

Date: Sun, 4 Mar 2007

Thank you for asking for feedback on the 2006 fourth edition of the Blue Book. The Seattle Group met a week ago and discussed it.

The group is concerned that many of the suggestions (see attached Word file) that we submitted over a year ago were not included in the revision. Is there an explanation for this?

We are now re-submitting our suggestions and requesting the editorial committee to give them due consideration in the 2007 Blue Book revision process.

Yours in service,

Seattle Sunday night group
(by Joe for the group)

Attaching the following:

Date: Nov 28, 2005

Subject: Blue Book Feedback

To the Trustees and Literature Committee:

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to provide feedback on the revision of the Blue Book of RCA. And thank you also for the hard work that has gone into both preparing the draft and soliciting feedback from the groups.

Please see, attached, a Word file titled SeattleBluebookFeedback.doc. It contains the Seattle Sunday night group's recommendations for the Twelve Steps in the 4th ed. of the Blue Book as well as some general suggestions regarding editing of the book as a whole. (Use Word's comments feature to view the marginal comments in print view.)

We are happy to answer any questions.

Yours in service, Seattle Sunday night group
(by Ellen and Joe for the group)

The Seattle group notes continuing problems with verb tenses. In what follows, we refrain from commenting on grammar problems and propose, instead, that an editor make corrections throughout.

We suggest that the text not use the term God and the term Higher Power interchangeably.

Concerning tenses, we suggest a scheme such as the following:

It's okay to mix tenses as long as it is clear how each tense is being used. Try to classify each sentence according to whether it tells

- I. What It Was Like**
- II. What Happened**
- III. What It's Like Now**
- IV. How It Works**

**For Class I sentences, use past perfect tense. Example:
"We had been creating crisis where there was none. I had been having an affair."**

**For Class II sentences, use simple past tense. Example:
"We had a spiritual awakening. We admitted to God, ourselves, and another couple the exact nature of our wrongs."**

**For Class III sentences, use present perfect tense.
Example: "We have developed a new way of living."**

**For Class IV sentences, use simple present tense.
Example: "Each group has but one primary purpose, to carry the message to couples still suffering. We attend meetings regularly, stay in touch with our sponsoring couple, and work the Steps together."**

Using Word's comments feature, please see also our notes below regarding the Twelve Steps of RCA.

Note: We have marked passages that are new in the 4th ed. While the Seattle group does not advocate removing these additions, we do note that a better practice of the traditions and especially of A.A.'s Twelve Concepts would involve proposing additions to the membership and putting them up to a vote (in the form of resolutions to be dealt with at the annual convention).

Step 1

We admitted we were powerless over our relationship - that our lives together had become unmanageable.

We all have family-of-origin issues and a history of relationships. We may not have gotten what we needed emotionally, physically, mentally or spiritually when we were growing up. There may have been abuse (physical, sexual, spiritual, or emotional), abandonment, or deprivation. We all bring "baggage" to the coupleship. The steps teach us how to look at our baggage and how to reverse the process of blame.

Both of us are responsible for the presence or absence of intimacy between us. As soon as each of us accepts mutual responsibility, we are ready for the First Step of RCA. Step One involves taking 200% responsibility for the health or disease of the relationship. Each person carries 100%.

Occasionally a couple may not have been far enough along in their individual recoveries to be able to answer the following questions, or they may have gotten into a fight or into dysfunction simply by having issues raised. If this were the case, we encouraged step work be done only in the presence of a sponsoring couple.

We also recognized that some couples came to our meetings having met after both partners had been in individual recovery for various periods of time. They may not have had a long history of coupleship dysfunction or other dysfunction. In those cases, Step One involved understanding old dysfunctional patterns with other partners. It also involved understanding family-of-origin issues, personality traits and other individual issues that might have affected the relationship.

Writing is very important. It is suggested that the couple:

1. Take one pencil and one piece of paper and begin the process together. RCA is about the "we"-ness and "us"-ness of our relationship. In RCA, we open ourselves up to a new way of thinking and living in coupleship.

