



Healing through the Savior

THE ADDICTION RECOVERY PROGRAM

12-Step Recovery Guide

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The Addiction Recovery Program

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Acknowledgments

The *Healing through the Savior: The Addiction Recovery Program 12-Step Recovery Guide* has adapted the original 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. into a framework of the doctrines, principles, and beliefs of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The original 12 steps are listed here, and the 12 steps as used in this program appear throughout the remainder of this guide.

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The 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous:

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.®

Healing Through the Savior: The Addiction Recovery Program The 12 Steps

Step 1: Admit that we, of ourselves, are powerless to overcome our addictions and that our lives have become unmanageable

Step 2: Come to believe the power of God can restore us to complete spiritual health

Step 3: Decide to turn our wills and our lives over to the care of God, the Eternal Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ

Step 4: Make a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves

Step 5: Admit to ourselves, to our Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ, to proper priesthood authority, and to another person the exact nature of our wrongs

Step 6: Become entirely ready to have God remove all our character weaknesses

Step 7: Humbly ask Heavenly Father to remove our shortcomings

Step 8: Make a written list of all persons we have harmed and become willing to make restitution to them

Step 9: Wherever possible, make direct restitution to all persons we have harmed

Step 10: Continue to take personal inventory, and when we are wrong, promptly admit it

Step 11: Seek through prayer and meditation to know the Lord's will and to have the power to carry it out

Step 12: Having had a spiritual awakening through the Atonement of Jesus Christ as a result of taking these steps, we share this message with others and practice these principles in all we do

Preface

Whether you struggle with an addiction or know someone who does, this guide can be a blessing in your life. With permission from Alcoholics Anonymous, the 12 steps have been adapted to include the doctrines, principles, and beliefs of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In this guide, the steps are presented in order along with a related gospel principle. This guide will help you learn how to apply these steps. No matter what your circumstances are, these steps can help you come unto Christ and receive the blessings of recovery and healing.

Addictions may include the use of substances such as tobacco, alcohol, coffee, tea, and both prescription and illegal drugs. Addictions may also include behaviors such as gambling, viewing pornography, lust, inappropriate sexual behaviors, video gaming, inappropriate technology use, and unhealthy eating. While health care professionals consider addiction a physical disease, the physical aspect is only part of the problem. Addiction affects the mind, body, and spirit, so the solution must address all aspects of the disease.

This guide is not specific to any particular addiction. Though people struggle with different types of addiction, many have found a common solution in the path outlined in this guide. It is a workbook and reference for anyone who desires to recover from any type of addiction. This guide is the primary reading material in the addiction recovery support meetings sponsored by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Men and women who have suffered the devastating effects of various addictions and experienced long-term recovery helped in developing this guide and were invited to share their experiences in applying the 12 steps. Their point of view (the “we” in this guide) is used to convey the anguish of addiction and the joy of healing and recovery. You can find

comfort and support from these people. Church leaders and counseling professionals also helped in writing and developing this guide. The combined wisdom and experience of these many authors stand as another witness of the reality of Jesus Christ’s Atonement and the possibility of recovery from addiction.

We invite you to come to a recovery meeting. (“We” are men and women who have suffered the devastating effects of various addictions and have experienced long-term recovery.) Directions for finding in-person, video, telephone, or recorded meetings (with permission) are available on the Addiction Recovery Program website (AddictionRecovery.ChurchofJesusChrist.org). Do not let your fears keep you from the blessings of attending a recovery meeting. Please know that these meetings are places of understanding, hope, and support, where you will discover that you are not alone and you will find that recovery is possible. We found this guide to be most effective when we worked the steps with a sponsor and our bishop. Some of us included a professional counselor in our recovery journey.

Recovery begins when we are honest and admit that we struggle with addiction. For some people, identifying themselves as addicts in recovery meetings helps them to be honest and to remember just how powerful their addiction can be. However, we should be careful that this does not limit our hope or trust in God. If we define ourselves as addicts, we may unintentionally deny the truth that Jesus Christ can heal us and change our very nature. In our recovery, we must all find a balance between being honest about the power of addiction while at the same time trusting that Jesus Christ can restore us to complete spiritual health.

If you feel you might have an addiction and have the smallest desire to break free, or if you are willing to

develop the desire, we invite you to join us in studying and applying the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ as outlined in this guide. If you follow this path with a sincere heart, you will find power in Jesus Christ to recover from addiction.

Elder Robert D. Hales explained: “Addiction is the craving of the natural man, and it can never be satisfied. It is an insatiable appetite” (“Becoming Provident Providers Temporally and Spiritually,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2009, 10).

Then he described the way so many people who are ensnared in addiction long to feel: “But as children of God, our deepest hunger and what

we should be seeking is what the Lord alone can provide—His love, His sense of worth, His security, His confidence, His hope in the future, and assurance of His love, which brings us eternal joy (“Becoming Provident Providers Temporally and Spiritually,” 10).

Though the gap between where we are and where we long to be may seem insurmountable, the Addiction Recovery Program and this guide have helped many people travel the road from addiction to recovery, and it can help you do the same.



Introduction

First and foremost, we want you to know that there is hope for recovery from addiction. (“We” are men and women who have suffered the devastating effects of various addictions and have experienced long-term recovery.) We have known great sorrow, but we have seen the Savior’s power turn our most devastating defeats into glorious victories. We once lived with daily depression, anxiety, fear, and debilitating anger but now experience joy and peace. We have seen miracles in our own lives and in the lives of others who were ensnared in addiction.

We have paid an awful price in pain and suffering because of our addictions. But God has blessed us as we have taken each step to recovery. We have come to see ourselves as beloved children of God. Having had a spiritual awakening, we strive every day to improve our relationship with Heavenly Father; His Son, Jesus Christ; ourselves; and others. In short, the Savior has done for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Some people consider addictions to be bad habits that we can conquer by willpower alone, but we became so dependent on a behavior or a substance that we could no longer see how to abstain from it. We lost perspective and a sense of other priorities

in our lives. Nothing mattered more than satisfying our desperate need. When we tried to abstain, we experienced powerful physical, psychological, and emotional cravings. As we succumbed to our cravings and addictions, our ability to use our agency was diminished or restricted. President Boyd K. Packer taught, “Addiction has the capacity to disconnect the human will and nullify moral agency” (“Revelation in a Changing World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 14).

We began the process of recovery by being humble and honest, by calling upon God and others for help, and by taking the actions outlined in this guide. The 12 steps of recovery taught us how to apply the gospel of Jesus Christ to our lives. President Jeffrey R. Holland said: “Are you battling a demon of addiction—tobacco or drugs or gambling, or . . . pornography? . . . Whatever other steps you may need to take to resolve these concerns, come *first* to the gospel of Jesus Christ” (“Broken Things to Mend,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2006, 70).

Steps 1–3 teach us how to exercise faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. Steps 4–9 take us through a process of thorough repentance. Steps 10–12 encourage us to be accountable, to seek divine

direction and power to stay on the covenant path, to share with others the miracle that has come into our lives, and to endure to the end.

Many of us who are living in recovery still participate in the Addiction Recovery Program. We find great support in our desire to maintain our freedom from addiction. And we are blessed as we seek to help others who are in bondage to addiction. We firmly believe that we have been transformed through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Like the Anti-Nephi-Lehies in the Book of Mormon (see Alma 24:17–19), we have experienced healing and a change in our very nature through Jesus Christ’s grace and power. We don’t want to lose that gift, so every day we choose to remember our total reliance on Him. As we continue to participate in the Addiction Recovery Program, we are reminded that addiction is powerful and that we may end up returning to it rather than to God if we lose sight of these truths. Our desire is to maintain what God has so graciously given us.

If you feel you have an addiction and have even the smallest desire to break free and are willing to “experiment upon” the word of God (Alma 32:27), we invite you to join us in studying and applying the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ as taught in this guide. Our experience has shown that if you follow this path with a sincere heart, you will find the power you need to recover from addiction. This power is called grace. “The grace of God helps us every day. It strengthens us to do good works we could not do on our own” (Topics and Questions, “Grace,” Gospel Library). As you apply each of these 12 steps faithfully, the Savior will strengthen you and you will come to “know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

We know by our own experience that you can break free from the chains of addiction. No matter how lost and hopeless you may feel, you are the child of a loving Heavenly Father. If you have been blind to this truth, the principles explained in this guide will help you rediscover it and establish it deep in

your heart. These principles can help you come unto Christ and allow Him to change you. As you apply the steps, you will draw on the power of the Savior and He will free you from bondage.

Those of us in recovery invite you with all our empathy and love to join us in a glorious life of hope, freedom, and joy, encircled in the arms of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. Just as we have recovered, you can also recover and enjoy all the blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Action Steps

This is a program of action. Our progress depends on consistently applying the steps in our daily lives. This is known as “working the steps.” The following actions help us come unto Christ and receive the direction and power necessary to continue in our recovery. Please remember to work with your sponsor.

Focus on our eternal identity

When President Russell M. Nelson was asked how to help those who suffer with addiction, he replied, “Teach them their identity and their purpose” (in Tad R. Callister, “Our Identity and Our Destiny” [Brigham Young University devotional, Aug. 14, 2012], speeches.byu.edu). Each of us is a child of a loving God. We know that He loves us and is actively caring for us.

We didn’t always think this way though. Some of us were convinced He wasn’t there. Some of us didn’t care either way. Some of us believed He was there but that He was too angry or disappointed in us to help. For almost all of us, misunderstanding our relationship to God led to a barrier that kept us from turning to Him for help. Instead, we turned to addictive substances or behaviors to help us cope with life’s challenges. We often entered negative cycles. We acted out, which led to feelings of guilt and shame, and this led to more acting out to cover the pain of these emotions. Understanding our identity

and purpose as God’s children has empowered us to break these cycles.

We also learned the difference between guilt and shame. Guilt is feeling bad about something we’ve done, and shame is feeling bad about who we are. Elder David A. Bednar explained guilt’s value this way: “Guilt is to our spirit what pain is to our body—a warning of danger and a protection from additional damage” (“We Believe in Being Chaste,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 44). Before recovery, many of us instead felt shame, concluding that we were forever broken and unworthy of love from God or anyone.

However, once we came to see our divine nature *and* admitted our need for heaven’s help to recover from addiction, we began to see ourselves as Jesus Christ sees us: spiritually sick men and women trying to heal through His grace rather than bad men and women trying to become good enough to earn His love.

We invite you to practice believing that you are God’s child and that He loves you no matter what you have done. While it is true that harmful choices limit our opportunities, our worth to God can never change. He loves us because we are His children, not because of our choices: “Though we are incomplete, God loves us completely. Though we are imperfect, He loves us perfectly. Though we may feel lost and without compass, God’s love encompasses us completely” (Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Love of God,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 22).

Become willing to abstain

We were finally willing to abstain when the pain of the problem became worse than the pain of the solution. Have you come to that point yet? If you have not and you continue in your addiction, you will surely reach that point because addiction is a progressive problem. It is a degenerative disease that takes away our ability to function normally.

At first, staying completely sober seemed very daunting for us. But as we continued to hear from others who found the serenity and the sobriety we were looking for, we began to believe that we too could recover.

Before we could begin the recovery process, we first needed the desire to recover (see Alma 32:27). Freedom from addiction starts with a tiny flicker of willingness. If your desire is small and inconsistent today, don’t worry. As you take action, it will grow! We learned that one of the most powerful actions we can take is to pray and ask God to increase our desire to abstain.

If you do not yet have the desire to begin recovery, you can acknowledge your unwillingness and consider the costs of your addiction. List what is important to you. Consider your relationships with family and friends, your relationship to God, your spiritual strength, your ability to help and bless others, and your health. Then look for contradictions between what you believe in and hope for and your behavior. Consider how your actions undermine what you value. Pray for God to help you see yourself and your life as He sees it—with all your divine potential—and what you risk by continuing in your addiction.

Recognizing what you lose by indulging in your addiction can help you find the desire to stop. If you can find even the smallest desire, you will have room to begin. And as you progress through the steps of this program and see the changes that come into your life, your desire will grow.

Note: Depending on the nature of your addiction, you may need to seek medical attention before you start your recovery. Please consult a medical professional.

Get support

The journey toward recovery and healing is long and hard, but we don’t have to do it alone. Living in recovery requires absolute honesty. Denial,

self-deception, and isolation make it difficult to achieve lasting and stable progress in recovery. It is important for us to enlist the support of others as soon as possible. Many people are willing to walk with us and help us. President Spencer W. Kimball said: “God does notice us, and he watches over us. But it is usually through another person that he meets our needs” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* [2011], 82).

Seeking help from God and others will not only provide the encouragement we need to continue the journey but will also help us remember that we are worthy of help. When you ask for help, you may be surprised at the amount of love and acceptance you find. The more you connect with others, the more opportunities you will have to receive love and support in discovering true healing and recovery.

Consider the different sources of support available to you and how you can reach out for help. We recommend finding and working with a sponsor who has successfully applied the 12 steps. A sponsor is never assigned. We encourage you to prayerfully consider who you might ask to be your sponsor as soon as possible. A great place to find a sponsor is in a recovery meeting. Recovery meetings are a safe place for us to share and learn about recovery.

Other important sources of support include family members, friends, Church leaders, and therapists. The ultimate source of support is Heavenly Father. Deciding who we ask and when we ask for support is a personal decision. In some cases, it may not be safe or helpful for us to confide in or ask for help from certain family members or friends. However, it is important that we get as much support from as many sources as possible. For more information, please review the “Support in Recovery” section found in the appendix of this guide.

We may be embarrassed or ashamed to ask for support from others. We may not want anyone else to know about our problems or faults. We may not want to be a burden or may not feel like we are worthy of help. But we have found that people are blessed when we ask for their help. The 12th step

is about service and helping others. When those in recovery serve others, they are strengthened in their own recovery.

Study and Understanding

The following scriptures and statements from Church leaders will help you begin your recovery. Use them for meditation, study, and journaling. Remember to be honest and specific in your writing.

My divine identity

“Look backward, remembering that you proved your worthiness in your premortal state. You are a valiant child of God, and *with His help*, you can triumph in the battles of this fallen world. You have done it before, and you can do it again.

“Look forward. Your troubles and sorrows are very real, but *they will not last forever*” (Neil L. Andersen, “Wounded,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 85; emphasis added).

- Looking backward, what battles have I already fought and won?

- When have I received help from the Lord in my life?

“Around the Church I hear many who struggle with this issue: ‘I am just not good enough.’ ‘I fall so far short.’ ‘I will never measure up.’ . . .

“. . . As children of God, we should not demean or vilify ourselves, as if beating up on ourselves is somehow going to make us the person God wants us to become. No!” (Jeffrey R. Holland, “Be Ye Therefore Perfect—Eventually,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 40).

- How can I learn from my mistakes while still remembering my worth as a child of God?

- What are my thoughts about President Holland’s use of the word *eventually* in the title of his talk?

My relationship with Jesus Christ

“And they had viewed themselves in their own carnal state, even less than the dust of the earth. And they all cried aloud with one voice, saying: O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified; for we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who created heaven and earth, and all things; who shall come down among the children of men” (Mosiah 4:2).

The process of recovery happens when we focus on the solution rather than the problem. When we

strengthen our relationship with Jesus Christ, He will give us the power and peace we need to live in recovery.

- What is my relationship with Jesus Christ?
Do I trust Him to help me?

- When I recognize my own weaknesses, do I have the courage to turn to my Savior for His redeeming power? Why or why not? If not, how will I begin?

“The scriptures define the doctrine of Christ as exercising faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement, repenting, being baptized, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end [see 2 Nephi 31].

“The Atonement of Christ creates the conditions upon which we may rely upon ‘the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah’ [2 Nephi 2:8], ‘be perfected in [Christ]’ [Moroni 10:32], obtain every good thing, and gain eternal life.

“The doctrine of Christ on the other hand is the means—the only means—by which we can obtain all of the blessings made available to us through Jesus’s Atonement” (Brian K. Ashton, “The Doctrine of Christ,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 106).

- The 12 steps of recovery are sometimes referred to as “baby steps” because they are incremental steps in the process of applying the doctrine of Jesus Christ to the problem of addiction. How can taking these “baby steps” help me to receive the blessings of Jesus Christ’s Atonement?

My desire to abstain from addiction

“As you shift your focus away from worldly distractions, some things that seem important to you now will recede in priority. You will need to say no to some things, even though they may seem harmless. As you embark upon and continue this lifelong process of consecrating your life to the Lord, the changes in your perspective, feelings, and spiritual strength will amaze you!” (Russell M. Nelson, “Spiritual Treasures,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2019, 77)

This promise, made by a prophet of God, outlines the amazing changes possible when we shift our focus to the Lord.

- What daily actions will I take to focus on Jesus Christ?

- What worldly distractions will I say no to, trusting that they will “recede in priority”?

“And the Lord said unto [Alma]: Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, must be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters” (Mosiah 27:25).

- My willingness to change is key to being redeemed from my “fallen state.” Do I have the desire to abstain from my addiction? Do I feel unwilling? If so, why?

- Willingness comes when I consider what my addictions are costing me and others. What are the costs of my addiction?

- What is the cost to my health?

- What is the cost to my family? my relationships? my ability to help others?

- How does my addiction affect my relationship with God?

Find help

“As followers of Christ, we are not spared challenges and trials in our lives. We are often required to do difficult things that, if attempted alone, would be overwhelming and maybe impossible. As we accept the Savior’s invitation to ‘come unto me’ [Matthew 11:28], He will provide the support, comfort, and peace that are necessary” (John A. McCune, “Come unto Christ—Living as Latter-day Saints,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2020, 36).

- The Savior provides the necessary support, comfort, and peace to do overwhelming or impossible things. How can I find the support and comfort He has promised?

- Does recovery seem overwhelming or maybe impossible if I attempt it alone?

- How does knowing that no one is spared from trials in their lives and that we all need support help me let go of my reluctance to reach out to others for help?

- Have I prayed about who to ask to be my sponsor? Did any names come to my mind?

“It is likewise through the grace of the Lord that individuals, through faith in the Atonement of Jesus Christ and repentance of their sins, receive strength and assistance to do good works that they otherwise would not be able to maintain if left to their own means. This grace is an enabling power that allows men and women to lay hold on eternal life and

exaltation after they have expended their own best efforts” (Bible Dictionary, “Grace”).

- There have been times when I have been able to give up my addiction for a while. How can I consistently remain free from addiction, even when I am stressed or discouraged?



Step 1: Admit that we, of ourselves, are powerless to overcome our addictions and that our lives have become unmanageable.

Key Principle: Honesty

Many of us began our addictions out of curiosity. Some of us became involved because of a justifiable need (such as a prescription drug) or as an act of deliberate rebellion. Some of us began as an attempt to escape pain. Many of us started on this path when we were barely older than children. Whatever our motives and whatever our circumstances, we soon discovered that the addiction relieved more than physical pain. It eased stress or numbed our feelings. It helped us avoid our problems—or so we thought. For a while we felt free from fear, worry, loneliness, discouragement, regret, or boredom. But because life is full of conditions that prompt these kinds of feelings, we resorted to our addictions more often. Addiction became one of the main ways we tried to cope with our needs and emotions. The Savior Jesus Christ understands this struggle. President Spencer W. Kimball said, “Jesus saw sin as wrong but also was able to see sin as springing from deep and unmet needs on the part of the sinner” (“Jesus: The Perfect Leader,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1979, 5).

Still, most of us failed to recognize or admit that we had lost the ability to resist and abstain on our own. At our lowest point, many of us felt that we had few choices. As President Russell M. Nelson observed: “Addiction surrenders later freedom to choose. Through chemical means, one can literally become disconnected from his or her own will” (“Addiction or Freedom,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 7).

We wanted to stop but had lost all hope. Filled with fear and despair, some of us even considered ending our life as the only alternative. But we realized this was not the path Heavenly Father wanted us to take.

It was difficult to admit to our addictive behaviors. We denied the seriousness of our condition and tried to avoid detection and the consequences of our choices by minimizing or hiding our behaviors. We didn’t realize that by deceiving others and ourselves, we slipped deeper into our addictions. As our powerlessness over addiction increased, many of us found fault with family, friends, Church leaders, and even God. We plunged into greater isolation, separating ourselves from others—especially God.

When we resorted to lies and secrecy, hoping to excuse ourselves or blame others, we weakened spiritually. With each act of lying about and hiding our addictions, we bound ourselves with “flaxen cord[s]” that soon became as strong as chains (2 Nephi 26:22). Then a time came when we were brought face-to-face with reality. We could no longer hide our addictions by telling lies or by saying, “It’s not that bad!”

