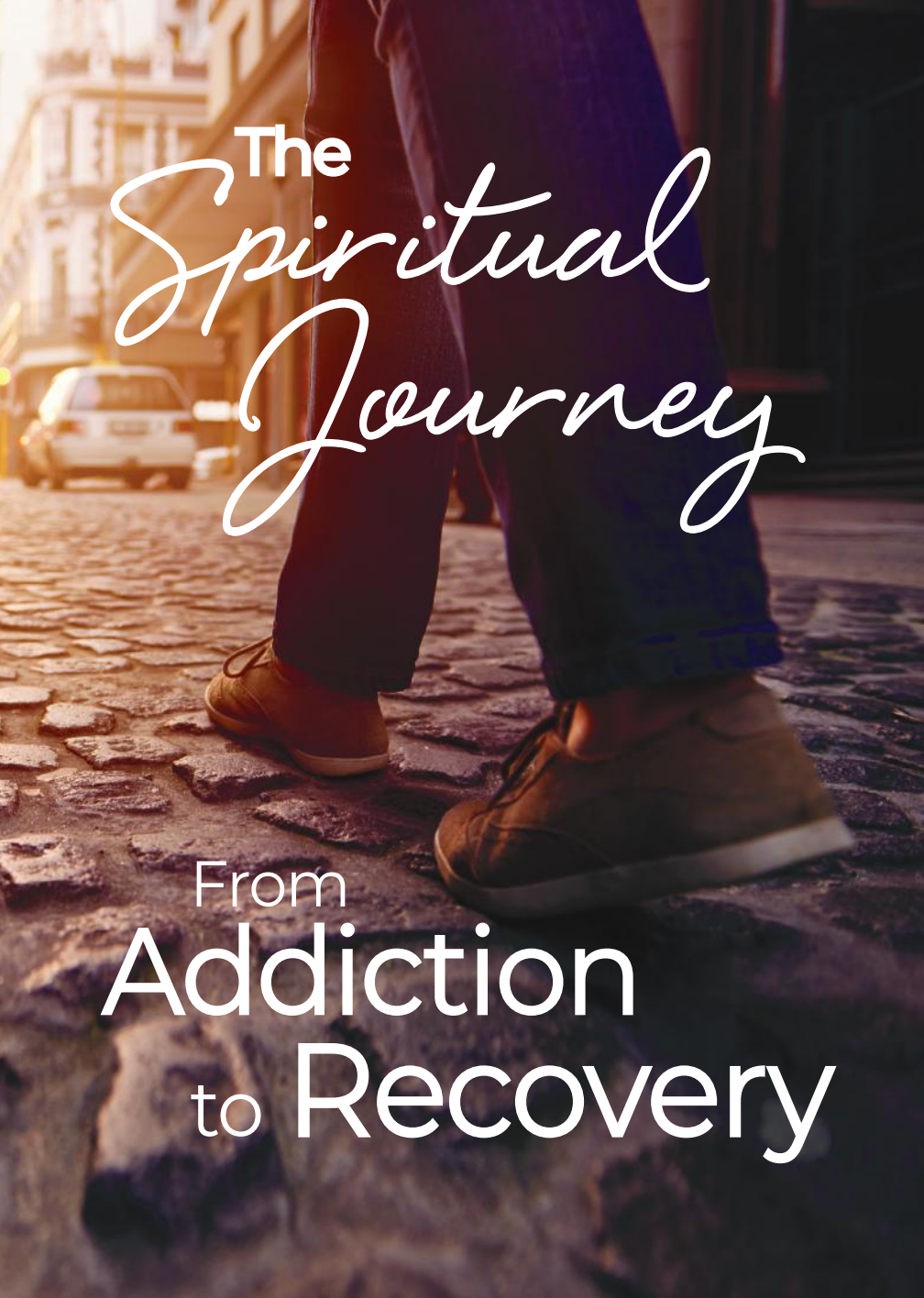


A person is walking on a cobblestone street during the "golden hour" of sunset. The person is wearing dark blue jeans and brown suede sneakers. The background shows a blurred city street with a white car and buildings, bathed in warm, orange light. The overall mood is contemplative and hopeful.

The *Spiritual Journey*

From
Addiction
to **Recovery**

YOUR SUPPORT *makes a difference*

Generous donations from friends like you allow us to make Unity literature available to those most in need of spiritual encouragement. Please give at unity.org/donatenow or write:

Unity
1901 NW Blue Pkwy.
Unity Village, MO 64065-0001

Thank you!

Dear Friend,

As Unity prays with millions of people each year, more than half the requests are for healing—healing of all kinds—physical healing, mental healing, relationship healing, and especially, healing from addiction.

People pray for an end to the nightmare of addiction occurring within themselves or their families. They are willing to surrender to a Higher Power, to let go and trust the Divine that dwells within them. They are open to answers in any form.

The prayers continue even in sobriety. An end to drinking or drugs is only the beginning of a long road, lasting a lifetime. Recovery involves not just addicts but everyone who loves them. The inner work at first may seem arduous, but it can lead to a life more glorious than imagined, more awake, more filled with love and gratitude, more connected to God.

Knowing how many people are in the midst of addiction or rebuilding their lives from it—and answering requests from many, many booklet readers—Unity offers this collection of deeply honest and personal stories and insights about the spiritual journey of recovery. It is divided into three sections: for those new to recovery; for those clean and sober for years who may be looking for a deeper level of spiritual awareness; and for families whose recovery parallels the addict's.



Affirmation: My Peaceful Heart

I am peaceful, for
my heart knows and
trusts God's presence
within me. I release
my focus on the ups
and downs of my outer
life. I relax as I place
my confidence in the
power of good.

Recovery comes in many ways and through different avenues. The majority of these writers based their journey on the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous. You will read here about the practical spiritual tools they have learned, how working the 12 steps enhanced their understanding of themselves and God, and how their personal spiritual beliefs sustain their recovery. Many also draw from the Unity teachings.

Because members of 12-step groups traditionally remain anonymous in all forms of media, none of the writers' names are being used in this booklet, even though most freely discuss their recovery with friends or in their churches. By remaining anonymous, they could be anyone. Their experiences could be yours. They likely have been where you are.

We hope this booklet is a comfort and an inspiration for you if your family has been touched by addiction.

Your Friends in Unity

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**FOR
NEWCOMERS**

Affirmation:
Got Hope?

When I let go of insisting on “how it has to be,”
I encounter hope.
My perspective shifts and I see that,
no matter what,
a bright day is possible for me.
I say yes to my joy today!

Gathering *Courage*



Every moment of my life, I'm either living more fully or withdrawing into less. I can challenge my fears or believe them. I can expand my point of view or try to protect it. I can work with life circumstances or struggle against them. I can believe in myself or find myself lacking.

It's a process! I'm more courageous now than I used to be. Every time I set a boundary, say what I need, or stand up for what's important to me, my courage grows. Even if my stomach is doing flip-flops as I take that next step, I feel brave!

I'm my own hero! I don't even have to do it well; I just need to do it.

For years I used sleep as an escape. My life just didn't feel right, and I was afraid to look at the reasons, so I hid from them. Of course, things only got worse. Finally, I started to trust myself enough to make changes. It was scary and led to some sleepless nights, but it was worth it. One tiny step at a time, I created a life that feels right to me. I deserve a life I don't have to hide from.

Walking through my fears helps me awaken to the unexpected strength I've had all along. Gathering courage as I go, I gain momentum with every gutsy step, no matter how small. Today I move forward, becoming more of who I want to be. 



Finding God in Recovery

I did not kill myself that night, despite my intention. Like most nights, I sat in the basement with my last friend, a dwindling case of red wine. I still remember the pain and regret, the shame and self-loathing, the complete isolation from people, anger from my husband and children, jobs lost, and friendships ruined. I could not look at myself in the mirror. I cried imagining there would be nothing nice said at my funeral. Even God was disgusted with me.

Just as I wondered whether anyone would care, a beam of light through the small, basement window fell on the wine glass in my hand. I looked at the glowing liquid with a sudden awareness about myself: *This is what you do all night, every night, and some days too.* No. I did not want to be dead. I wanted everything to be different.

Somewhere inside, a still, small voice said, “Tomorrow, you will not drink.” I did not drink the next day but kept a lunch date with a recent acquaintance and networking connection. I barely knew her, yet I

sobbed through lunch, unable to hold back the misery. She went to get something from her car and returned with a used paperback she had picked up the day before at a garage sale.

I had read half of that book, *A Return to Love* by Marianne Williamson, when I found the courage to call Alcoholics Anonymous. Maybe God was not done with me after all.