2. Now that you have that piece of paper, make a couple decision. Who will hold the pencil and do the writing? Are you able to share, negotiate or compromise? Is there a power struggle? Are you ready to take the First Step?

3. Read aloud the "Safety Guidelines."

4. Divide the paper in half with a vertical line down the middle.

5. Now each partner in the coupleship makes a list of the relationship issues over which he or she feels powerless.

Comment [D1]: new in the 4th ed.

The Seattle group proposes to delete this. It is confusing. Also it is too hard for someone new to the program before answering the questions that follow.

You are now ready to answer the following questions:

1. What dysfunctional roles had we brought from our families-of-origin?

2. What had our family-of-origin model taught us about relationships?

3. What were our individual experiences of abuse and how had those affected our ability to be related, to be intimate, and to be sexual?

4. How had our individual addictions affected our relationship?

5. What were the unmanageable issues we never seemed to resolve? (e.g., how we spent money, how we spent our time together, parented the kids, divided the household duties, where/how we celebrated holidays, etc.)

Comment [D2]: The following has been deleted in the 4th ed. (from the brochure; it wasn't in the Blue Book):

how each person viewed being sexual, being spiritual

The Seattle group proposes adding this back in.

6. How had these issues brought us to anger and what were our patterns of expressing anger?

7. How had we felt hopeless about our relationship?

8. In order to save our relationship, what measures had we tried that hadn't seemed to work?

9. How had we fought unfairly?

Having surrendered thus far, we were ready to take [Step Two](#).

Comment [D3]: The Seattle group proposes re-inserting here, just before the final sentence, the paragraph that appears in the brochure (not the Blue Book), but is left out here:

Understanding the powerlessness and unmanageability of our relationships is key. This belief must be appreciated by each member of the coupleship in order for couple recovery to move forward.

AND the affirmation:

We are a beautiful, unique couple and we deserve recovery.

(We suggest re-inserting all the affirmations, which appear in the brochures but not in the Blue Book.)

Step 2

We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to commitment and intimacy.

In Step One we admitted we were powerless over our relationship. Step Two involved coming to some mutual understanding of what we trusted as a couple and what we believed in as a couple. We sought to blend our heritage and to find something to believe as a couple. We made a collage of this belief to have a visual picture of our "greater power." We found this helpful to frame and

keep accessible to our relationship and to share with other couples. We were willing to accept a Higher Power and nurture our relationship with a sense of hope and freedom.

We also found more intimacy in sharing with each other our Second Steps from our individual programs. We may have come from different religious backgrounds or no religious background at all. We found writing the step a useful tool in relationships. We suggest you share one pencil and piece of paper as you do the Steps. These are a list of questions to consider as you discover the spiritual path of recovery for yourselves.

Pause and read aloud the Safety Guidelines before moving forward.

1. What family-of-origin messages about religion or spirituality had we brought into the relationship?
2. What kinds of instruction, modeling, teaching, etc. about religion or spirituality had we experienced?
3. Did we receive any guidance from our parents?
4. What abuses and/or dysfunctional beliefs about couples did we learn from our religion?
5. What healthy and supportive beliefs did we learn from our church, synagogue or other house of worship?
6. Had we experienced any spiritual abuse?
7. Was one of our parents the Higher Power in your family-of-origin?
8. Were clergy, religions teachers or nuns unkind, shaming, blaming or belittling?
9. Had we felt angry about religion, God, or our heritage?
10. Had we trusted and accepted, or mistrusted and rejected, the religious traditions of our partner?
11. What had been our spiritual history as a couple?
12. Describe your "Ideal God", or "Higher Power".

12. What would it be like to have a relationship with this Ideal Higher Power?

Now that each partner has an image, or feel, of what the Higher Power of their choosing would be like, find those aspects of these Higher Powers that are common to both partners. This might be your couple's Higher Power.

Step Two is a process where each individual, and the coupleship, makes a decision "about God". As we move into Step Three we will be given an opportunity to make a decision "for God".

Comment [D4]: New in 4th ed.

Step 3

We made a decision to turn our wills and our life together over to the care of God as we understood God.