A loved one, a doctor, a judge, or an ecclesiastical leader told us the truth we could no longer deny: the addiction was destroying our lives. When we honestly looked at our past, we admitted that nothing we had tried on our own had worked. We acknowledged that the addiction had gotten worse. We realized how much our addictions had damaged our relationships and robbed us of any sense of worth. At this point, we took the first step toward freedom and recovery by finding the courage to admit this was more than a problem or bad habit.

We finally admitted the truth that our lives had become unmanageable and that we needed help to overcome our addictions. We acknowledged that we could not heal ourselves and admitted we could not stay sober while practicing our addiction in any form. We realized we needed help from God and others to be honest with ourselves. The amazing thing about this honest realization of defeat and our subsequent surrender was that recovery finally began.

Honesty is the foundation for all of the other steps and helps us realize our need for the Savior. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, then of the First Presidency, taught: “Being able to see ourselves clearly is essential to our spiritual growth and well-being. If our weaknesses and shortcomings remain obscured in the shadows, then the redeeming power of the Savior cannot heal them and make them strengths [see Ether 12:27]” (“Lord, Is It I?,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 58).

When we indulged in our addictions, we lied to ourselves and others, but we could not truly fool ourselves. We pretended we were fine, full of bravado and excuses. But somewhere deep inside, we knew indulging in our addictions would lead toward greater sorrow. The Light of Christ continued to remind us. Denying this truth was tiring; it was a relief to finally admit we had a problem. Finally, we allowed a tiny opening for hope to slip in. When we chose to admit we had a problem and were willing to seek support, we gave that hope a place to grow.

Action Steps

This is a program of action. Our progress depends on consistently applying the steps in our daily lives. This is known as “working the steps.” The following actions help us come unto Christ and receive the direction and power necessary to take the next step in our recovery.

Let go of pride and seek humility

Pride and honesty cannot coexist. Pride is an illusion and an essential element of all addiction. Pride distorts the truth about things as they are, as they have been, and as they will be. It’s a major obstacle to our recovery. President Ezra Taft Benson said:

“Pride is essentially competitive in nature. We pit our will against God’s. When we direct our pride toward God, it is in the spirit of ‘my will and not thine be done.’ . . .

“Our will in competition to God’s will allows desires, appetites, and passions to go unbridled.

“The proud cannot accept the authority of God giving direction to their lives. They pit their perceptions of truth against God’s great knowledge, their abilities versus God’s priesthood power, their accomplishments against His mighty works” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* [2014], 232).

At some point, we had to choose to let go of our pride and be honest about our addiction. It isn't easy to be humble, work through years of self-deception, and ultimately choose honesty, but over time, it becomes a great blessing.

It was a major turning point for us when we finally let go of our pride and became humble. Most of us didn't humble ourselves but were "compelled to be humble" (Alma 32:13). Either way, the consequences of our addictions caught up to us, and we lost things that were dear to us—our homes, our jobs, our families, and even our freedom. We lost the trust of family and friends. We lost our self-respect and our confidence to face the challenges of life. We reached our lowest point, and though the humility that resulted was painful, it was the beginning of our recovery.

Recovery from addiction is not easy; it requires hard work. But we finally realized that the price we paid to remain in our addictions was far greater than the price of recovery. As we let go of pride, we were ready to start on the path toward freedom from addiction.

Be honest and talk to someone

An important action to help us be honest about our addictions is to talk with someone about it. Because our addictions have led us to justify, rationalize, and lie to others, including ourselves, many of us are experts in deception. This deception enables us to pursue our addictions, and it's hard for us to see things honestly. As we minimize and justify our behavior, we mistakenly think we are still in control. However, when we're open and up-front with another person, that person can help us see the truth and break through the deception.

The person we might want to talk to first is our Heavenly Father. We can pray and ask Him to help us be honest, see things more clearly, and have the courage to accept the truth. Then we can prayerfully think about someone else to talk to, someone who

understands the gospel of Jesus Christ and the path to recovery. Choose someone you trust. It could be a spouse, parent, family member, Church leader, friend, coworker, therapist, sponsor, the missionaries, or a facilitator at a recovery meeting. After choosing someone, the next step is to share with them the ways we are struggling. We need to pray for courage to be as honest as we can about our addictions. (See the document "Support in Recovery.")

Attend meetings

Recovery meetings are powerful sources of hope and support. Wherever we are, we can attend meetings in person or online. These meetings are a place to gather with others seeking recovery and with those who have already taken this path and are proof of its effectiveness. In recovery meetings, we find others who have experience in applying the steps and finding recovery and who are willing to help us in our own journey. Recovery meetings are a place of understanding, hope, and support.

At these meetings, we study specific gospel principles that can help change behavior. President Boyd K. Packer taught: "The study of the doctrines of the gospel will improve behavior quicker than a study of behavior will improve behavior. Preoccupation with unworthy behavior can lead to unworthy behavior. That is why we stress so forcefully the study of the doctrines of the gospel" ("Little Children," *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 17). Meetings are free and confidential. Go to AddictionRecovery.ChurchofJesusChrist.org to find a meeting near you.

Study and Understanding

Studying the scriptures and the statements of Church leaders helps us in our recovery. This study increases our understanding and helps us learn. We use the following scriptures, statements, and questions for prayerful personal study, writing, and group discussion.

The thought of writing may seem overwhelming, but writing is a powerful tool for recovery. Writing gives us time to reflect, helps us focus our thinking, and helps us see and understand the issues, thoughts, and behaviors surrounding our addictions. When we write, we also have a record of our thoughts. As we progress through the steps, we can see our progress. For now, just be honest and sincere as you write your thoughts, feelings, and impressions.

Are you convinced you are powerless over your addiction?

“Addiction has the capacity to disconnect the human will and nullify moral agency. It can rob one of the power to decide” (Boyd K. Packer, “Revelation in a Changing World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 14).

- What are the signs that I am powerless over my addictive behavior?

- How is my addiction impacting me?

- What secrets do I hide from others?

- What extent have I gone to in order to engage in my addictive behavior?

- What morals or standards have I violated?

- How have I rationalized these choices?

Hunger and thirst

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6).
“And my soul hungered; and I kneeled down before my Maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication for mine own soul; and all the day long did I cry unto him; yea, and when the night came I did still raise my voice high that it reached the heavens” (Enos 1:4).

- In these two scriptures, we learn that our souls can hunger. Have I ever felt empty inside, even when I am not physically hungry? What causes that emptiness?

- How can my hunger for things of the Spirit help me be more honest?

Honesty

“Some may regard the quality of character known as honesty to be a most ordinary subject. But I believe it to be the very essence of the gospel. Without honesty, our lives . . . will disintegrate into ugliness and chaos” (Gordon B. Hinckley, “We Believe in Being Honest,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1990, 2).

- What are the ways I have lied and attempted to hide my addiction from myself and others? How has this behavior caused “ugliness and chaos”?

Humility

“Because ye are compelled to be humble blessed are ye; for a man sometimes, if he is compelled to be humble, seeketh repentance; and now surely, whosoever repenteth shall find mercy; and he that findeth mercy and endureth to the end the same shall be saved” (Alma 32:13).

- What circumstances have compelled me to be humble and repent?

- What hope does Alma offer me? How can I find or receive that hope?

Encompassed by temptations

“I am encompassed about, because of the temptations and the sins which do so easily beset me.

“And when I desire to rejoice, my heart groaneth because of my sins; nevertheless, I know in whom I have trusted.

“My God hath been my support; he hath led me through mine afflictions in the wilderness; and he hath preserved me upon the waters of the great deep.

“He hath filled me with his love, even unto the consuming of my flesh” (2 Nephi 4:18–21).

- When Nephi felt overwhelmed, in whom did he place his trust?

- What can I do to place more trust in the Lord?

“I know that man is nothing”

“It came to pass that it was for the space of many hours before Moses did again receive his natural strength like unto man; and he said unto himself: Now, for this cause I know that man is nothing, which thing I never had supposed” (Moses 1:10).

- In what ways am I nothing when I do not have the help of God?

- In what ways am I of infinite worth?

- How can recognizing my need to rely on God bring me to admit my own “nothingness” and become as a little child? (Mosiah 4:5; see also Mosiah 3:19).



Step 2: Come to believe the power of God can restore us to complete spiritual health.

Key Principle: Hope

When we realized our powerlessness over our addictions, most of us felt stripped of any hope. We had tried to quit so many times. Some of us had prayed to God countless times. We had apologized for our behavior and promised to change. But after failing again and again, we began to think that God was disappointed in us and wouldn't help us. Those of us who grew up with no concept of God were certain we had exhausted every avenue of help. Either way, step 2 presented us with an answer we had either abandoned or never considered—to find hope in Jesus Christ and the power of His Atonement.

Finally humbled, we asked for help. Following what felt like the tiniest ray of hope, we began to attend recovery meetings and work with sponsors. When we first came to meetings, we were filled with doubts and fears. We were frightened, tired, and possibly even cynical, but at least we came.

In recovery meetings, people honestly described what their lives had been like, what happened to change them, and what it was like to live in recovery.

We found that many of the people we met in these meetings had once felt as hopeless as we felt. But as we continued to attend, we saw many of them genuinely laughing, talking, smiling, and feeling optimistic about the future. We saw many who had experienced a powerful change in their lives, a change that we also desired.

Gradually, the principles they shared and practiced started to work for us. As we kept coming back, we began to feel something we had not felt in years—hope. If there was hope for others who had been at the very brink of destruction, maybe there was hope for us too. We began to believe that if we turned to Jesus Christ, there would be “no habit, no addiction, no rebellion, no transgression, no offense exempted from the promise of complete forgiveness” (Boyd K. Packer, “The Brilliant Morning of Forgiveness,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 19).

In this atmosphere of faith and testimony, we found hope that began to awaken us to the mercy and power of God. We began to believe that He could deliver us from the bondage of addiction. We followed the examples of our recovering friends.

We began working the steps, getting support from others—including our sponsors—and attending recovery meetings. As we prayed, pondered, and applied the scriptures, over time we began to renew our activity in the Church. Our own miracles began to happen, and we found ourselves blessed with the grace of Jesus Christ to help us maintain our abstinence one day at a time.

As we worked through step 2, we became willing to replace trust in ourselves and our addictions with faith in the love and power of Jesus Christ. We worked this step in our minds and hearts with the support of others, and we learned that the foundation of recovery from addiction must be spiritual. Then, as we pressed forward and worked each of the steps recommended in this guide, the spiritual nature of recovery was affirmed to us repeatedly.

This program is spiritual, and it's a program of action. For us and countless others, recovery work has been worth every effort. As we apply these principles and allow them to work in our lives, we are restored to sound mind and complete spiritual health. We find a genuine relationship with ourselves, with others, and with the Savior Jesus Christ.

For some of us, the miracle of recovery seemed to come quickly; for others, recovery has been more gradual. Either way, the important thing is that we continued to *practice* believing and trusting that God would do for us that which we couldn't do for ourselves. Over time we were eventually able to say that through "steadfastness in Christ," we have been rescued from addiction and enjoyed a "perfect brightness of hope" (2 Nephi 31:20).

Our loving Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, are with us every step of the way. They help nurture and expand our hope in Christ. President M. Russell Ballard taught:

"For those of you who have fallen prey to any kind of addiction, there is hope because God loves all of His children and because the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ makes all things possible.

"I have seen the marvelous blessing of recovery that can set one free from the chains of addiction. The Lord is our Shepherd, and we shall not want as we trust in the power of [His] Atonement. I know the Lord can and will free the addicted from their bondage, for as the Apostle Paul proclaimed, 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me' (Philippians 4:13)" ("O That Cunning Plan of the Evil One," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 110).

If we relapse, we find great value in turning to God and speaking with our sponsors. We may be tempted to give up all hope. But a relapse does not destroy the progress we have made, and it need not destroy our hope. Relapse is a powerful reminder of our need to continue to go to recovery meetings, find the support of sponsors and others, surrender to God, and work through these steps. As we keep pressing forward, we begin to feel the power of Jesus Christ in our lives. We are better able to abstain, and our hope increases.

Elder David A. Bednar taught: "We may falsely think that such blessings and gifts are reserved for other people who appear to be more righteous or who serve in visible Church callings. I testify that the tender mercies of the Lord are available to all of us and that the Redeemer of Israel is eager to bestow such gifts upon us" ("The Tender Mercies of the Lord," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2005, 101). Jesus Christ will give us many tender mercies in our journey toward recovery, one of the most important being the hope that the power of God can restore us to complete spiritual health.

Action Steps

This is a program of action. Our progress depends on consistently applying the steps in our daily lives. This is known as "working the steps." The following actions help us come unto Christ and receive the direction and power necessary to take the next step in our recovery.

Develop a correct understanding of God's character

Our shame often gets in the way of understanding God's character and love for us. Blinded by our pain and addictions, we often see Him as someone who is vengeful, disappointed, or angry with us. The purpose of this action step is to set aside incorrect ideas about God and develop a better understanding of His love, mercy, and willingness and desire to bless us.

First, it's important to understand that God is there even if we don't feel His presence. Coming to know God is hard work and requires patience. It can be difficult when we're used to instant gratification, but over time we can start to see and experience His divine characteristics. We come to know God better.

We can ask Heavenly Father to help us better understand His nature. We can look for the hand of God in our lives and how much He does for us. We can study scriptures about the Savior's mercy and grace and then discuss these scriptures with our sponsors and others who support us.

As we start gaining a better understanding of God's love and mercy, we start to experience greater confidence and hope in God's power to deliver us. President J. Reuben Clark Jr. testified of our Heavenly Father's mercy by stating: "I believe that our Heavenly Father wants to save every one of his children. . . . I believe that in his justice and mercy he will give us the maximum reward for our acts, give us all that he can give, and in the reverse, I believe that he will impose upon us the minimum penalty which it is possible for him to impose" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1953, 84).

Pray and study the scriptures

President M. Russell Ballard stated: "If anyone who is addicted has a desire to overcome, then there is a way to spiritual freedom—a way to escape from bondage—a way that is proven. It begins with prayer—sincere, fervent, and constant

communication with the Creator of our spirits and bodies, our Heavenly Father" ("O That Cunning Plan of the Evil One," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 110).

As we let go of pride and strive to do our best each day, we desire to pray for guidance and direction from a loving Heavenly Father. Some of us had never really prayed or pondered the scriptures. Some of us were tempted to stop praying or studying. We mistakenly thought these efforts were not working because we didn't feel close to God or because we still struggled with addiction.

We found that one of the keys to success was to continue using these spiritual tools. Praying aloud, praying in simple gratitude throughout the day, and praying for others were powerful new practices for many of us. One of the ways to increase the power of prayer is by more honestly expressing our struggles to God. Even as we shared with Heavenly Father our lack of willingness to change, our willingness was strengthened. We also experienced more frequent, quiet, small impressions from the Holy Ghost. We began to ask God what small steps we could take each day, instead of merely asking for Him to instantly remove our challenges and addictions.

Finally, the desire to communicate with God leads us to study the words of modern and ancient prophets. Prayerfully studying the scriptures, seeking answers to our questions, and recording impressions from the Spirit can be helpful in coming to believe that God can and will help us.

A great place to begin studying the word of God is with the scriptures and quotes at the end of each chapter in this guide. Each scripture and quote was selected with recovery in mind, and each question is asked with the hope that it might help us apply the scriptures and quotes to our lives. We have found that taking even a few minutes every day to seek what God desires to communicate to us yields great rewards. We give our witness to this truth: "Yea, we see that whosoever will may lay hold upon the word

of God, which is quick and powerful, which shall divide asunder all the cunning and the snares and the wiles of the devil” (Helaman 3:29).

Study and Understanding

The following scriptures and statements from Church leaders can help in our addiction recovery. We can use them for meditation, study, and journaling. We must remember to be honest and specific in our writing to gain the most benefit from it.

Believe in God

“Believe in God; believe that he is, and that he created all things, both in heaven and in earth; believe that he has all wisdom, and all power, both in heaven and in earth; believe that man doth not comprehend all the things which the Lord can comprehend” (Mosiah 4:9).

- Many witnesses in heaven and on earth testify of God’s existence. What evidence of God and His love have I experienced?

Increase faith in Jesus Christ

President Russell M. Nelson taught: “Start today to increase your faith. Through your faith, Jesus Christ will increase your ability to move the mountains in your life” (“Christ Is Risen: Faith in Him Will Move Mountains,” *Liahona*, May 2021, 101).

Many of us tried to recover from our addictions through sheer willpower or through having faith in a friend or therapist. Sooner or later, we found that faith in ourselves or others did not enable us to overcome our addictions fully. Faith in Jesus Christ and His ability to heal us is the foundation of our recovery.

- How do I feel today about turning to the Savior in my recovery efforts?

- What has helped me have faith in Jesus Christ?

- What do my sponsor, Church leaders, and others suggest I do to help increase my faith?

The power and strength of hope

When we have hope in our hearts and minds, we'll have a bright focus on our future actions. Hope brings stable strength and confidence rather than temporary optimism. Hope can also be a source of peace, calm, and emotional stability as we progress through our recovery from addiction.

Regarding this principle, President Russell M. Nelson stated, "Hope is mightier than a wistful wish.

Hope, fortified by faith and charity, forges a force as strong as steel. Hope becomes an anchor to the soul. . . . If we will cling to the anchor of hope, it will be our safeguard *forever*" ("A More Excellent Hope" [Brigham Young University devotional, Jan. 8, 1995], 3, speeches.byu.edu).

- When have I felt power and confidence because of hope in Christ?

- What daily spiritual practices and actions was I doing during that time?

- How did being hopeful affect my mind, mood, and spirit? How did it affect my future goals and plans?

- How did it affect my relationships and interactions with people who love and care about me?

Gratitude list

One way to see God in our lives is to frequently ponder and write about our blessings. We can better understand Heavenly Father's love for us by looking for evidence of His love and power in our lives.

- What am I grateful for?

- What good things have happened in my life?

- How have I seen God’s hand in my life?

Hold on to hope amidst relapse

Elder Dale G. Renlund taught: “A saint is a sinner who keeps on trying.’ . . . God cares a lot more about who we are and who we are becoming than about who we once were. He cares that we keep on trying” (“Latter-day Saints Keep on Trying,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 56). All of us experience feelings of hopelessness from time to time as we strive for recovery. This is especially true if or when we relapse. But our hope and recovery are rooted more in progress than perfection. A relapse does not erase our prior efforts or momentum in turning to Jesus

Christ. We can learn to maintain our hope in Christ even when we relapse.

- In what ways am I trying to change, get better, and progress?

- What are some of the victories or successes I’ve had in my life recently?

- What do my sponsor, Church leaders, family members, and friends say about my efforts and progress?

He can deliver us from bondage

“But if ye will turn to the Lord with full purpose of heart, and put your trust in him, and serve him with all diligence of mind, if ye do this, he will, according to his own will and pleasure, deliver you out of bondage” (Mosiah 7:33).

- What helps me have more faith in the promise that Jesus Christ will deliver me?

- How can I better turn to Jesus Christ, put my trust in Him, and serve Him with all diligence of mind? What specific things can I improve upon?

- What does it mean to me to wait upon Jesus Christ to deliver me “according to his own will and pleasure?”



Step 3: Decide to turn our wills and our lives over to the care of God, the Eternal Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Key Principle: Trust in God

Step 3 is the decision step. In the first two steps, we acknowledged what we could not do for ourselves and what we needed God to do for us. In step 3, we were introduced to the only thing we could do for God. We could decide to open ourselves to Him and surrender our entire lives—past, present, and future—and our wills to Him. Step 3 is an act of agency. It is the most important choice we make in this life.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell made the following statement about this most significant decision: “The submission of one’s will is really the only uniquely personal thing we have to place on God’s altar. It is a hard doctrine, but it is true. The many other things we give to God, however nice that may be of us, are actually things He has already given us, and He has loaned them to us. But when we begin to submit ourselves by letting our wills be swallowed up in God’s will, then we are really giving something

to Him” (“Insights from My Life,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2000, 9).

President Boyd K. Packer described his decision to yield his will to God and the freedom that decision gave him: “Perhaps the greatest discovery of my life, without question the greatest commitment, came when finally I had the confidence in God that I would loan or yield my agency to him—without compulsion or pressure. . . . In a sense, . . . to take one’s agency . . . and say, ‘I will do as you direct,’ is afterward to learn that in so doing you possess it all the more” (*Obedience*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year [Dec. 7, 1971], 4).

When we first attended recovery meetings, we may have felt pressured or even forced by others to be there. But to work step 3, we had to decide to act for ourselves. We realized that changing our lives had to be our own decision. It wasn’t about what our families and friends thought or wanted. We had to be willing to stay in recovery regardless of anyone else’s opinions or choices.