I had given no thought to God in the years I drank. My husband had been my Higher Power, the source of my physical and emotional well-being for 30 years. I did not know I was codependent or emotionally

Instantly, I felt a weight lift from
my soul. I did not have to do this
alone. I began to understand God
as unconditional love and an
always gentle wisdom that
I was worthy to receive.

abused, nor
did I have the
courage to
leave. No one
knew the chaos
and violence
inside our
home.

I had not
considered that
there was a

spiritual aspect to me or that I was more than a physical being. I had been religious at times, but I never had an awareness of Spirit or that I was being guided.

Still, I fought the idea of a Higher Power. I was not giving over my will so fast. When someone suggested I think of God as “Good Orderly Direction,” I went with that, learning to do “the next right thing”: eating when I was hungry, sleeping when I was tired, even remembering to do laundry, feed my kids, or pay a bill. I was relearning the simplest things so my life could be manageable in the smallest of ways.

I had trouble focusing and couldn't read right away. Yet healing was taking place as I did what I could. The promises I read in the *Alcoholics Anonymous Big Book*, assured me that if I didn't drink, one day at a time, I would "not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it." I wanted that more than anything else. There were caring, encouraging people around me. I leaned on their faith while not really having any of my own.

Then one day it happened: My awareness of God showed up in a lightbulb moment as I understood the third step! It says: "Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him."

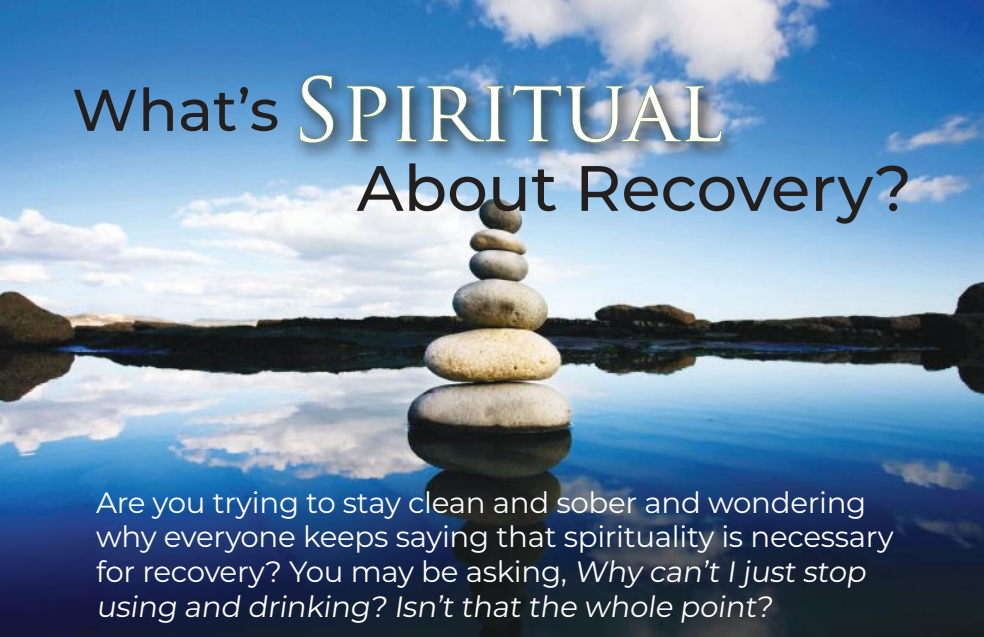
This came with the knowing that God forgave me. The judgment had come from me, not God. Now I had a decision to make. Was I going to rely on me alone, the self-involved, ego-driven personality that had "Edged God Out (EGO)," or would I choose to live while listening for God's will for me? That is when I heard the small voice say, "If God is your copilot, let him fly the plane!"

Instantly, I felt a weight lift from my soul. I did not have to do this alone. I began to understand God as unconditional love and an always gentle wisdom that I was worthy to receive. I could again look at myself in the mirror. When I did, I would say out loud, "God loves you. It is going to be all right."

It has been better than all right. The person holding the wine glass in the basement *did* die. Someone new emerged. With God, I have gotten through life's hardest challenges—deaths, divorce, starting a business and losing one, unemployment, and cancer—by not drinking and becoming someone useful.

All the promises have come true, one day at a time. It has been an evolving thing, but God only gets bigger and more essential to my life. ♥

What's SPIRITUAL About Recovery?



Are you trying to stay clean and sober and wondering why everyone keeps saying that spirituality is necessary for recovery? You may be asking, *Why can't I just stop using and drinking? Isn't that the whole point?*

The answer to that question lies in the very nature of addiction itself, and you might find it surprising! The bottom line is that abstinence is not the same as recovery. Having abused body, mind, and spirit with alcohol and/or drugs, simply removing the substances does not repair the damage. The body is sick, the mind is confused, and the spirit is beaten. Recovery is movement in the direction of reunifying all the damaged parts. This reunification can be understood as a return to wholeness.

My own recovery journey has encompassed all three aspects of being: body, mind, and spirit. At its core, my experience has been that this journey toward wholeness is a spiritual journey. Follow me through it for a few moments here and see what you think.

Abstinence withdraws the poison. This will eventually return the physical body to a more normal state, though abstinence alone ignores the mental and spiritual issues that are also present. Abstinence alone is what we call “white knuckle” sobriety. It's holding on tight in order

to avoid a relapse yet being tormented by the untreated symptoms of mental and spiritual decay.

Mentally we may be stuck in old patterns of thought that are keeping us sick. For example, we may not know how to function effectively in relationships with others. We may be dishonest, take things too personally, find ourselves without patience and tolerance, and it seems that the only right ideas are our ideas.

We can work on our behavior—just “stop doing that”—and see our lives improve. Yet we may still be subject to depression and a feeling of worthlessness. Just as abstinence is only part of the solution, so it is with changing our behaviors. There is still something missing, and we can sense it.

Spiritually we might feel lost in the world, not having a sense of who we are and what is important in life. We might begin to realize that we have ideas about God, the Universe, the world around us, good and evil, how we fit into the picture, and so on that are now coming into question.

We might wonder if there isn't a better way to see these things. This is where the real power of sobriety comes into play. It is only by exploring these deep questions of life and finding a new understanding that we gain the peace and serenity we so desperately desire.

Perhaps you can assess your program of recovery. Perhaps it feels as if there is something missing. Maybe some new ideas, tools, and/or techniques are called for to address all three areas of your life.

If you are focused on abstinence, that's good. It's the essential first step. But when you are able, think about what you can add to that to address your other needs. Talk to your trusted friends and stretch your comfort zone. You will soon be walking in the sunlight of the Spirit as the uniquely created individual you are! 

PRAYER FOR

Healing

**In this moment, there is perfect
recognition of Divine Power as all
limitations fall away.**

You are lifted up into this realization through your own ability to hold on to your presence of being beyond any limiting thoughts or feelings.

True peace enters your heart and mind and reintroduces itself to you as perfect harmony. You remember the grace with which you have always wandered this world. You are such grace within the beauty of your existence. God grace is fulfilled within and through you. God love is your breath of life.

Your doubts, fears, and sickness are real and impacting at your human level. You do not ignore them nor deny them but slowly open yourself up to

what is more of who you are. Nothing can truly sway you from your path even though sometimes that is exactly how your inner and outer world appears to you.

You no longer give power to anything less than what you already feel, intuit, and truly understand at the very depth of your being. Instead, you affirm the very Christ presence within you that recognizes itself through the tender heart, gentle touch, and compassion you extend to others. Now is the time to turn your power around and apply it to yourself.

Allow yourself to receive from all directions and from all who extend their helping hand to you, whether you recognize them or not. Right now, allow yourself to give back to you with all the passion you usually extend to others. Therein lies the power of true surrender.

Even if you may not see the gratitude in all, simply thank yourself for the strength within you to ask for help. The gift of vulnerability serves you well. And for that, we say thank you. And so it is.

AMEN. ♡

Filling the God-Shaped Hole

Sobriety is more than abstaining from drugs, alcohol, or any of our addictive behaviors. It means to recover the person you were born to be.

Some of us lost all hope of ever having lives with success in careers and loving relationships. Others of us, because of our life's circumstances, never even had the opportunity to explore what this meant. We have felt an emptiness in the depths of our souls, and we used substances outside of ourselves in hopes it would ease our pain and fill these holes.



But this hole is where
inspiration (in-spirit)
guides you to design
the blueprint for your
life's highest purpose,
where the spark of
hope ignites your faith
and fuels your passions, where
the miracle of transformation
manifests everything you will ever
need to become your highest self.
This hole is a holy place that only
God can fill to make you whole.