Seattle group finds this offensive. Consider how other 12-step fellowships handle this step: This step does not ask us to be theologians (to describe the nature of our Higher Power) but rather to believe that a Higher Power can restore us. It's a program of action. The emphasis is on what this Higher Power does, rather than on the nature of the Higher Power.

Together two people who are in a committed relationship form a coupleship, a oneness, a distinct and separate entity. This coupleship has a life of its own and needs to be nurtured appropriately. Couple recovery depends on this nurturance. Both partners need individual recovery: meetings, sponsors, therapy, a support group, spirituality, recreation, vocation and other individual interests. A coupleship needs these same elements for couple recovery.

Trust is said to be a major issue for couples, as their experiences of trust were violated in previous relationships/family-of-origin.

Step Three involves what we decide to trust together and how we decide to turn our relationship over to a "Higher Power."

Comment [D5]: The Seattle group proposes deleting this. It is confusing.

Before Step Three can be completed, we go on a "spiritual quest." Bring out your piece of paper and begin a "list" again. On all of your steps, "date" your papers so in referring to them you are able to monitor your growth in this program. "Spiritual quests" vary widely and can involve things such as:

Comment [D6]: The Seattle group proposes changing this to "We developed a spiritual practice that was mutually agreeable."

Start each day with thanksgiving to our Higher Power

Comment [D7]: Could this information (plus the instruction about reading the Safety Guidelines together) be put into a sidebar (or headnote or whatever) that accompanies all the steps and is not repeated in the main body of the text of each step?

Reading scripture together

Doing daily meditations

Comment [D8]: The Seattle group proposes changing this to "Spiritual practices vary widely and can involve . . ."

Going to church or other house of worship

Going to study groups

Praying together

A daily walk to enjoy nature

Making a trip or a retreat to a spiritually significant place

Comment [D9]: The Seattle group proposes a new paragraph be inserted after this line:

These quests can take days, months or years before a mutually acceptable "statement of faith" can occur. We are encouraged to write down a quest agreement. It can be in longhand, or typed suitable for framing and witnessed by "couple" friends or a "sponsoring couple." This presents a truly warm, supportive and validating experience for all people involved. It is suggested the

Make a list of things you as a couple might try to include as a part of your spiritual practice.

Comment [D10]: The Seattle group finds this offensive and propose changing this to ""mutually acceptable spiritual practice."

couple chair a "step meeting" in RCA and share their experience, strength and hope with other couples.

Ultimately, Step Three involves turning our relationship over. Many couples find it significant to do something formal, traditional (even sacramental) or non-traditional. An example of this is a re-dedication of vows in the presence of friends or even someone of spiritual authority. Some people re-dedicate their coupleship in a church or synagogue. Some go to a Bed and Breakfast, some have a picnic with friends in the park, or invite guests to their home for a celebration of their spiritual renewal.

We are invited to be a creative couple and have a memorable event celebrating our increasing commitment to ourselves, each other, and the relationship.

We recognize that we are both on a spiritual path together. Placing our relationship in our Higher Power's hands means the end of power struggles and control. We make a decision. We surrender.

Comment [D11]: The Seattle group proposes italicizing this. This is the meat of the matter.

This is the basic spiritual principle upon which Step Three stands:

Comment [D12]: The Seattle group proposes reverting to a period here instead of the colon.

God, we offer ourselves to Thee – to build with us and to do with us as Thou wilt. Relieve us of the bondage of selves that we may better do Thy Will. Take away our difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those we would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of Life. May we do Thy Will always!

Comment [D13]: new in the 4th ed.

The Seattle group proposes EITHER deleting this paragraph OR including it only if it is followed by an explanation such as the one that follows this prayer in *Alcoholics Anonymous*, i.e., something to the effect that it doesn't matter what words you use; members are encouraged to re-write the prayer using their own words.

Step 4

We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of our relationship together as a couple.