As we worked through step 3, we learned that recovery was far more the result of the Lord's efforts than our own. He worked the miracle when we invited Him into our lives. We chose to allow God to recover and redeem us. We decided to allow Him to direct our lives, remembering, of course, that He always respects our agency. We put our lives in His hands when we decided to continue this spiritually focused program of recovery.

When we took this step, we felt terrified of the unknown. What would happen if we humbled ourselves and surrendered our lives and wills completely to God's care? For many of us, childhood was very hard, and we were terrified of becoming as vulnerable as little children again. Because of past experiences, we were convinced that committing to recovery was nearly impossible. We had seen other people break too many commitments, and we had broken too many ourselves. But we decided to try what our recovering friends had suggested: "Don't use. Go to meetings. Ask for help." Those who had walked the steps of recovery before us invited us to experiment with this new way of living. They waited patiently for us to become willing to open the door to God just a little bit.

Jesus Christ extends the same invitation: "I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20).

At first, our efforts were anxious and halting. We kept giving Jesus Christ our trust and then taking it back. We worried that He would be displeased at our inconsistency and withdraw His support and love from us. But He didn't.

Gradually we allowed Jesus Christ to demonstrate His healing power and the safety of following His way. Each of us realized that we not only had to give up our addictions, but we also had to turn our entire wills and lives over to God. As we did so, we found that He is patient and accepting of our faltering efforts to surrender to Him in all things.

Our ability to withstand temptation is now anchored to humbly submitting to God's will. We express our need for the power of the Savior's Atonement, and we begin to feel that power within us, fortifying us against the next temptation. We have learned to accept life on the Savior's terms.

Submitting to God can be hard for us. It requires us to rededicate ourselves to His will each day, sometimes every hour, or even moment to moment. As we are willing to do so, we find the grace and enabling power to do what we cannot do for ourselves.

Continually submitting to God's will reduces stress and brings more meaning to our lives. We are less irritated by the little things that used to bother us. We accept responsibility for our actions. We treat other people as the Savior would treat them. Our eyes, minds, and hearts are open to the truth that mortality is challenging and that it will always have the potential to bring us sorrow and frustration as well as happiness.

Each day we renew our commitment to submit to God's will. This is what most of us mean when we say, "One day at a time." We have decided to let go of the self-will and self-seeking that were at the root of our addictions. And we have decided to enjoy another day of the serenity and strength that come from trusting in God and in His goodness, power, and love.

Steps 1, 2, and 3 help us understand how to exercise faith. One of the clearest indications of working step 3 is that we are willing to trust God enough to continue to the next step.

Action Steps

This is a program of action. Our progress depends on consistently applying the steps in our daily lives. This is known as "working the steps." The following actions help us come unto Christ and receive the direction and power necessary to take the next step in our recovery.

Decide to trust and obey God

These words—adapted from the “Serenity Prayer” by Reinhold Niebuhr—help us as we decide to trust and obey God: “God, grant me serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.” These words beautifully harmonize with the Prophet Joseph Smith’s words in Doctrine and Covenants 123:17: “Therefore, . . . let us cheerfully do all things that lie in our power; and then may we stand still, with the utmost assurance, to see the salvation of God, and for his arm to be revealed.”

God grants us serenity when we trust in His ability to help us. We accept that although we cannot control the choices and actions of others, we can decide how we will act in each situation we face. We courageously decide to trust our Father in Heaven and act according to His will. We turn our wills and lives over to His care. We decide to obey Him and keep His commandments.

In our recovery, we have found that we need to practice step 3 often. Sometimes it seems that we need to recommit each moment or each day. It doesn’t matter how many times we need to do it. Each time we do, we feel God’s help and His love, and we are strengthened in our recovery. Elder Neal A. Maxwell reminded us: “Spiritual submissiveness is not accomplished in an instant, but by the incremental improvements and by the successive use of stepping-stones. Stepping-stones are meant to be taken one at a time. . . . Eventually our wills can be ‘swallowed up in the will of the Father’ as we are ‘willing to submit . . . even as a child doth submit to his father’ (see Mosiah 15:7; 3:19)” (“Consecrate Thy Performance,” *Ensign*, May 2002, 36).

Review and renew covenants with God

Trusting God in all things can be like putting on a new pair of glasses and seeing everything clearly. When we decide to turn our wills over to God, we begin to experience the comfort and joy that come

from seeking and doing Heavenly Father’s will. One way we show our willingness to trust God is to prepare to worthily take the sacrament.

Speak with your bishop or branch president about your addiction and your decision to follow God’s will. Do your best to attend sacrament meeting each week. As you worship, listen carefully to the sacrament prayers and consider the gifts that Heavenly Father offers you. Then renew your commitment to accept and follow His will for your life by partaking of the sacrament if your bishop or branch president agrees that you are ready to do so.

As your recovery progresses, you will find yourself more willing to be among those who honor the Savior’s sacrifice. You will begin to experience the reality that “with God nothing shall be impossible” (Luke 1:37).

Study and Understanding

The following scriptures and statements from Church leaders can help in our recovery. We can use them for meditation, study, and journaling. Our nature is to find the easiest and softest option for recovery. But we now know that being honest and specific is more helpful. As we review our answers to the following questions with our sponsors and others, we clearly see our perspectives and motives.

Find harmony with the will of God

“Reconcile yourselves to the will of God, and not to the will of the devil and the flesh; and remember, after ye are reconciled unto God, that it is only in and through the grace of God that ye are saved” (2 Nephi 10:24).

- What does the word *reconcile* mean?

- What does it mean to live my life in harmony with the will of God?

- How can I feel God’s enabling power in my life as I turn to Him?

- How do I feel about letting God direct my life?

- What prevents me from allowing Him to direct my life?

Submit to the will of God

“The burdens which were laid upon Alma and his brethren were made light; yea, the Lord did strengthen them that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord” (Mosiah 24:15).

God could have removed the burdens of Alma and his people. But instead, He strengthened them to “bear up their burdens with ease.” Notice that they did not complain but submitted cheerfully and patiently to God’s will. Think about the humility it takes to be willing to have a burden lightened gradually rather than immediately.

- What does it mean to submit to God?

- How do I submit?

- How do I feel about submitting willingly and patiently to God’s timetable?

- How can I gain the courage to keep trying to follow His will?

Fast and pray

“They did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God” (Helaman 3:35).

- This verse describes people who yielded their hearts to God. How can fasting help me yield my heart to God and abstain from addiction?

- Will I commit to pray in the moment of temptation for humility and faith in Christ? Why or why not?

- How strong is my willingness to yield my heart to God instead of to addiction?

Humble ourselves before God

“But behold, he did deliver them because they did humble themselves before him; and because they cried mightily unto him he did deliver them out of bondage; and thus doth the Lord work with his power in all cases among the children of men, extending the arm of mercy towards them that put their trust in him” (Mosiah 29:20).

Humbling ourselves is a decision. We may be tempted to believe that although God has helped others, He won't help us because we are helpless and hopeless. We can recognize this lie for what it is. In truth, we are children of God.

- How does this knowledge help me humble myself and seek God's help?

- What other thoughts and false beliefs about God and about me have kept me from crying mightily to God for deliverance from bondage?

Choose to trust God

“I would that ye should be humble, and be submissive and gentle; easy to be entreated; full of patience and long-suffering; being temperate in all things; being diligent in keeping the commandments of God at all times; asking for whatsoever things ye stand in need, both spiritual and temporal; always returning thanks unto God for whatsoever things ye do receive” (Alma 7:23).

Trusting God is a choice. Recovery happens by God's power but only after we choose to submit to His will. Our decision then opens the channel for His power to flow into our lives. This scripture describes the qualities we need to surrender our lives and wills to God's care.

- Which of these qualities do I lack?

- Who can help me develop the qualities I lack?

- Which qualities can I work on today?

- What can I do now to start developing these qualities?

Become as a child

“The natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit,

and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father” (Mosiah 3:19).

Many of us experienced unkind treatment from parents or guardians, so becoming “as a child” is challenging, maybe even terrifying.

- Is this the case for me? Do I have unresolved problems with a parent?

- What can I do to separate my feelings about my parents from my feelings about God?

Commune with God

“[Jesus] kneeled down, and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:41-42).

In this prayer, the Savior demonstrated His willingness to submit to Heavenly Father. He expressed His desires, but then He humbly did the will of His Father. It is a blessing to be able to tell God our feelings.

- How does knowing that Heavenly Father understands my fear, pain, or whatever I am feeling help me to say honestly, “Thy will be done”?



Step 4: Make a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

Key Principle: Truth

The purpose of step 4 is to look at our past to better understand our weaknesses and recognize what is preventing us from becoming like the Savior and serving others. For example, fear, justification, and denial cloud our ability to see things clearly. But we can't change something if we aren't fully aware of it. Our inventories help us understand everything that is getting in the way of our recovery process. Writing our inventories requires us to be honest with ourselves about who we are and where we have been so that we can then ask God to help us change, become better, and heal.

We have all experienced very difficult things. Our hearts have been broken, and we have painful emotional scars. We turned to addictive substances and behaviors that numbed the pain, and then we made choices to continue seeking this temporary relief. These behaviors caused even more pain, which gave us more reason to use addiction to cope. The pains of life and our addictive behaviors became mountains of shame that we tried to hide, forget, or deny.

Our addictions, fear, and denial crippled our ability to reflect honestly about our lives. We denied or didn't understand the damage and havoc our addictions caused in our relationships. So we did all we could to forget, justify, or lie to ourselves to cope with our pain. Consequently, we couldn't recognize many of our mistakes or we tried to forget them. We had lied to ourselves so convincingly that much of our past was now out of view to us. Our sponsors and others in recovery groups asked us to do the hard work and admit to ourselves what we may have forgotten or were unwilling to see. Only then could we understand that we need the Savior to heal us.

The prospect of reviewing our past and then writing it down seemed overwhelming and at times even impossible. It took a lot of effort and work to do this. We had to search our hearts and minds to remember our past experiences, and it was difficult for us to write them down. The important thing was to sit down and start writing. This forced us to practice our newly strengthened trust in God. Our hope that we could be healed, forgiven, and freed from bondage gave us courage to try. We asked God to help us overcome our fear. We asked Him to help

us remember and face our mistakes and pain with courage. He heard us and was there for us.

Our sponsors were essential in helping us bravely move forward with this step. Because they had taken this step themselves, they were able to encourage us and help us see our past clearly. We didn't do it perfectly, but we did our best. And in the end, it was enough. By recognizing and discovering the destructive elements in our lives, we had taken a necessary step in correcting them. We also found it helpful to recognize the good in our past and include in our inventories the positive things we had done and strengths we had developed. Step 4 helped us give God an honest account of who we are, including both our weaknesses and our strengths.

These written lists of our resentments, fears, harms, and strengths become a critical asset in our recovery journey. As we eventually progress to steps 6 and 7, we will use our inventories to review the weaknesses that keep us perpetually stuck in destructive cycles. For instance, it was pride and fear that held us back from owning our mistakes, which caused us to damage relationships and trust. Then, as we approach steps 8 and 9, the people from our inventories are those we will have the opportunity to forgive and make amends to.

Action Step

This is a program of action. Our progress depends on consistently applying the steps in our daily lives. This is known as “working the steps.” The following actions help us come unto Christ and receive the direction and power necessary to take the next step in our recovery.

Write an inventory with a sponsor's help

This step is where we start to exercise our faith through our works (see James 2:17–18). For many of us, this is the hardest step. It may be challenging, painful, and overwhelming, and we may feel we

need to account for everything in our past. However, writing our inventories does not have to be an insurmountable task. We can sit down, pray, and begin to write, even if we write about only one question or event at a time.

Please review the examples and principles in the appendix (for example, the worksheet). We can use one of these examples as a template to help us begin. If we overcomplicate this process, it is much harder for us to start or to make progress. So when writing our first inventory, it may be best to keep things simple. We can always come back to it again as we continue to work the steps. Please work with your sponsor as you write your inventory. God blesses us as we do this work, and we will never regret it.

Study and Understanding

The following scriptures and statements from Church leaders can help in our addiction recovery. We can use them for meditation, study, and journaling. We must remember to be honest and specific in our writing to gain the most benefit from it.

Addiction is a symptom

“For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7).

Many of us assumed our addictions are a physical problem. We were surprised to learn that our thoughts, feelings, and beliefs are the roots of our addictive behaviors. The difficult combination of our brain, body, and attitude is what seems to keep us stuck. We have come to see that our addictive behaviors are not our main problem but a harmful solution to our real problems.

- How can this perspective about my addiction help me move forward in writing my inventory?

- As I pray and ask God to help me be honest, what does the Holy Ghost teach me about my tendency to deny the reality of my condition and circumstances?

Take inventory

In the scriptures, we see many invitations to take a close, honest look at ourselves. A wonderful example is found in Alma 5:14. The prophet Alma asked these inventory questions: “Have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?” We suggest studying the rest of Alma chapter 5 for more examples of inventory questions we can ask ourselves.

Taking inventory of where we are presently can be very helpful. For example, a business that doesn’t regularly take inventory of its assets and liabilities usually doesn’t thrive. Taking inventory is an opportunity for business owners to objectively determine what is valuable and should be kept and what is detrimental and should be discarded. If business owners fall into the trap of dishonesty and fool themselves about the real nature of the inventory, they won’t be able to make accurate decisions about the value of their goods.

Similarly, it is important for us to take an honest look at our lives and character.

- How have I fooled myself about my weaknesses?

- How have I failed to see my true worth and strength?

Face our past

“And when I desire to rejoice, my heart groaneth because of my sins; nevertheless, I know in whom I have trusted” (2 Nephi 4:19).

While doing our inventories, there were times when our hearts groaned because of our sins and the pains we may have faced.

- How can trusting God help me as I complete my inventory and face my sins and pain?

Trust that He will heal us

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:5–6).

An inventory can help us see the whole picture. It helps us become aware of our thoughts, feelings, and actions as well as who our choices have affected. Two of the common threads in many of our inventories were fear and an over-reliance on self. The commitment we made in step 3 was to trust God and this recovery process. Our inventories are the next step of recovery and will give us concrete ideas about how to proceed.

- How would my life and choices be different if I let go of pride and instead chose to rely on and trust God?

- What reluctance do I feel about moving forward in my commitment to turn my life and will over to God’s care?

- When I ask God if He will care for me in each step of my recovery, what is the answer I receive in my heart and mind through the Holy Ghost? Keep in mind that God’s manner of caring for us may be different than what we would choose for ourselves.

Spiritual sickness

“Sometimes spiritual illness comes as a result of sin or emotional wounds. Sometimes spiritual breakdowns come so gradually that we can scarcely tell what is happening. Like layers of sedimentary rock, spiritual pain and grief can build over time, weighing upon our spirits until it is almost too heavy to bear. . . .

“But just because spiritual trials are real does not mean that they are incurable.

“We can heal spiritually.

“Even the deepest spiritual wounds—yes, even those that may appear to be incurable—can be healed” (Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Bearers of Heavenly Light,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 78).

Consider the three worst things you have done in your life. Were you close to the Savior and His Spirit when you did those things? If you were like we were, you weren’t open to His Spirit. Many in recovery call this disconnection being “spiritually sick.”

- When I indulge in addictive and wrongful behaviors, am I spiritually sick? Why or why not?

Resentments

A major portion of our inventories is to record our resentments. These include grudges we've held for people, institutions, and other things we felt harmed us or treated us unfairly. Harboring resentment has been one of the most poisonous and detrimental forces in our addictions. It set us against others and led us to feeling justified in our own harmful or apathetic choices.

We found heavenly help to see others in a new, charitable light as we made the conscious choice to pray for them and ask God to bless them with every blessing that we would seek for ourselves. "Extending forgiveness can take tremendous courage and humility. It can also take time. It requires us to put our faith and trust in the Lord as we assume accountability for the condition of our hearts. Here lies the significance and power of our agency" (Amy A. Wright, "Christ Heals That Which Is Broken," *Liahona*, May 2022, 82).

- Can I choose to take a new perspective about the people I resent? Could they, like me, have been spiritually sick and disconnected from God when they wronged me?

- If I struggle with this, how can I change my approach to praying for these people?



Step 5: Admit to ourselves, to our Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ, to proper priesthood authority, and to another person the exact nature of our wrongs.

Key Principle: Confession

In our addictions, most of us felt isolated or alone. Even on occasions when others might feel a sense of connectedness, we felt like we didn't fit in. Many of us felt broken and thought no one would accept or love us, especially if they knew about our addictions. As we came to recovery meetings, we began to emerge from the isolation in which addiction thrived. At first, many of us just sat and listened, but eventually we felt safe enough to share our experiences. Still, we kept many things to ourselves—shameful things, embarrassing things, heartbreaking things, things that made us feel vulnerable.

Working step 4 may bring back these feelings of shame and embarrassment, so we recommend working step 5 right after completing step 4. Postponing it would be like acknowledging an infected wound without cleansing it. Admitting our wrongs seemed

overwhelming, but as we asked Jesus Christ for help, He gave us courage and strength.

Sharing our inventories with our sponsors and then confessing to our bishops seemed to be the hardest things we had ever done. But those who had gone before us helped us understand the importance of this step. Writing our inventories helped us become fully aware of our mistakes, weaknesses, and sins. But becoming aware of them was not enough. Addiction thrives in secrecy. By working through step 5, we broke that secrecy. Sister Carole M. Stephens taught, “Hope and healing are not found in the dark abyss of secrecy but in the light and love of our Savior, Jesus Christ” (“The Master Healer,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 11). Being completely honest prepares us for the next steps and allows Jesus Christ to heal us more fully.

President Spencer W. Kimball taught: “Repentance can never come until one has bared his soul and admitted his actions without excuses or

rationalizations. . . . Those persons who choose to meet the issue and transform their lives may find repentance the harder road at first, but they will find it the infinitely more desirable path as they taste of its fruits” (“The Gospel of Repentance,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1982, 4).

Trusting God and summoning courage, we decided to work step 5. We weren’t sure we could overcome the intense feeling of shame and fear of rejection. Some of us started to share or confess but gave in to fear and had to try again. We prayed and asked God to help us have the strength we would need. Sharing and admitting our mistakes was a powerful experience. As we did so, we felt Jesus Christ’s love for us, which gave us hope that it would be okay.

Although our sponsors helped us write our inventories, we needed to share our inventories with them or another trusted person. They saw things from a different perspective and helped us see patterns we couldn’t. They helped us better understand our tendencies toward negative thoughts and emotions (such as self-will, fear, pride, self-pity, jealousy, self-righteousness, anger, resentment, lust, and so on). These thoughts and emotions reflected the nature of and were the fruits of our wrongs. But our sponsors could see the good in us and helped us see the good in ourselves.

We confessed to our bishops or branch presidents anything that was illegal or that would have prevented us from having a temple recommend. If we had doubts about what to confess, we asked our priesthood leaders. Our confessions involved seeking forgiveness from Jesus Christ through prayer and proper priesthood authority. For most of us, this experience was liberating. We unloaded our heavy burdens and placed them at the Savior’s feet. We felt peace, joy, and love. This experience was sacred and sweet.

Action Steps

This is a program of action. Our progress depends on consistently applying the steps in our daily lives. This is known as “working the steps.” The following actions help us come unto Christ and receive the direction and power necessary to take the next step in our recovery.

Share our inventories from step 4 with our sponsors and confess our sins to God and proper priesthood authorities as needed

Alma advised his son Corianton to “acknowledge [his] faults and [the] wrong which [he did]” (Alma 39:13). This advice can serve as a guide and inspiration for working step 5. This step includes sharing our inventories from step 4 with another person, typically a sponsor, who has been through the process and can help us share in an honest and a thorough way. If a sponsor is not available, prayerfully select another trusted person, preferably someone well-grounded in recovery. Avoid anyone you suspect might extend improper guidance, provide misinformation, or have difficulty maintaining confidences. We also suggest caution in sharing our inventories with close family members. It is important to counsel with our bishops or therapists to decide when to disclose our behaviors to a spouse in order to prevent further injury to them.

Jesus Christ taught that confession is an essential part of the repentance process: “By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them” (Doctrine and Covenants 58:43). Therefore, we confess our sins to our Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ and seek His forgiveness. Furthermore, we should confess our more serious transgressions to a bishop or branch president. If you are unsure what to confess, listen to your conscience and be mindful of sexual sins or other immoral behaviors. When in doubt, remember the invitation to “come now and let us reason

together” (Isaiah 1:18) and discuss your questions with your priesthood leader.

“While only the Lord can forgive sins, these priesthood leaders play a critical role in the process of repentance. They will keep your confession confidential and help you throughout the process of repentance. Be completely honest with them. If you partially confess, mentioning only lesser mistakes, you will not be able to resolve a more serious, undisclosed transgression. The sooner you begin this process, the sooner you will find the peace and joy that come with the miracle of forgiveness” (*True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* [2004], 134).

