



Step 8

Willingness and Hope

Step Eight of Alcoholics Anonymous states: "Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all." At first glance, this seems like a fairly simple undertaking, because it only asks people to make a list and become willing to repair the damage they have caused. However, my experience with Step Eight has made me realize that it is one of the most emotionally demanding steps on the list. Making a list is a basic task — and I certainly didn't have a shortage of people who I had wronged — but "becoming willing?" Well, that makes it a lot more complicated. Willingness has a few different faces in my mind. I can tell myself that I'm willing to do whatever it takes to make up for what I've done wrong, but when the time comes to make a legitimate effort to fix something, it can often be a different story.

I've learned that true willingness isn't something I can just decide to have. It requires honesty, humility, and the insight to face the ripple effect of my past actions. I've also experienced almost every level of willingness on the spectrum, from an absolute readiness to immediately face the person, all the way to delaying an amend for years because I wasn't truly willing.

Even though it can be uncomfortable, Step Eight is an essential part of the AA program. If I don't keep a catalog of the individuals I have created strife for, I would lose track, because the number is that high. If I don't become willing to make amends to

those I have harmed, I will never be able to truly mend those relationships and face the fallout of my actions.

Creating a list of people who we hurt is not just about writing down the names. It involves reflecting on specific actions and trying to identify specifically the ways in which I caused harm. This process was also crucial for my own personal growth, as it was at this point that I was able to recognize that a lot of the harm I had caused others was also harmful to myself. Failing to keep up with my health, social life and familial relationships was causing a lot of issues for me, and some of these were parts of amends I owed to others. Acknowledging the ways we are letting ourselves down can be just as important as recognizing the pain we have caused others.

Step Eight does not require immediate action or guarantee that making amends will be easy. Instead, we must focus on developing the willingness to do what is right, even when it evokes fear or insecurity. Becoming willing means accepting that making amends is about taking responsibility rather than controlling the outcome.

In my own case, there were a few names that were difficult to find the willingness, and there were a few different reasons for this. The financial amends I owed were terrifying because the amount of money I owed was enough that I envisioned myself spending years in debt, paying off these sums of money, when in reality it was much more manageable. But over all else, despite telling my sponsor I was willing to make all my amends, there was one amend that I knew I wasn't willing to make: my

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Please email your article to Lifeline@aastpaul.org or send it by regular mail to Lifeline Editor, St. Paul Intergroup, 33 Wentworth Ave E, Suite 355, W. St. Paul, MN 55118-3431. Materials or articles mailed to us cannot be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope. Intergroup reserves the right to edit submissions for clarity, language, length, and content that might violate A.A.'s Traditions, etc.

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father. I had been out of contact with him for years, and I also let my alcoholic mind convince me I knew exactly how he would respond, and that it would be unproductive for all involved, so I simply didn't do it.

The next few years, I saw my life improve, and many of the promises manifest in my life. However, in the back of mind, I knew the work was incomplete. I knew there was someone I had wronged who I had not addressed. It took me 3.5-4 years into my recovery to get around to that amend, and it was much less eventful than the story I told myself about how it would be. Because of this experience, and how I feel that it held me back for years, I always strongly recommend prioritizing the willingness, and not taking it for granted, because a lack of willingness led to a roadblock in my program.

While Step Eight can bring up feelings of shame or regret, it also offers hope. Many people get sober believing they can never repair the damage they have caused. This step reminds them that while they cannot change the past, they can choose how they respond to it in the present. Taking responsibility is not about dwelling on mistakes forever; it is about learning from them and making better choices moving forward. In this way, Step Eight helps replace guilt with purpose and replace fear with courage and action.

Sam A, St. Paul

Working the 8th Step by Subtraction

When I was one year sober in 1983, it wasn't uncommon for a sponsee to meet his sponsor at the old St. Clair Broiler for breakfast, and while there work on a step. On a summer day I brought my list there to review with my sponsor. Let's call him Norman (because that was his name). We proceeded to go through the list and talk about what amends might look at for the people on that list.

