

Dignity

She is clothed with strength and dignity;
she can laugh at the days to come.
She speaks with wisdom,
and faithful instruction is on her tongue.
She watches over the affairs of her household
and does not eat the bread of idleness.
Her children arise and call her blessed;
her husband also, and he praises her:
“Many women do noble things,
but you surpass them all.”— Proverbs 31:25-29 (NIV)

Step Nine is a step of dignity, not groveling. The reception we receive cannot change the courage inherent in our act of making amends. When we openly and honestly attempt to clean our side of the street to the best of our ability, the reaction has nothing to do with our act. If rebuffed, the valor of our offer remains undimmed, the honesty unsoiled. Acceptance or rejection has no effect on our amends. We walk away with pride and confidence. Perhaps, with the passage of time, the person who refuses to accept our kindness will become healthy enough to accept it.

What benefit comes from unaccepted amends? Huge ones. Amends benefit *us*. Even when we cannot find a person to whom amends are due, becoming completely willing to take that action should the opportunity arise brings healing. Some people we harmed have died. Whether we go to the grave or write a letter and burn it or just tell another person what we would have said to the person had we been able, the amends mend our hearts.

When our amends are made, we become clothed with strength and dignity and the weight of coming days laid out before us vanishes. We laugh at the freedom suddenly granted us. We speak with wisdom, and having made our amends are able to guide OA's following us on the path to make their own. Our household benefits even before any effort at making amends, simply because we live the joy we have found, passing that to others in the family. Procrastination, which really is chronic low-intensity fear, fades away with the other apprehensions. Our behavior, like a contagious disease, quickly infects those around us with honesty, industry, and smiles. "Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all."

Slimming Steps

Describe how the process of preparing to make amends and then doing them has benefited you and your family.

Step Ten

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

No Inventory but Yours

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." – Luke 10:38-42 (NIV)

"Mama! He hit me!"

"Make him stop it! He's ruining my dress."

"She filed for a divorce and wants me to pay for it!"

"He must have cheated to get that job. It should be mine!"

What the other person did wrong seems very plain to us. The resentment list in the Fourth Step is a breeze. Even when we get to the Tenth Step, though, writing the inventory of the other person comes far easier than seeing our faults and shortcomings. How do we come to the point of seeing first our contributions, dismissing the car swerving into our lane or the look we know means the person wishes us ill? (You may read "food" for "alcohol.")

Love and tolerance of others is our code.

And we have ceased fighting anything or anyone, even alcohol. (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, page 84.)

So the Big Book explains our state of mind at Step Ten. *¡Ojalá que sí!* The Spanish phrase lacks a proper English translation, but “Oh that it were so!” approaches it. How, then, does it become true? The habit of Step Ten as a way of life gradually – glacially perhaps – incorporates the truth into our beings.

When suddenly we find ourselves “restless, irritable, and discontent,” time out! Step aside (physically or just mentally) and sort through the familiar questions.

What am I feeling?

Why am I upset?

What part of my being is affected – personal relations, self-esteem, security, ambitions, sex relations?

What’s my part of it?

What amends do I need to make?

Find another OA to talk to, either your sponsor or another, and work through the issue, then go on with your life, having ceased fighting anything or anybody, including food.

Slimming Steps

Have you taken anybody else’s inventory today? Do you need to take yours? How carefully do you follow Step Ten daily?

Taking Stock

Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. – Deuteronomy 8:2-3 (NIV)

Like the Hebrews, we compulsive overeaters would gripe about manna from heaven, but we'd gripe because there was too little, and we couldn't stash it away for "tomorrow." Besides, according to the best information available, it wasn't sweet enough for my taste.

What do you gripe about? Don't limit this to words coming from your mouth; what do you feel cheated about? What are your grudges?

And your thankfulness? What brings your heart joy? What (or who) makes your life easier? Name your blessings.

"They" say Heaven is like floating around on a cloud playing a harp, a life devoid of deadlines, responsibilities, worries, and hurts. Peaceful? For how many days would you like to engage in that bliss? Depending on the complexity of the harp and how long it takes to master that, I could make maybe six months, tops, more like one, really. Thirty days. Thirty months? Years? Decades? Millennia? OUCH!

Stress. Trouble. Adversity. Complications. Aggravation. Friction. Enigma. Impediment. Burden. Are these such bad

words? A constant stream of them can be maddening, but a constant diet of manna and quail would get pretty darned tiring as well. Okay, okay. I'm sitting here with a computer, with all my needs met, with the money and ability to get most tangible things I might want. I can minimize the benefit of a life of ease. But isn't it all relative? I don't have the money a professional football player gets for a game. I can't sign multi-million dollar contracts for my acting, singing, or even my excellent writing skills. (Insert winking emoticon here.) I have much more than many, but much less than others.

In John 14:27, Jesus says he leaves us peace, he gives us peace. He doesn't give us what the world gives us, but instead leaves us with the ability to claim untroubled hearts. How do we get the peace, claim the untroubled hearts? Look to the Steps.