Each partner needs first to look at the impact of her or his behavior on the relationship. After having shared the individual inventories with each other, the inventory of the coupleship is completed. The goal of this inventory is to gain an awareness of the extent of the damage the illness has caused. We must fearlessly face our coupleship. When a couple is able to face the reality of their relationship, they can grow in their love based on honesty. Review these questions about your personal role in the relationship:

- 1. Unfinished Business: In what ways have I not finished things with my partner, letting him or her go and fester?**
- 2. Hypervigilance: In what ways have I looked for things to go wrong?**
- 3. Self-Responsibility: In what ways have I failed to take responsibility for my mistakes or issues?**
- 4. Comfort and Feelings: In what ways have I not shared uncomfortable feelings with my partner?**

Comment [D14]: Change this to "letting them go and fester."

The Seattle group notices that there are many grammatical errors in the 4th ed. We are not commenting on them all, but we felt we had to comment on this one.

5. Accuracy and Honesty: In what ways have I placated my partner or opposed sharing real perceptions?

6. Connection: In what ways have I not been available to my partner? Do I seek regular ways to connect?

7. Stress: In what ways have my over-extension and stress affected my partner?

8. Separateness: Had I developed a separate life away from my partner? Had this separate life include friends and activities?

9. Personal Needs: In what ways has my partner needed to guess or "know" about my needs? Have I asked for them to be met clearly?

10. Shame Avoidance: In what ways had I sought to put blame on my partner?

11. Pain Thresholds: In what ways have I tolerated pain that was unnecessary?

12. Choice Clarity: In what ways have I been unclear about my choices, leaving things undecided or up to my partner?

To complete the inventory, review together these questions and record your answers on a single piece of paper. Writing helps us organize our thoughts. Begin by reading aloud the Safety Guidelines.

Answer the following questions as a couple:

1. In what ways have we created crisis when there wasn't any?

2. In what ways have we fought that really never accomplished anything?

3. How have we neglected instead of nurtured our relationship?

4. How have we avoided being close when we have had the opportunity to have intimacy?

5. In what ways have we pretended these problems do not exist?

6. In what ways have we isolated ourselves from other couples and friends who could have supported our relationship?

7. In what ways have we been depleted both physically and emotionally so we have had nothing to give one another?

8. In what ways have we tolerated abuse of ourselves and our family?

9. What have been our social and physical strengths?

10. How had the disease of our relationship affected us socially, financially, and physically?

11. What have we grieved together as a couple? How have we grieved?

12. What has our process looked like?

13. What have been our losses (e.g. having never achieved our financial goals, having children with problems, having a dysfunctional sexual relationship, etc.)?

14. Despite our dysfunctions, what have we liked about our relationship?

15. What have been the good things?

16. What have we treasured in each other and the coupleship?

Step 5

We admitted to God, to each other and to another couple the exact nature of our wrongs.

Most of us chose to share our Fourth Step with a Sponsoring Couple or some other couple who had been in the program long enough to have worked most of the Twelve Steps. It was also important to give this inventory to a couple who was, in our opinion, living the program.

This process of doing the Fifth Step was a vehicle to self-acceptance in our coupleship. This may have been difficult because some aspects and behavior of the relationship were shameful. This was our opportunity to have our guilt and shame transformed into humility.

Call your Sponsoring Couple on the telephone and schedule an evening to share your inventory. Allow about two hours in length. Choose a safe place. Get a good night's sleep. Consume your evening meal before meeting. Do not be rushed or committed to anything else that evening/time. Get comfortable—have tea, juice or coffee available. The Sponsoring Couple has a piece of paper and pencil handy to make notes for later input. Allow the couple to share at their own pace--and keep focused. As part of this process, the Sponsoring Couple has the opportunity to practice active listening.

Comment [D15]: The Seattle group notes that the term "couple" is used sometimes in the singular and sometimes in the plural. We prefer the plural.

Start with a moment of silence and then say the Serenity Prayer or Third Step Prayer. Follow by reading the Safety Guidelines aloud.

We found that sharing honestly and openly with another couple was healing for both the grief and shame. We realized the coupleship was accepted, validated and appreciated in spite of the dysfunctional behaviors.