Let peace into our lives

Repentance and confession bring peace into our lives. Elder Quentin L. Cook described this peace by stating: “When there has been a major transgression, confession is required to bring peace. Perhaps there is nothing to compare with the peace that comes from a sin-wracked soul unloading his or her burdens on the Lord and claiming the blessings of the Atonement” (“Personal Peace: The Reward of Righteousness,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2013, 32).

Occasionally people in recovery meetings or in other situations continually rehearse their sins and shortcomings. Though they constantly confess their mistakes, they never find peace. Do not confuse step 5 with an obsessive desire to dwell on negative things. The intent of step 5 is exactly the opposite. We work step 5 not to hold on to the things we confess but to let them go.

Once we honestly and thoroughly completed step 5, we were left with nothing to hide. We outwardly demonstrated our desire to “give away all [our] sins” (Alma 22:18) so that we could receive a greater knowledge of God’s love and the love of many people who care about us.

Study and Understanding

The following scriptures and statements from Church leaders can help in our addiction recovery. We can use them for meditation, study, and journaling. We must remember to be honest and specific in our writing to gain the most benefit from it.

Confess to God

“I, the Lord, forgive sins unto those who confess their sins before me and ask forgiveness” (Doctrine and Covenants 64:7).

- How does confessing my sins to God help me make positive changes in my life? How does it give me courage and strength to confess to another person?

Focus on how God sees us

“Let not any man publish his own righteousness; . . . sooner let him confess his sins, and then he will be forgiven, and he will bring forth more fruit” (Joseph Smith, in History, 1838–1856 [Manuscript History of the Church], volume C-1 Addenda, 46, josephsmithpapers.org).

- One major obsession of people who struggle with addiction is a desire to look good to others. How would this desire keep me from improving and “bringing forth more fruit,” or good works?

- How would my behavior change if I were more concerned about how God perceives me?

Be sincere

“Whosoever transgresseth against me, him shall ye judge according to the sins which he has committed; and if he confess his sins before thee and me, and repenteth in the sincerity of his heart, him shall ye forgive, and I will forgive him also” (Mosiah 26:29).

When we confess our sins, we must be sincere.

- Consider how holding back part of my confession undermines the sincerity of my efforts. What part of my inventory, if any, am I tempted to hide?

- What do I have to gain by hiding this portion of my inventory? What do I have to lose?

- How might Jesus Christ bless my life if I confess the most difficult things first and give them to Him?

Confess our sins as soon as we recognize them

“In this same year were they brought to a knowledge of their error and did confess their faults” (3 Nephi 1:25).

- This verse is an example of people who did not procrastinate confessing their faults once they recognized them. What are the benefits of confessing my sins right after I recognize them?

- What might be the detrimental effects if I procrastinate confessing my sins?

Relieve stress and find peace

“I would not dwell upon your crimes, to harrow up your soul, if it were not for your good” (Alma 39:7).



Step 6: Become entirely ready to have God remove all our character weaknesses.

Key Principle: Change of Heart

Many of us found success and healing through step 5. We were amazed by and grateful for the transformation in ourselves. Most of us found that our addictions tempted us less intensely and less often. Some of us had already started to see the blessings of recovery. We all felt closer to Heavenly Father and had more peace in our lives. With such mighty changes, some of us wondered if this was all we needed to do. But we still needed more healing to continue and maintain our recovery.

We noticed that abstinence made our character weaknesses more visible. Because we no longer used addiction as an escape, we could see our issues more clearly. We tried to control our negative thoughts and feelings, but they continued to reappear, haunting us and threatening our new lives in recovery. We were tempted to use our addictive behaviors and self-will to try to control our character weaknesses and cope with stress as we had in our past.

Those who understood the spiritual implications of recovery urged us to recognize that while all the

outward changes in our lives are wonderful, Jesus Christ has more blessings for us. Others helped us see that if we want to not only avoid our addictions but lose the desire to return to them, we must experience a change of heart. This desire for a change of heart is the purpose of step 6.

You may wonder how you can accomplish such a change. Step 6, like the steps before it, may feel like an overwhelming challenge. Don't be discouraged by these feelings. As painful as it may be, you may have to admit, as we did, that recognizing and confessing our character weaknesses in steps 4 and 5 does not mean we are ready to give them up. We may still cling to our old ways as we try to cope with stress.

The most humbling thing to acknowledge is that we may be trying to change ourselves without God's help. Step 6 requires us to surrender to God all remnants of pride and self-will. Like steps 1 and 2, step 6 requires us to continually humble ourselves and admit our need for the redeeming and transforming power of Christ. After all, His atoning

sacrifice has enabled us to work through each step up to this point. Step 6 is no exception.

As we come unto Jesus Christ and ask for help with this step, we will not be disappointed. If we trust Him and have patience with the process, we will see our pride gradually replaced by humility. He will wait patiently for us to weary of our efforts to change on our own without help. As soon as we turn to Him, we will again witness His love and power. Instead of clinging to old patterns of behavior, we can have an open mind as the Spirit gently suggests a better way of living. Our fear of change will diminish as we realize that Jesus Christ understands the pain and hard work required. Again, this happens over time and is different for each of us. This is an exercise of continually giving our wills to the Lord. It is a process, not a onetime event.

As the process of coming unto Christ takes hold in our hearts, our false beliefs that fueled our negative thoughts and feelings will be replaced by truth. We will grow in strength as we continue to study and apply the word of God. Through the testimonies of others, the Lord will help us learn that we are not beyond His power to heal. The desire to blame others or rationalize our way out of this challenging process will be replaced by the desire to be accountable to Him and be submissive to His will. Through the prophet Ezekiel, the Lord declared, “A new heart . . . will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26).

The Savior wants to bless us and change our natures. As we let Him do so, we will become more united with Him, just as He is united with Heavenly Father. The Savior wants to give us rest from the isolation and fear that contributed to our addictions. He wants to bless us with His grace and power available to us through His atoning sacrifice.

As we yield to the promptings of the Spirit and look to God for salvation not only from addiction but from character weaknesses, He will change our

disposition and character if we are willing. A growing desire to be sanctified by God will prepare us for a change in our very natures. President Ezra Taft Benson described this change as follows:

“The Lord works from the inside out. The world works from the outside in. The world would take people out of the slums. Christ takes the slums out of people, and then they take themselves out of the slums. The world would mold [people] by changing their environment. Christ changes [people], who then change their environment. The world would shape human behavior, but Christ can change human nature. . . .

“May we be convinced that Jesus is the Christ, choose to follow Him, be changed for Him, captained by Him, consumed in Him, and born again” (“Born of God,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 6–7).

Action Steps

This is a program of action. Our progress depends on consistently applying the steps in our daily lives. This is known as “working the steps.” The following actions help us come unto Christ and receive the direction and power necessary to take the next step in our recovery.

Be willing to change through the power of God

When we first learned of step 6, some of us said, “Of course I’m ready for God to remove my weaknesses!” We felt defeated by our many failed attempts to overcome our weaknesses on our own. However, as we pondered and received input from our sponsors, we realized we were more reluctant to let go of our weaknesses than we thought.

The Holy Spirit and others helped us see that we often used our weaknesses as defense mechanisms or as ways to boost our egos. For instance, some of us resorted to resentment and a sense of superiority

when we felt threatened. We liked feeling right although we were often wrong.

Some of us put ourselves down and diminished our divine nature to keep others from hurting us. We assumed that if we could insult ourselves first, then anyone else who demeaned us had simply come to the same conclusion we'd already reached.

But these unhealthy responses to challenges came from our character weaknesses, not our strengths. We were afraid that if we let go of our weaknesses, we would be more vulnerable. But as we let God remove our weaknesses and worked with our sponsors, we discovered how much God cares for us.

We invite you to awaken to your true worth and put your confidence in God's care rather than in your own defenses.

Find connection with others in recovery and at church

As we became more comfortable with other people in recovery, we started to see that they were more like us than we had assumed. As we shared our stories and listened to other people share theirs, our compassion grew. We began to recognize the common condition of all of God's children and felt more at home around them. Family, friends, and Church leaders invited us to come back to church or to strengthen our current commitments. Instead of resisting or making excuses, we decided to attend church. We gradually found that many things we loved about recovery meetings were also part of worship at church.

When we were baptized, few of us understood the lifelong process of true conversion. However, President Marion G. Romney explained it plainly: "In one who is really wholly converted, desire for things contrary to the gospel of Jesus Christ has actually died. And substituted therefore is a love of God, with a fixed and controlling determination to keep his commandments" (in Conference Report, Guatemala Area Conference 1977, 8).

As we experience the miracle of ongoing recovery—first from addictive behaviors and then from character weaknesses—we will experience true conversion. We will awaken and come to ourselves just as the prodigal son "came to himself" (Luke 15:17).

Study and Understanding

The following scriptures and statements from Church leaders can help in our recovery. We can use them for meditation, study, and journaling. We must remember to be honest and specific in our writing to gain the most benefit from it.

Give away all your sins

"The king said: . . . [W]hat shall I do that I may be born of God, having this wicked spirit rooted out of my breast, and receive his Spirit, that I may be filled with joy? . . . I will give up all that I possess, . . . that I may receive this great joy. . . .

"The king did bow down before the Lord, upon his knees; yea, even he did prostrate himself upon the earth, and cried mightily, saying:

"O God, . . . I will give away all my sins to know thee, and that I may be raised from the dead, and be saved at the last day" (Alma 22:15, 17–18).

- Reread these verses carefully. What obstacles, including attitudes and feelings, keep me from giving away "all my sins" and more fully receiving the Spirit?

Participate in the fellowship of the Church

“And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters” (Mosiah 5:7).

As we take upon ourselves the name of Christ and are strengthened by His Spirit, we begin to identify with the Saints—brothers and sisters who have been baptized and have entered into His family on earth.

- As I have come to know my fellow Saints better, how have I become more willing to participate in the fellowship of the Church?

Experience redemption

“The natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love” (Mosiah 3:19).

Many of us become Saints in name only at baptism and spend the rest of our lives struggling to “put off the natural man [or woman]” and develop the characteristics listed in this verse.

- How has this struggle prepared me to accept that it is only through the Atonement of Christ—by becoming one with Jesus Christ and Heavenly Father—that I can experience redemption?

Come unto Christ

Elder Richard G. Scott taught: “No matter what the source of difficulty and no matter how you begin to obtain relief—through a qualified professional therapist, doctor, priesthood leader, friend, concerned parent, or loved one—no matter how you begin,

those solutions will never provide a complete answer. The final healing comes through faith in Jesus Christ and His teachings, with a broken heart and a contrite spirit and obedience to His commandments” (“To Be Healed,” *Ensign*, May 1994, 9).

No amount of support or fellowship—even in recovery groups or congregations of the Church—will bring salvation. Other people may support and bless us in our journey, but eventually we must come unto Christ Himself.

- How did my journey of recovery begin?

- Who was instrumental in helping me get on the path to repentance and recovery? How has their example pointed me toward the Savior?

- What have I learned about the Savior that has helped or influenced my desire or ability to change my behavior?

Be patient with the process

“Ye are little children and ye cannot bear all things now; ye must grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth.

“Fear not, little children, for you are mine, and I have overcome the world; . . .

“And none of them that my Father hath given me shall be lost” (Doctrine and Covenants 50:40–42).

Sometimes we become impatient or discouraged that recovery is an ongoing process. These verses show Jesus Christ's and Heavenly Father's patience with us as "little children." Apply these verses to yourself by writing them out addressed to you personally.

- How can the promises in this scripture strengthen me when I get discouraged?

- How does Jesus Christ help me along the strait and narrow path?

- How does my growing love for God and other people bring me out of addiction, help me continue in abstinence, and restore my hope of eternal life?

Receive help from Jesus Christ

“My beloved brethren, after ye have gotten into this strait and narrow path, I would ask if all is done? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save.

“Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life” (2 Nephi 31:19–20).



Step 7: Humbly ask Heavenly Father to remove our shortcomings.

Key Principle: Humility

All the previous steps have prepared us for this step. Step 1 helped us to be humble and admit we were powerless over our addictions. Steps 2 and 3 helped us have enough faith and confidence in the Lord to ask Him for help. Our inventories from step 4 helped us see our characters and behaviors more clearly. Working step 5 demonstrated our courage to be honest with God, ourselves, and another person. Step 6 helped us become ready and willing to let go of our character weaknesses. We are now ready to take step 7. We focus on the “HOW” of working each step: being humble, open-minded, and willing.

All the steps require humility, but step 7 requires it most explicitly: “Humbly ask Heavenly Father to remove our shortcomings.” As we worked through the first few steps in recovery, we learned that no matter how hard we try on our own, we cannot change or find recovery without the Lord’s help. This step is no different. *True to the Faith* describes humility as follows: “To be humble is to recognize gratefully your dependence on the Lord—to understand that

you have constant need for His support” (*True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* [2004], 86).

Some of us began to slip back into our old ways and tried to change on our own. But as we recognized our many faults and weaknesses, we learned that we need to rely upon the Lord for His help to change. In working step 7, we were not excused from the work that was ours to do. We had to be patient and “press forward with steadfastness in Christ” (2 Nephi 31:20). We needed consistent reminders to turn to God and ask for His help.

We wondered how these miracles would happen for us. It has been different for each of us, but there is some common ground. Rarely have people experienced dramatic and sudden changes to their character; the gradual process of steps 6 and 7 have usually come about the way Elder David A. Bednar describes:

“We as members of the Church tend to emphasize marvelous and dramatic spiritual manifestations so much that we may fail to appreciate and may even overlook the customary pattern by which the Holy Ghost accomplishes His work, . . . [which is

through] small and incremental spiritual impressions” (“The Spirit of Revelation,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2011, 88).

When we choose to surrender to God and align our will with His, our days are full of small moments in which He invites us to pause in our old, reactive responses and instead rely on His power to help, lift, and love. Sister Rebecca L. Craven taught: “Do not become discouraged. Change is a lifelong process. . . . In our struggles to change, the Lord is patient with us” (“Keep the Change,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2020, 59).

Whether our addictions have been to alcohol, drugs, gambling, sexual lust, self-destructive eating patterns, compulsive spending, or other addictive behaviors or substances that we’ve used to cope with stress in life, the Savior will “succor [us] according to [our] infirmities” (Alma 7:12). As we become willing to change by coming unto Jesus Christ, we experience His healing power.

While working on this step, many of us found that we had to fight off the tendency to feel ashamed. Looking at our shortcomings brought up feelings that we weren’t good enough or that we had once again failed. But working the steps and coming unto Christ gave us a new way of looking at ourselves. We felt God’s love for us as His beloved sons and daughters. This love helped us fight off feelings of shame and self-pity.

We began to see our shortcomings and weaknesses as opportunities to humbly ask for God’s help to move forward in our recovery journey.

Action Steps

This is a program of action. Our progress depends on consistently applying the steps in our daily lives. This is known as “working the steps.” The following actions help us come unto Christ and receive the direction and power necessary to take the next step in our recovery.

Ask God to do what we cannot do for ourselves

How do we live step 7 daily? We pause during the day in the moments when our self-will comes back or when we see our weaknesses. In these moments, we surrender and listen. We remember we are powerless to change ourselves unaided, and we trust that the Lord can change us. Then we go forward relying on Him. We let go of what we cannot do, and we ask God to help us.

This requires turning to God in prayer. “Each of us has problems that we cannot solve and weaknesses that we cannot conquer without reaching out through prayer to a higher source of strength” (James E. Faust, “The Lifeline of Prayer,” *Ensign*, May 2002, 59).

When we meaningfully and purposefully pray, we can access God’s love. When we allow ourselves a peaceful time and place to connect with the divine, we can build and strengthen our relationship with God. By keeping a simple prayer in our hearts, such as, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6) or “Thy will be done” (Doctrine and Covenants 109:44), we will continually remember our total dependence upon the Lord. Our love for God and His love for us will help us form a relationship to which we can give our whole selves.

Study the sacrament prayers

The sacrament prayers are wonderful expressions of the humility and intent behind step 7. We have the opportunity to partake of the sacrament each week and meditate on the words of the sacrament prayers.

We suggest reading Moroni 4:3; 5:2 and humbly applying these sacred words in your own voice as follows: “O God, the Eternal Father, [I] ask thee in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this bread to [my soul as I] partake of it; that [I] may eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son, and witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that [I am] willing to take upon [myself] the name of thy

Son, and always remember him, and keep his commandments which he hath given [me], that [I] may always have his Spirit to be with [me]" (Moroni 4:3).

As we think of the sacrament prayers in this way, we can approach the Savior more personally with a broken heart and contrite spirit. As we think about our weaknesses or any mistakes that we may have made, we can then turn our hearts toward Him. We can ask Him to help us repent, be better, and remove these shortcomings.

Study and Understanding

The following scriptures and statements from Church leaders can help in our recovery. We can use them for meditation, study, and journaling. We must remember to be honest and specific in our writing to gain the most benefit from it.

His grace is sufficient

"And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them" (Ether 12:27).

Being mortal and imperfect, we are all subject to many weaknesses. In this verse, the Lord explains that His purpose in allowing us to experience mortality and encounter such weaknesses is to help us be humble. Notice that we *choose* to humble ourselves.

- What does the phrase "my grace is sufficient for all men" mean to me?

- Do I have faith that the Lord's grace is sufficient for me?

- What does it mean to humble myself before the Lord?

- List some of your character weaknesses. Next to them, list the strengths they may become as you come unto Christ.

Choose to be humble

“As I said unto you, that because ye were compelled to be humble ye were blessed, do ye not suppose that they are more blessed who truly humble themselves because of the word?” (Alma 32:14).

Most of us came to recovery meetings in desperation; we were motivated by the consequences of

our addictions. We were compelled to be humble. However, the humility described in this step is voluntary. It is the result of our own choices to humble ourselves.

- How have my feelings of humility changed since I started recovery?

Filled with joy

“They had viewed themselves in their own carnal state, even less than the dust of the earth. And they all cried aloud with one voice, saying: O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified; for we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who created heaven and earth, and all things; who shall come down among the children of men.

“And it came to pass that after they had spoken these words the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they were filled with joy, having received a remission of their sins, and having peace of conscience, because of the exceeding faith which they had in Jesus Christ who should come” (Mosiah 4:2-3).

King Benjamin’s people offered the kind of prayer that we offered as we worked step 7. They felt peace and joy when the Spirit of the Lord came upon them and gave them a remission of their sins.

- What experiences have I had when I felt peace and joy?

- How would it feel to have peace and joy in my life every day?

Obey the commandments

“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. . . .

“If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in His love.

“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full” (John 15:4–5, 10–11).

- What does it mean to me that if I keep the Savior’s commandments, “[I] shall abide in [His] love?” (verse 10).

- According to these verses, what are some promised blessings of abiding in Him?

- How do I feel today about keeping the Savior's commandments?

- How is keeping the commandments an expression of my love for God?

God's love

“When we put God first, all other things fall into their proper place or drop out of our lives. Our love of the Lord will govern the claims for our affection, the demands on our time, the interests we pursue, and the order of our priorities” (Ezra Taft Benson, “The Great Commandment—Love the Lord,” *Ensign*, May 1988, 4).

Coming to know the mercy and goodness of God thus far, we have probably begun to feel the love of God—for Him and from Him.

- Have I felt an increase of love while working through the steps? If so, why?

- How has working step 7 helped me realign my priorities and put God first in my life?

Take upon ourselves the name of Christ

“And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; . . .

“. . . I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ, all you that have entered into the covenant with God that ye should be obedient unto the end of your lives. . . .

“Whosoever doeth this shall be found at the right hand of God, for he shall know the name by which he is called; for he shall be called by the name of Christ” (Mosiah 5:7-9).

- What does it mean to be called by the name of Christ and to represent Him?

- What do I need to do to be found at the right hand of God?

- What do I covenant to do when I am baptized and when I partake of the sacrament? (See Mosiah 5:7–9; 18:8–10, 13; Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79.)

- How do I feel when I think of the Savior’s willingness to give me His name in exchange for making a covenant with Him to obey and serve Him, which includes giving up my shortcomings?

Surrender our weaknesses

“A religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation” (*Lectures on Faith* [1985], 69).

- Some people read these words and think “all things” refers to all possessions. How has surrendering all my weaknesses to the Lord increased my understanding of what it means to sacrifice all things?



Step 8: Make a written list of all persons we have harmed and become willing to make restitution to them.

