**Step 8: Listing People Harmed**

*“I made a list of all the people I had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.”*

Step 8 is another action step and, like Step 4, is best done without worrying about the step that comes right afterward. Step 8 and its companion, Step 9, are the ones that demonstrate the changes we are going though most clearly to other people in our lives, and they’re the most complicated steps for most people and may raise some difficult questions. As with the previous steps, if you have already done Step 8, use this worksheet to record your actions, and talk this over with your therapist and your sponsor.

1. Why stir up old problems? That’s one of the first thoughts many recovering people have when they first think about this step. Another is, “No way, I’ll never do that!” So why should you do what this step asks? There must be good reasons for so many people to engage in it. To help make the purpose and benefits of Step 8 clear, we’ll break it down into phrases.

2. The first thing Step 8 asks you to do is to “make a list of all persons we had harmed.” In other words, list who you’ve hurt and describe what you’ve done to hurt them. Most people find that the lists of people and institutions they resented and feared, which they created in Step 4, make a good starting point for Step 8. So let’s start there. Please look again at those lists. On a separate sheet divided into three columns, list any of the people and institutions from your lists of resentments, fears, and sexual wrongs that you have harmed. A definition of harm often used in 12-step programs is “to cause physical, emotional, spiritual, mental, or material loss or difficulty.” In the second column, list what you did in each case. Title the third column *What I can do to correct the harms I caused* and leave it blank for now.

3. Now, how do you feel about those people and institutions and how may they feel about you? If you notice any of the same feelings showing up again and again, on your part or the part of those you’ve hurt, list those feelings here:

4. How would the feelings in these situations be different if you hadn’t done the things you did?

5. What benefits do you think you would gain from having made a list of the people and institutions you’ve harmed? How do you think this will help you stay clean and sober or avoid returning to any other addictive patterns?

6. The next phrase is “and became willing to make amends to them all.” Are you willing to do this, or do you find that in some of the situations you have listed, you are unwilling to make these amends? If so, why?

7. Another point may be useful: Remember that Steps 8 and 9 are separate steps. This one isn’t asking you to make the amends yet, only to list the people you’ve hurt and to become willing to make amends. If you feel like holding back because you don’t want to face the people you’ve hurt or the consequences that may come up with Step 9, then you aren’t willing yet. You’re still in the middle of Step 8. The second part, becoming willing, is what makes it possible to go on to Step 9. Are you now willing? If not, what might help you become willing to go on to Step 9 and start making amends to people you’ve hurt? Talk about this with your sponsor or other recovering people you trust and respect.

8. Most of us find that we would rather not make some amends. The word *willing* is the key. It doesn’t say we have to want to or that we have to like doing so, only that we must be willing to do it. List some things you are willing to do because they are needed, even though you would prefer not to (examples could be getting a vaccination or paying income taxes).

9. Why are you willing to do these unpleasant things? Why are they necessary?

10. You may have said you are willing to do unpleasant things because the results would be even more unpleasant if you didn’t do them. It’s the same with these amends. What do you think you have to lose? In what ways could these amends cause problems for you?

11. Now balance the things you feel you might lose by making amends against the things you will lose if you relapse. Which set of consequences is worse and why?

12. If you have trouble understanding how failure to make amends might lead to relapse, think about how leaving these things unresolved affects your self-esteem and your level of stress. Talk about this with your sponsor or others you trust and think about how this interferes with your becoming the person you want to be and with the changes you asked your Higher Power to make in you in Step 7. How would leaving amends undone affect you in these areas?

Be sure to bring this handout to your next session with your therapist and talk about your thoughts and feelings about the exercise.

AMENDS LIST

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| Who I harmed | What I did and how it hurt them | What I can do to correct the harms I caused |
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