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way 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. (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, 83-84)

Slimming Steps

What are your wants? List them without thinking of the next two questions.

What are your blessings?

What are your needs?

The Glass Ceiling

In recovery the ceiling
has nothing to do with race
gender ethnicity

In recovery it's up to you
but try as you may
you can't break through

In recovery the ceiling's
named so all have heard
fourth dimension of existence

In recovery it's found
unexpectedly accidentally
when least expected

In recovery surrender's
never negative
never bad

In surrender the higher power
assumes control bringing us
to true recovery
to existence's essence

My Truth, Not Hers!

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”

He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. – Matthew 18:1-4 (NIV)

I made a mistake. I promptly admitted it when called to my attention. She’d asked what could be done to stop such mistakes, and I reminded her I’d already asked for help in that area. The response back lacked a direct offer for help (one I would have had difficulty drumming up the humility to accept anyway) but gave suggestions for getting assistance. No rancor or recrimination came enclosed with the advice. Still, I sit here, chastised. I admitted my fault. The advice is sound. So why do I resent it so?

Forty years ago a teacher asked me to talk to my sister about being a disruption. I decided to quit my leadership role in the extracurricular activity he led, walked home to get the record book, and trudged back, a trip of less than half a mile total. He was not there when I returned, and I never resigned. I could bicker with my sister all I chose, could call her bossy and fight with her. An outsider had no such right!

Resentment. We inventory it, work through it, and find it right back there, smeared in our face. We’ve worked the Steps. We know how to release the poison from our system. But can’t I indulge it just a little longer?

Become as a little child. I'm like a child. I'm self-centered, egotistical, fiercely independent, wanting to do it myself!! Become as a little child. Jesus didn't want a childish temper-tantrum. So how do we get back to the kingdom of heaven, that oneness with God we accomplished through the first nine Steps? Become as a little child. Whoever humbles himself....

God, grant me the humility to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference. Amen. So be it.

Slimming Steps

How does a child's approach to life resemble the alignment with God we achieve through working the steps?

A Permanent Response to Temporary Problems

In the 19th chapter of I Kings, Elijah, afraid, ran from the king's evil intentions. He wanted to live enough to flee danger, but after walking a day alone, the desire to live that had sent him on the trip had vanished, and he prayed for his own death. He went to sleep, but an angel woke him, fed him, and led him into his life's work.

I've never considered suicide. Homicide? Yes. I've protected myself from succumbing to my anger by drafting a book showing my preferred method of committing murder, knowing that would be found if anybody looked into my motives and thoughts after the contemplated death. Still, I know many in this program who have contemplated suicide rather than homicide as a way out.

I went to the funeral of a talented personable 26-year-old professional who took her own life. She worked redirecting troubled teens, kids I work with on a less personal basis. Sometimes, knowing a youngster is on suicide watch, I tell them they are loved, that suicide is a very permanent solution to temporary concerns and problems. I don't know if I've ever had any effect on them. I doubt the woman who died ever heard me say that to the kids, but another who's heard me often later wished the conversation might have taken place. I regretted the lack, too, though I certainly don't expect she could have been stopped by my words. I feel

compelled to write here, though, should the reader need the reassurance.

The neat part about OA is the people. No, not *the* neat part; an important neat part of OA is people like me and people like you, a family, a home. If you walk into the rooms of OA, you are loved there. And, through that experience, you can find you are loved by many others as well. Through the love of others, you can grow to love yourself. You are loved. I love you. God loves you. Please, please, let OA people love you.

The last three verses of Romans 8:

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. – Romans 8:37-39 (NIV)

Remember. You are loved.

Slimming Steps

Who cares about you? Don't dismiss the question. The answer is people do care. Name them.

What would you like to be? List adjectives, then list accomplishments.

Consider the promises:

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way 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. (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, pages 83-84)

How would you feel if these promises were true in your life?

Dealing with Anger

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, “Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father’s house into a market!”

His disciples remembered that it is written: “Zeal for your house will consume me.” – John 2:13-17 (NIV)

Perhaps, like me, you’ve spent your life suppressing your anger, stuffing it down with food, being the “good child.” In finding out who we are, we discover the damage done with this kind of behavior, not only to ourselves but to those around us who we believed ourselves to be protecting from our anger. Instead, it has seeped into every aspect of our behavior, coloring our lives, destroying our quality of life.

Les Carter in his book *Enough About You, Let’s Talk About Me*, observes, “Sometimes people will ask: ‘Do I have a right to be angry?’ With assertiveness, however, the question becomes, ‘Do I have the responsibility to be angry?’”

It’s not necessarily a question of deciding whether or not to be angry. Even as we hid it from ourselves, we were angry much of our lives. The issue is what to do with the anger. What are the options open to us – the *healthy* options?