Many of us resist recovery because we hear the word *God* and instantly close our minds to the possibility that a Higher Power can help us. However, God is just a word that helps us to communicate the great mystery that powers all life. This power has also been called universe, love, humanity, a higher purpose, the Big Bang, and even a Group Of Drunks (GOD) in recovery.

In Unity we believe that everything and everyone is connected, and we are made from the same substance that created every star, planet, and person. This Higher Power also includes you and you are part of it. This is what we mean when we say the power is within you.

Some of us believe the lies of the ego/addict that we are not worthy of a better life. Against our better judgment we have lied, stolen, and cheated to maintain our addiction. We have brought great harm to others mentally, emotionally, and perhaps even physically.

More than anything, we have harmed ourselves. You may try to use in moderation, abstain for months at a time, or replace one vice for another. But once again, you give your power away to the disease of addiction until your spirit is broken and you find yourself in the depths of depression, debt, and utter despair.

When we disconnect from our Source, our light dies to an ember that loses its glow. Our will to live is extinguished. Finally, through the Gift Of Desperation (GOD), we might consider the idea that a power greater than ourselves can reignite the will to survive and a drive to thrive.

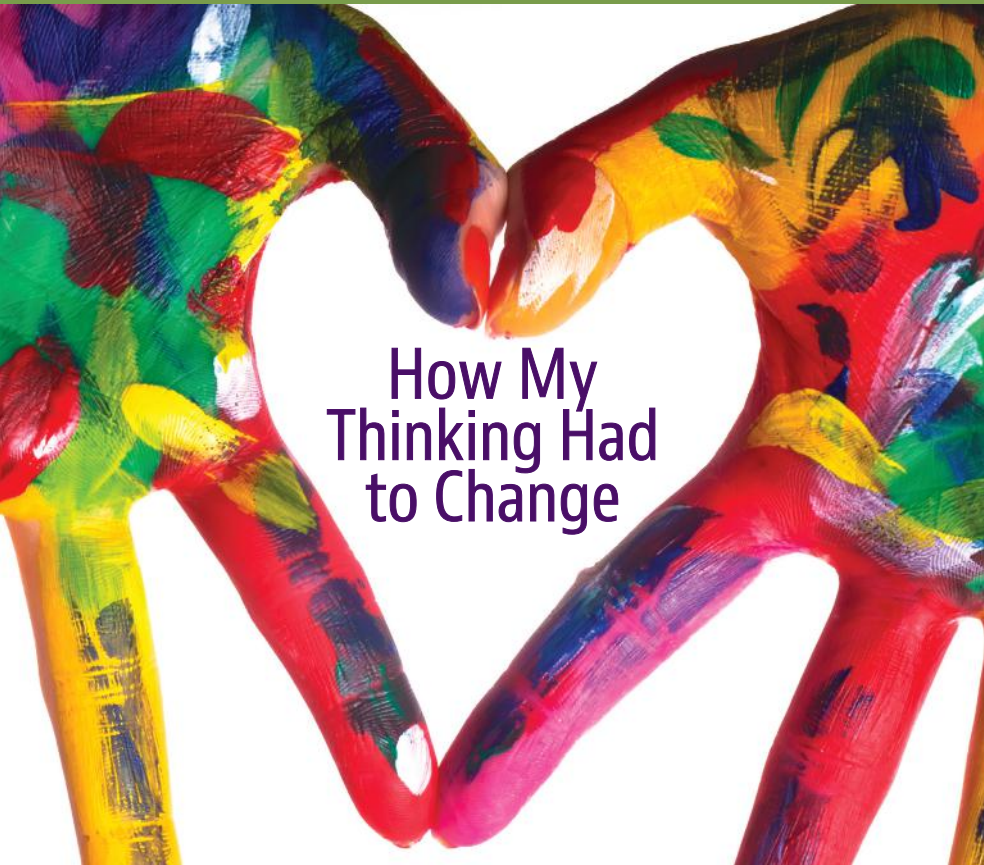
To reclaim your birthright to the substance that created the entire universe, you first have to become willing to put down the substance that is killing you. When you get honest with yourself, open your mind to new possibilities, and become willing to ask for help, you will be empowered with all the tools you need to create a life full of love, peace, and prosperity.

You are worthy of recovery! How do I know? If this is true for me and millions of others, I know this is true for you. 

I was 15 when I first started drinking. I had left the church of my childhood and had a generally agnostic view of God or anything spiritual.

Those first drinks were only a prerequisite to the drug and alcohol abuser I would become over five, 10, and 20 years.

I grew up believing I could do anything. But you probably know how it is: Something happens that doesn't fit your idea of a perfect life, and depression sets in. Drugs and alcohol were the companions to turn my not-so-perfect life into an induced stupor. And of course, they also added to my problems.

A close-up photograph of two hands, one on the left and one on the right, with fingers interlaced to form a heart shape. The hands are painted with thick, vibrant, multi-colored brushstrokes in shades of red, yellow, green, blue, and purple. The background is a solid, bright white.

**How My
Thinking Had
to Change**

I became so addicted to my drug of choice that I decided to move to a different city to get away from the people, places, and things I thought lit my desire for the drugs. But life only went from bad to worse because I hadn't learned to change myself.

Nearing the end of a year I met a person who befriended me and welcomed me into his circle of friends. I began to learn that my way of thinking was affecting my life. I had to learn to believe in myself again. I decided to move back to my hometown, and my new friend suggested I find a local Unity church.

I was convinced I could stay off drugs and alcohol, and although I didn't go back to the same people, places, and things, I found myself living in an apartment complex filled with the same types of people. My drug addiction took a turn for the worse. I now had a new drug of choice, thanks to my new friends, and the addiction was unbearable. Several years went by as I was simultaneously attending Unity church on Sunday mornings and doing drugs any other day of the week.

My new church taught me that I create my life through my way of thinking and believing. I began to hope I could overcome my drug addiction, but then I would use again. Oh, I held down a full-time job, but once I was off work, the negative thinking about my life and the need to escape it would overcome any previously held belief that I could heal on my own. I would lie in bed at night and beg God to heal me, and if not heal me, then to take me out of my misery by allowing me to die. I wasn't suicidal; I just wanted it all to end.

My new church also taught me that the kingdom of God is within me. I learned to listen and act on the still, small voice I heard when I wasn't using. During the two years I prayed for God to heal me or kill me, I began to receive an answer, but it required action from me—action I wasn't ready or willing to take.

“If you want to be healed, you must leave your husband,” I heard over and over again. But I loved him; I didn’t want to leave. How would I survive in the world without him?

“Get an education,” the still, small voice answered. After some musing I began classes at the local community college.

College gave me confidence I had never had before. I became bolder and proud of what I was doing. One day my husband was annoyed and said, “You think you are somebody.” Well, I not only thought it, I knew it. But the comment burned into my heart that he didn’t think so.

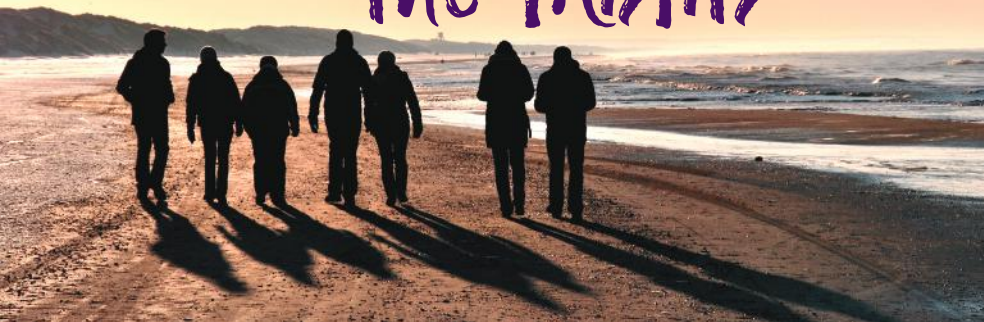
The next morning I finally said, “I hear you, God, and I’m leaving. I don’t know where I’m going or what I’ll do, but I will follow if you will lead me.”

That was the last time I used my drug of choice, but the healing would take five more years when I finally found a 12-step group and surrounded myself with people who were clean and sober.

I stumbled and fell a few times as I learned how to trust the divinity of God’s guidance. “He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul” (Psalm 23:2).

Not everywhere I went or everything I did turned out the way I wanted, but I can see how even those events were a part of a greater scheme. I now have a master’s degree and follow the divinity of my inner guidance every chance I get. ♥

Leaving the Island of the Misfits



I don't know what shape you were in when you first got into recovery, but if you were like me, you fit in NOWHERE. Almost nowhere. I did fit with others who belonged on the Addict Island of the Misfits.