As I went through the list, I got to a woman I had worked with back in Indiana who, for some reason, I had decided was the woman for me. The only problem was that she, and I quote, "was not interested." That did not deter my resolve, and my resolve never deterred hers. When I relapsed drinking after 15 months, the drunk included a call to her that ended in me saying "I'm going to get you!" I did not mean that the way it might sound – but I think most people might interpret that as the language of a stalker.

So, Norman stopped me and said "okay, your amends to her is to stay away from her, don't contact her or make any attempt to see her." I was dumbfounded as I

was hoping for advice on how I could make the perfect amends, hopefully one where she might see the error of her ways and also see what a great guy I was. But right there in the moment, the sanity of Norman's advice made so much sense, as his suggestion for an amend was actually achievable!

Whenever I think about sharing Norman's point of view, I often think of what the Step 8 critics (there's always critics, right?) might say. "You need to make face-to-face amends and admit your part," or "don't let fear dictate who you approach to make amends to – in the end you are doing them for yourself!" "You are just feeling sorry for yourself if you think removing yourself from someone else's life is a form of amends" is another one I hear in my head from time-to-time.

But time, which is now over 43 years, has proven Norman's advice to be sound. I do believe amends by letting someone live their life without me in it is sometimes the most appropriate option.

I have another situation where I tried to repair a relationship and found the other person very open to continue having me apologize over and over again, to have me keep trying to make things better. My many attempts to re-establish the relationship on better terms had left me (a) thinking too much about what I should try next and (b) wondering what I actually did to have things fall apart like this in the first place! After a number of years of reaching out in efforts to make things better, I have come to realize that there comes a time when perhaps my side of the street is clean, and the best course of action is to remove myself from a relationship, not unlike my earlier example. After many attempts to mend the relationship, I realized the results had become futile. Perhaps, much to my dismay, that person also may not want me to be part of their life.

I do think I should remain vigilant in the 8th step. If spontaneous opportunities should present themselves I need to be ready to respond appropriately in that moment. The 8th step is never one that I feel I have stopped working in the effort to have the best possible relationship with others.

This essay could be just as much about sponsorship as it is about the 8th Step. Norman's suggestion is still one of those "higher power moments" in my life. It was a suggestion of an easily achievable amend and was what that woman on my list was asking for the entire time. There isn't always a formula or an algorithm/program for what we do in the AA Program. There is much art to what we do to go to any lengths to work the steps and,

TRADITION 8 – ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS SHOULD REMAIN FOREVER NONPROFESSIONAL, BUT OUR SERVICE CENTERS MAY EMPLOY SPECIAL WORKERS

Why AA Refuses to Get Paid

What if I told you that AA has no paid sponsors, no professional therapists, and no one making money off carrying the message? Would that surprise you?

It surprised me. My first sponsor was the Inter-group Office manager, and I met her during her lunch hour, inside the 411 Main professional office building, to read the Big Book. If that doesn't date me, I don't know what will. I remember doing the math in my head: she works here, I'm meeting her here, on the clock, in an office — she must be getting paid for this. It seemed

obvious. It also happened to be wrong, and she wasted no time correcting me. She redirected me straight to the Traditions and walked me through Tradition 8 before I'd even finished my first cup of bad meeting coffee. That conversation turned out to be my introduction to every Tradition that came after it. You don't usually start there. I did, and I think it made me pay closer attention than I might have otherwise.

What Tradition 8 Actually Says

Tradition 8 states that “Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.” Translation: AA is not a professional recovery organization. It's not a coaching business. It's not an outpatient treatment facility wearing a fellowship's clothing. Nobody gets paid to be a sponsor. Nobody charges or accepts money to carry the message. Nobody builds a business on the back of the 12 Steps.

That said, AA isn't naive about logistics. There are paid positions: office staff, literature distribution, the people who keep the service structure running. The line is sharp and it's meant to be. Twelve-step work is always free. Administrative work can be compensated. Blur that line and you've built something AA was never designed to be.

