

Experience, strength and hope from Al-Anon members for times when you can't get to an Al-Anon group

July 2022

Dear Loners

Today Juliet is sharing her reflections on Step Five and her experience of working this Step with her Sponsor.

I was asked to share on Step Five, however, I always like to summarise the preceding Steps as a way of understanding my road to recovery.

Step One: “We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.”

The first word of the Step is “we” not “I” indicating to me that I am not alone and that together we are going to try and help each other to recover from the disease of alcoholism. We are powerless over this disease. I needed to become aware that I needed help; I had to admit that I needed help; I needed to do something to help myself. In Al-Anon, I learnt that I do have power over my actions and thoughts. I am responsible for my attitude and my behaviour. I needed to ask you to help me because I could not do it alone.

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

Again, I don't need to do this alone we are going to do this together. And the Step asks us to believe in the possibility that there is a Power greater than us that can help us. For me the word sanity means balance. I needed to get balance and order into my life. In order to do that, I needed to trust you and trust my Higher Power. I actually followed the programme and at this point found a sponsor. Now I definitely was not alone. I had found someone I could trust and go forward with my recovery.

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

This is a choice I make every day; to ask my Higher Power for guidance for the day. I have a plan and if it does not work, I stop, breathe and start the day again by asking for help and guidance. I am not sure how or why it works but it just does. I have the faith and together you, me and my Higher Power will get me through the day and over this crisis. At the end of the day, I give thanks and express my gratitude. I never ask for things, just guidance.

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

This is an inventory of my strengths and weaknesses, not yours or the alcoholic's. It was difficult to make this list but with the help and encouragement of my sponsor and *The Blueprint for Progress* (P-91) booklet, I made a list. It was also suggested that I look at my relationships and find the common weaknesses that caused me the most stress and anxiety. I also needed to look at what caused me the most joy and happiness, as this showed me my strengths. Over the years, I have done the Steps many times and found out more truths about myself.

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

This Step is daunting and very difficult for most of us, so why do it? The reason for me is that it set me free. I do believe that we are as sick as our secrets. I found that it was easy to admit them to myself and I believed that my Higher Power knew my thoughts and actions better than I did, but it all came together when I admitted them to my sponsor. I trusted her.

We made a date to spend the day together and in a relaxed and quiet place, I started sharing my faults. It is not something I could do in five minutes or rush through; we needed time, a pot of tea, a quiet place and a box of tissues. I felt safe, free and loved. It was good to share honestly, from the heart, with a loving caring friend. The best thing of all was she just listened; she did not judge or criticise me.

I had to be careful to be realistic about my expectations. She suggested that I start with the most difficult experiences first. This was wise because after that everything was easy. This experience was the best way I could learn, become aware and admit my faults. I felt so much lighter and freer after the experience. I sincerely suggest that we all walk this path together. This experience was truly rewarding and encouraged me to move forward with Steps Six to Nine.

I could have shared with a religious leader or therapist but I thought it was best for me to find somebody in the fellowship, that I could trust and admit my wrongs. It ended up being a beautiful rewarding experience for both of us.

Choosing a sponsor was a very difficult choice to make and I knew I needed to make sure that I did not use this as an excuse to not do Steps One to Five. Reading about sponsorship in the Al-Anon Conference Approved Literature (CAL) and the Sponsorship pamphlet (P-31) helped to guide me. Since then, I have sponsored many members as it is the only way I know how to pay back the kindness and love that was shown to me.

Thank you Juliet, for sharing your experience of working Step Five with your Sponsor and for detailing how it has helped you to continue working through the remainder of the Steps. If you are reading this letter and would like to know more about sponsorship, it is recommended that you read some of the Al-Anon literature. All our books have references on sponsorship and there is a dedicated pamphlet that deals with this topic. Ask your local area office (alanontvl@absamail.co.za) for details on the literature that is available.

Tradition Seven: Every group ought to be self-supporting, declining outside contributions. If you would like to contribute towards our office expenses, our banking details are below. Thank you to everyone who contributes in these financially difficult times. Al-Anon needs your assistance and is grateful for it.

Best wishes

Clare

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