Like many of us, my childhood wasn't always easy. A gym teacher, a relative, violent strangers here and there, and the darkness of addiction and destitution all did enough damage to ensure I learned my mantra of "fat, ugly, and stupid, aren't we?" very well.

So well in fact that by the time I was 25, when I saw *anything* that reminded me of what was missing in my life, I knew it was because I was indeed fat, ugly, and stupid. I would never be enough. This "island" was a place where all we broken humans went to be reminded of our eternal brokenness.

When I was finally beaten down and made it to my first recovery meeting, I heard only one thing: "Welcome home." Of course, I didn't believe anyone. How could strangers welcome someone like me? I sat down in the circle and listened. Someone handed me a piece of

literature, and I got my first glimpse of a pathway to life. I couldn't comprehend what it all meant, but I read through it, and I started to get angry. I didn't need anyone to tell *me* what a defect of character was! I was a giant walking defect. I had spent a lifetime cataloguing what was wrong with me!

Then there was the part about asking God to take it all away. Really? Do you honestly think I had never tried that?! Every day of my life I asked God to make me not be me. I never remembered a time I *didn't* think I was unworthy or that my existence was wrong.

I certainly didn't need to be told to apologize. For years I had been saying I'm sorry for everything, including my own existence. Yet I stayed in the meetings, knowing inside it was either this or death.

IS EGO THE PROBLEM?

I started working at recovery and I began to hear warnings about my ego. Things like: I should fear my ego, not listen to it, or it was my ego that was my “best thinking,” the thinking that had turned my life into this mess. The ego was the cause of my defects of character and the apparent root of my inability to be a “normal” person in society.

It made perfect sense. Clearly, I hadn't made healthy choices for myself, and my thinking was distorted. It's just who I am as an addict. Through the 12 steps I would learn to make peace with this adverse life partner—my ego—but it would always be with me.

Then I discovered the Unity spiritual movement, and at my very first church service I heard the minister say something amazing: Each of us—not just Jesus—was created in the image and likeness of God. I thought, *HOLY COW! Really? Does this guy know what he is saying? In the image and likeness, seriously!?! He must be nuts because he can't mean me! I mean really—look at me!*

I left the service and wrestled with this idea for some time. It ate at my soul, like a corrosive agent nibbling on my brain, eating away at the belief

I had about me and my ego. I was seriously confused and afraid, my recovery felt threatened. How could I be divine in nature? You can't be divine and an addict at the same time, right? Something was very wrong.

Yet being a dutiful recovery person, I went to my sponsor for guidance. Ironically, he was the one who had taken me to my first Unity service. For 29 years I have been practicing what he taught me, and I offer you my own understanding here.

TRUE SELF AND UNIQUE SELF

What I had come to understand as my ego was actually my adverse ego or immature ego. The fact is, I need an ego to navigate this world, so I don't want to drive it away. I want to continue doing my inner work in order to heal and have a healthy ego. At the same time, there is the other aspect of my being—my divinity.

Think of it this way: What we know as the Divine within is our True Self. It is the place of our greatest potential, our Christ nature or wholeness. It is *what* I am, eternal and unchangeable. Even in my darkest times of addiction, in every moment I closed the door on myself inside, trying to kill off parts of me, my True Self was always alive.

Then there is my Unique Self. This is the “me” that is changeable, the expression of my personality, who I am, my humanness. In walking this path with God, myself, and another human being, I have grown up my ego and learned to embrace all that I am so my Unique Self no longer expresses the wounds of the past—my defects of character—which is the adverse ego. I have learned to love and serve my world.

I don't have to choose between my divine nature and my ego, I only have to learn how to put feet on my True Self, making God, Spirit, or whatever you call a Higher Power present in this world as my Unique Self.

Anyone suffering from addiction needs to know they are not forever fractured and broken. By living our True Self through our Unique Self, we are restored to our inherent goodness and can light the way for others. ♥

LONG-TERM RECOVERY

Affirmation:
I'm Worth It!

I am a worthy and valued expression
of the Divine. Today I choose to see myself
as God sees me—precious, delightful, and whole.

I give myself the well-deserved gift
of loving self-care.

A heart shape formed by wooden beads on a wooden background. The beads are arranged in a heart shape, with a tassel hanging from the bottom right. The background is a wooden surface with a vertical grain.

The Spiritual Heart of the 12 STEPS

When we get into recovery, our first priority is physical health and well-being. Then as we work our recovery program, the fog in our brain lifts and we can make basic choices, like finding a job, paying the bills, and being a productive member of society.

We slowly develop the capacity to feel and express emotions beyond the primal mad, sad, glad, or bad. We discover we don't need to use something to fix our feelings because they are so uncomfortable. Finally, our spiritual nature begins to expand, and it becomes an integral part of recovery.

Whether we realize it or not, we engage with spiritual principles from day one. I remember when I first got into recovery, I heard someone say that addiction was a spiritual disease and required a spiritual answer. In starting down the road of the 12 steps, we say *yes* to a life founded on universal spiritual principles.

This is my own understanding of the spiritual principles behind the 12 steps. It saved my life three decades ago and still lies at the heart of my journey.

Step 1 is about simple HONESTY. We admit we are powerless and our lives are unmanageable. This is no-holds barred truth-telling, and probably something we haven't done in a very long time. When we tell the truth about our life it brings a sense of relief, and we discover we're not alone.

Step 2 opens the door to HOPE. It tells me life can be different, that I don't have to continue on this suicidal death march. Hope recognizes I can be delivered from the insanity of addiction, but most important, hope says something greater is possible for me.

Step 3 focuses on FAITH. I begin to intentionally connect to something greater than me, a Higher Power of my own understanding. For some it's God, for others it's nature. The point is that we start practicing some form of trust and confidence in something beyond ourselves. It is an invitation to step away from our self-centeredness and into a world of benevolence and generosity.

Step 4 is taking a giant leap of COURAGE. In writing a "searching and fearless moral inventory," we are doing something that is all about us and can be quite difficult and fearful. Yet with a strong heart and mind, we put our world on paper. With courage we take responsibility for our lives and begin righting the wrongs.

Step 5 is about TRUST. We rely on the character and strength of another person to support us as we share our deepest, shame-filled secrets. The trust we place in another brings renewed life as we experience someone loving us just as we are.

Step 6 is expanding our practice of WILLINGNESS. This principle doesn't say I have to do something right this minute or be perfect at anything. Instead, being "entirely ready" is the willingness to choose to say yes to showing up differently, to releasing my old patterns of thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Step 7 is about HUMILITY. Many of us come to recovery well-versed in humiliation and get confused about this spiritual principle. Humility is simply an honest evaluation of self. The practice of humility is seeing and embracing the wonderful things about ourselves so we can also acknowledge our shortcomings without shame and truly let go. In so doing, we claim our inherent goodness.

Step 8 introduces us to a new level of INTEGRITY. Nobody comes to recovery overflowing with kindness or respect for ourselves or others. Integrity is doing the right thing for the right reason, especially when no one is watching. This step propels us into this practice. We consciously choose to turn our focus to the others in our lives, setting the stage for asking for forgiveness.

Step 9 is LOVE. Making amends is not about saying “I’m sorry.” Instead it is approaching another person we have harmed to admit our wrongs, while also committing to changing our behaviors. No excuses, no explanations, simply being present to the person, allowing them to have their experience and voice. This step is all about the other person. This is compassion, this is love.

Step 10 is about PERSEVERANCE. Remain steadfast to a principle regardless of the obstacles. It is often referred to as the first of the three maintenance steps. This spiritual principle is a daily walk I take requiring self-reflection, self-discipline, and self-compassion. Some days it can be exhausting, but recovery is a daily commitment to living a life of healing and wholeness.

Step 11 is the first step that takes a deep dive into SPIRITUALITY. While we have been introduced in the early steps to the idea of God or a Higher Power, this is about consciously choosing the practices of prayer and meditation for our spiritual growth. Spirituality is the sacred framework we use to create meaning in our lives. Prayer and meditation, in whatever form these take, are the practices we use to

enhance and grow our relationship with a Higher Power and with our world around us.

Finally, Step 12 calls us to be in SERVICE. If it weren't for the spiritual practice of service, no one would even know about recovery. We often hear the phrase, "We keep what we have by giving it away," which is another way of demonstrating how grateful we are for our lives and for the gifts and graces that continue to unfold.

These principles are woven into the steps and together comprise a road map for living life abundantly and joyfully. Each principle is a seed for a life focused on healing and compassionate service, the miracle of freedom that only comes by saying *yes*. ♥

Affirmation:
Wisdom's Light Guides Me!

My mind is responsive to Wisdom's light.
I follow Wisdom's guidance and take actions
that expand my joy of living!

