

## Our times on life's terms 7 July 2023

This month we will start off with our seventh step. **“We humbly asked him to remove our shortcomings.”** Humility is necessary if we are going to live a clean life and walk a spiritual path. Humility is not the same as humiliation, nor is it a denial of our good qualities. An attitude of humility means that we have a realistic view of ourselves and our place in the world. Step seven helps us understand our role in our own recovery, appreciate our strengths and limitations, and faith in a power greater than ourselves.

Character defects, as our literature states, are those things that cause pain and misery all of our lives. If they contributed to our health and happiness, we would not have come to such a state of desperation. Defects of character literally define our disease; obsession, compulsion, and self-centeredness. These defects are as indispensable to the disease as honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness are to recovery. I have come to the conclusion that my defects of character all stem from self-centered fear. As I look at that it occurs to me that self-centeredness itself is based in fear.

It's amusing that we need to have it pointed out to us the damage defects of character cause. We hang onto them, justify and explain them, even protect them like they have value. I want to say I am powerless over defects but at the same time, I am not. How I behave is my choice and that is the biggest indicator of who I am. I believe removal of defects is directly proportional to willingness to do footwork. I am grateful for the work necessary to achieve and maintain recovery. My responsibility is the footwork, my higher power takes care of the results or consequences.

Each facet of our program is necessary for the full structure. Step work nourishes responsibility, accountability, and maturity. Meeting attendance reinforces unity, communication, and fellowship. Service cultivates excitement, action, and compassion. Literature provides information, experience, and stability. Prayer and meditation encourage faith, honesty, and integrity. Sponsorship feeds relationships, trust, and application.

Humility is the main ingredient of the seventh step. Humility is a good place to be. It is the simplest form of honesty. By owning our truth, we are set free from ourselves to be ourselves. Freedom from the selves we condemned practicing addiction. Humility owns our imperfection and provides us opportunity to change. It is based on truth which informs us of the improvement we are capable of regardless of where we come from or where we are. It is a result of getting honest with ourselves. I never anticipated or expected to find so much power, freedom, and self-esteem by following our basic program. The magnitude of this gift still overwhelms me sometimes. At the same time, I am grateful that the infinite task of life on life's terms no longer evades me due to fear. I am so comforted by the responsibility the program of NA has given me through participation.

We examined our lives and discovered who we really are. Stepwork gives us the ability to look at ourselves from a different perspective. It comes from a solution oriented direction. It has allowed me to discover who, how, what, where, and why I am. It shows my truth without humiliation. Imperfection is more obvious and acceptable today. I once believed myself to be insignificant, unable, and incompetent. I can recognize the gift of being who I truly am despite

imperfection today. I am more than grateful for that. I am no longer ashamed of who and what I am. I am grateful for the program helping me change how I am.

As our addiction progressed, we devoted our energy to satisfying our material desires. All other needs were beyond our reach. We always wanted gratification of our basic desires. I always wanted what I wanted when I wanted it, if not before. As my addiction progressed, my expectations also progressed, which promoted my dissatisfaction and added to the level of powerlessness and unmanageability.

I prefer to look at the equation from the recovery point of view rather than that of addiction. Instead of what happens as our addiction progresses, I present the question of what happens as our recovery progresses. I am not denying the power the obsessive part of the disease has. However, I am claiming the power of choice recovery has returned to me. I think the disease can only get me when I allow it due to my actions and behaviors which dictate my will and my life. I think god is part of NA rather than NA being part of god. We use the word god because it communicates most effectively to most people a basic understanding of the power underlying our recovery. The word, we use for the sake of convenience. The power behind the word, however, we use for more than convenience. As my recovery progresses, I grow. I flourish to the extent I am willing to practice and work.

The seventh step is an action step, and it is time to ask god for help and relief. We have to understand that our way of thinking is not the only way, other people can give us direction. I am grateful other people are vehicles of communication between higher powers and I. If I don't judge the messenger, more answers are available.

When someone points out a shortcoming, our first reaction may be defensive. I think when someone points out a shortcoming it is because they relate. When I am judging, I am relating. I just don't want to admit it. The disease loves to tell me I'm different, I'm better, I don't need principles, I'm okay by myself. I believe my truth today is I can't see defects in others unless I relate. That's how I recognize them so well.

We must realize that we are not perfect. There will always be room for growth. Perfection is too high of a bar for any one of us to accomplish. Imperfection is a relief and it leaves room to expand, learn, and grow.

If we truly want to be free, we will take a good look at input from other addicts. The power of "we" is easily overlooked, not realized, or unrecognized. The container of experience we have as a fellowship may not be infinite but there is certainly more than enough available when we choose to seek it. The inexhaustible support I have at my fingertips is amazing. It thrills me to see what we are. I am so glad to be part of it. I even value the addicts that I see myself in so much I resent them. Their actions and behavior speak to me more clearly and loudly than I prefer. Sometimes that's what I need to remember what anonymity really is.

Humility applies in this step because we approach this power greater than ourselves to ask for the freedom to live without the limitations of our past ways. The integrity of our program applies as well. The stability of principles and the intimacy of our fellowship are the most powerful things I've ever experienced in my life. Not only do they free me from the limitations of my past but they also provide opportunity and options beyond my comprehension.