We encourage couples to record their experience in a journal. We also find it helpful for the Sponsoring Couple to provide a written impression of the Sponsored Couple's 5th Step. Feedback can be given either in the journal, in the Blue Book, or in a note or a card of encouragement.

This step freed us to begin anew.

Step 6

We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character, communication and caring.

Step 6 has a clear message--get ready for some changes! This step emphasizes relationship building and improvement. Relationship building involves recognizing the wrongs, professing them and becoming willing to get rid of them.

Every recovering couple has a series of patterns in which they can lose their reality. These patterns usually occur at times of high stress or periods of over-extension or depletion. Sometimes these dysfunctional patterns occur when there is an opportunity for intimacy. One or both partners elect to avoid closeness by going to the old patterns. Recovering couples need to recognize the patterns and the temporary insanity these patterns bring and how a couple can lose their reality together.

Warning Signs That Old Patterns Are Resurfacing

Comment [D16]: The Seattle group proposes italicizing this.

Repetitive arguments

Frequent periods of denial

Nonproductive communications

Extreme over-extension or depletion

Making statements you do not mean

Taking actions you regret

Fighting about issues that are not important

Comment [D17]: Insert immediately after this item the item that appears in the brochure, but not in the Blue Book:

Make these lists together and pick a time to talk when you are both feeling balanced. You are now ready. Enjoy the process. See the humor. Open up to healing in your relationship.

Statements such as: you always, you never . . .

Always start by reading the Safety Guidelines aloud.

Take your piece of paper to make lists and gather more information for your coupleship by answering the following questions:

- What had been our dysfunctional patterns of relating?
- What had been our dysfunctional patterns of communicating?
- What had been our dysfunctional patterns of caring?
- What had been our dysfunctional patterns of nurturing each other?
- What had been our dysfunctional patterns of being sexual?
- How had we fought unfairly?

If as a couple we don't work on our relationship, the same issues will surface with different partners in the next relationships. This means that we must practice couple recovery with our partner. Our couple issues were the same when we got into this relationship as they were in previous relationships.

Comment [D18]: After this paragraph, insert the paragraph that appears in the brochure, but not in the Blue Book:

Understanding and identifying our character defects, then, gives us the ability to turn these defects over to our coupleship higher power.

Step 7

We humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.

In Step 7, we need to form a working partnership with a power greater than ourselves. We seek humility — the ability to face reality. The real change happens as we let go of our false pride and worked in partnership to make contracts to change.

The contracts we made were witnessed and signed by our sponsors. We felt validated in our relationship. We had something to remind us of our hard work in self/coupleship recovery.

As we defined our Higher Power, we asked how our trust in that Power could help us remove those defects of character and where could we get help to know how to communicate, fight fairly, have a healthy sex life, etc.? RCA believes strongly in making contracts. We needed contracts about:

Comment [D19]: The Seattle group finds the first six words to be offensive (it's not about *defining* our Higher Power). Omit these first six words and begin simply "We asked how our Higher Power. . . ."

Sexuality: For example, we may have seen a therapist for insight and direction regarding specific attitudes and behaviors. We may have attempted celibacy contracts to take sexual pressure off our relationship in order to work on other issues. We may have needed contracts about how often, who initiates, etc. What were our sexual boundaries?

Comment [D20]: Change "could we" to "we could."

Comment [D21]: The Seattle group proposes deleting the phrase "for example."

Producing Income: What have been the dynamics of independence when one partner is financially dependent on another?

Division of Labor: What has been the impact on the division of labor in the household when both partners work outside the home? When only one works outside the home? When both are retired?

Communicating: We have been encouraged to look at the Safety Guidelines in order to know how to structure a contract about communicating. As partners, we have been encouraged to use "I statements" rather than saying "you did..." or "you said..." This has helped us each take individual responsibility for the coupleship and has helped us avoid blame.

Recreation: How have we played together? We may have been abused out of our playfulness as a couple. We have needed to deal with unresolved expectations. Why has been having fun such hard work sometimes? A recreation contract has been helpful for some couples.