CAN DISCONTENT BE *Divine?*

Before I arrived in recovery through a 12-step program, there was always another pill, more alcohol, or an enticing diversion (food, shopping, relationships, and so on) with which to anesthetize my emotions and calm my mind.

I did not recognize that the emotional pain was a signal, a symptom that a change of some type was needed. So I changed a lot of things—house, spouse, car, job. Those changes helped for a short while, but inevitably I was just as uncomfortable as before.

It took a long while working on myself, looking at my ideas, living with my emotions, and adjusting my attitudes before the terror, bewilderment, frustration, and despair began to recede.

I was often restless, irritable, and discontent. That provided the motivation for me to continue my path.

I worked really hard and my life began to straighten out. But after a long while following directions and seeking to connect with a



Higher Power, I found myself again miserable—this time clean and sober—and I had to ask myself, *Is this all there is?*

I resigned myself to an unexciting life, one which some might call “stupid, boring, and glum.” All my efforts to change my circumstances failed. I was stuck. Stuck in an emotional rut not knowing which way to turn. Resignation and depression set in.

I see this happening to others all too often. We get clean and sober, life improves, and then we find out the things we thought would make us happy ... don't. We have a nice home, a great job, and perhaps the relationship of our dreams. Nothing is wrong. And yet we feel this discontent, this urge, for something more.





We might say “I’m just not happy” or “I don’t know what’s wrong with me.” We might have joined a church and a 12-step group, worked the steps, volunteered for service positions, and given our phone number to dozens of newly recovering people while sponsoring others. We might serve on the board of directors of worthy organizations and coordinate fund-raisers and events for worthy causes.

On the outside, we are living the dream—yet perhaps we feel empty inside. We know that returning to our former addiction is not the answer, but there is something missing. Is this feeling of being restless, irritable, and discontent a state of

internal disarray? I think it is actually divine discontent—an urge to grow higher.

DIVINE DISCONTENT

Divine discontent comes from a different place than the outer world and its circumstances. It comes from the “still, small voice” within—that inner urging calling us in a new direction.

We often ignore it. We often push it aside. We often say “Who, me? That’s crazy!” But it doesn’t go away. This type of discontent is calling us to a new way to find meaning and purpose in our lives.

We have unlimited spiritual potential and we are being nudged to grow into it, to use it for the greater good. With this feeling, we have become aware of a new level of receiving, of openness to the Universe. We are being called to stretch.

“Be true to yourself”—a 12-step program motto can provide guidance here. Are you in your true station in life? Are you doing what makes your heart sing? Your soul is calling you to be more, not necessarily to do more. Spiritual growth and reliance upon the Divine for guidance provide the direction.

SPIRITUAL CHECKPOINT

When feeling discontented, our (perhaps natural) instinct is to look around for the source of the problem, to change some material or physical thing—the job, the spouse, the house, the car.

But we can make a different choice.

We can choose to turn within in prayer, asking, “What is mine to do?” We can meditate and listen for the answer. We can share what we learn with trusted spiritual guides, and we can use our resources to discern the next right step. We pray and listen, then act.

Restless, irritable, and discontent? Or divine discontent? Are you running away from life or moving toward a bigger life? The universe is calling. Are you answering? ♥



WHY **ONE LETTER** MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Addiction is partly a spiritual illness, and 12-step recovery programs are based on developing a relationship with a Higher Power. Step 11 specifies that “prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God” are key to long-term sobriety.

When I got sober, we closed almost every 12-step meeting by saying the “Serenity Prayer” together:

*God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
The courage to change the things I can,
And the wisdom to know the difference.*

While I was speaking this beautiful prayer daily, I was aware it was a prayer to a God outside of myself, asking to be granted something I presumably did not possess. Yet my understanding of God, which grew from my studies of Unity teachings, led me to know God is always providing everything we need. By adding one letter, I was able to change this into an affirmative prayer:

God grants me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change ...

This tiny adjustment suggests for me a God that is compassionate, present, and constantly providing all I need. It then becomes my job to open up to my good. Using affirmative language, I feel empowered.

Affirmative prayer works not because it changes the outside/physical world; rather it changes us for the situation. Used properly, affirmative prayer is one of the most powerful tools you can use to transform your thinking and your life.

Affirmative prayer and the 12 steps of recovery have both been used by people around the world to heal from illnesses that doctors had described as hopeless, to mend relationships that others called doomed, and to transform lives that many thought were wasted.

There are two other formal prayers widely used in 12-step programs, usually called the “Third Step” and “Seventh Step” prayers. Both are beautiful prayers that epitomize the spiritual concept of surrender to something greater than ourselves. For my own spiritual journey of recovery, I have combined and adapted these prayers into one affirmative version.

The original prayers are quoted from *Alcoholics Anonymous*, often called the *Big Book*, first published in 1939.

THIRD STEP PRAYER

God, I offer myself to Thee to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt.

Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will.

Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy love, and Thy way of life.

SEVENTH STEP PRAYER

My Creator, I am now willing that You should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that You now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to You and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do Your bidding.

Here is my version:

AFFIRMATIVE PRAYER OF RELEASE

Dear God, I surrender to a life of service and love. I release the beliefs that keep me tied to a life of pain and suffering and embrace my highest good and greatest expression. I am grateful for the strength, love, peace, joy, and freedom that I experience and share today.

All the various traditions of affirmative prayer share one central Truth: There is only One Power and One Presence actively working in the universe and in our lives: God the Good, Omnipotent. The One Power is always available to us and as us, through the process of prayer.

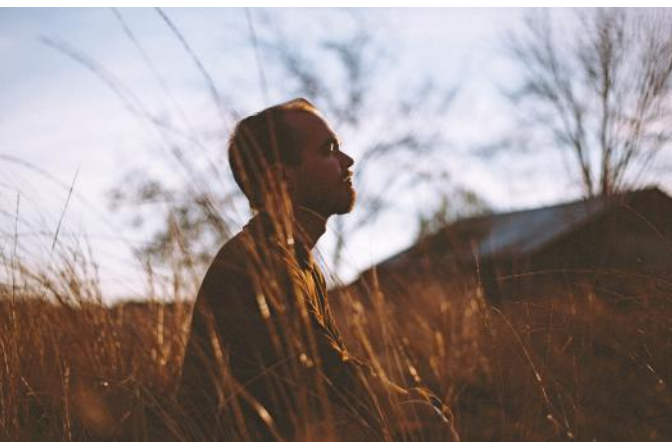
Simply put, through prayer we know our oneness with God.

I invite you to make the 12-step prayers your own, to try out, adapt, and personalize the prayer of your heart on the magnificent journey of recovery. ♥

Moving **OUT** of Spiritual Kindergarten



In 1988 a sober member of Alcoholics Anonymous carried the message of recovery to me. Little did I know when I attended my first meeting, I was about to be changed forever. The isolation and despair that had haunted me began to dissipate in the acceptance and welcome from people who understood because they'd been there too.



I found a sponsor who took me through the 12 steps. Under her guidance, I learned the importance of participation in meetings, sponsorship, and service. Slowly the

fragments of my life were reassembled. I was happy. The work done in those early years formed a solid foundation, which sustained me for well over a decade.

Yet as is wont to happen, a level of complacency seeped into my recovery, bringing with it more frequent occurrences of feeling “restless, irritable, and discontent”—a description from the *AA Big Book*.

Listening to others with long-term sobriety, it became clear that I needed a progressive program of recovery. The same steps apply, but in the absence of a deeper engagement with the spiritual principles embedded therein, we can get locked into what AA cofounder Bill W. called “spiritual kindergarten.”

What is the gateway that leads to greater spiritual and emotional sobriety? For me, the answer resided specifically in Steps 6, 7, and 11. These three steps are like a graduate-level curriculum on the power of true humility, personal responsibility, and advanced meditation.

The way I see it, each one issues the same invitation: **Embody your Higher Self.**

Steps 6 and 7 are about dropping ego-based defense mechanisms; Step 11 is the access point in God. It acts as a catalyst for a new way of seeing and action. In other words, there is a shift from the small “s” to the capital “S” Self, the essence of spiritual awakening.

When the deeper dimensions of the steps are interwoven and consistently practiced as a way of living, I find not only personal contentment but, more important, a pathway for safe passage in my heart and mind for all. Surely this is the freedom Bill W. meant for every recovering alcoholic to experience. ♥

STEP 6

Were entirely ready to have
God remove all these defects of
character.

STEP 7

Humbly asked Him to remove our
shortcomings.

STEP 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.

*From the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics
Anonymous*

PRAYER FOR

Harmony

There is power within you that is beyond recognition, bubbling to the surface as you resonate with who you truly are.