Why the Early Members Fought for This

In AA's early days, some members floated the idea of charging for sponsorship, reasoning that it would support the people giving up their time. Others wanted AA to bring in professional counselors and start looking more like therapy. Bill W. and the early membership saw where that road ended: the moment sponsorship became a paycheck, it would stop being spiritual and start being transactional. People would show up to help newcomers because it paid the bills, not because they meant it. And newcomers would start believing recovery had a price tag. So AA drew the line. No admission at meetings. No profit from helping another alcoholic. What was freely given has to stay freely given.

Equals, Not Gurus

St. Paul Intergroup Newsletter

St. Paul and Nearby Communities' AA Program is Vital — Support It with Your Contributions!



Carry the message to alcoholics in our community with your experience, strength, hope, and creative abilities!

We are seeking contributions in these areas:

- Articles about the steps, traditions, sponsorship, AA experience
- Graphics related to St. Paul AA
- Original AA jokes and cartoons
- Local AA organization event announcements

If you write your shares or leads, it is easy to turn it into an article! Email us.

For further details and schedule, please contact
lifelinechair@aastpaul.org

Here's the part of Tradition 8 that doesn't get said out loud enough: the reason sponsorship stays unpaid is also the reason it works at all. A sponsor isn't a guru, isn't a mentor perched a rung above you, isn't a professor lecturing from the front of the room. A sponsor is another alcoholic, sharing what happened to them, standing next to you instead of above you.

That distinction isn't just a nice sentiment — it changes what happens when your sponsor hits a gap. Because they will. No single person has lived through every version of this disease. So what happens when your sponsor doesn't have the experience you're going through? You go find someone who does. You ask around. You sit with a stranger at a meeting and say, "how did you get through that?" It's basically field study, except the research method is connection, and the data is somebody else's survival.

I think of it like college, but not the version where professors are the whole show. The professors matter, sure, everyone respects the expertise. But it's the students who build the actual campus life — the clubs, the study groups, the welcome events that make a new kid feel like they belong instead of like they're auditioning. That's sponsorship. It's not a student sitting across from a teacher. It's two students in the same school, comparing notes on how they got through the same hard class.

Sponsoring someone shouldn't feel like a performance in either direction. Not for the sponsor, who isn't required to have every answer, and not for the newcomer, who isn't being graded. Take money out of it and that's exactly what stays intact — nobody's credentials are on the line, nobody's client is watching them perform expertise. It's just one person telling the truth about what happened to them, to another person who needs to hear it. That's why we do this for free. It's what keeps it honest.

The Field I Avoided for Twenty Years

I bucked at working in the recovery sector for the first twenty years of my sobriety. My reasoning felt airtight at the time: if I turned recovery

into my job, I was convinced I'd eventually stop working my own recovery. I'd start clocking in instead of showing up.

When I finally did step into the field, I found something I hadn't expected. Some of the people I've admired most, people whose sobriety I actually wanted, had done an incredible job of holding both — working a program and working in the field — without one eating the other. What surprised me was where I learned the ethics of that balance. It wasn't in AA meetings. It was in textbooks. Discernment, professional boundaries, how to show up as a clinician who's also in recovery — that's coursework, not fellowship.

And here's the detail that still makes me laugh: in the recovery field, there's documentation for everything. Every session, every contact, every note. It's also the single most annoying part of the job. Thank God my sponsor doesn't keep a file on me, and I don't keep one on my sponsees. That absence of paperwork isn't an oversight — it's the whole point of Tradition 8 sitting quietly in the background, doing its job.

Carrying It Forward

Honoring Tradition 8 isn't complicated, even if it runs against the grain of everything else in a culture that monetizes expertise. Carry the message for free. Let AA's paid positions stay administrative, nowhere near the actual 12-step work. Keep the meetings and the sponsors separate from clinical treatment — a sponsor isn't a counselor, and a meeting isn't a session.

Underneath all of it are three things: service, gratitude, and integrity. We help because it keeps us sober, not because it pays. We give back what was given to us, freely. And the message stays clean exactly as long as it stays free of money.

