mind.
12. Having gained spiritual insight as a result of these steps, we practice these principles in all areas of our lives, and make this message available to others in need of recovery.

Buddhist 12 Steps

(Doug C's "A Buddhist's Insight into the 12 Steps of Recovery" is on the [Buddhist Recovery Network](#). A PDF of his essay can also be found [here](#).)

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our craving and addiction and that our lives have become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than our individual selves could restore us to wholeness.
3. We made a decision to take refuge in and entrust ourselves to the compassion and guidance of a Greater Power of our understanding.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of our thoughts, words, and deeds.
5. We admitted to ourselves, our Greater Power, and another human being the precise moral nature of our thoughts, words, and deeds.
6. We became entirely ready to have our Greater Power transform our unwholesome characteristics into wholesome ones.
7. We humbly turned our unwholesome and unskilful qualities over to our Greater Power to be transformed into positive ones.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to remain mindful of our mental, verbal, and physical actions, and when we acted unskilfully, promptly admitted it.
11. We engaged in meditation and prayer in order to improve our conscious contact with our Greater Power (of our understanding) and to gain the insight and strength to realize and attain our Greater Power's compassionate aspiration for us.
12. Having realized a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we carry this message to others in need of recovery, and try to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Islamic Twelve Steps to Recovery

(There are some 21 [Millati Islami](#) groups across the United States who use this adaptation of the Steps.)

1. We admitted that we were neglectful of our higher selves and that our lives have become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that Allah could and would restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to submit our will to the will of Allah.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves
5. We admitted to Allah and to ourselves the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Asking Allah for right guidance, we became willing and open for change, ready to have Allah remove our defects of character.
7. We humbly ask Allah to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of persons we have harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. We sought through Salaat (prayer service) and Iqraa (reading and studying) to improve our understanding of Taqwa (G-d consciousness; proper Love and respect for Allah) and Ihsan (though we cannot see Allah, he can see us).
12. Having increased our level of Iman (faith) and Taqwa, as a result of applying these steps, we carried this message to humanity and began practicing these principles in all our affairs.

Native American

(This version was prepared for Native Americans by the [Umatilla Tribal Alcohol Program](#).)

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol, that we had lost control of our lives.
2. We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could help us regain control.
3. We made a decision to ask for help from a Higher Power and others who understand.
4. We stopped and thought about our strengths and our weaknesses and thought about ourselves.
5. We admitted to the Great Spirit, to ourselves and to another person the things we thought were wrong about ourselves.
6. We are ready, with the help of the Great Spirit, to change.
7. We humbly ask a Higher Power and our friends to help us change.
8. We made a list of people who were hurt by our drinking, and want to make up for these hurts.
9. We are making up to those people whenever we can, except when to do so would hurt them more.
10. We continue to think about our strengths and weaknesses, and when we are wrong we say we are wrong.
11. We pray and think about ourselves, praying only for strength to do what is right.
12. We try to help other alcoholics and to practice these principles in everything we do.

A Freethinker's Steps

(John L, who has written a number of posts for the AA Agnostica website, got sober in February 1968 and at the time pledged: "If I lived I would help A.A. re-write the Steps, to put them into good English." In 2010 he wrote this alternative to the original 12 Steps.)

1. We admitted that we were alcoholics – that we suffered from an addiction which is invariably fatal unless arrested.
2. We hoped for recovery from our addiction.
3. We committed ourselves to lifelong abstinence, staying away from the first drink, a day at a time.
4. We joined a fellowship of recovering alcoholics, who help each other maintain sobriety.
5. We honestly evaluated our lives, acknowledging both our strengths and our weaknesses.
6. We did our best to build on our strengths and to overcome our weaknesses.
7. We got our lives in order – dealt with the wreckage of the past – made amends whenever feasible.
8. We strived to be in good health: We stopped smoking, exercised, got enough rest, and ate nutritious food.
9. We determined to live in the real world, here and now, whether pleasant or painful. We pledged allegiance to reason and evidence, rather than superstition and dogma.
10. We abstained from mind-altering drugs, including those prescribed by physicians.
11. We continued to share our experience, strength and hope with other recovering alcoholics.
12. We carried the message of sobriety to alcoholics who were still drinking.