Every challenging experience is transformed by recognizing the strength and courage available within you now. You command yourself to relax as you breathe deeply, slowly, and quietly. Silence becomes your reality. Silence flows as your underlying current, ever so powerfully and lovingly with joy and without distraction. You are strong, you are beautiful, you deserve the peace you seek.

Gently allow all things standing between yourself, happiness, and a sense of calm to drift away. You lovingly say good-bye, knowing these challenges have served their purpose. You appreciate them and joyously move forward.

Recognize and affirm your strength and power
as you are filled with love and light.

You resonate with affectionate self-compassion,
knowing that your heart, mind, and soul
oscillate in perfect harmony together.

You now see the soothing curves of the spiritual
practices of recovery dancing with each other,
and you treasure your ability to dance along.
Your body is light, your mind is clear, your heart
is strong, and your soul is at peace. Tell your
yourself: *I am home, I am calm, I am complete.*

I am one with all life.

Immersed in Pure Being, you are held in the
perfect harmony with all life and affirm ease for
yourself, knowing your life is unfolding more gently
as Perfect Love creates a circle of harmony that
surrounds your heart as well as the hearts of those
around you in every moment. And so it is.

AMEN. ♥



TWO PATHS TO *Transformation*

STEP 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.

UNITY PRINCIPLE 4: Prayer is creative thinking that heightens the connection with God-Mind.

Some years ago, I was asked to lead a weekly Eleventh Step meeting. I have no idea why, since I was not at all comfortable with the step myself, but sometimes we find ourselves speaking what we need to hear.

After several weeks of desultory discussion that seemed to cover the same ground again and again without any forward movement, I had a brainstorm during a Sunday service at Unity. At the meeting the following week, I suggested that we forego discussion and simply meditate together.

The response was surprisingly negative. The unanimous decision of the group was that meditation was something we discussed, not something we did—at least not in public.

What I learned, I guess, was that Unity, with its five basic spiritual teachings, and the 12 steps form two distinct but interwoven spiritual

paths. Unity is about exploring and expressing the positive energy that is the essence of Truth. The focus of the 12 steps is on overcoming self-generated negative energy that can become a serious roadblock to that Truth. Both paths are essential, and they are totally compatible with each other.

Still, negotiating the 12 steps of recovery in terms that feel comfortable from a Unity perspective—and vice versa—can be challenging in the early going. What's required is exactly what is hardest to come by in early recovery—patience. In my own case, I stomped through the early steps in combat boots, wrestling them to the ground in the mistaken belief that they were offensively judgmental and unreasonably demanding.

By the time I found my way to the final steps I had also found my way to Unity, and my attitude had changed considerably. The simple persistence required to move from step to step provided its own reassurance that I would not disappear into the labyrinth of recovery. And those early steps deepened my appreciation of Unity, which sees prayer not as merely passive acceptance of divine guidance but as the creative process through which we achieve our spiritual purpose.

If the overall theme of the 12 steps is “How It Works,” an appropriate title for the Eleventh Step might be “How It Continues to Work Going Forward.” It was the step that expanded my focus from my own recovery issues to a sense that there was a larger purpose at work. With meditation and prayer as powerful tools, I was ready to expand my understanding even further.

STEP 12: Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

UNITY PRINCIPLE 5: Knowing and understanding the laws of life, also called Truth, are not enough. We must also live the Truth we know.

It seems to me a perfect example of divine order that both Unity basic principles and the 12 steps conclude by ushering me into a wider worldview. We are not in recovery just so that our lives may become more manageable but so that we can expand the positive energy we've discovered to include others in need. We are not practicing the universal principles taught in Unity simply to be more comfortable in our own skins but to make a transformative difference in our collective consciousness.

Of course, neither Unity nor the 12 steps demands that we become missionaries espousing a spiritual path. We simply live transformed lives, willing to share with others the means of that transformation.

Neither Unity nor the 12 steps is—or would ever claim to be—the One True Answer to the challenge of recovery. Every true spiritual path is unique and valid. What's important is to stay the course through the early steps and principles, to reach the point where we cooperate with the larger creative purpose for which we are here: creating a new consciousness beyond the limits of recovery. ♥

Affirmation: Love Heals!

Love's healing power calms my mind,
relaxes my body, and fills my heart.

I rest in divine love, and
I am refreshed and renewed.

WHAT'S RIGHT ABOUT ME

Working the 12 steps included an inventory of my negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, as I couldn't heal what I wouldn't acknowledge. Once I got going, that list grew and grew! I discovered that I played a significant part in my misery. It also became apparent that my self-esteem was shot.

Just as it was necessary for me to take a good look at myself and get to work turning my negatives around, there came a time when it was necessary to balance it out by taking another inventory—this time with what was good about me.

As I made a new list, I asked myself:

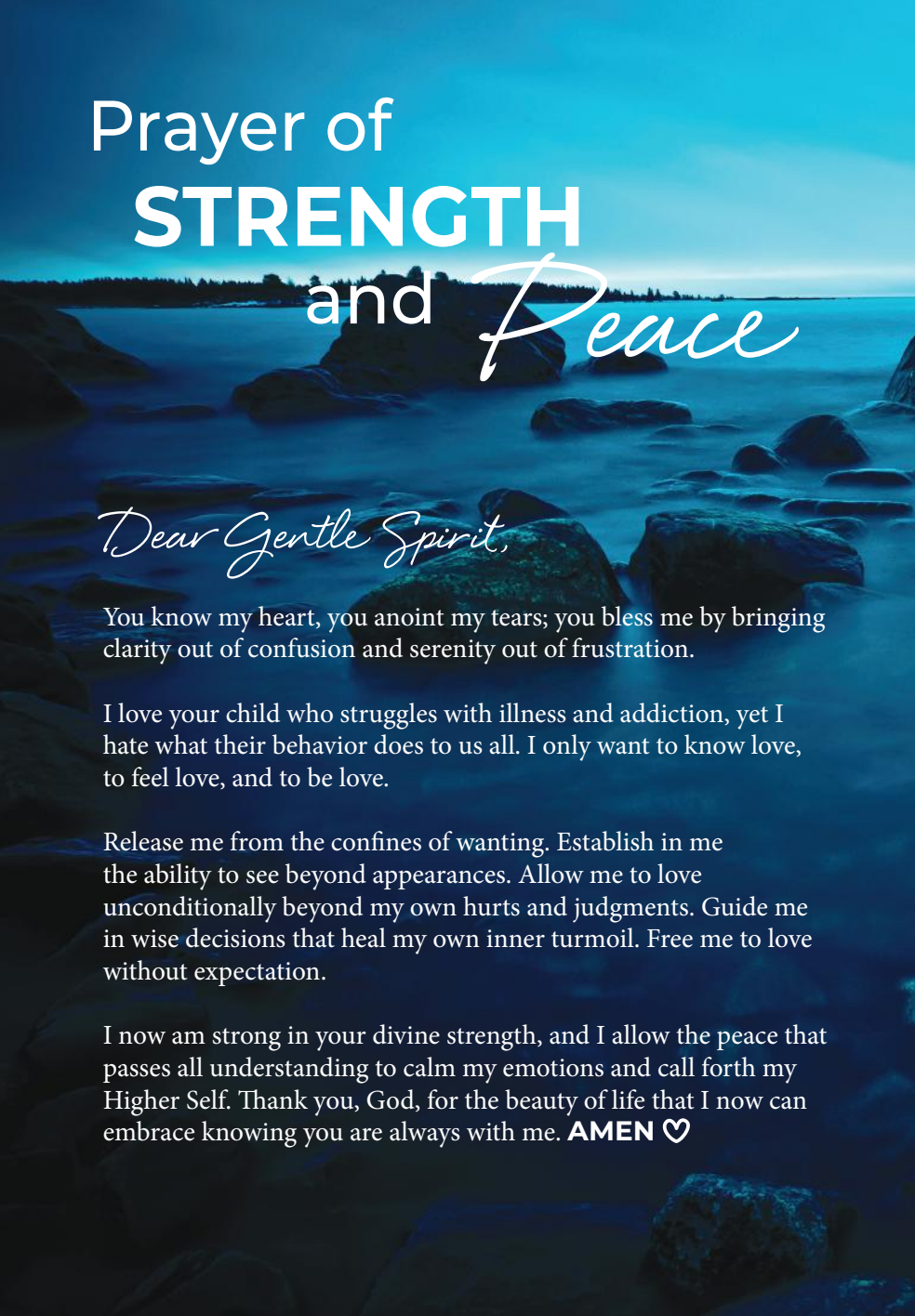
- What are my positives?
- What do I do well?
- Am I a good listener?
- In what instances have I been kind?
- When have I stood up for myself?
- How have I been a good friend?
- How many times have I looked for what's right instead of what's wrong?
- Have I gotten better at asking for help?
- When did I last set a healthy boundary?
- When have I walked through my fear to do something I wanted to do?
- In what ways is my relationship with my Higher Power deepening?
- How have I changed in the past year?