Key Principle: Prepare to Make Amends

Before our recovery began, our addictive lifestyles were like a tornado full of destructive energy that cut through our relationships, leaving much wreckage behind. As we worked on step 7, we felt the healing power of the Savior's mercy, and we felt eager to mend broken relationships. Step 8 is an opportunity to write a list of people and institutions we harmed and then make a plan to clean up and rebuild our relationships.

As we worked the steps of recovery, we found that one of the inspired things about the 12 steps is the order in which they are written. There is often a preparation step that comes before a step that requires great courage. Step 8, along with all the previous steps, is our preparation for step 9, which requires courage beyond our own.

We learned from people who had already worked step 8 that impulsively rushing to make amends

without preparation can be as detrimental as not making amends at all. So we took time to pray; seek counsel from people we trust, like our sponsors or Church leaders; and make a plan. This preparation in step 8 prevented us from further harming our relationships when we began contacting people in step 9.

Write a list

Before we could rebuild relationships, we needed to identify and make a list of those relationships that were damaged. We used our inventories from step 4 to prepare our lists. As we prayerfully reviewed our inventories, the Spirit helped us identify the relationships we had harmed. Those of us who made a chart when we worked step 4 found it easier to identify these people and institutions (see the appendix for an example of a chart).

We found the following guidelines helpful as we made our lists. We asked ourselves, "Is there anyone in my life, past or present, who I feel embarrassed,

uncomfortable, or ashamed around?” We wrote down their names, and we resisted the temptation to justify our feelings or excuse our negative actions toward them. We included people we meant to hurt and people we did not intend to hurt. We included people who had passed away and people we had no idea how to contact. We focused on these special cases when we worked step 9. As we worked step 8, we focused on being courageous in our honesty.

We tried not to leave out little things. We thought honestly about the harm we caused people as we indulged in our addictions, even if we were not aggressive toward them. We listed loved ones and friends we had harmed by being resentful, irresponsible, irritable, critical, impatient, dishonest, and dishonorable. If we added to another person’s burdens in any way, we included these people on our lists. We tried to list everyone who was affected by the lies we told, promises we broke, and ways we manipulated or used them. We thought of people we had not forgiven, and we added them to our lists as well.

After we listed everyone we harmed, we added one more name to the list—our own. When we indulged in our addictions, we harmed ourselves as well as others. The best way we can make amends to ourselves is to live in recovery from addiction. God can help us forgive ourselves and make amends. As we felt God’s love and forgiveness, our feelings of shame were replaced with a willingness to make amends.

Become willing

After we made our lists, we needed to become willing to make amends. Many of us found we could not list people and institutions we had harmed without being distracted by our resentment toward those who had harmed us too. People often get caught in terrible cycles of mutual resentment with each other. To break these cycles, someone has to be willing to forgive.

When we honestly confessed our negative feelings, God helped us break the cycle of resentment. He showed us that we need to forgive others just as He forgives us. In the parable of the man who was forgiven of all his debts but did not want to forgive others, his lord said to him, “I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have . . . compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?” (Matthew 18:32–33).

As we struggled to become willing to make amends to people who had hurt us, we pleaded for Christ’s grace to help us extend to them the same mercy He gives to us. We took the Savior’s counsel to pray for their welfare and asked for them to receive all the blessings that we would want for ourselves (see Matthew 5:44).

As we worked through step 8, we tried to remember that this step is not an exercise in shaming anyone—either ourselves or others. Our experience has shown us that the Savior lifts the burdens of guilt and shame as we take an honest look at our troubled relationships and our part in them. In step 8, we began to relate to ourselves, others, and life with a new heart. We began to feel peace in our lives rather than contention and negativity.

We became willing to stop judging people unrighteously and taking inventory of their lives and faults. We became willing to stop minimizing our own negative behaviors or making excuses for them. By becoming willing to make amends, we felt the peace of knowing that Heavenly Father is pleased with our efforts. This step helped us take the actions that allow the Savior to set us free from our past mistakes. Becoming willing to make amends prepared us to work through step 9.

Action Steps

This is a program of action. Our progress depends on consistently applying the steps in our daily lives. This is known as “working the steps.” The following actions help us come unto Christ and receive the

direction and power necessary to take the next step in our recovery.

Write a list of people we might have offended or harmed

Our sponsors guided us as we prepared our lists, and once more we found writing to be invaluable. Many of us used the following outline to help keep the process simple but concrete.

First, using our inventories from step 4, we listed the people or institutions we needed to contact.

Next to each entry, we gave a brief reason for needing to make amends.

Then, as guided by the Spirit, we made a plan to contact the people on our lists, whether in person, by telephone, or by letter or email. We reviewed our plans with our sponsors or trusted advisers.

Finally, we included a target date. We left a space to report the date we contacted the person and the results of the contact. (The chart in the appendix is a helpful tool.)

Forgive

It is hard to ask for forgiveness from people who have hurt us. If you find yourself struggling with this, you may find it helpful to first write a list of people you need to forgive; then write a list of people from whom you need to ask forgiveness. You may be surprised to find that some names appear on both lists.

We need to be patient with ourselves as we prayerfully work toward forgiving the people we listed. President James E. Faust said: “Most of us need time to work through pain and loss. We can find all manner of reasons for postponing forgiveness. One of these reasons is waiting for the wrongdoers to repent [and make amends to us] before we forgive them. Yet such a delay causes us to forfeit the peace and happiness that could be ours. The folly of

rehashing long-past hurts does not bring happiness. . . . If we can find forgiveness in our hearts for those who have caused us hurt and injury, we will rise to a higher level of self-esteem and well-being” (“The Healing Power of Forgiveness,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2007, 68).

Forgiving someone does not mean that we condone their poor choices or allow them to mistreat us. But forgiving does allow us to move forward spiritually, emotionally, and physically. Just as those who have harmed us are in bondage, our unwillingness to forgive them can hold us captive. As we forgive, we leave behind feelings that have the power to “canker, fester, and ultimately destroy” (Thomas S. Monson, “Hidden Wedges,” *Ensign*, May 2002, 20). Forgiving also helps us have the Spirit more abundantly and continue on the path of discipleship. As President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, then of the First Presidency, reminded us, “Heaven is filled with those who have this in common: They are forgiven. And they forgive” (“The Merciful Obtain Mercy,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2012, 77).

Pray for charity

Although you may be as terrified as we were to make amends, we testify that with the Savior’s help, you can become willing to meet the people on your list when the opportunity arises. We prepared to make amends by praying for the courage to live by faith in God, not by fear of what people might do or say. And we tried to follow gospel principles rather than shame or fear. One of the powerful principles that helped us was charity, “the pure love of Christ” (Moroni 7:47).

Before working through step 8, many of us were surprised to feel Jesus Christ’s love despite all our imperfections. This love *from* Him caused us to feel great love *for* Him and gave us a desire to follow Him. As we tried our best to follow Him, we were filled with His love for ourselves and others. We prayed for charity, and over time we found ourselves more willing to forgive people and make amends.

We also found a greater measure of love and forgiveness toward ourselves. We asked God to soften the hearts of the people on our lists with charity toward us, and we prayed for the strength to accept any outcome.

As we prayed for charity, many of us found it helpful to choose a person from our list and deliberately kneel and pray for that person each day for two weeks. Our lists of amends helped us be specific in our prayers to Heavenly Father about our unresolved feelings. As we prayed—even if it felt insincere at first—we were eventually blessed with miraculous compassion. Even in extreme situations, God has blessed people who have prayed for charity to forgive and make amends.

Study and Understanding

The following scriptures and statements from Church leaders can help in our recovery. We can use them for meditation, study, and journaling. We must remember to be honest and specific in our writing to gain the most benefit from it.

Peaceable followers of Christ

“I would speak unto you that are of the church, that are the peaceable followers of Christ, and that have obtained a sufficient hope by which ye can enter into the rest of the Lord, from this time henceforth until ye shall rest with him in heaven.

“And now my brethren, I judge these things of you because of your peaceable walk with the children of men” (Moroni 7:3–4).

In the first seven steps, we began a process of becoming peaceable followers of Christ. When we are at peace with Christ, we are better prepared to be at peace with others.

- How does working through the steps of recovery in order help me become a peaceable follower of Christ?

- What other actions do I need to take to be at peace with the people in my life?

God's perfect love

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

“We love [God], because he first loved us” (1 John 4:18–19).

- How can I trust in God's perfect love for me and for the person from whom I seek forgiveness?

- How can knowing that God loves me and all His children strengthen my resolve to make restitution whenever possible?

Reach out to others

“Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

“Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again” (Luke 6:37–38).

Even though we may fear that some people will reject our efforts to make peace with them, we should not let this fear keep us from putting them on our lists and preparing to contact them. The blessings we will receive are far greater than the pain.

“The nearer we get to our Heavenly Father, the more we are disposed to look with compassion on perishing souls—we feel that we want to take them upon our shoulders, and cast their sins behind our backs. . . . If you would have God have mercy on you, have mercy on one another” (Joseph Smith, in History, 1838–1856 [Manuscript History of the Church], volume C-1 Addenda, 74, josephsmithpapers.org).

- We are all imperfect souls in need of Jesus Christ's mercy. How does it help to know that in working step 8, I am opening the door to receive Jesus Christ's mercy and grace?

- How is Jesus Christ the greatest example of forgiving other people? How can His example help me forgive other people?

Forgive and ask for forgiveness

“Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?”

“Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven” (Matthew 18:21–22).

It is easier to forgive and ask forgiveness for a single wrongdoing than it is to forgive or ask forgiveness for a long-standing situation filled with multiple offenses. Think about past or present relationships with long-standing situations you need to forgive or ask forgiveness for.

- How can I gain strength to forgive and ask for forgiveness?

“I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin.

“I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men” (Doctrine and Covenants 64:9–10).

Jesus taught that not forgiving others is a greater sin than the original offense.

- How is refusing to forgive myself or someone else the equivalent of denying the Savior’s Atonement?

“Nothing is so much calculated to lead people to forsake sin, as to take them by the hand, and watch over them with tenderness. When persons manifest the least kindness and love to me, O what power it has over my mind, while the opposite course has a tendency to harrow up all the harsh feelings and depress the human mind” (Joseph Smith, in History, 1838–1856 [Manuscript of the Church], volume C-1 Addenda, 74, josephsmithpapers.org).

- Am I willing to be the one who breaks the cycle of bitterness and offense?

- How do resentment and bitterness damage me physically, emotionally, and spiritually?

- How have people who have shown me kindness and love inspired or motivated me to act differently?

Break the cycle of bitterness and offense

The Prophet Joseph Smith described how kindness can lead to repentance and forgiveness:



Step 9: Wherever possible, make direct restitution to all persons we have harmed.

Key Principle: Make Amends

As we moved on to step 9, we were ready to seek forgiveness. Like the repentant sons of Mosiah who went about “zealously striving to repair all the injuries which they had done” (Mosiah 27:35), we desired to make amends. Still, as we faced step 9, we knew we could not carry out our desires unless God blessed us with His Spirit. We needed courage, good judgment, sensitivity, prudence, and appropriate timing. Most of us did not possess these qualities at that time. We realized that step 9 would once more test our willingness to humble ourselves and seek the Lord’s help and grace.

Because of our experiences in this challenging process, we offer a few suggestions. It is very important that we are not impulsive or careless as we attempt to make amends. It is equally important that we do not procrastinate. Many people in recovery have relapsed when they allowed fear to keep them from making amends. We need to pray for the Lord’s guidance about when and how to make amends. In addition, it is helpful to speak with our sponsors, Church leaders, or others we trust.

Sometimes we may be tempted to avoid meeting with a person on our lists. However, we recommend that you resist this temptation, unless, of course, a legal restriction keeps you from meeting with someone. When we are humble and honest and make reasonable efforts to meet in person, we can repair damaged relationships. We let people know we are approaching them to make amends. We respect their wishes if they indicate they would rather not discuss the matter. If they give us the chance to apologize, we are brief and specific about the situation. We are careful not to make excuses or manipulate the people we approach. The purpose of making amends is not to justify our behaviors or to criticize people; the purpose is to admit our wrongs, apologize, and make restitution whenever possible. We do not argue with people, even if their response is not favorable or accepting. We humbly approach each person and offer reconciliation, not justification.

It may be particularly challenging to apologize for certain actions. For example, we may have to address matters that could have legal repercussions, such as theft or abuse. We may be tempted to overreact, make excuses, or avoid making amends.

We prayerfully seek ecclesiastical or professional counsel before taking any action in these very serious cases.

In other cases, we may not be able to make amends directly. The person may have died, or we may not know where he or she lives. In such cases, we can still make amends indirectly. We can write a letter expressing our regret and our desire to reconcile, even if the letter cannot be delivered. We could find someone who reminds us of that person and do something to help him or her, or we can do something anonymously to help a member of the person's family.

In some cases, we may have done harm that we cannot repair. Elder Neil L. Andersen taught:

“There are many wrongs that cannot be made right by the one who has hurt or offended, and there is pain and suffering that cannot be fully repaired. But never dismiss the generous restitution you can make, the suffering you can ease, even though love, purity, virtue, trust, and respect may be impossible to restore without the Lord's intervention. . . . For some sins, the only way to make restitution may come from blessing the lives of others and being an instrument in the Lord's hands to bring his goodness and grace to others” (*The Divine Gift of Forgiveness* [2019], 218, 221).

From the moment we decide to adopt these true principles into our new way of life, we begin to make living amends. We amend the way we live, and as we live in recovery, it blesses everyone around us.

There may be situations where approaching another person to make amends would be painful for that person or even harmful. If you think that might be the case, discuss the situation with your sponsor or trusted adviser. This step of recovery should never cause further harm or distress to others.

After making amends for most of our past actions, there may still be one or two people we feel we cannot face. Many of us dealt with this reality. We

recommend you turn to the Lord in honest prayer. If you still have fear or anger toward someone, you should probably postpone meeting with him or her. We can overcome negative feelings by praying for charity to see the person as the Lord sees him or her. We can look for positive reasons why restitution and reconciliation will help. If we do these things and are patient, the Lord can and will—in His own way and in His own time—give us the miraculous opportunity to seek forgiveness from everyone on our lists.

In some cases, the person will not or cannot forgive us. Other people may forgive us but do not want to reconcile or have a relationship with us. While this may be discouraging or painful for us, it's important to respect their feelings and honor their agency. Step 9 is about doing our part to make amends. This step does not require the other person to forgive or reconcile with us. As we do our part in making an honest effort to make amends, we work step 9 and move forward in our journey of recovery.

Action Steps

This is a program of action. Our progress depends on consistently applying the steps in our daily lives. This is known as “working the steps.” The following actions help us come unto Christ and receive the direction and power necessary to take the next step in our recovery.

Approach others

In step 8, we made lists and prayerfully considered when and how to approach the people on our lists. We discussed our plans with our sponsors or trusted advisers, and then we were ready for step 9—to contact the people on our lists (if possible and appropriate). When we contact people to make amends, we do not have to go into great detail about our addictions. But we should share enough detail to help them better understand why we need to speak with them.

We acknowledge our mistakes and ask what we can do to make things right. Whether or not they forgive us is up to them. The people we approach may have questions that are appropriate for us to answer. Remember to answer their questions in a way that will not further harm the relationship. If you have any doubts, simply tell them you would like to think about this more and will get back with them. You can then discuss with your sponsor or trusted adviser how and when to answer these questions.

We may sometimes become emotional during this process. We pray and ask for the Lord's help to remain calm and focused on the purpose of our visit. We may be tempted to justify or explain our actions by bringing up or focusing on something that someone else did, but we should resist this temptation. We need to remain focused on making amends for *our* actions.

We discuss what we can do to make restitution with the person we have wronged. For example, if we need to make restitution by paying money back, the person may forgive the debt, ask for the principal amount, or ask for interest. We may not need to meet their expectations; however, it's important to understand what the person feels we need to do to make restitution, and we should prayerfully consider it.

After making amends, we will complete the last two columns in the chart we created in step 4 (see the appendix for an example of a chart). We enter the date of each contact, the amends we made, and the results. Then we discuss the results with our sponsors. We recognize that we're striving to do all we can to be in harmony with the people on our lists. We've done our best to make things right, and we can trust the Lord to heal what we cannot heal. Peace comes through our relationship with the Lord. Other people have their agency to respond as they wish.

Recognize the blessings of recovery

As we gathered the courage to make amends, it was encouraging to inventory the blessings we received from working the steps to this point. We began to recognize that the blessings of recovery far exceeded our expectations. We recommend that you begin a list of the changes in your life. Here are some of the changes we noticed in ourselves as we came to this point in our recoveries:

- We feel God's perfect love for us.
- We feel new joy, happiness, and freedom in our lives.
- We understand people, relationships, and situations with a deeper perspective and have increased empathy toward others.
- We have a newfound direction and purpose for our lives.
- We feel deeper acceptance and love for ourselves and for others.
- We think less of ourselves and focus more on serving people who need our help.
- We feel the infinite Atonement of Jesus Christ more intensely and personally.
- We have more hope and faith for our eternal future.
- We have less fear about life and financial situations.
- We feel forgiven, and we can more readily forgive others.
- We trust that with God's power, we can do things we cannot do by ourselves.

There may be many more changes in your life. Please make your list and share it with someone.

One of the most harmful consequences of our addictive behaviors is that we may have influenced others to develop addictions themselves.

- Who in my life have I influenced this way?

Study and Understanding

The following scriptures and statements from Church leaders can help in our recovery. We can use them for meditation, study, and journaling. We must remember to be honest and specific in our writing to gain the most benefit from it.

Influence others for good

“The Spirit of the Lord doth say unto me: Command thy children to do good, lest they lead away the hearts of many people to destruction; therefore I command you, my son, in the fear of God, that ye refrain from your iniquities;

“That ye turn to the Lord with all your mind, might, and strength; that ye lead away the hearts of no more to do wickedly; but rather return unto them, and acknowledge your faults and that wrong which ye have done” (Alma 39:12–13).

- According to Alma’s teachings in these verses, where can I find courage to make amends to these people?

Be persuaded, not compelled

“Whosoever will come may come and partake of the waters of life freely; and whosoever will not come the same is not compelled to come; but in the last day it shall be restored unto him according to his deeds” (Alma 42:27).

There are many powerful reasons to work step 9, but we must never get caught up in the rationalization or lie that we have no choice. The Addiction Recovery Program is a program of persuasion, not compulsion.

- Do I feel persuaded or compelled to make amends?

- According to this verse, what are some reasons I may be persuaded?

Prepare to meet God

“I would that ye would come forth and harden not your hearts any longer; for behold, now is the time and the day of your salvation; and therefore, if ye will repent and harden not your hearts, immediately shall the great plan of redemption be brought about unto you.

“For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors” (Alma 34:31–32).

- What do I accomplish when I soften my heart and make amends?

- How does my willingness to make amends increase when I realize that I am also preparing to meet God?

Activity in the Church

“And [Alma the Younger and the sons of Mosiah] traveled throughout all the land, . . . zealously striving to repair all the injuries which they had done to the church, confessing all their sins, and publishing all the things which they had seen, and explaining the prophecies and the scriptures to all who desired to hear them” (Mosiah 27:35).

Because of addictions, many people stop attending church. Some people use others’ faults to justify limited involvement in the Church.

- What has been my experience with activity in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?

- How has coming closer to the Savior through recovery helped me feel reunited with His Church?

- How does being active in the Church help me make amends and recover more fully?

Willing restitution

“You must restore as far as possible all that which is stolen, damaged, or defiled. Willing restitution is concrete evidence to the Lord that you are committed to do all you can to repent” (Richard G. Scott, “Finding Forgiveness,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 76).

- How is making amends evidence not only to the Lord but also to myself and others that I am committed to a life of humility and honesty?

The intents of our hearts

“He that repents and does the commandments of the Lord shall be forgiven” (Doctrine and Covenants 1:32).

In making amends, we may face people who will not forgive us. Maybe their hearts are still hardened toward us, or perhaps they do not trust our intentions.

- How does it help to know that the Lord understands the true intent of my heart and that He will receive my offer to repent and make restitution, even if other people may not?



Step 10: Continue to take personal inventory, and when we are wrong, promptly admit it.

Key Principle: Daily Accountability

Step 10 helps us progress in our new, spiritually minded way of life. It's about holding ourselves accountable every day through personal evaluation, accepting what we discover, and promptly repenting. We are not perfect and will continue to make mistakes in our lives as well as in our recovery. Some of us may worry that we can't progress in our recovery unless we complete each step perfectly or live without mistakes. Step 10 protects us against the pressure to live perfectly. We are reminded that we continually need the Lord as we progress in our recovery.