Gabe's Therapist's Version

(Gabe - see the first alternative 12 Steps in this collection - was inspired by his therapist's 12 Steps, as below.)

1. Alcohol was something we could not do with, or without. Our lives and relationships were shattered.
2. We gained hope by talking to others who either have had or understood our problem.
3. We decided to accept what they said and act on their suggestions.
4. We needed to own our behaviour both good and bad.
5. We discussed it with someone else.
6. We identified those personal characteristics which had shaped our lives and accepted that they needed to change.
7. We asked for practical help in effecting these changes.
8. We made a list of those people whose lives had been affected adversely by our actions and behaviour, became prepared to make amends.
9. We repaired the harm we had done to them, whenever possible without doing further harm to ourselves or anyone else.
10. We continued to own our behaviour on a daily basis.
11. We tried to discover our own place in the world and to get in touch with our own personalities.
12. We became prepared to help others follow the same path.

The Twelve Step Journal

(From the book [*The Twelve Step Journal*](#) by Claudette Wassil-Grimm, M.Ed.)

1. We admitted we were powerless over our addiction/compulsion - that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that, like all human beings, our power was limited and we needed to learn to let go and learn from others.
3. We made a decision to let go of control, assume a spirit of goodwill, seek the wisdom of responsible others, and discover our true "voice within."
4. We made a searching and fearless inventory of our strengths and weaknesses.
5. We admitted to our journal, ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to listen to wise counsel and seek that still small voice within to guide us to change our behaviors which have been harmful to ourselves and others.
7. Humbly began the process of deep change so we could overcome our weakness.
8. Made a list of all persons we have harmed, became willing to make amends to them all, and to forgive those against whom we have held grudges.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Through meditation and journaling we continually seek to clarify and improve our own judgment and to consider the best direction and purpose our lives can take.
12. Having developed deeper wisdom and an appreciation of the spiritual as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other addicts and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Steps of Self-Confirmation

*(These alternative 12 Steps are taken from an article by Christine Le, Erik P. Ingvarson, and Richard C. Page which first was published in **The Journal of Counseling & Development**, Jul/Aug 1995 (Vol. 73 Issue 6, p. 603-609). A copy of the article is available here in PDF format: [Alcoholics Anonymous and the Counseling Profession: Philosophies in Conflict.](#))*

1. I realize I am not in control of my use.
2. I acknowledge that a spiritual awakening can help me to find a new direction.
3. I am ready to follow and stay true to the new path I have chosen.
4. I have the strength and courage to look within and to face whatever obstacles hinder my continued personal and spiritual development.
5. I commit to become fully aware of how my use hurt those around me.
6. I am changing my life and developing my human potential.
7. I am proud of my strength and ability to grow.
8. I will do all I can to make up for the ways I have hurt myself and others.
9. I will take direct action to help others in any way that I can.
10. I will strive to be self-aware and follow the new path I have chosen.
11. I will continue to develop my potential through helping others and strive to become fully conscious of myself and life around me.
12. I will continue to develop my own human potential and spirituality and will actively help others who cannot control their use of alcohol.

About AA Agnostica

The AA Agnostica website is meant to be a helping hand for the alcoholic who reaches out to Alcoholics Anonymous for help and finds that she is disturbed by the religious content of many AA meetings.

It is not affiliated with any group in AA or any other organization.

Contributors to the website are all members of Alcoholics Anonymous, unless otherwise indicated. The views they express are neither their groups' nor those of AA, but solely their own.

There is an increasing number of groups within AA that are not religious in their thinking or practice. These groups don't recite prayers at the beginning or ending of their meetings nor do they suggest that a belief in God is required to get sober or to maintain sobriety. If the readings at their meetings include AA's suggested program of recovery, then a secular or humanist version of the 12 Steps is shared.

The **AA Agnostica** website does not endorse or oppose any form of religion or atheism. Our only wish is to ensure suffering alcoholics that they can find sobriety in AA without having to accept anyone else's beliefs or having to deny their own.

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