I embellished my list with my favorite affirmations. “I am courageous, smart, capable, kind, and determined” and “Good for me!”—words of encouragement. I drew happy faces, stars, and hearts, and colored them with crayons. Balancing my life includes being aware of how far I've come. 

**FOR
FAMILIES**

Affirmation:
I Am Never Alone!

Even when chaos swirls around me,
I am one with God, one with good.
I center my awareness in my breath and
know that I am protected, I am guided,
and I can take constructive action.
My loved one, too, is one with God.
I trust God's love within them.



Prayer of **STRENGTH** and *Peace*

Dear Gentle Spirit,

You know my heart, you anoint my tears; you bless me by bringing clarity out of confusion and serenity out of frustration.

I love your child who struggles with illness and addiction, yet I hate what their behavior does to us all. I only want to know love, to feel love, and to be love.

Release me from the confines of wanting. Establish in me the ability to see beyond appearances. Allow me to love unconditionally beyond my own hurts and judgments. Guide me in wise decisions that heal my own inner turmoil. Free me to love without expectation.

I now am strong in your divine strength, and I allow the peace that passes all understanding to calm my emotions and call forth my Higher Self. Thank you, God, for the beauty of life that I now can embrace knowing you are always with me. **AMEN** ♥



ARE YOU ASKING THE Right Questions?

“When is he going to hit bottom? When is he going to finally get some help? When is he going to have had enough?”

You would think that getting a DUI, going to jail, losing his job, and my kicking him out of the house would do it, but it didn’t. All my crying, scolding, preaching, ranting, and nagging didn’t make a dent—except in me.

It finally dawned on me that I was asking the wrong questions. When I asked these instead, my life got better: “When am I going to hit *my* bottom? When am I finally going to get some help for *me*? When have I had enough?”

I had always thought of myself as a good person—kind, caring, and helpful. But now I was having daily screaming matches with someone I thought I loved. The night I threw a glass of water in his face I knew something was terribly wrong. My life was heading downhill.

Friends suggested my constant worrying was a reaction to my boyfriend's use of alcohol and other drugs. As a child I had seen the disease of addiction devastate and take the lives of three extended family members. The possibility I was repeating that pattern terrified me.

I believe in grace—that God within and around us does through us what our conscious minds cannot fathom. Grace brought me into contact with people who had solutions. From them I learned three essential things:

First, I am not responsible for another person's life or behavior, no matter how much I love them.

Second, I am responsible for my own life.

Third, I have a Higher Power that loves me no matter what. I started to relax and disentangle myself from my boyfriend's life, realizing it belonged to him, not to me. I started to let go and put him in God's care. I learned to cherish myself. I began to check on my own well-being—how do I feel, what do I need, what is the highest good for me? I learned to let things I used to react to and argue about go by.

I learned to respect myself enough to rest, eat regularly, and make joy a priority. I began to pray and so receive guidance and strength. I discovered serenity.

I had wanted to conquer the disease of addiction in my family by bringing it to heel. I'm grateful that's not how it works. I was shown that when I asked the right questions, I received a much richer solution—the gift of my own life. 💙

A photograph of a family of three lying on their backs on a patterned surface. The father, in the center, is wearing a blue and white striped shirt and is smiling broadly. To his right is a young boy in a white shirt, also smiling. To the father's left is a woman with dark hair, wearing a purple and white patterned top, smiling. The text "Recovery Is an INSIDE JOB" is overlaid in white serif font across the middle of the image.

Recovery Is an INSIDE JOB

Once upon a time, I fell in love with and married an individual who drank too much. After 10 years of marriage I began to see how my focus on trying to change his behavior was my problem, not his.

Someone, perhaps an angel or even two or three, guided me to a program that was the beginning of my recovery, eventually leading me from a very painful relationship to a healthy way of living.

One of the first things I noticed when reading the 12-step program's suggested ways to heal was that I could pray to a God of my understanding. I believed I already had tried everything I could think of to change my spouse and alleviate my emotional and sometimes physical pain. I had prayed to God, the God I barely knew from my upbringing. What I had not done was to sit and listen to the guidance being afforded me in the stillness of my own being.

Like others who are affected by someone else's addiction, I was living in a state of denial. Part of that denial was that somehow I could control my situation. I only needed to find the key, and the key must be out there somewhere.

But I soon understood that the real key to moving out of the pain was to release all my ideas about what was and was not mine to do. I began to spend time not only in meditation but also reading and talking with others who had similar situations. I began to understand how my thinking had led me astray.

It was through the recovery program for families that I began to use spiritual tools to create a life that worked for me. I could release judgments more easily. I learned to remove myself from unhealthy situations without anger and fear. I learned to stand up for my own good because I learned that I was a worthy child of God. I started to see synchronicities showing me the paths to take, putting me in contact with individuals who could help, and giving me the tools

I needed to stay in integrity with my own values and to remain compassionate and loving.

Through recovery I learned that taking care of myself and not trying to take over someone else's responsibilities was a practice of tough love for both of us. Sometimes tough love appears to be not caring. Actually, it is more than caring; it is seeing the truth for another, knowing that they, too, are a worthy child of God.

It takes courage to practice tough love. It can be a gamble that ends in loss. Yet, it can also be the new beginning that you and the addicted individual need. I ended up divorcing the spouse I had become addicted to, and he later died of his disease. But I got better and stayed with my recovery program.

What I did not want for my life was to end up in another addictive relationship. I knew I needed to grow more spiritually. I found a Unity church shortly after I met and married someone well into his own recovery from addiction. He also was looking for a spiritual center that would support what we were already achieving in our current practice. We both understood the spiritual principles taught in Unity as our next step in healthy living.

The Unity teachings remind me that we are all one. We affect each other whether we like it or not, some more than others. We each have the spark of divinity within us. When we take time to put our outer circumstances on hold and go within, we can allow that higher consciousness not only to nurture our souls but to bless us with divine wisdom and the powers to bring forth a happy, joyous, and free way of living.

We can use the practical tools of affirmations and denials to bring us back to the present moment where we focus on our responsibilities, needs, and desires. And we remember that we already have been given the courage and the tools for everything we need to do. We just need to do it! 💙

PRAYER FOR

Connection

**In this moment, center yourself
with your breath—a moment of
strength and faith, and of love and life.**

Every inhale grants us the beauty and generosity of the Divine while every exhale allows us to cleanse ourselves, let go, forgive, and connect with God and ourselves. In Truth we find solace, in peace we find comfort, in love we find community.

Through prayer we know nothing can stand in the way of life to reclaim itself as it has always been expressed. Peace enters the mind and heart, resonating with a harmony so well-rounded that it vibrates throughout your being and extends to those around you.

Every thought and feeling is aligned with our Perfection of Being, and we are witness to our minds taking action in our lives. Tell yourself:

I see the world as it truly is: loving, kind, caring, serving, graceful and connected. I see the world as it truly is: loving, kind, caring, serving, graceful and connected.

Nothing can deter us from realizing the Truth within ourselves and others. Neither thoughts of limitation nor disbelief can distract us from recognizing our divine potential. Nothing can convince us of anything else but the beauty of divine living, and so we go forth and be love in action.

In loving gratitude and forgiveness, we quietly speak to ourselves, "It is my honor and purpose to step into my healing and unfoldment as in the perfect eye of God." All together, we share a resounding expression of thanksgiving toward each other and ourselves as we celebrate our Oneness to God and connection to each other and all life. And so it is.

AMEN. ♡

First I Grew Older, Then I Grew Up

Growing up in an alcoholic home, you do whatever it takes to survive and evade the power of those in charge. The goal is to manipulate, manage, and control all aspects of your life.

Of course, this recipe creates a distorted perspective on how life works and comes with guaranteed dysfunction, which is not much fun. Usually there is an unkind day of reckoning, frequently called “hitting bottom.”



This wake-up call is better described as a “grow-up” call, because when you grow up in an alcoholic home, you just get older; you don’t mature into a real “grown-up.” Eventually the survival patterns you had to develop no longer work. It takes gentleness, humor, love, and respect to climb out of the hole, and you can’t do it alone. That’s one feature that makes recovery such a growth opportunity: You don’t do it alone.

Growing up with an alcoholic parent means trust will be a new paradigm and a steep learning curve. Trust God, trust others, and trust yourself? No way!

I had fired God. I prayed for years for my mom to quit drinking to no avail. She died of alcoholism at 49, so no God for me.