In the Book of Mormon, Alma taught that a mighty change of heart takes faith in Christ's Redemption and Resurrection (see Alma 5:14–15). Using the scenario of the Judgment Day and providing multiple examples of questions we can ask ourselves, Alma emphasized the key role of honest self-appraisal in opening ourselves to Christ's redeeming power. We can apply this principle by asking the kind of searching questions that Alma suggested about

our feelings, thoughts, motives, and conduct. Daily personal evaluation and the Lord's redeeming help can stop us from slipping into denial, complacency, and relapse.

The incredible process of recovery is about allowing the Lord to change our thoughts, feelings, and hearts. As a result, our behaviors will change. Those who have gone before us encouraged us to watch for pride in all its forms and to humbly take our weaknesses to Heavenly Father. Daily accountability helps us recognize when we need help and prevents us from reverting to old habits.

It's normal to have negative thoughts and feelings. When we worry or feel self-pity, anxiety, resentment, lust, or fear, we can immediately turn to the Father and ask Him to bless us with peace and perspective. We may also discover that we are still holding onto negative beliefs. We can ask our Father in Heaven to help us make an honest effort to change. In working step 10, we no longer feel the need to justify, rationalize, or blame. Our goal is to keep our hearts open to and our minds focused on the Savior and His grace.

We work step 10 by taking a daily inventory. As we plan our day, we prayerfully examine our actions and possible motives: Are we doing too much or too little? Are we taking care of our basic spiritual, emotional, and physical needs? Do we serve others? Are there any situations in our day that are hard or stressful? Do we need help from others to deal with these hard things? Do we see any old behaviors or thinking patterns? These kinds of questions help us live intentionally, strengthen our recovery, and move us closer to Jesus Christ.

We can evaluate ourselves at any time by taking time to think, ponder, and apply the steps we have learned. When we find ourselves in a moment of crisis, we can ask ourselves and God, “What character weakness in me is being triggered? What have I done to contribute to this problem? Is there anything I can say or do without pretense that will lead to a respectful solution for me and the other person?” We can remind ourselves, “The Lord has all power. I’ll give this to Him and trust Him.”

Whenever we find ourselves taking a negative action toward another person, we can make amends as quickly as possible. It’s important to cast aside our pride and remember that sincerely saying, “I was wrong” is often just as important in healing a relationship as saying, “I love you.”

At the end of the day, we evaluate how things went. How did we do? Do we still need to counsel with the Lord about any negative behaviors, thoughts, or feelings? We can also talk to a family member, friend, sponsor, or trusted adviser to help us see things more clearly.

Of course, we will continue to make mistakes despite our best efforts. But daily accountability is a commitment to accept responsibility for these mistakes. As we examine our thoughts and actions each day, resolve them, and repent through the Savior, negative thoughts and feelings will fade away.

“Nothing is more liberating, more ennobling, or more crucial to our individual progression than is

a regular, daily focus on repentance. Repentance is not an event; it is a process. It is the key to happiness and peace of mind. When coupled with faith, repentance opens our access to the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ [see 2 Nephi 9:23]” (Russell M. Nelson, “We Can Do Better and Be Better,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2019, 67).

Daily accountability, or daily repentance, helps us experience the joy and freedom the Savior offers us. We no longer live in isolation from the Lord or others. We can have the strength and faith to face difficulties and overcome them. We can rejoice in our progress and trust that practice and patience will ensure continued recovery.

Action Steps

This is a program of action. Our progress depends on consistently applying the steps in our daily lives. This is known as “working the steps.” The following actions help us come unto Christ and receive the direction and power necessary to take the next step in our recovery.

Spiritual preparation for each day

An important part of daily accountability is to plan our day, follow through on our plans, and then review how things went at the end of the day. When we deliberately do this, we are protected from drifting back into old habits.

Elder David A. Bednar counsels us to prepare our day with the Lord in the morning: “Meaningful morning prayer is an important element in the spiritual creation of each day—and precedes the temporal creation or the actual execution of the day” (“Pray Always,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 41).

As we go about our day, we keep a prayer in our hearts for continued assistance and guidance. Sometimes things don’t go as we planned, and we need to be flexible and continually seek Heavenly Father’s help.

Elder Bednar further counsels us: “At the end of our day, we kneel again and report back to our Father. We review the events of the day” (“Pray Always,” 42). As we follow up with the Lord and review our day, we can celebrate our successes and recognize where we may have fallen short. We counsel with the Lord about what we need to do to repent or make amends and how we can do better next time.

Daily repentance

“One day at a time” is a familiar phrase that means living one moment at a time. By continually taking account of our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, we have an opportunity to repent and draw closer to our Father in Heaven. As we repent, we discover the truth that repentance is not a sad, restrictive ordeal but rather a joyful and liberating experience that we look forward to embracing.

As we repent daily, we may discover additional shortcomings or remember past actions that need attention and, in some cases, restitution. It may become part of our daily repentance to refocus on earlier steps designed to remove our shortcomings or make restitution. Reviewing with our sponsors what we have learned from our efforts to repent daily can clarify what else we might need to do to fully repent. We may also need to confess to proper priesthood authority.

President Russell M. Nelson urges us to “experience the strengthening power of daily repentance—of doing and being a little better each day” (“We Can Do Better and Be Better,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2019, 67). As we humble ourselves and strive for honesty each day, we grow closer to the Savior. The Savior instructed His disciples, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Luke 9:23). Repenting and taking up our cross to follow the Savior each day prepares us for step 11.

Study and Understanding

The following scriptures and statements from Church leaders can help in our recovery. We can use them for meditation, study, and journaling. We must remember to be honest and specific in our writing to gain the most benefit from it.

Watch our thoughts, words, and deeds

“If ye do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God, and continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish. And now, O man, remember, and perish not” (Mosiah 4:30).

It could be dangerous or deadly if we didn’t pay attention to what we were doing while driving a car. Write about being self-aware.

- How does self-appraisal help me avoid lapsing again into my addictions (and perishing)?

Humility and self-control

“Blessed are they who humble themselves without being compelled to be humble” (Alma 32:16).

Being willing to eliminate negative thoughts before they erupt into hurtful behavior is a way of humbling ourselves without being compelled. Write about your willingness to humble yourself. Experiment for a day with eliminating negative thoughts.

- What blessings come to me?

Live in the present

“The more enlightened a person is, the more he seeks the gift of repentance, and the harder he strives to free himself from sin as often as he falls short of the divine will. . . . It follows that the sins of the godfearing and the righteous are continually remitted because they repent and seek the Lord anew every day and every hour” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* [1973], 3:342–43).

One of the most beneficial effects—mentally, emotionally, and spiritually—of living the principles described in these steps is that we learn to live in the present.

- How does step 10 help me deal with life one hour at a time when necessary?

- How does it help me to know that I have to live these principles only one day at a time?

Continue repentance and forgiveness

“As oft as they repented and sought forgiveness, with real intent, they were forgiven” (Moroni 6:8).

Knowing that the Lord is willing to forgive us as often as we repent with real intent can give us courage to try again each time we fall short.

- What does it mean to me to repent and seek forgiveness with real intent?

Be patient

“I would that ye should be humble, and be submissive and gentle; easy to be entreated; full of patience and long-suffering; being temperate in all things” (Alma 7:23).

Whoever coined the old saying “Practice makes perfect” didn’t mention how much patience it takes to keep practicing. As we are patient and continue

to make daily amends and take daily inventories, we will progress on our road to recovery.

- How does self-appraisal and making daily amends ensure that I will continue in my humility and spiritual development?

- How does taking an inventory at the end of each day help me overcome the tendency to hold on to anger or other hurtful emotions?



Step 11: Seek through prayer and meditation to know the Lord’s will and to have the power to carry it out.

Key Principle: Personal Revelation

In step 11 we make a daily commitment to seek to know the Lord’s will and pray to receive the power to carry it out. We found that God wants to speak to us and that we can learn how to hear Him. President Russell M. Nelson declared, “Does God really *want* to speak to you? Yes!” (“Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 95). The purpose of this step is to improve our abilities to hear Jesus Christ, receive personal revelation, and receive the power to conduct our lives accordingly. This desire for personal revelation is in great contrast to the cravings we experienced when we were lost in our addictions.

In the past we thought hope, joy, peace, and fulfillment would come from earthly sources such as alcohol, drugs, lust, unhealthy eating, or other addictive or compulsive behaviors. Our pattern was to avoid negative emotions by numbing them with our addictions. Some of us were trying to fill the emptiness in our lives with anything but God. Over

time we discovered that any positive effects of our addictions were short-term, counterfeit solutions that left us empty.

Seeking revelation is an important step in achieving lasting recovery. President Nelson said: “I urge you to stretch beyond your current spiritual ability to receive personal revelation, for the Lord has promised that ‘if thou shalt [seek], thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge, that thou mayest know the mysteries and peaceable things—that which bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal’ [Doctrine and Covenants 42:61]” (“Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” 95).

We have started to appreciate our need for the Savior, Jesus Christ, and understand His role in our lives. Some of us felt clumsy and unpracticed as we prayed, but we began to pray to the Father in the name of Jesus Christ for a closer relationship with Him. We know that we can do much more with Him than we ever could without Him. We began to learn that recovery is not focused only on addiction or

sobriety; it encompasses inviting the Lord's guidance into all aspects of our lives.

Prayer, meditation, and scripture study are essential in coming unto Christ. They can help us hear His voice and receive power to carry out His will. We try to pray in humility, knowing that we are dependent on the Lord's divine direction and strength. We pause and meditate throughout the day, striving to quiet our minds and hear the still, small voice. We study the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon, because they testify of the Lord's willingness to give us direction and power. As we do these things, we experience personal revelation and receive the blessing of "always [having] his Spirit to be with [us]" to guide, direct, and comfort us (Moroni 4:3).

For many of us, the idea of receiving personal revelation was difficult because we believed we were unworthy of God's love. In our addictions, we either thought that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ didn't care enough to communicate with us or that we had forfeited the right to receive revelation because of our pasts. Some of us thought we had never received personal revelation. We prayed or meditated, and nothing seemed to happen. We didn't feel anything special or receive any recognizable answers. When this happened, our old way of thinking surfaced: "God may help others, but He doesn't help me."

Many of us still struggle with these feelings. But as we became conscious of His love and mercy, these false beliefs were shattered. Our confidence that He loves us enough to communicate with us can increase as we apply step 11 to our lives.

Our work in step 11 requires us to have faith that He will answer us, and we can learn to recognize His voice. It may not happen quickly or with a miraculous sign from heaven. But we can listen and be patient. We all hear Him in different ways. Sometimes we don't get a specific direction right away. This does not mean He doesn't love us. Rather, it may

mean He wants us to learn to trust Him and apply the truths He has already given us. Our trust in Him helps us be willing to wait upon Him and grow in the ability to hear His voice (for more information, see Richard G. Scott, "Learning to Recognize Answers to Prayer," *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 30).

The Lord often answers our prayers through others. President Spencer W. Kimball taught: "God does notice us, and he watches over us. But it is usually through another person that he meets our needs" ("Small Acts of Service," *Ensign*, Dec. 1974, 5). It is important for us to connect with others, especially those in our support systems. We can hear His voice through our Church leaders, family members, and friends as well as through reading the scriptures, studying conference talks, and listening to sacred music. We can also receive inspiration and guidance regularly as we attend recovery meetings and work the steps of recovery with our sponsors.

Improving our ability to seek and receive revelation takes practice and patience. "To be sure, there may be times when you feel as though the heavens are closed. But I promise that as you continue to be obedient, expressing gratitude for every blessing the Lord gives you, and as you patiently honor the Lord's timetable, you will be given the knowledge and understanding you seek. Every blessing the Lord has for you—even miracles—will follow. That is what personal revelation will do for you" (Russell M. Nelson, "Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives," 95–96).

Action Steps

This is a program of action. Our progress depends on consistently applying the steps in our daily lives. This is known as "working the steps." The following actions help us come unto Christ and receive the direction and the power necessary to take the next step in our recovery.

Come unto Jesus Christ through prayer, fasting, and meditation

For those of us who have little experience with prayer, Elder Richard G. Scott's words are reassuring: "Don't worry about your clumsily expressed feelings. Just talk to your Father. He hears every prayer and answers it in His way" ("Learning to Recognize Answers to Prayer," *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 31). It was also helpful to review the parts of prayer. We address Heavenly Father by name, tell Him what we are thankful for, ask for the blessings we need, and then close in the name of Jesus Christ. We kneel if we are physically able. We pray, often aloud, to the Father, seeking His guidance through the Holy Ghost (see Romans 8:26). We don't have to use flowery language. We can be honest and share our hearts with Heavenly Father.

Many of us learned to rise early and spend time in quiet solitude for study and prayer. We schedule time for prayer and meditation, usually in the morning. During this time, we can put God first, before anyone or anything else in the day. Then we study, using the scriptures and the teachings of modern prophets to guide our meditations. Fasting can be a powerful tool to add to this effort. Then we listen to our hearts and minds to try to hear or feel Him. We write down our thoughts and impressions as we pray and meditate.

When this precious, private time has ended, we do not cease to pray. Silent prayer, in the depths of our hearts and minds, becomes our way of thinking throughout the day. We counsel with the Lord as we interact with others, make decisions, and deal with emotions and temptations. We continually invite and seek His Spirit to be with us, that we might be guided to do the right thing (see Psalm 46:1; Alma 37:36–37; 3 Nephi 20:1).

Meditate in stillness and quiet

Many of us find that meditation helps as we seek revelation and guidance from the Lord. We look

for a quiet place, free from distraction. President Russell M. Nelson has stated, "Quiet time is sacred time" ("What We Are Learning and Will Never Forget," *Liahona*, May 2021, 80). It may help to get in a comfortable position. We clear our minds and relax. We take some slow, deep breaths.

Next we think and ponder about what is important to us and listen to the thoughts that come into our minds. We can think about the challenges we are facing, especially those in our recovery or relationships. We can think about the verses of scripture or the general conference talk we are studying. We can simply think about the day ahead and the direction we need. We can even record the thoughts that come into our minds in a journal for greater clarity. After this quiet time, we continue to seek the Lord's direction and power throughout the day as we strive to "look unto [Him] in every thought" (Doctrine and Covenants 6:36).

President M. Russell Ballard has taught: "It is important to be still and listen and follow the Spirit. We simply have too many distractions to capture our attention, unlike any time in the history of the world. Everyone needs time to meditate and contemplate. . . . We all need time to ask ourselves questions or to have a regular personal interview with ourselves. We are often so busy, and the world is so loud that it is difficult to hear the heavenly words 'be still, and know that I am God' [Psalm 46:10]" ("Be Still, and Know That I Am God" [Church Educational System devotional for young adults, May 4, 2014], broadcasts.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

Study and Understanding

The following scriptures and statements from Church leaders can help in our recovery. We can use them for meditation, study, and journaling. We must remember to be honest and specific in our writing to gain the most benefit from it.

Draw near to the Lord

“Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:63).

The Lord respects our will and our agency. He allows us to choose to approach Him without compulsion. He draws near to us when we invite Him to do so.

- How will I draw near to Him today?

Express gratitude

“Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 5:17–19).

When we remember to be grateful for everything in our lives, even the things we don’t understand, we will be able to maintain the continual contact with God that Paul called “[praying] without ceasing.” Try to thank God throughout the day.

- How does this practice of gratitude affect my closeness to the Spirit?

Feast on the words of Christ

“Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:3).

In this verse, Nephi taught that when we feast on the words of Christ, these words will guide us in all we need to know and do. Picture how it would be to have Jesus Christ walk and talk with you all day.

- What do I feel when I meditate on this image?

Receive personal revelation

“The Savior said, ‘I will tell you in your *mind* and in your *heart*, by the Holy Ghost’ (D&C 8:2, italics added). . . . An impression to the *mind* is very specific. Detailed words can be heard or felt and written as though the instruction were being dictated. A communication to the *heart* is a more general impression” (Richard G. Scott, “Helping Others to Be Spiritually Led” [address given at the Church Educational System Symposium, Aug. 11, 1998], 3–4).

As our understanding of personal revelation increases, we will recognize it more often and in a greater variety of ways.

- How have I received impressions and revelation from the Lord?
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“I say unto you [these things whereof I have spoken] are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit; and this is the spirit of revelation which is in me” (Alma 5:46).

Fasting in the way the Lord has ordained can bring great power that we would otherwise not have (see Matthew 17:14–21). In fact, we can fast specifically to overcome addiction. Isaiah taught, “Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free and that ye break every yoke?” (Isaiah 58:6).

- How have fasting and prayer increased my ability to receive revelation?
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“The idea that scripture reading can lead to inspiration and revelation opens the door to the truth that a scripture is not limited to what it meant when it was written but may also include what that scripture means to a reader today. Even more, scripture reading may also lead to current revelation on whatever else the Lord wishes to communicate to the reader at that time. We do not overstate the point when we say that the scriptures can be a Urim and Thummim to assist each of us to receive personal revelation” (Dallin H. Oaks, “Scripture Reading and Revelation,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1995, 8).

Learning the language of the scriptures is a lot like learning a foreign language. The best way to learn is to immerse ourselves in them—to read and study them every day.

- When have I received revelation from a passage of scripture?

Receive counsel from the Lord

“Seek not to counsel the Lord, but to take counsel from his hand. For behold, ye yourselves know that

he counseleth in wisdom, and in justice, and in great mercy, over all his works” (Jacob 4:10).

Our prayers may have been ineffective in the past because we spent more time counseling the Lord—telling Him what we wanted—rather than seeking His will about our decisions and conduct.

- Have I had a recent experience with prayer? If so, was it full of counsel to the Lord or from the Lord?

- Am I willing to listen for and receive His counsel?

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Step 12: Having had a spiritual awakening through the Atonement of Jesus Christ as a result of taking these steps, we share this message with others and practice these principles in all we do.

Key Principle: Service

As we approach step 12, we acknowledge that this is not the end of our journey. As a result of working these steps, we enjoy a life of recovery through the grace and mercy of God. We testify that working through the steps one time is never enough. We found it was critical to continue working these steps, practice these principles in all areas of life, and carry the message of hope to others.

We have a message of hope for others struggling with addiction and for all people facing the challenges of mortality: God is a God of miracles, as He has always been (see Mormon 9:11, 16–19). Our lives prove that. We are each being made new through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. We can share this message best by serving others. Sharing our testimonies of His mercy and His grace is one of the most important services we can offer. President Spencer W. Kimball noted, “One of the

most vital things we can do is to express our testimonies through service, which will, in turn, produce spiritual growth, greater commitment, and a greater capacity to keep the commandments” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* [2006], 87).

Bearing one another’s burdens through acts of kindness and selfless service is part of our new lives as followers of Christ (see Mosiah 18:8). The desire to help others is a natural result of spiritual awakening. Just as the sons of Mosiah desired to share the gospel with the Lamanites after their own conversion, we too may desire to share the hope and healing we have experienced through Christ’s Atonement (see Mosiah 28:1–4). We may desire to bless, help, and lift those around us. We realize the truth King Benjamin taught when he said, “When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 2:17).

A natural way to serve others is to become a sponsor or to mentor others who are new to the recovery process. (Please review the “Choosing a Sponsor” document to find out more.) We inform other participants from recovery groups we attend or our local Church leaders that we would like to help as a sponsor or mentor. When we become aware of someone battling addiction, we share information about the Addiction Recovery Program. We tell them about the hope for recovery through the Savior Jesus Christ, and we invite them to attend a meeting with us.

In addition to helping those who struggle with addiction, we also serve their family members and loved ones. Oftentimes people rally around the person struggling with the addiction and neglect to attend to their loved ones. We can validate and acknowledge the difficulties they face. We can share the hope that they can turn to the Savior and find peace and healing, regardless of whether or not their loved one chooses recovery. We can share the *Support Guide: Help for Spouses and Family of Those in Recovery* and invite them to attend a spouse and family group meeting.

As we serve others by supporting them in recovery, we need to be careful not to allow others to become overly dependent on us. Our responsibility is to encourage them to turn to Heavenly Father and the Savior for guidance and power. In addition, we should encourage them to seek support from others. Great blessings come from the Lord through Church leaders, sponsors, family members, friends, and others. We can share the “Support in Recovery” document with them, which is found in the appendix of this guide.

As we try to help others, they may not be ready to take these steps. As we share the message of recovery and hope through the Savior, we must be patient and meek. There is no place in our new lives for ego or any sense of superiority. It is helpful to remember our own captivity and how Jesus Christ

has redeemed us through His mercy and grace (see Mosiah 29:20).

In our enthusiasm to help others, we strive to keep a balance between sharing the message and continuing to apply these steps in our own lives. Our primary focus must be on continuing to apply these recovery principles to ourselves. Our efforts to share these ideas with others will only be as effective as the recovery we maintain.