- Distance yourself from people hurting you.
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- Explain calmly and compassionately how the events cause you distress.
- Don't assume truth in words about you. Listen, evaluate, and accept proper criticism, but reject manipulative and hurtful comments made in spite or from weakness.
- Remove yourself from people and events you're not prepared to handle.
- Call your sponsor or another OA.
- Pray for serenity, for courage, and for wisdom.
- Pray for the person hurting you.

We have a right to live our lives honestly and free from hurtful false accusations. We have the right to happiness, not only the pursuit of it.

Slimming Steps

Who makes you angry? What triggers behavior in you less worthy than what you want to exhibit? What are you going to do about it?

Igor Ego

“Surely you know how it has been from of old,
ever since man was placed on the earth,
that the mirth of the wicked is brief,
the joy of the godless lasts but a moment.
Though his pride reaches to the heavens
and his head touches the clouds,
he will perish forever, like his own dung;
those who have seen him will say, ‘Where is he?’” –
Job 20:4-7 (NIV)

We admitted we were powerless over food, believed God could remove the insanity, decided to turn our lives and will over, inventoried, admitted, became willing, asked for defects to be removed, listed and made amends. We’re through.

We’re not through.

A friend of mine wrote, “After 2½ months of abstinence I had just a bite of candy, one of those bite sized candy bars, and afterwards went many days. I pushed the recurring thought, ‘I can control this sugar’ from my mind repeatedly. Well, soon I found I was bingeing on sugar. So I started over. I now have six days of abstinence. My boundary with sugar is no sugar at all.”

I know exactly how she feels. I quit computer games cold turkey, turned the compulsion over to God, and realized the immense relief and new time formerly spent wallowing in Spider Sol, Sudoku, Yubotu, the game of the moment. Months later, my computer having crashed and the reboot

having virtually nothing but an Internet connection, I opened a game. Shortly after I got a new computer, loaded it with programs and my projects, had plenty to do. And weeks passed again. But then, itty-bit by sneak-a-peek, I let insidious games sneak in as a way to “think about” the project at hand. And itty-bit by sneak-a-peek, they robbed me of my time.

Ego had surfaced. Igor the Ego. The monstrous Igor Ego. God, save me from my character defects. Again. Bill Wilson in a speech said, “Ego deflation at depth is today a cornerstone principle” of the Twelve Step program. Igor, prepare for deflation.

We overeaters have ego problems. They may or may not show from the outside to the causal observer. We can be (and often are) egomaniacs with inferiority complexes, but ego reigns before we come into recovery. And even when we rid ourselves of the parts of ego that come out as resentment, fear, wounded pride, and rage, ego springs back again. “I can handle this.” “I don’t need to be *that* strict.” “Oh, for goodness sake, I’ve been good. I *deserve* this!”

Ego deflation happens when we attain a new adjustment, a new infusion of humility and empathy. That takes restructuring over the long haul, not the quick fix we hope for when we come into the program. We need to build up the self that is the seat of God in our lives, to recognize we do deserve the very best – and stop selling out for a piece of candy, a round of Sudoku, or a bite of birthday cake. We are still addicts, despite having worked the Steps. But God willing and our keeping out of the way, we’re addicts in recovery.

Slender Steps

What can you do today to fine tune your relationship with God? How has ego wiggled back into your life?

Wake-Up Call

Let me in!
I didn't mean to,
I slipped out of the rooms
and the door slammed shut.
Please, please, I didn't mean to
stop, didn't intend to take it back,
to wrest control away, to myself.
It's cold out here!
I'm scared. The fears
are back, the terror,
the loneliness.
The good-old-days aren't here.
I know. I left them in the rooms.
Please, please let me in.
I didn't mean to go back out.
What's that buzz? What's coming?
Oh. OH! Okay.
Thank God!
God, I offer myself to Thee
to build with me and do with me....
But please, please hold on tight.

Step Eleven

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

Send Leanness among the Fat

Therefore will the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness; and under his glory there shall be kindled a burning like the burning of fire. – Isaiah 10:16 (ASV)

God will send leanness among his fat ones, and under his glory kindle a burning like that of fire. A prediction of OA? Probably not. But what an image!

We read in the forewords to *Alcoholics Anonymous* of the amazing growth of AA in the early years, half never drinking again, another quarter becoming non-drinkers in time. This doesn't happen in the OA abstinence I know. Still, for me and countless others, the recovery found in OA is well worth all the misery before, if that misery enabled the surrender to such glorious recovery.

I write with cold air around me, the thermostat set lower than my real comfort level, but I'm wrapped in warm clothing and an afghan. Outside cold reigns supreme, unchecked. My discomfort seems greater this year, but the knowledge it's caused in large part by a change in my metabolism and the lack of the blubber padding me for so many years makes tolerating the chill even enjoyable.

Inside me God's glory has kindled a burning like the burning of fire. John Wesley, founder of Methodism, told of his conversion experience:

In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter to nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart
