

INTRODUCTION TO WORKING THE STEPS ON ISSUES

(Adapted from Relationship Renewal: Step Up to Intimacy — A workbook for committed couples who want to find joy in their partnerships (4th ed. 2003, at p. 163–64). Copyright © 1992, 2003 by Diane and Glenn Anderson. Adapted by an RCA Couple in the Walnut Creek, California, RCA group.)

Written for Alcoholics Anonymous and adopted by other Twelve-Step fellowships, including Recovering Couples Anonymous, the Twelve Steps of Recovery are a brilliant formula for a spiritual path to personal growth and healing from dysfunction, addiction, or co-addiction.

The order in which the Steps are taken is crucial as they are based on a logical progression. The same progression has equal validity when applied to dealing with one particular issue.

Working the Twelve Steps on an Issue

We — an RCA couple — first encountered the idea of working the Twelve Steps on an issue in 2005 after working the *Relationship Renewal* workbook in a Step-study group. Since then we have written the Steps on an issue dozens of times for our own recovery, assisted sponsees, and have presented RCA workshops on the method. We have developed the following guidelines for use by RCA couples.

Instructions for Using the Twelve Steps to Work on a Particular Problem

If you are just learning this tool, pick a relatively low stress problem to practice on.

1. If you find this process is causing distress in your coupleship, stop what you are doing till you can be with your sponsors.
2. If you find you are taking your partner's inventory as you write, you are off track. The Steps talk about taking your own inventory; nowhere do they talk about your partner's inventory.
3. Do not read your answers to each other until you have finished writing the entire Twelve Steps. Healing comes later in the process.
4. Although ideal if both do it, it is not necessary for both parties to write out the Steps on a problem. It helps whoever does the work. It is very beneficial to have an agreement to listen to your partner's work. (But see #2.)
5. If both partners are writing on an issue, be sure you are in agreement on which issue you are writing. That is the only part of the process you have to agree on.
6. We suggest using the questions as a guide and writing your answers in a notebook so that you can do it again on other problems, using the same questions.
7. Answering all the questions takes most people about an hour or two. If you are taking lots longer, maybe you are trying for perfection instead of just taking one whack at it out of many whacks. Recovery is about progress, not about perfection.

Some find these questions effective because they discover their own part in a problem. Others have liked that the questions bring the Higher Power right into the issue.

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Using the Twelve-Step Method to Examine an Issue

When you are having a problem, take time to make an honest, short & clear description of that problem. Include the basic factual elements of the situation, the persons and the feelings involved (ex. fears, resentments, wanting to control). This is recovery work. Do your best to talk about your own point of view.

STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE:

Here are the questions to help you work the Steps in exploring the issue:

Step 1:

In what ways do you feel powerless when encountering this issue?
What is the unmanageability in your life created by this issue?

Step 2:

How can your Higher Power help your thinking and feeling in this situation?

Step 3:

How can making a decision to turn your will and life over to the care of Higher Power help you at this time?

Step 4:

Make a fearless and searching inventory of your part in this issue. How do they affect other defects like need to control, caretaking, obsessive-compulsive behaviors, stuffed anger, and resentments, etc.?

Step 5:

Clearly look at your responsibility and admit your part of the situation to yourself and your Higher Power, and talk to a trusted friend about your actions in this situation.

Step 6:

What do you need to do to become entirely ready to give up your anger, resentments, fears, control, etc. in this situation? Are there any you want to hang on to?

Step 7:

Can you humbly ask your Higher Power to remove your shortcomings in this situation? What part can you play to release these shortcomings?

Step 8:

Make a list of all the persons who have been harmed in this situation and be aware of how you have hurt yourself and/or your coupleship.

Step 9:

How will you make things right in each case and when? What can you have as a focus of change to prevent you from being in this conflict/issue in exactly the same way again?

Step 10:

Look the situation over again and make sure nothing has been left out.

Make a list of 3-5 things you did that were unskillful or/unhelpful in this situation.

Make a list of 3-5 things your partner did in this situation that were skillful or helpful.

Step 11:

Go to your Higher Power in prayer and meditation; asking for awareness of Higher Power's will and the power to carry that out. (Write a prayer if you are willing.)

Step 12:

Can what you have learned in working the Steps on this situation be of benefit to others?

How can you apply what you have learned to other aspects of your life, your relationships, your family, and your spiritual awakening?