So ask yourself the question my sponsor asked me, without ever quite phrasing it that way: are you carrying the message with no expectation of anything coming back? Because the whole fellowship is still standing on the answer.

Jamie L, St. Paul

Office Update

-Office Manager has resigned from his position effective July 3rd, Comments bellow

-Office Manager position is now open, more details on the website

- We recently updated our database of reps and volunteers so that we can better share updates, information, and events with our community
- We could always use more volunteers, St. Paul Intergroup runs on volunteers and the more members we have participating in AA St. Paul Intergroup the better it runs and more it can help care our primary message.
 - If you could talk to your groups about sending reps to our monthly board and rep meeting, this is one of the best ways to support St. Paul Intergroup, please also ask your reps to confirm their contact information with the office so they can receive updates for the meetings
- We had a wonderful time at gopher state thanks to the many volunteers who showed up to help. Our many volunteers are what make intergroup work smoothly.

I would like to deaply thank all of the groups and members who have supported intergroup over the years of my dedicated work, and all of those who have called into the office and allowed me to be there for them. I appreaite all of the trust and oportunities the groups and members have given me.

Best Regards,
Jacob F.

SELF-SUPPORT SUGGESTIONS FOR GROUPS

"Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions." The Conference-approved pamphlet: "Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix" offers the following suggestions for the distribution of group funds after group expenses have been paid:

50% St. Paul Intergroup

33 Wentworth Ave E.
Suite 355
West St. Paul, MN 55118-3431

30% General Service Office

P.O. Box 2407
James A Farley Station
New York, NY 10116-2407

10% Southern MN Area 36

Southern Minnesota Area Assembly
P.O. Box 2812
Mpls., MN 55402-0812

10% District Committee

Ramsey County:

District 8, P.O. Box 131523
St. Paul, MN 55113

Dakota County:

District 19, P.O. Box 1466
Burnsville, MN 55337

Washington County:

District 15, P.O. Box 181
Lake Elmo, MN 55042

WAYS TO FINANCIALLY SUPPORT INTERGROUP

1. VIA SQUARE

Use the camera on your phone to scan this QR code to be redirected to the SPI contribution webpage :



2. VIA CHECK

You are always welcome to stop by during business hours, or mail a personal or AA group check to the office at:

Saint Paul Intergroup
33 Wentworth Ave E, Ste 355
West St. Paul, MN
55118-3431

AREA 36 PINK CAN PLAN

**THE PINK CAN PLAN COLLECTS FUNDS
TO PURCHASE AA LITERATURE FOR ALCOHOLICS IN
CORRECTIONS FACILITIES IN
SOUTHERN MINNESOTA.**

MAIL CONTRIBUTIONS TO:

**PINK CAN PLAN
PO BOX 41633
PLYMOUTH MN 55441-0633**

How It Works

4th Step

Workshop

*Where: St Paul Intergroup
33 Wentworth Ave
St Paul, MN 55118
Right Conference Room
(street level by front doors)*

*When: Saturday July 11th (part 1) &
Saturday July 18th (part 2)*

*Time: 10 AM to 3 PM - there is no cost
(will break for lunch 12:00 to 12:45)*

Cost: There is no cost-this is a free workshop

*Bring: Big Book, paper, pencils or pens & a friend or
two. Everyone and all 12-step programs
welcome!*

For sign-up and more information call
St Paul Intergroup 651-227-5502
Christopher B 651-707-5551
Marty Y 651-261-5484

DISTRICT SERVICE MEETINGS

District 8 (Ramsey Co.)
3rd Wed., 7:00 PM
Email: dist8@area36.org (for Zoom info)

District 15 (Washington Co.)
Christ Lutheran Church
11194 N. 36th St.
Lake Elmo
4th Mon., 7:00 PM
Email: dist15@area36.org (for Zoom info)

District 19 (Dakota Co.)
2nd Weds. Of the Month -7pm to 8:30pm
Eagan Community Center
1501 Central Pkwy
Saint Paul, MN, 55121
Lone Oak Room
dist19@area36.org



LOOKING FOR A SERVICE OPPORTUNITY?

