

Steps for Life – Not Just Recovery



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*Why aren't Steps a part of everyone's life,
not just those in recovery?*

By John B

Many sources enumerate steps pertaining to correct living; some might call them rules, commands, or some may just see them as suggestions. The Bible has the Ten Commandments. In his book, *God Is Not One*, Stephen Stephen Prothero lays out a thorough analysis of eight of the worlds' largest religions and not one of them is bashful about telling us how to live. Step by step. The American Humanist Society offers [Affirmations of Humanism: A Statement of Principles](#); a list of 21 beliefs and suggested behaviors that will lead us to a good life. And as millions of people have discovered, many of life's' maladies can be shoved into remission by using a 12 step formula. Take your pick, 10, 12, or 21; the number is of no consequence.

Here's what has worked for me since I escaped from the dense fog of alcoholism. We all have the freedom to make up our own list, but it is important to remember that our choices have consequences.

Steps for Life

1. Live one day at a time. Focus on the present.
2. As the times change, my mind must change.
3. Adhere to a healthful diet and a reasonable exercise regimen.
4. Ask questions, be skeptical of answers, willingly accept uncertainty.
5. Be an informed citizen. Read widely for information and to maintain mental acuity. Use it or lose it.
6. Be persistently honest. Especially with myself.
7. Look for ways to reciprocate for the kindness and support I have received throughout my life.
8. Personally portray an example of moral decency.
9. Try to decrease my consumption of material goods.
10. Do what I can to help create a society based on fairness and justice as much as it rewards merit and individual success.
11. Every day, do what is necessary to build and maintain quality personal relationships.

The steps required for me to get sober led to the realization that the overall quality of my life has been and will continue to be determined by the quality of my relationships with my fellow humans. No deity required.

By Nina C

When I began this road to recovery, I quickly realized that we all see it differently. Is it really a life long journey, will I be careful not to do anything that may jeopardize my newfound freedom? We all know the answer to this question it's up to me. Thankfully I am not alone in this journey.

What has helped me most is the wisdom of my friends who have shared their journey in recovery. I credit them for much of my success. In fact, I love my new lifestyle so much that when Roger C shared his 12 Steps for Life and suggested we all compose our own, I got excited.

The first thing I needed to do was put into words how my values in life have changed. Keeping in mind that the elimination of self-medicating aided in the return of my coping mechanisms, making it possible to consistently incorporate these values into my daily life.

I struggled with calling them steps because they feel more like commandments to me rather than steps. Calling them commandments ... well, that just feels so wrong. However, feel free to silently add the words "Thou shalt" at the beginning of every line. For example: Thou shalt not get attached to anyone or anything because everything comes to an end, or, thou shalt live in the moment because that's all we really have. Memento mori, (Latin) remember that you must die.

I also grappled with the order of these values. I finally realized that each and every one of them is equally valuable in helping me keep my new life truly rewarding. Hence the list for my 12 Principles for Life.

12 Principles for Life

1. Love life, meditate.
2. Dream big.
3. Be nice to yourself and everyone else.
4. Care for your health and the environment.
5. Always be thankful, look on the bright side.
6. Don't judge, empathize.
7. Do everything to the best of your ability.
8. Don't get attached.
9. Don't try to control everything.
10. Live in the moment.
11. Always do the right thing.
12. Always be authentic.

By Roger C

As a person in recovery I have seen how the 12 Steps have helped many people. Of course as an agnostic, I am not at all fond of the original 12 Steps – which have a God in six of them – but I do like the secular 12 Steps. It's all about doing the right things in order to live a better life.

So now I am wondering why we didn't have Steps earlier in life. Why not when we were teenagers? How about in High School? Why couldn't there have been a course on the steps or suggestions or whatever that could have assisted us in living and enjoying a better existence? As a teenager for me school was simply about learning enough to get a good job. That's all that life seemed to be about in those days.

I was also a Catholic and guess what: there were Ten Commandments! But while a few of them were helpful ("Thou Shall Not Steal") others were not ("I Am The Lord Thy God... Thou Shalt Have No Other Gods Before Me"). Moreover, Catholicism also includes confession in much the same way that the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous is about admitting character defects. I would get to confess on Sunday at Church and every Friday at my primary school. My punishment after each confession was having to recite a prayer half a dozen times or so: "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with Thee. Blessed art Thou amongst women, and blessed is the Fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen." Suffice it to say that I abandoned Catholicism. It's simply impossible to believe in an anthropomorphic, interventionist, male, supernatural deity. For me anyway.

Back to our Steps for Life. To begin with, I believe that way back then, in High School, I would have benefited hugely from discussions about what could contribute to living a good life. This could have involved Steps for Life and a diversity of them because there is simply no person identical to another person. In sobriety we each ultimately have our own path to staying sober and clean. As humans, we each have a very specific way of living a good life. So: no commandments.

Twelve Steps for Life

1. Life is not forever. Make it the best you can.
 2. Learn from others and from the collective wisdom of the world, formally and informally.
 3. Be honest with yourself, and with others.
 4. Be careful not to take drugs – alcohol, pharmaceuticals, etc. – that could harm you and affect your day-to-day life.
 5. Learn about which foods are best for your health. Get daily exercise.
 6. Accept the things you cannot change. Let it be.
 7. Connect with others in person – family members, friends, co-workers, etc. – daily and regularly. Life is not virtual.
 8. Practice daily self-reflection and whatever meditative processes will enhance your spiritual awareness.
 9. Have fun! Enjoy a variety of activities each and every day.
 10. Make care and compassion a part of your life; endeavour to never hurt another person.
 11. Do what you can to protect the world in which we live.
 12. Be responsible. Help anyone, anywhere who reaches out for help. All humans should have access to a decent life; and for that we are responsible.
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