If we are willing, we will find many opportunities to share the spiritual principles we have learned in this program. As we bless others’ lives, our own lives are blessed. We experience the principle that President Ezra Taft Benson taught: “Men and women who turn their lives over to God will discover that He can make a lot more out of their lives than they can. He will deepen their joys, expand their vision, quicken their minds, strengthen their muscles, lift their spirits, multiply their blessings, increase their opportunities, comfort their souls, raise up friends, and pour out peace. Whoever will lose his life in the service of God will find eternal life” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* [2014], 42–43).

Action Steps

This is a program of action. Our progress depends on consistently applying the steps in our daily lives. This is known as “working the steps.” The following actions help us come unto Christ and receive the direction and power necessary to take the next step in our recovery.

Serve others

The desire to serve is a natural outcome of our healing process through the Lord. Through our recovery, we have experienced a mighty change of heart toward ourselves and others (see Alma 5:14). President Russell M. Nelson taught: “[We] truly seek to live the first and second great commandments. When we love *God* with all our hearts, He turns our

hearts to the well-being of *others* in a beautiful, virtuous cycle” (“The Second Great Commandment,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2019, 97).

However, service is not always easy. Though we may want to, we cannot possibly serve everyone in need. We will continue to need direction and power from the Lord to serve others. We can pray for help to notice and identify ways He would have us serve. We can ask those around us about opportunities and needs. We may be surprised by how many opportunities are readily available to us. Serving others can be as simple as a smile, or it can be more involved like a major project. We should use wise judgement in our service to avoid going beyond our strength or capacity.

One of the best ways we can serve is to share our stories of recovery. We can continue to attend recovery meetings and testify of Jesus Christ’s grace and healing power. When we were newcomers, we received hope from those who had worked the steps and found recovery before us. We now have the opportunity to share the message of recovery by telling our stories. We also share our testimony of the Savior’s power when we are at church and with our family and friends.

Participate in temple and family history work

One meaningful and powerful way we can serve is through temple and family history work. This service blesses not only those who have died, but it also blesses us. President Russell M. Nelson reminded us: “While temple and family history work has the power to bless those beyond the veil, it has an equal power to bless the living. It has a refining influence on those who are engaged in it” (“Generations Linked in Love,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 93). For many of us, temple and family history work is an important part of our recovery.

Some of us may not feel ready to serve in the temple. We may not feel motivated or even know where to

begin with family history work. But we can decide to start. We can visit with our bishops or branch presidents about our desires to serve. Our desire to do the Lord’s will and continue in our recovery can motivate us. We may need to make some changes in our lives to enter the temple. We may not even know how to do family history work, but we can ask for help. Relief Society and elders quorum presidents can help us know where to start. There are also online resources to help us at FamilySearch.org and ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

Temple and family history work provides power and strength for our recovery. “You will find not only protection from the temptation and ills of the world, but you will also find personal power—power to change, power to repent, power to learn, power to be sanctified, and power to turn the hearts of your family members to each other and heal that which needs healing” (Dale G. Renlund, “Family History and Temple Blessings,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Feb. 2017, 39). The principles in this guide lead us to follow the Savior and enjoy all the blessings He has for us, especially those found in the temple.

Study and Understanding

The following scriptures and statements from Church leaders can help in our recovery. We can use them for meditation, study, and journaling. We must remember to be honest and specific in our writing to gain the most benefit from it.

Conversion and recovery

“True conversion is more than merely having a knowledge of gospel principles and implies even more than just having a testimony of those principles. . . . Being truly converted means we are acting upon what we believe and allowing it to create ‘a mighty change in us, or in our hearts,’ [Mosiah 5:2]. . . . [Conversion] takes time, effort, and work” (Bonnie L. Oscarson, “Be Ye Converted,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 76–77).

As the Lord changes our hearts through conversion and recovery, we become sources of strength to others who are just starting out on this path. The Savior told Peter, "And when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:32).

- How does Sister Oscarson’s definition of conversion apply to my experience in recovery?

- How do I feel about strengthening others as they recover from addictive behaviors?

Great progress from small steps

“Be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great” (Doctrine and Covenants 64:33).

- How do I feel when I think of living these principles in all aspects of my life?

- How does it help me to realize that great works are done in small steps?

Share our testimonies and comfort others

“This is my glory, that perhaps I may be an instrument in the hands of God to bring some soul to repentance; and this is my joy.

“And behold, when I see many of my brethren truly penitent, and coming to the Lord their God, then is my soul filled with joy; then do I remember what the Lord has done for me, yea, even that he hath heard my prayer; yea, then do I remember his merciful arm which he extended towards me” (Alma 29:9–10).

We have learned that it is critical in recovery to be willing to share our testimonies of these principles.

- How will sharing my experience help me to remain strong in my recovery?

“[As ye] are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life—

“Now I say unto you, if this be the desire of your hearts, what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him, that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you?” (Mosiah 18:9–10).

Your experience with addiction helps you to empathize with those who struggle with addiction; your experience in recovery helps you to comfort them.

- How has my desire to stand as a witness of God increased since I have followed the steps of recovery?

Serve despite imperfection

“Except in the case of His only perfect Begotten Son, imperfect people are all God has ever had to work with” (Jeffrey R. Holland, “Lord, I Believe,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2013, 94).

“None of us have perfect lives or perfect families; I certainly don’t. When we seek to empathize with others who *also* experience challenges and imperfections, it can help them feel that they are not alone in *their* struggles. *Everyone* needs to feel that they really *do* belong and *are* needed in the body of Christ” (J. Anette Dennis, “His Yoke Is Easy and His Burden Is Light,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2022, 81).

Sometimes we wonder if we are ready to share recovery with others because we are not yet practicing these principles perfectly.

- How does knowing that the Savior works through imperfect people help me become more willing to share my experience with recovery?

The power of God unto salvation

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Romans 1:16).

- What are my thoughts and feelings as I look back at my spiritual transformation throughout the recovery process?

- Am I reluctant to share my experience in recovery? If so, why?

“Go your way whithersoever I will, and it shall be given you by the Comforter what you shall do and whither you shall go.

“Pray always, lest you enter into temptation and lose your reward.

“Be faithful unto the end, and lo, I am with you. These words are not of man nor of men, but of me, even Jesus Christ, your Redeemer, by the will of the Father” (Doctrine and Covenants 31:11–13).

The scriptures are full of guidance to help us maintain a spiritual way of life that will lead us back to God.

- What specific guidance do I find in these verses?

Postface

As we come to the end of this guide, we testify that we have not come to the end of this sacred journey. When we first came to recovery meetings, we imagined the greatest miracle we would ever experience would be our recovery from addiction. Those of us who are experiencing this blessing know that there is more—more work to do and more miracles and grace to experience. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

We who have taken these steps and are finding recovery hope and pray that you too will be blessed with full recovery, including the added blessings of full participation in the Church. Being clean and sober is the beginning of embracing everything the Lord has for us.

Some of us participate in the program, think we are healed, stop participating, and then relapse. Others find recovery but stop short of receiving the blessings of full activity in the Church. We have found that a thorough recovery includes finding a balance and connection between the 12 steps of recovery and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We are becoming new creatures in Christ, and as such, we can be powerful instruments to help the Lord on both sides of the veil (see 2 Corinthians 5:17). We testify of the additional strength we find as we continue to practice these gospel principles

in all aspects of our lives, including our activity in the Church. The principles we apply in recovery, the lessons we learn, and the experiences we gain help us come unto Christ more completely and lead us to act according to the Lord’s plan. We are becoming “anxiously engaged” members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Doctrine and Covenants 58:27).

The Lord has blessed us as we have used the tools suggested in this guide. However, the Church of Jesus Christ is the storehouse of all the tools necessary for us to retain our sobriety and to grow and progress on the covenant path. As we conclude this guide, we invite all participants in the Church’s Addiction Recovery Program to “press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men” (2 Nephi 31:20). As we do so, we are given the greatest of all the Lord’s promises: “Ye shall have eternal life” (verse 20).

In conclusion, we leave you our testimony that there is hope for recovery through the Savior Jesus Christ and these principles. We have participated in the gospel and taken these steps, and we know they work. We invite you to pray for the desire and willingness to continue this work, allowing the infinite grace of Jesus Christ to complete your recovery. May God bless you on your journey.

Appendix

- Support in Recovery
- Choosing a Sponsor
- Principles to Write an Effective Inventory
- Recognizing and Welcoming the Newcomer

Support in Recovery

The Importance of Finding Support

Support from others is important to help us find recovery and healing. Having someone we can turn to in times of weakness often proves to be essential. Denial and isolation are hallmarks of compulsive and addictive behaviors. It is easy to fall back into these behaviors without the support and perspective of others. It is important for us to get support as soon as possible in our recovery.

Connecting with others not only provides the encouragement we may need but also helps us remember that we are worthy of love as children of God. As we reach out to others for support, we are blessed and those who support us are blessed as well. As we use the 12 steps and seek support from others, we may benefit from the following sources of support:

- **Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost.** Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost are our greatest sources of support. Change is made possible through Jesus Christ and His Atonement. In the Book of Mormon, the prophet Alma shares that Christ “will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities” (Alma 7:12). We will feel succored and nurtured when we humbly go to our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

It is important not to overlook the help of the Savior through the Atonement. He has taught us, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). The Holy Ghost can give us comfort, peace, and spiritual strength to keep moving forward.

- **Family members.** Family members can be a source of support by offering love and

acceptance. They may be able to increase their ability to support by applying the gospel principles taught in the *Support Guide: Help for Spouses and Family of Those in Recovery*. Though not all family members will be in an emotional position to provide comfort, those who can are often the most powerful sources of support.

- **Friends.** Friends can provide love and support when we talk with them about our struggles, whether or not we confide in them about the details. When friends have the courage to point out behaviors that we need to stop or when they encourage us to seek help, we can move forward in our progress toward recovery. As we experience love and support from friends, it can remind us of our worth and value.
- **Ecclesiastical leaders.** Ecclesiastical leaders can provide essential support in the process of change. These leaders can help us feel the Savior’s love and play a key role in helping us repent and become spiritually clean from compulsive and addictive behaviors.
- **Sponsors.** Sponsors are people who have found recovery by working through the 12 steps. Because of their experience, they know how to help us work through and apply the steps. They can usually recognize dishonesty and understand other difficulties even when we may not be aware of them.
- **Recovery meetings.** Recovery meetings are a safe place where we can find acceptance, love, and support. In these meetings we share our experience as well as our faith and hope for recovery through the Savior Jesus Christ and by applying the 12 steps in our lives. Sharing our experiences may help us work toward needed changes and find hope that recovery and healing are possible.

- **Mental health and medical professionals.** Mental health and medical professionals can often provide insight and unique skills necessary to recover and heal from compulsive and addictive behaviors. If we are still struggling with compulsive and addictive behaviors even as we participate in the Addiction Recovery Program, we should consider seeking professional help from a mental health or medical professional. When seeking professional help, Church members should choose someone who is supportive of gospel principles.

Choosing People to Support You

In the Church's Addiction Recovery Program, you are not assigned a sponsor or a support system. Deciding when and whom to ask for help is a personal decision. Prayerfully consider those around you who you feel most comfortable asking for help or who would be the most helpful for you. Generally, the more people you have as a support, the better your chances are of achieving recovery. Once you identify those you would like in your

support system, it can be humbling and scary to ask for their help. However, as you do, you may be surprised at the amount of love and acceptance you feel. The more you connect with others, the more opportunities you will have to receive love.

Make sure you choose extremely trustworthy people to support you. Some of the most effective people to support you are those who have a current connection to you (such as parents, a spouse, family members, and Church leaders), want you to be successful, are fully active in the Church, and understand or have a desire to understand the exact nature of the challenge you face. Someone who has overcome his or her own challenges often has greater empathy for the challenges others experience. Those with similar challenges to your own often have a greater ability to empathize with your struggle.

As you begin the process of change, you may be physically, emotionally, and spiritually vulnerable. Be cautious to not develop an inappropriate relationship with anyone who supports you.

Choosing a Sponsor

Working with a sponsor can enhance your recovery. A sponsor can support you in your growth and determination to overcome the challenges, dependencies, or addictive behaviors you are facing. In your journey of recovery, you are not alone; a sponsor is someone who is “willing to . . . comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God” (Mosiah 18:9). Please consider working with a sponsor as soon as possible.

What Is a Sponsor?

A sponsor is someone who has found recovery by working through the 12 steps. They may understand specific challenges related to recovery even when you may not be aware of them. A sponsor is not meant to be your best friend or mental health professional. Rather, a sponsor’s role is to help you work through the steps of recovery.

Finding a sponsor

In the Church’s Addiction Recovery Program, you are not assigned a specific sponsor. You can approach sponsorship in a way that fits your individual experience, needs, and personality. Sponsorship is a joint decision by you, the sponsor, and the Lord.

Finding someone to sponsor you may feel daunting, but others can help you. The best way to find a sponsor is to attend recovery meetings. Those with similar challenges often have a greater ability to empathize with your struggle. The following ideas can be helpful in deciding on an appropriate sponsor:

1. Seek spiritual guidance from Heavenly Father through prayer and fasting about who could be a sponsor for you.

2. Consider choosing someone who has spent significant time in recovery and has worked through the 12 steps.
3. Listen as people share their experiences in recovery and consider who you might connect with.
4. Group leaders and facilitators can introduce you to appropriate and willing candidates.
5. Ask someone who you feel is qualified.
6. You should choose a sponsor who is the same gender as you (unless the sponsor is a relative).
7. As you begin the process of change, you may be physically, emotionally, and spiritually vulnerable. Be cautious to not develop a dependent relationship with a sponsor.
8. You can always ask someone to sponsor you on a temporary basis. You can switch sponsors at any time.

Being an effective sponsor

Becoming a sponsor is a great act of service as you share your own experience, faith, and hope you have found working through the 12 steps of recovery and healing through the Savior Jesus Christ. Sponsors ask thoughtful questions, point to resources, share practical help on how to work through the steps, and encourage those they sponsor to attend recovery meetings. A sponsor understands that others may play a role in a person’s recovery and will not be offended if those they sponsor seek support from others or choose to change sponsors. Below are some principles to be an effective sponsor:

1. **Prioritize God before all else.** Constantly remember God and help those you sponsor rely on Him. Take care to not allow those you sponsor to become too dependent on you. Your responsibility as a sponsor is to encourage others to turn to Heavenly Father and the Savior for guidance and power. Your role is to share your experiences of faith and hope to help the person you support feel loved and supported by God.
2. **Be an active participant in recovery.** A sponsor needs to be in recovery for a substantial amount of time before sponsoring anyone (generally 12 months or longer) and actively engaged in applying and studying the principles of recovery. You may feel added pressure in your own recovery when you begin to sponsor someone else. Be careful not to jeopardize your own recovery by sponsoring someone else. A sponsor practices self-care and asks for help or support when needed.
3. **Be humble.** As a sponsor, your role is to use your strengths to offer support and guidance.
4. **Respect the agency of others and exercise patience.** Effective sponsorship comes “by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; by kindness, and pure knowledge” (Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–42). Avoid trying to fix others in any way. Help others consider principles and practices and then support them as they make their own decisions. Respect their agency and have hope that the Lord will help them as they turn to Him. The person you are helping may not yet be ready to move forward. He or she may repeat unhealthy behaviors or be slow to adopt the principles and practices of sincere change. A sponsor must be patient with others as they journey toward recovery.
5. **Serve selflessly.** Selfless service requires giving without expecting anything in return. A sponsor should have a great capacity for understanding and be willing to devote time and effort to those they sponsor. Avoid seeking praise, admiration, loyalty, or other emotional rewards from those you sponsor.
6. **Respect your personal commitments.** Becoming a sponsor does not mean those you sponsor should have unlimited access to your time and resources. You can set an example of the importance of healthy boundaries by honoring your other commitments, including your family, the Church, your career, and your personal time. Remember the counsel King Benjamin gave in Mosiah 4:27: “And see that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength.”
7. **Be prayerful.** Each time you choose to sponsor someone, seek the Lord’s guidance to know which principles or practices will be most helpful for the individual’s current needs. Be prayerful as you consider ways to serve, always striving to be led by the Spirit.
8. **Testify of truth.** You may feel prompted to share experiences to let others know that you can relate. You may also bear testimony of the Savior and His healing power. The truth that God is a God of miracles is key (see Moroni 7:29). Sharing your testimony of His mercy and grace may be one of the most important services you can offer.
9. **Keep confidences.** As a sponsor, you have a responsibility to protect the privacy of others. Anonymity and confidentiality are core principles in strengthening your ability to sponsor and help others.

Principles to Write an Effective Inventory

When beginning step 4, it is important to know that there is no one right way to do this inventory. An inventory is a very personal process. Many people get discouraged or frustrated trying to figure out how to create an inventory, but we encourage you to simply begin, even if that means just writing down a list of events.

We need to seek the Lord's guidance. He will help us be truthful and loving as we sort through our memories and feelings and conduct an honest self-examination. We may also consult with our sponsors or others who have already done an inventory. They will help us realize how best to proceed.

The objective of the inventory is to help us make things right with God, ourselves, and others. The inventory gives us an opportunity to step back and look at our lives. As we do, we see patterns in the ways we have responded to our life experiences, identifying both character flaws and character virtues. Below are some simple principles that will help us begin our inventories.

A. Prepare to Make Our Inventories

As we begin our inventories, it is important to continue to work with our sponsors. Sponsors help us work this step effectively. Often the first instruction sponsors give is to begin every aspect of the inventory with prayer and to ask God to lead us to the truth. We can trust the impressions and thoughts that come to us.

Prayer will also help us maintain hope throughout the process. We have all faced the same overwhelming task with the same struggle of being rigorously honest. We testify that this process is the sure path that has led us back into an honest and joyful relationship with ourselves, others, and God.

B. Write Our Inventories

The inventories of our lives will be most effective if we write them. We can hold a written list in our hands, review it, and refer to it when necessary. Unwritten thoughts are easy to forget. As we write our inventories, we will be able to think more clearly about the events in our lives and focus on them with less distraction.

Some of us are reluctant to write our inventories because we feel embarrassed or fearful about our writing abilities or about someone else reading what we have written. But we don't let these fears stop us. Our spelling, grammar, penmanship, and typing skills do not matter.

C. Identify Key Incidents

We write about the key moments in our lives that have impacted us. As we work on our inventories, we look beyond the events and examine our thoughts, feelings, and beliefs. These are actually the roots of our addictive behaviors. We find that to fully heal and recover, we need to examine our fear, pride, resentment, anger, self-will, and self-pity.

We sometimes feel overwhelmed trying to decide what to write first. Some people group their lives according to age, year in school, places lived, or relationships. Others start by brainstorming. We probably won't remember everything all at once. We need to continue to pray and allow the Lord to bring things to our remembrance. We leave this process open-ended and add to our inventories as we remember experiences and situations.

We recognize that some memories may be distorted and inaccurate because of the profound impact self-deception and trauma can have on our memories. Some of the memories are so painful and

embarrassing that we may be reluctant to acknowledge them and write them down. The Spirit will guide us as we consistently pray and seek feedback from our sponsors. These sources of support will help us recognize truth.

D. Be Fearlessly Honest in Our Self-Examination

The next important step in our inventories is to better understand our pasts. Describing what happened, how we felt, why it happened, and who else it affected is a process of self-discovery. Through a fearlessly honest self-examination, we acknowledged the truth of our pasts and what that meant for the future. Being honest in our self-examination helped us repent, seek forgiveness, and heal more fully.

This may be the most difficult phase of the inventory process. It is painful to see our part in dysfunctional relationships and negative experiences. But our sponsors can support us and help keep us focused and honest. We can persist and acknowledge that this process of self-discovery is essential to our recovery. As Elder Bruce D. Porter said, “The discovery of self is a profoundly spiritual experience, one that is possible for anyone willing to learn. . . . If the goal is pursued faithfully, [we] will find treasure at the journey’s end” (“Searching Inward,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1971, 63, 65).

Please see the section titled “Example 1—Question Format” for examples of questions to help guide you through an honest self-examination.

E. Celebrate Our Efforts

We recognize that an honest written inventory is an ongoing process in recovery. We found we needed to revisit our inventories and add to them. This process helped strengthen our understanding and ability to

maintain recovery and helped us develop new and improved healthy relationships.

Step 4 is a process. We can celebrate all our efforts in writing our inventories. The reflection of ourselves we will see as we work this step can inspire us to change the direction of our lives if we let it. Because of the Savior’s love and grace, we do not have to be what we have been. When we call on the Lord for guidance as we examine our lives, we will come to recognize our experiences as learning opportunities.

The inventory process empowers us to humbly acknowledge our weaknesses and to seek God’s help to turn them into strengths. “And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them” (Ether 12:27).