Parenting: Who has had certain responsibilities and when? Have we agreed on discipline and what values we have wished to pass on to our children? Have we stood united in our religious and/or philosophical beliefs? Or have we allowed our children to be buffeted between two opposing viewpoints on life? Have we been confused about our parenting roles? Have we allowed our children to "divide and conquer?" Or have we maintained unity in parenting?

Fighting: Conflict is healthy but fighting unfairly is not. We took the list of how we have fought unfairly from Steps One and/or Six, and have made another list of fighting rules to guide us in conflict in the coupleship. These rules have varied from couple to couple. For example, if we have said, "We always quarrel unfairly after 11:00 p.m. We're just too tired," a fighting rule has been that "We won't conduct a fight after 11:00 p.m." We may have agreed not to argue in the car or in front of the kids, etc. Some general rules that most couples implemented are:

1. In order for a constructive argument to take place, both people must agree that there is indeed an issue in conflict and agree on an appropriate time and place to discuss this conflict. When agreement of a time and place is reached, all other "fighting" rules take effect.
2. We won't name-call, shame, damage, use offensive language, or blame our partners. We will use "I statements" to express our needs, feelings and boundaries.
3. We will have a certain time limit. When time is up we must reschedule a time to continue the dispute. We can call "time-out" or take "breaks," and we can cancel the fight if rules have been broken.
4. For those of us who don't know how to fight or don't like to engage in any kind of conflict at all, we will agree to be honest about our feelings (including anger), even if this is only for 15 minutes.
5. If we can't fight fairly by ourselves, or if we fear confrontation, we will have our verbalizing of disagreements only in the presence of our RCA sponsors or our therapist.
6. We agree to avoid dramatic exits and to avoid physical abuse. We agree not to threaten divorce. If one of us needs an individual time-out to get in touch with feelings, to think about things, or to feel safe, we can say, "This is not

about my leaving the relationship or avoiding the conflict issue, but I am taking a break and will be back. Do you agree to meet in one hour (or tomorrow morning, etc.)? This is not about my abandoning the coupleship."

Again, these were just a few rules. The other rules varied according to the history of each coupleship. They may have seemed oppressive or cumbersome at first. We found that while we needed to be very intentional about them in the first months, they eventually became more automatic as they replaced our old behaviors and became "routine." The goal was to be able to express and hear anger in a healthy way. We experienced the ability to resolve conflict and fight fairly as a great gift of intimacy. Our fighting contracts were written out, each rule elaborated, and witnessed by our RCA sponsors.

Step 8

We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

Step 8 is about those people, including ourselves individually, who were harmed by our coupleship dysfunction: family members, children, friends, fellow workers, etc. In this step we continued to take our own inventory—as a couple. This step helped us to interact with other people in a new way. This step called for a change in our behavior. There was a logical sequence for us to follow.

First we made a list again to discover how we had harmed ourselves first in the coupleship. What was the exact nature of this harm? It helps to categorize the wrong doings into 4 groups:

Emotional Wrongs

Venting rage or

Holding resentments

Withholding information our partners need to be partners

Silent treatment

Comment [D22]: new in the 4th ed.

Material Wrongs

Money--borrowing, spending, withholding

Contracts--cheating, not abiding by terms

Disregarding others' boundaries on their personal things

Destroying or violating joint property

Comment [D23]: new in the 4th ed.

Moral Wrongs

Setting bad examples to anyone who looked to us for guidance

Excessive preoccupation or obsessions with people or projects in order to be unavailable to others

Sexual infidelity, broken promises, lying

Personal Abuse—physical, sexual, verbal

Spiritual Wrongs

Neglect of obligations to ourselves, family, support group, community

Avoiding self-development

Lack of gratitude

Neglect of spiritual quest

Comment [D24]: The Seattle group proposes changing this to "Neglecting to develop a spiritual practice."

Now we take a look at the facts and ask ourselves:

1. What are our thoughts and feelings about having done that harm?

2. What are our fears about making amends?

Comment [D25]: new in 4th ed.