Asking for and accepting help was another unfamiliar pattern because so much energy had been invested in “looking good” and acting as if everything was fine when it wasn’t. Codependents are tremendous actors because they are so practiced in self-abandonment. They will be anything you want or need them to be.

And, oh, the drama created in an alcoholic household! My particular variety had a lot of violence and visits from the local police, which in the late 1950s was atypical in our “nice” neighborhood.

I did what many adult children of alcoholics do. I fled, trying to create my own life but unconsciously recreating all the dynamics of my family of origin. You either work things out or act them out, and I did the latter.

I had no awareness of my feelings or other aspects of normal development. I was like a wheel with uneven spokes and many flat sides. When I hit a flat side, I was stuck because I had no skills to navigate that particular area of life.

Recovery meant learning new skills, asking for help, and finally growing into the maturity I hadn't developed growing up.

I was truly blessed to find the Unity spiritual movement and 12-step recovery at the same time. As I reflect on my life, it seems to have had three phases: my violent and terrifying childhood; my first marriage, children, and entry into recovery; and a third phase, which is now thriving. I call it Maturity-Capacity-Creativity.



The first part—maturity—was learning to experience and manage my feelings as they thawed out. Genuinely feeling all the stored-up anger and fear was overwhelming. I had to learn to breathe through it, pray, and take a step back to look at the bigger picture. I was learning how to respond rather than react. I had to learn to be responsible for myself and only myself.

I developed a mantra: ASAP—As Soon As Possible, Always Say A Prayer. My prayer was “God is solving this; I can’t. God can; I’ll let God.” Then trust. This was a new pattern for me!

The next part was to develop capacity. It is all about boundaries and the ability to be present to others without abandoning yourself. I learned that I mattered, and “No!” is a complete sentence. I needed to factor myself into every equation and account for my needs.

When in conflict, I could cultivate curiosity. What is this really about for me? What is this about for them? My capacity for self-awareness was growing and my self-centeredness was shrinking.

I learned that being responsible means the ability to respond. It does not mean taking on someone else's pain or emotional work. I learned to speak up, to be heard, and to stand in my spiritual authority. The Twelve Powers, those divine attributes that Unity teaches and are hard-wired into every human being, were as much my friends as the 12 steps of recovery.

Finally comes creativity, which I consider to be making a way out of no way, making sense of nonsense, and dancing with spirit. It is a messy process of trial and error, but you can learn to enjoy the mess; it is compost for growth. Perfection is not the goal. If you have a pulse, you are still a work in progress, expanding and growing in consciousness.

Recovery is a path you walk, not a place you land. It is a continual remaking of yourself. You don't go through recovery, you allow recovery to go through you; you allow Spirit to shine as you, and you begin to thrive. 

5 SIMPLE SPIRITUAL PRACTICES TO KEEP YOU CONNECTED



“Have you prayed about it?”
was the question from a
longtime member of my
family support group.

New in my own recovery as a person affected by a loved one's drinking, the idea of praying about my problems had not dawned on me. Polite on the outside, my inner reaction was, *What good is that going to do? I need some real answers!*

But her question got me stewing. Is it possible there is a spiritual power that can help me? Is it possible that I am not alone with this heartbreaking situation? Is it possible that I, too, can connect with this loving power?

I decided to find out. Willingness to experiment and discover the answers to my questions opened me to fresh ideas and surprisingly effective solutions. My intensity slowly shifted away from attempts to manage my loved one's life. I started to stand in my own shoes.

I came to realize that spirituality is not about getting others to change—it's about asking for help so that I may change. Before this I had never asked for help because I didn't think there was any assistance for me. However, now I saw that there was. I just needed to be willing to receive it.

By keeping some simple practices, my relationship with my Higher Power, whom I call God, grows. I feel more serene and confident. I hear my internal guidance. Joy blooms quietly in my life. I get along better with other people. When I open my eyes in the morning I say, "Good morning, God!"

Learning to do this didn't come easily. There are days I forget and revert to what I used to say: "Good God, it's morning!"

The gift is that no matter which way I greet the day, God is there, and God loves me. I don't have to be perfect anymore. I have a laugh and move on.

I am grateful for my friend in recovery who so long ago asked me that powerful question: “Have you prayed about it?” Her courageous generosity changed my life. I discovered there is a God who loves me, and there is nothing more practical than spirituality.

Simple Practices

1. Spiritual reading encourages and energizes me. Every day I choose selections from my collection of inspirational books. The wisdom, experience, strength, and hope I find there expand my understanding and remind me there are many with me on this journey of family member recovery.
2. I attend support group meetings where I share my problems and talk about how I apply spiritual principles to create solutions. I listen closely to my fellow members. Feelings of isolation dissolve, and my hope is renewed.
3. The best part of my day is the time I spend talking with God. Sometimes I talk by writing in my journal. Sometimes I talk quietly in my mind on my morning walk. Sometimes I shout out loud in the privacy of my home. Whichever I choose, I make sure I get real and tell it like it is. I feel God listening and loving me back no matter what I say.
4. Then I listen to God. I get quiet by focusing on my breath and relaxing my body. I sit in the stillness for as short or long a time as I wish. While I'm sitting, or at some point later in the day, I always get clarity and a change of heart.
5. I'm not shy about asking trustworthy others to pray for me. I have a prayer partner and I have praying friends. I call the Silent Unity prayer ministry. Every time I reach out, I find my problems grow smaller and the love within and around me grows bigger. 

YESTERDAY, *Today,* AND TOMORROW

There are two days in every week about which we should not worry; two days which should be kept free of fear and apprehension.

One of these days is **YESTERDAY**, with its mistakes and cares, its faults and blunders, its aches and pains. **YESTERDAY** has passed forever beyond our control.

All the money in the world cannot bring back **YESTERDAY**. We cannot undo a single act we performed; we cannot erase a single word we said. **YESTERDAY** is gone.

The other day we should not worry about is **TOMORROW**, with its possible adversities, its burdens, its larger promise. **TOMORROW** is also beyond our immediate control.

TOMORROW, the sun will rise, either in splendor or behind a mask of clouds, but it will rise. Until it does, we have no stake in **TOMORROW** for it is as yet unborn.

This leaves only one day—**TODAY**. Any man can fight the battles of just one day. It is only when you and I add the burdens of those two awful eternities—**YESTERDAY** and **TOMORROW**—that we break down.

It is not the experience of **TODAY** that drives men mad. It is remorse or bitterness for something which happened **YESTERDAY** and the dread of what **TOMORROW** may bring.

**Let us, therefore, live
but ONE day at a time.**

—Author Unknown

Becoming My Own Best Friend



The God of my understanding is teaching me to become my own best friend. I'm not to say anything to myself that I wouldn't let someone say about my best friend.

I'm invited to acknowledge the things I do well, speak words that are positive, hang out with people who uplift me, and to be grateful for me.

I'm enthusiastically given permission to pay attention to what makes me happy and then start owning my happiness. How to begin? It's time to quit taking myself so seriously and start having fun! Becoming my own best friend includes discovering what I enjoy and including it in my daily activities.

Self-kindness heals. When I'm kind to myself I tend to be kind to others. When I'm hurting, my Higher Power reminds me to be gentle with myself, just as I would with my best friend. When I make a mistake, I do my best to wrap myself in self-kindness, learn from the situation, make amends if needed, then let myself off the hook. My sense of worthiness grows.

With each new understanding, my relationship with myself deepens. Every time I treat myself gently—telling myself that I'm okay—self-compassion takes root. Every time I choose a positive thought instead of falling back on my old negativity, I create a space for change. My Higher Power reminds me that I'm worth changing.

Becoming my own best friend has helped me see myself in a new light. I'm not only worth changing, I'm worthy of happiness! Just ask my best friend! ❤️

RESOURCES

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

AA is a 12-Step program offering support to individuals with alcohol problems. Meetings are anonymous and open to anyone. aa.org

ALA-ANON AND ALA-TEEN

Family groups offering support to relatives and friends of individuals with addiction. al-anon.alateen.org

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS

NACoA envisions a world in which no child who struggles because of family addiction will be left unsupported. nacoa.org

NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE

For more than 100 years, NCADD has provided direct support and treatment to alcoholics and drug addicts. ncadd.org

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE

Free, 24/7, confidential support for you or your loved ones.
1-800-273-8255, suicidepreventionlifeline.org

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

NA is a 12-Step program that offering support to individuals with addiction problems, regardless of the substance abused. Meetings are anonymous and open to anyone. na.org

SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

SAMHA is a free information service providing referrals to local treatment facilities, support groups, and community-based organizations for individuals and families facing mental and/or substance use disorders.
1-800-662-HELP (4357), samhsa.gov/find-help

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