F. We May Need Professional Help

We may have had very difficult experiences or things that have happened to us. Some of these things may include traumatic experiences, such as abuse, violence, or severe psychological pain. As we write our inventories, remembering these difficult experiences can bring back the pain, fear, and emotions associated with these events. Reliving these painful experiences and emotions can cause further harm to us without the proper support and help. We should consider seeking professional help from a therapist, counselor, or doctor to process these kinds of events. Professionals can help us safely process trauma at an appropriate pace. If you are unsure whether you need this help, please discuss this with someone you trust. You could also meet with a professional for an assessment and consider their recommendation.

Examples of Writing an Inventory in Step 4

There are many successful formats for creating an inventory in step 4. However, we have learned that the following elements make an inventory most effective for recovery.

1. **God**—Making an inventory is hard work, and we cannot accomplish it alone. We need God’s support. Prayer is an important part of this vital endeavor. As we turn to God in prayer, He will strengthen us and help us do this important work.
2. **Honesty**—Inventories are careful reviews of our lives and should include incidents, situations, and relationships we recall with discomfort or uneasiness. We must be as honest and thorough as possible. We have found that the deeper we are willing to search our souls, the more effective working step 4 will be.
3. **Writing**—The process of writing gives us more insight, perspective, and clarity. Some of our situations make it challenging to put our inventories in writing. Though we have different abilities and inclinations, the Lord will bless our every effort to place our most difficult experiences before Him in writing. If you struggle with writing, ask your sponsor or someone else to help.
4. **Sponsor**—A sponsor should be someone who has worked the 12 steps and completed his or her own inventory. Sponsors can be most helpful in guiding us through the process and putting our lives in perspective. If you haven’t already, we strongly suggest you begin working with a sponsor.

After we have written our inventories, we keep them to use as a reference for the next steps in

recovery. Our inventories help us identify character weaknesses and strengths in steps 6 and 7, and the people or institutions we mention in our inventories will be those we need to forgive or make amends to in steps 8 and 9. When the time is right, we can destroy the portions of our inventories that include negative or angry expressions, accounts of personal transgressions, and any other sensitive matters that we should not share with others. Destroying these writings can be a symbol of our repentance and a powerful way to let go of our pasts.

As previously mentioned, there are many ways to write an inventory. Below are three examples. There are many other ways to write an inventory that are not listed here. These examples will help us get started. No matter what approach or combination of approaches we use, it’s essential that we allow God to show us how He sees us and each situation. If we do, God will give us increased strength and hope in this process.

How do we begin? Some people work chronologically through their lives according to age, school year, places lived, or relationships. Others start by brainstorming. We won’t remember everything all at once, so we continue to pray and allow the Lord to bring things to our remembrance. We can always add to our inventories as we remember situations and experiences.

Example 1—Question Format. This method uses questions to examine troublesome life incidents. It helps us delve deeply into each situation.

Example 2—Worksheet Format. This method helps us chart and organize the people or institutions we harmed. It helps us identify our character weaknesses and provides valuable information for upcoming steps.

Example 3—Journal Format. A journaling approach can shed light on our lives. It gives us the opportunity to ponder and process the details of our lives.

Example 1—Question Format

As we review our lives, the first challenge is to identify past and present situations that make us feel uncomfortable. Ultimately, we are trying to see our own character weaknesses and to identify people we need to forgive or to whom we need to make amends. The following example uses questions to help us make a fearless and thorough self-examination. These questions help us identify key people, situations, principles, institutions, or incidents. They help us describe what happened, how we felt, why it happened, and who it affected. We devote one page to each person or situation. On each page, we write our own answers to the questions. We try to keep our answers under 15 words—short phrases are enough.

The following example deals with just one incident, the accidental death of a sister.

Initial Questions

1. What happened? Give a short description of the situation.

My sister was killed in a car accident.

2. Why did this incident bother me?

It was the worst thing that has ever happened to me.

3. How did the incident affect me and my relationships (financially, emotionally, physically)? How did this incident leave me wounded?

I withdrew from others. I'm still insecure. I started using alcohol to numb the pain, and I gained weight. I lost any desire to continue my education. I don't want to get close to anyone. I'm afraid to be in a serious relationship.

4. What were my initial feelings when it happened? What feelings do I still have about this incident?

I felt shocked and pained when it happened. I felt angry with God. I still feel wounded.

5. Looking back, what were some of my character weaknesses that contributed to this situation? (We must prayerfully seek God's help to be humble and face the truth, even though it may be very painful.)

- Was I being dishonest? Who did I lie to?

Mostly I lied to myself. I blamed God and my family for my own inability to have faith in Jesus Christ.

- Was I frightened?

Yes, I couldn't understand why Heavenly Father hadn't protected her. If such a bad thing could happen once, it might happen again.

- Was I resentful?

Yes, mostly at God but also at her husband and the driver of the car that hit her. I didn't think it was fair that she was killed.

- What evidence of pride do I see in my life? Do I see signs of self-deception, self-righteousness, or self-pity in my attitudes and actions?

I expected my life to always be happy. I didn't think bad things should happen to me or my family. I definitely felt sorry for myself.

6. Did my actions hurt or negatively affect anyone else? If so, who?

My actions hurt others in my family, like my brother-in-law. I was unstable in my emotions and struck out in anger at my family. I was unforgiving of the other driver. My anger at God was hurtful to me.

7. What did I do to control the situation? What actions did I take or omit to get what I wanted?

I either withdrew or lashed out at others. I threw tantrums. I just did not want it to be true. I wanted to go back in time. I wanted God to bring her back to life. I even asked my parents to pray for her to come back. My thinking was extremely confused!

8. How did I act like a victim to manipulate others (for example, need for attention, sympathy, and so on)? Did I insist on being right? Did I feel slighted or unacknowledged?

I threw tantrums, isolated myself, and refused to talk to a grief counselor. I could see only my own feelings and my own pain. I really just wanted someone else to make it all better for me.

9. Was it any of my business? Whose feelings did I ignore by thinking only of myself?

It was my business. She was my sister, and I felt a lot of pain. However, I never stopped to consider the pain others were feeling—my parents, my brothers and sisters, our friends, her husband.

10. Did I resist help from God and others?

Yes, I was mad at God, so I wouldn't pray. I wouldn't talk to anyone or let myself be comforted.

Example 2—Worksheet Format

Another way to make an inventory is to fill out the chart below. First, fill out the first column on

the left, then the second, third, fourth, and so on. Filling out this chart can reveal the patterns we need to look for in our inventories. We consider positive traits that we need to develop or that we already have, always remembering that the Lord can turn our weaknesses into strengths (see Ether 12:27). We take time to read and ponder the Lord's counsel.

Person, institution, situation, incident, or principle about which I have negative feelings

What happened and what action did I take? Give a short description of the event. Consider listing items from my life chronologically, perhaps in increments of 5 to 10 years.

Effect

Why did this person, institution, situation, incident, or principle bother me? Did it affect my emotional, physical, or financial security? Did it affect my relationships, sense of self-worth, or ambitions for the future?

Feelings

What were my feelings at the time? What feelings do I still have about it? Do I feel regret for my part in the problem or resentment toward a person, institution, situation, incident, or principle?

Character weaknesses

What evidence of pride do I see in my life? Do I see signs of self-deception, self-righteousness, self-pity, or self-will in my attitudes and actions? What were my self-centered fears that contributed to this situation or incident or to my feelings about this person, institution, or principle?

Forgive and make amends

Who do I need to forgive? To whom do I need to make amends? Remember to add my own name to this column.

Positive traits

When doing my inventory, I may focus on difficult aspects of my life. However, I should also think about my strengths and positive traits. What are my

character strengths? Which character strengths do I need to develop further? Focusing on my positive strengths can remind me of my infinite and indestructible divine worth.

0 to 10 years						
Person, institution, situation, incident, or principle (What happened? Who was hurt? and so on)	Effect (emotional, physical, or financial security; relationships, self-worth, or ambitions)	Feelings (resentment, fear, regret, hurt, and so on)	Character weaknesses (self-will, pride, dishonesty, self-righteousness, self-pity, self-deception, and so on)	Forgive and make amends (Who do I need to forgive or make amends to?)	Positive traits (charity, humility, honesty, courage, faith in Jesus Christ, and so on)	Which traits do I need to develop further?
Sam, a kid at school, kept making fun of me and called me names.	This affected the way I felt about myself and my relationships with friends. I wanted to be brave, but I couldn't.	I was afraid, and I also felt ashamed of how scared I was. I wish I had just hit him.	self-pity, self-righteousness	I need to forgive Sam. In the future, I want to be a person who is kind but also honest.	I am a nice person. I generally see the good in others.	forgiveness, courage
I made a treat at a Primary activity. I wanted to take it home to show Mom and Dad, but I kept eating little bites as I walked. Finally, I just ate the rest.	This affected my sense of self-worth. I wanted to share my accomplishment with my parents, but I failed.	All the way home I regretted what I was doing. I felt embarrassed, fat, and weak. I felt I was a failure.	pride, self-pity, gluttony, lack of self-control	me	I want to do the right thing. I think I have a good heart.	humility, faith in Jesus Christ, self-control with food

10 to 20 years						
Person, institution, situation, incident, or principle (What happened? Who was hurt? and so on)	Effect (emotional, physical, or financial security; relationships, self-worth, or ambitions)	Feelings (resentment, fear, regret, hurt, and so on)	Character weaknesses (self-will, pride, dishonesty, self-righteousness, self-pity, self-deception, and so on)	Forgive and make amends (Who do I need to forgive or make amends to?)	Positive traits (charity, humility, honesty, courage, faith in Jesus Christ, and so on)	Which traits do I need to develop further?
I discovered masturbation when kids at school were joking about it. When I asked my mom about it, she became flustered and told me to never do it and never talk about it again.	I was conflicted inside because it felt good but left me feeling bothered. When I was around friends at church, I felt like I was the only one struggling with it since no one discussed it.	I felt embarrassed, cut off by my mom, alone, dishonest, and dirty.	self-will, dishonest, unclean, lack of self-control	me, my mom	I guess I have a good conscience. I want to be good.	willingness to open myself to others, honesty, chastity, repentance
For about 14 months, I regularly stole cash from the register or used products without paying at the place where I worked.	I was always nervous around my manager. I feel guilty about it now but don't know how to make it right since that business doesn't exist anymore.	fear, greed, self-centeredness	dishonesty, self-will, self-deception	the place where I was working, my manager	I'm a hard worker.	honesty, accountability

20 to 30 years						
Person, institution, situation, incident, or principle (What happened? Who was hurt? and so on)	Effect (emotional, physical, or financial security; relationships, self-worth, or ambitions)	Feelings (resentment, fear, regret, hurt, and so on)	Character weaknesses (self-will, pride, dishonesty, self-righteousness, self-pity, self-deception, and so on)	Forgive and make amends (Who do I need to forgive or make amends to?)	Positive traits (charity, humility, honesty, courage, faith in Jesus Christ, and so on)	Which traits do I need to develop further?
I got drunk at a party and woke up with someone I barely knew.	This affected my feelings of security, safety, and self-worth. I wanted to get married in the temple, but it doesn't look like that can happen.	I feel dirty, hopeless, and miserable. I'm so sorry I even went to that party. Why did this happen to me?	distrust, contempt for myself and my so-called friends, self-pity	me, my friends	I'm a kind person. I want to get past this somehow. I have worked hard to develop my talents.	sobriety, responsibility, obedience, putting God first, chastity
My sister was killed in a car accident. I felt close to her husband and children, but he cut himself off from our family.	This has been a huge trauma in my life. I'm insecure physically and emotionally. My relationship with my sister and her family is totally gone.	I'm depressed so much of the time. I know that alcohol doesn't help the situation, but it makes it go away for a little while.	anxiety, fear, discontent, self-pity	God, me, my sister's husband, the people I hurt with my drinking	I am a good student and a hard worker. I love people and get along with others at work.	faith in Jesus Christ, hope, sobriety

30 to 60 years						
Person, institution, situation, incident, or principle (What happened? Who was hurt? and so on)	Effect (emotional, physical, or financial security; relationships, self-worth, or ambitions)	Feelings (resentment, fear, regret, hurt, and so on)	Character weaknesses (self-will, pride, dishonesty, self-righteousness, self-pity, self-deception, and so on)	Forgive and make amends (Who do I need to forgive or make amends to?)	Positive traits (charity, humility, honesty, courage, faith in Jesus Christ, and so on)	Which traits do I need to develop further?
I resent my son-in-law. He always needs money, yet he can't keep a job. He is careless. I'm afraid he's making my daughter unhappy.	I'm worried about finances. When I have bad feelings toward him, it affects my relationship with my daughter.	I feel frustrated. I feel resentful, and I'm angry with myself for feeling resentful. I feel trapped and unable to think of any good solution.	self-righteous, self-pity, pride, resentment	my son-in-law, my daughter, my spouse	I am usually pretty generous. I work hard at home and in the Church.	charity, forgiveness, receiving personal revelation
My spouse is talking about separation or divorce. I know I haven't been perfect, but it's not always me that causes the problems.	My relationships are terrible. My self-worth is affected as well as my financial and emotional security.	I am so scared. What if I don't get to see the kids? I don't know how I can survive a divorce.	fear, self-pity, resentment, anxiety	me, my spouse, my kids	I've tried really hard to change. I even went to counseling.	charity, love, peace, and greater trust in God

Example 3—Journal Format

Writing can be a powerful tool for understanding and healing. Prayerfully journaling before or after working on our inventories can be very helpful. As we review our lives, we simply start writing about the situations that we uncovered and how we feel. There is no system to this. We just pick up a pen, say a prayer, and begin writing. Let it flow! As we think through our lives using journaling, we look for people, institutions, situations, incidents, or principles

that we have negative feelings about. We write about how our emotions and feelings are affected, and we try to understand what our character weaknesses are and what strengths we would like to develop. We also pray to know who we need to forgive and to whom we need to make amends. Here are a few examples of journal entries:

- I've been thinking about my experiences in childhood lately. I remember that kid—I can't remember his name—but he was bigger than me,

and he was so mean. He kept calling me a baby and even worse names. I had to run home from school as fast as I could every day. I wonder if that was when I started to feel like I didn't have any friends and that I couldn't even make friends. I hate it when I run away from problems. I hate to be afraid, but it just isn't fair that some people are bigger and meaner. I always try to be friendly. I guess I feel sorry for myself. I can't understand why people aren't nicer to me. I'm a nice person.

- I was kind of a fat kid. I am still a little overweight, but it's hard for me to stop eating something I love. Even when I was in Primary, I could never get a treat home to share with my family. It made me feel like a failure. I've always been embarrassed about my eating and about my weight. Some people can eat whatever they want, and it doesn't affect their weight. That makes me really mad!
- I have a problem with sexual lust. It's really not my fault that I have a hard time with that. I discovered masturbation when kids at school were joking about it. When I asked my mom about it, she became flustered and told me to never do it and never talk about it again. But what about when the bishop interviewed me later? Should I have told him?
- I felt so ashamed about what was happening in my home between my parents that the only thing that made me feel better was smoking. I found some cigarettes and they gave me a lift, a charge that helped with how miserable I felt. I had my own secret life when I got up in the night and sleep wouldn't come. I thought I could quit anytime, but I really couldn't. Then I ran out of the cigarettes I found, and I had to steal to have money for more. I stole things from where I was working. I was so nervous that I would be caught, either by someone in my family or worse, by the cops. I hated the dishonesty, but I needed that smoking time alone—something just for me. I guess I felt sorry for myself.
- Another bad memory happened when I was in college. I wanted to be like my roommates, but I didn't get invited to many parties. I remember the night I finally went to a party where there was lots of booze. "Why not?" I thought. I wanted to be part of the crowd. I wanted to have some fun for once. I don't remember what happened next, but when I woke up, I was with someone I didn't really know. Things had gone from bad to worse. Why can't I ever catch a break? Nothing turns out in my favor.
- It seemed like the end of the world when we got the news that my sister was killed. She was walking along the road and a car mowed her down. My family was devastated, and some of us acted out even more than before. Her husband was so mad that he said he would never let their children talk to us again. He says my family causes trouble in their lives.
- My kids seem to be carrying on the family tradition. My daughter married a real loser. They never have enough money, and to be honest, I just can't afford to keep supporting them too. Why doesn't he get a job and then keep it? I'm so frustrated. I want to be a good parent to my daughter, but the constant money problems cause problems between us. I wish I could just accept her husband, but I just can't. I'm sorry.
- Sunday is supposed to be a great family day, right? I never thought this would happen. My spouse told me last night that we need some space, as in a separation. What? I can't believe it. Of course, I'm not perfect, but no one is. Dear God, what can I do?
- I talked to my sponsor about the idea of taking inventory of my life. My sponsor pointed out that there is a kind of pattern to the feelings I have and that there are some things I need to talk to my bishop about. As I read back over my journal entries for the last few weeks, I see that I tend to feel sorry for myself. Some bad things have

happened to me, sure, but I'm starting to see that when I turn myself over to the Lord, He can take away some of my pain. I don't have to keep using my addiction. I don't have the power to quit, but the Lord does have that power.

- The scriptures and words of the prophets are starting to make more sense to me now. I'm seeing how they apply to my life. I'm so much more aware of the character weaknesses that used to be invisible to me. Sometimes I wonder if they are getting worse because I see them more clearly. I know I need to continue with the next steps so I can really recover.

Recognizing and Welcoming the Newcomer

A newcomer is a person who is new to recovery meetings. He or she is often an individual in the early stages of change, a person returning after relapse, or a friend or family member of someone struggling with addiction. Anyone we do not recognize may be a newcomer, and because the first few meetings that newcomers attend are often pivotal, it is particularly important to try to make these individuals feel comfortable and welcome.

Newcomers are often uncertain and apprehensive. Remember that it takes a lot of courage for individuals to admit that they are participating in destructive behaviors, that their lives are unmanageable, and that they need help. It also takes courage for friends or family members to talk about the effects of addiction in their loved one's life and in their own lives. Our goal is to help newcomers want to return.

We have the responsibility to create a welcoming, accepting atmosphere before, during, and after each meeting. Trust that the Spirit will guide newcomers through the process of change. Remember that newcomers often feel overwhelmed, so be loving and gentle in your approach. Love, support, and encouragement are essential elements of feeling welcomed and included.

We have received direction from the Church that recovery meetings are for those 18 years of age and older. If the individual is under 18, encourage them to consult with their parents, bishop, and mental health or physical health provider for other options that may prove helpful. If they desire a more detailed explanation, encourage them to contact the local Family Services agency manager. Once you have made them aware of the rule, if they continue to attend, do not remind them of the rule again and do nothing to enforce the rule.

The following suggestions may be helpful as you reach out to newcomers before and after meetings:

1. When greeting someone you do not recognize, introduce yourself and ask if he or she has ever attended a recovery meeting before.
2. Reassure newcomers that they are in a safe place. Explain that we adhere to the principle of confidentiality and that they only need to use their first names. Also, let them know that if they are not comfortable reading or sharing in meetings, they can just listen.
3. Let newcomers share only what they want to. Recognize that they often feel uncomfortable explaining why they are attending meetings.
4. Suggest that newcomers listen for the things they have in common with other participants. Newcomers will feel more inclined to return to meetings when they can relate to those who are sharing. Explain that because our meetings are open to individuals who suffer from various types of destructive behaviors, group members may not always have the same experiences but will often experience similar emotions, as do those whose lives are affected by the choices or behaviors of others. Invite newcomers to remain after the meeting if they have any questions.
5. Trust that newcomers will come to understand the program without hearing about every aspect of it. Show newcomers the *Healing through the Savior: The Addiction Recovery Program 12-Step Recovery Guide* or the *Support Guide: Help for Spouses and Family of Those in Recovery* and encourage them to use these resources (available in Gospel Library in the "Addiction" section of Life Help). Explain to newcomers that through listening to the Spirit, attending meetings, and studying the guide, they may be able to better understand and apply principles and practices that lead to change.

6. Introduce newcomers to the facilitator.

Facilitators remember what it is like to come to the first meeting. They are examples to participants and can bear personal witness of how the program has brought change into their lives.

7. If there are problems related to newcomers sharing their experiences, be as gentle as possible in your response. Most problems and questions are more effectively addressed after the meeting rather than during the meeting. Over time, the newcomer will come to understand meeting etiquette.

8. Share with newcomers who are family members or loved ones of those struggling with pornography use or substance abuse that spouse and family support group meetings are available.

9. After the meeting, personally thank newcomers for attending.

10. Remember that newcomers are a blessing to the group. Newcomers provide continuing opportunities to serve, support, and learn from each other.



THE CHURCH OF
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