3. What is our resistance to making amends?

4. Are we willing to accept the consequences of our behavior?

5. How do we intend to make our amends?

Now we have a better idea about what dysfunctional and diseased behaviors have existed in our coupleship. If our relationship has been crazy as we know it to have been, then there has been harm to others. Begin to list the "others."

We reviewed our amends lists with our Sponsor Couple and asked for guidance so that care was taken to not make amends that would hurt or injure others. When direct amends were not appropriate for couples or individuals we had harmed, we devised amends in other ways (i.e., prayed for the well being of these people, etc.)

Comment [D26]: new in 4th ed.

We became willing to make amends by admitting this harm to ourselves and each other and by having changed the nature of our relationship with each

other. We discovered that, as we became willing to look at our own behavior, we became more tolerant and forgiving, less rigid and judgmental of other couples. Our viewpoints, attitudes and beliefs began to change as a result of our own participation in this process.

Comment [D27]: new in 4th ed.

In this step, we continue to take our own inventory — as a couple. We check our own progress from time to time.

[We became ready to move on to Step Nine.](#)

Step 9

We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

This is another action step and requires that we demonstrate a willingness to confront issues of our past. It takes courage to do this step, a careful sense of timing, and good judgment. This step is referred to as having "spiritual surgery" performed on us. Have your Eighth Step list available.

Most RCA couples, for example, begin by doing a Ninth Step with their children. We can make amends to our children by respecting them as individuals, by maintaining our own recovery, and by being healthy and reasonably happy adults ourselves.

Be careful not to confuse apologies with amends. Sometimes apologies are called for, but apologies are not amends. Amends are made by acting differently. For example, we can apologize ten times for being late to the meeting while we are the secretaries, but this will not "amend" the issue. Coming on time and changing our behavior thus becomes our amends.

As we repair the damage we did to others, we will be "overhauling" our relationship. We find a glow of satisfaction in knowing we do everything to pay off every material, moral and spiritual debt we owe our fellow human beings.

When we look at Step Eight, we realize we put our own relationship at the top of the list. How do we make amends to ourselves?

First, get a new attitude, one that reflects a willingness to love and forgive ourselves. Think about what we want to say. Be clear. Perhaps we want to write it down and take responsibility for our actions. Both of us must be willing to turn the coupleship over to our Higher Power.

In preparation for the actual making of the amends, we devote time to prayer and meditation. We don't go on if either of us is angry or upset. We keep it simple. We can express a desire or ask permission. "I need to be aware of the harm I have done to others and take responsibility for my actions. I would like to make amends to us/you. Are you OK to receive it?"

Again, create a comfortable, safe setting--kitchen table, living room--choose the favorite place you like to go. Read the Safety Guidelines and open with a prayer. A sample amends may sound something like this:

"I want to make an amend to our relationship about _____. I forgive myself for all the words that were said out of fear (thoughtlessness, inconsideration, anger, immaturity, selfishness, etc.) and out of my own confusion. I wish no harm to our relationship. I didn't intend to cause you pain. I ask for your forgiveness. I plan to change my behavior by _____."

The final three steps are about practicing what we have learned in the first nine steps.

Step 10

We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it to our partner and to others we had harmed.

Step Ten was about continuing to take inventory of our relationship. We believed that one part of this is what we called the "daily" or "weekly" inventory. The purpose of the daily or weekly inventory was to reverse the process of blaming behaviors that so often haunted many of us. It was also to teach each other what we really liked and what we really appreciated in each other. The hope was to find that this new behavior would become so familiar and automatic that we could do it without needing to write everything down.

Each partner took a sheet of paper and divided it in half. On one side of the paper each partner made a list of those things she or he did or said that day or week which has harmed the relationship. On the other side of the paper each partner made a list of those things our partner did that was helpful to the relationship. These lists were then shared with each other. This step supported our spiritual growth.

Daily practice of Step Ten maintained our honesty and humility and allowed us to continue growing. When we thought we are home free and comfortable, we might not have seen a need to attend meetings. We began to find excuses (i.e., we are too tired, it's too far to drive, it's raining out, etc.). If we chose this path, we eventually realized our relationship was in jeopardy. We may have become irritable, short-tempered, negative thinking and relapsed to old patterns of behavior (i.e., avoidance, working, spending, isolation, busyness, control, manipulation, withholding feelings, difficulty with intimacy).