Become a St. Paul Intergroup Night Owl

If you are interested - Contact:
Nightowl@aastpaul.org
to schedule training.

St. Paul Intergroup Office
33 Wentworth Ave E, Suite 355
West St. Paul, MN 55118-3431
To RSVP - please call 651-227-5502

2025 INTERGROUP BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Advisor to the Board: Ricardo G.

Board Chair: Alex S.

Alt. Board Chair: Brandon H.

Treasurer: Don H.

Alt. Treasurer: Marc K

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Members at Large:

Emily M.

Jamie Lynn

Matt

Kristine C.

Office Manager: Jacob F.

Webservant: Jonathan L. & Ethan

GREEN CAN PLAN

**PLEASE HELP PROVIDE AN ASL
INTERPRETER AT AN AA MEETING IN
DISTRICT 8**



CHECKS CAN BE SENT TO

ASL FUND

PO BOX 131831

ROSEVILLE, MN 55113-0020

OR

CONTRIBUTE ELECTRONICALLY

VENMO @ASLFund-DistrictEight

Contact District 8 ASL Fund Coordinator

St. Paul Intergroup Outreach Committee

Together We Can Help

- Help keep meetings up to date!
- Let people know about Intergroup!

Volunteer!

**Truly Make a Difference in
the Life of an Alcoholic!**



Scan the QR
Code



The Hand of AA Always to be There...

33 Wentworth Ave E
West St Paul, MN 55118
Suite 355

(651) 227-5502
outreach@aastpaul.org

If you would like to financially contribute to St. Paul, this QR code will bring you to the St. Paul Intergroup website contribution page.

There are other ways to contribute to St. Paul intergroup as well and you can find those on our website or at the office in person.



Office Volunteers

Bernie, Frank, Matt, Sue

Thanks to your all and thanks to our many Night Owl volunteers as well.

Hoot Hoot!

If you are interested in being of Service, please Vist our Website or contact the office!!

The following groups, members and Faithful Fiver members made the service of intergroup possible in the month of January:

- 25 A.A. Groups contributed - \$4,969.15
- Faithful Fivers contributed - \$2,742.15
- Total Contributions - \$7,954.98

Scandia AA
Forest Lake Alano
Wednesday Night Men's 12 x 12
Children of Chaos Plus
Most Important Thing Group--
Sunday, Roseville
We Care Alcoholics Anonymous
North Dale Group

WBL Thurs Bloom Ave
Complete Defeat Group
White Bear Lake Area A.A.
Friday Nite 12x12 By The Book
Shoreview 12 x 12
eagan tuesday nites
New Brighton BB
Saturday Morning Serenity Group
Maplewood Groups
Saturday Morning Womens Group

Valley Step Group
East Side Club - East Side
Firing Line
Grovers Thursday Night

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Please let us know a month in advance if your address changes. It saves us the cost of return postage and enables you to get each issue of *The Lifeline*. Our mailing permit does not provide for mail forwarding. **THANK YOU!**



St. Paul Intergroup **Individual Contribution** Enrollment Form

Your Intergroup strives to be self-supporting, and with your personal support we can continue to carry our vital message of Hope and Recovery to all who need and want it. Your contribution entitles you to a one-year subscription to the Lifeline. Contributions may be made annually, bi-annually, quarterly, or monthly. Please consider becoming one of our *Terrific Tennes* (\$10.00/month), *Fantastic Fifteneers* (\$15.00/month), or *Thoughtful Thirtiers* (\$30.00).

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3. Choose a Payment Method:

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☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ AMEX ☐ Discover

Card # _____/_____/_____/_____

Expiration Date: _____/_____

Name on Card: _____

Signature: _____
*I authorize St. Paul Intergroup to automatically bill my account as specified (monthly, quarterly, etc). I understand that I am free to cancel this authorization at any time by contacting Intergroup.

Check - Please make payable to:

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