This is our road to spiritual growth. We change every day. The road of recovery has many lanes. Simultaneously, some lanes are uphill while others are down. Some are newly paved

while others are gravel. Some are curvy while others are straight. We navigate spiritually and welcome change as the right of way. Recovery is a journey rather than a destination.

Growth in recovery is based on application of our basics; action, prayer, meditation, literature, meetings, step work, service, sponsorship, fellowship, and writing to name a few. Wishing is still a pipe dream.

The objective of the seventh step is to get out of ourselves and strive to achieve the will of our higher power. This step is where the rubber meets the road. It is an action step. My power of choice is exercised a lot in this step. At the same time, it is simple humility. The fact is I am not capable of everything. Removal of defects is up to more than my footwork, actions, and behavior. Part of me does not like this. Another part of me says whatever the program says, I do. It's simpler to practice humility than being right.

The seventh step is the opportunity to practice spirituality at its core. Once again, it reminds me my choice can still be wrong more than its right. Difficulties I experience are when I don't admit or accept my imperfection. When this occurs, ego is usually involved and I am more concerned with how I look than how I am. When I recognize, admit, and accept my imperfection, I am solution oriented. Perfection is not a spiritual principle. I believe imperfection is. We remove the power of expectations when we practice footwork. Ours is a program of action, not wishing, expecting, or entitlement.

Sharing with other recovering addicts will help us to avoid becoming morbidly serious about ourselves. The camaraderie we find among other addicts is priceless. We learn together how to accept, admit, amuse, and support each other. It's another one of the gifts of our initial desperation.

Accepting the defects of others can help us become humble and pave the way for our own defects to be relieved. Seeing others' defects can simply be what we hear and see at meetings. Other times, it comes from relationships as they develop and grow. Others' defects show us we are not so bad after all. It also helps us learn how they deal with them. We all have techniques, responses, and reactions. Together we have so much power to grow.

God often works through those who care enough about recovery to help make us aware of our shortcomings. Once we are past the discomfort of being called on our defects, it is actually a gift to have someone in our lives willing to love us enough to point out our imperfections.

As we stay clean and experience the twelve steps, our ability to connect the heart and spirit expand.

To keep our recovery fresh and vital, we need to stay alert for opportunities to practice our program.

The twelve steps are a process, a path we take to stay a step ahead of our disease.

Tradition seven states that **“Every NA group ought to be fully self supporting, declining outside contributions.”** Tradition seven guarantees freedom from outside control because we realize everything has its price regardless of intent.

Addicts as a group have been a burden to society. In NA, our groups not only stand on their own, but demand the right to do so. We have found freedom in being fully self-supporting allowing no assistance or help from anything or anyone outside of us. This is not through arrogance but of responsibility, accountability, and anonymity. As recovering addicts, we find that we are still dependent, but our dependence has shifted from the things around us to our program and the basic suggestions that make it up. Meeting attendance is usually our introduction to our program whether it be through H&I or regular meetings. There we meet other addicts in recovery who are examples for us to follow. As we attend more meetings we become familiar with the basics of recovery, meetings, steps, sponsorship, principles, literature, service, and fellowship. Old dreams can become realities.

Our financial experience is usually wanting when we arrive in NA. There was never enough money to fill the emptiness inside. We now need money to run our groups; there is rent to pay, supplies, and literature to buy. We take collections at our meetings to cover these expenses. What is left goes to support our services and further our primary purpose of carrying our message. We all pull together and in doing so we learn that we are really part of something greater than ourselves.

Our policy concerning money is clearly stated: We decline any outside contributions; our fellowship is completely self supporting. We accept no funding, endowments, loans, and/or gifts. We will not put our freedom on the line.

If we've been diligent in working steps, the past is largely resolved and we have a solid foundation on which to build our future.

Service is not a position on a committee, it's a posture of the heart.

There is a magic and a healing grace in meetings, but we cannot see it when our attitude blinds us.

Our seventh concept is **“All members of a service body bear substantial responsibility for that body's decisions and should be allowed to fully participate in its decision-making process.”**

This concept is a way of putting the principle of group conscience to work in the service environment. All members of a service body should be encouraged to participate in decision making to develop a fully informed, balanced group conscience. This is a prime display of the strength and value of our diversity. Each participant's contribution is important. Freely expressed individual conscience is the essential element in group conscience at any level.

NA service is a team effort. Our service representatives are responsible to the NA fellowship as a whole. Each members' input is valuable as we express the conscience of the whole. In an atmosphere of mutual respect, love, and frank, open discussion, each service body asks for guidance directly from the groups. We don't have any hard fast rules about participation. It is a learn as we go process that we maintain as we record it in our journey.

The spiritual principle of anonymity is the foundation for the seventh concept. This points our fellowship toward a leveling of the individual's importance as a participant. Though we may not all participate, we all have the right to.

Part of carrying our message is participating in our own recovery.

Change is a process, not an event.

We recover by making our own decisions, doing our own service, and working our own steps.