We remember that nothing stayed the same in our lives or coupleships. We were either growing one step at a time or regressing backward toward old behavior.

The program suggests three types of ongoing inventories:

1. **Spot-check inventory (what are my underlying motives for what I am doing).**
2. **Daily inventory (usually a "question" done on the run or just before going to sleep).**
3. **Long-term periodic inventory (twice yearly spiritual retreat on reflection of how you have changed and what are necessary corrections).**

Step 11

We sought through our common prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.

In Step Eleven, we had an opportunity to develop a deepening relationship with our Higher Power. In our relationship, this step was about our spiritual awakening. We were conscious. We improved our conscious contact with our Higher Power through prayer and meditation. The only requirement for a prayer to be successful was that it be sincere, humble, and not for our own selfish gain. Meditation was found to be an ancient art of quieting the mind and not thinking. Some of us in our relationship found it difficult to sit quietly and relax together free of mind chatter.

The miracle of this step is that we changed the way we prayed into a form of meditation. WE PRAYED ONLY FOR HIS OR HER WILL FOR US.

When we progressed with this step we found a great sense of gratitude as a couple and a feeling of belonging and being worthy. We also had a sense of being guided and sustained as we worked together as a couple.

Ultimate intimacy with our partner depended not only upon connecting emotionally, but also on connecting spiritually. At this time we looked at our spiritual quest in Step Three to review what we wanted to add or change.

We needed to spend time together daily as a couple--not just on vacation!

As we became aware of the presence of our Higher Power, we also needed to be aware of our own rhythms with our partner--our breathing patterns, waking, sleeping, lovemaking, and work patterns. We forgot about demands for a few minutes and became quiet inside together.

If we had difficulty praying or lacked experience with prayer and meditation, it was suggested that we use the Serenity Prayer.

God grant us the serenity

Serenity meaning that we no longer recoil from the past, live in jeopardy because of our behavior now, or worry about the unknown future. We seek regular times to re-create ourselves and we avoid those times of depletion which make us vulnerable to despair and to old self-destructive patterns.

To accept the things we cannot change

Accept change in that we not cause suffering for ourselves by clinging to that which no longer exists. All that we can count on is that nothing will be stable except how we respond to the transforming cycles in our lives of birth, growth, and death.

Courage to change the things we can

Which means remembering that to give up our attempts to control outcomes does not require we give up our boundaries or our best efforts. It does mean our most honest appraisal of the limits of what we can do.

And the wisdom to know the difference.

Wisdom becomes the never-forgotten recognition of all those times when there was no way out, and new paths opened up like miracles in our lives.

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Step 12

Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to other couples, and to practice these principles in all aspects of our lives, our relationship, and our families.

Step Twelve was about taking the message of couple recovery to other couples. There was great power in what one couple who came back from the brink had to offer other couples. When we were able to shine the light of our experience on the path of recovery so others found their way, we were practicing the 12th Step. As was in our individual programs, in the RCA fellowship we carried the message in many ways:

Comment [D28]: new in 4th ed.

1. Shared as a couple at recovery meetings.
2. Sought and accepted service positions as meeting secretary-couple, treasurer, or greeter. Took the responsibility of literature couple, refreshment couple, intergroup representative, temporary and full-time sponsor couple.
3. Carried the message of hope to others at retreats or in our individual program meetings by: posting flyers and ads, getting information out to marriage counselors and priests, and making a schedule of RCA meetings available.

4. **Supported the national convention through participation, voting as delegate, and financial donation.**
5. **Served as an Inter-Group couple, on the World Service Organization Board of Trustees, or a WSO Service Committee**
6. **Wrote our couple story and shared it with others.**

This step was meant for a lifetime. We got this program when we gave it away. The results affected all of our relationships, and if we had children, we broke the chains of addiction that bound families for generations. We learned from those couples who had gone before us. The message we carried was a liberating one. Working with newcomers was a rewarding experience.