## Fellowship Centre Newsletter: June 2024



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#### FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Welcome to the June Edition of the Fellowship Newsletter. The Newsletter is a medium of communication among all those involved with or connected to the South Edmonton Fellowship Centre. The focus of the Fellowship Centre is to support and facilitate 12 Step Recovery which includes a recovery-oriented library (see Newsletter page 9 for library update).

Because there are 12 Steps, 12 Traditions, 12 Promises, and 12 Concepts of World Service, it is often the case that, since there are 12 months in a year, each month corresponds with a Step, Tradition, Promise, and/or Concept. Since June is the sixth month of the year, this Newsletter focusses on Step Six: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Twelve Step recovery was popularized by Alcoholics Anonymous in the late 1930s. At that time alcoholism and addiction were technically considered personality disorders. *Defects of character* might be considered, particularly in extreme cases, as manifestations of clinical personality disorders. Today, researchers and clinicians believe that substance addictions (for example, drugs and alcohol) and activity addictions (for example, gambling and overeating) are brain-based conditions. However, many behaviors associated from addiction (for example, anger and resentment) are obstacles to recovery. Learning to recognize these behaviors as problematic and being willing to change them are essential for long-term recovery.

There have been many attempts to account for the high level of effectiveness of 12 Step recovery in treating substance and activity addiction. It has been suggested that 12 Step recovery:

- 1. provides connection to a clean, sober, and understanding community.
- 2. provides support and accountability through sponsorship and recovery friends.
- 3. is readily available, free of charge, and easily accessible.
- 4. provides a clear path for getting clean/sober and a structure for living clean/sober.
- 5. emphasizes the importance of spiritual principles and spiritual support.
- 6. empowers individuals to take responsibility for their recovery.

Although there is obvious overlap, the first three points above refer primarily to fellowship while the last three essentially relate to the 12 Steps. As is read at the beginning of many 12 Step recovery meetings and as stated on page 59 of the Big Book; "Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery." I hope you enjoy and benefit from this Newsletter's focus on Step Six.

## Sixth Month; Sixth Step

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

Having returned home from completing our Fifth Step, on page 75 of the Big Book we are asked to reflect on the thoroughness of our experience of the first five Steps. After which there is only one short paragraph in the Big Book on Step Six. It reads as follows:

If we can answer to our satisfaction, we can look at Step Six. We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable. Are we now ready to let God removed from us all the things we have admitted are objectionable? Can He now take them all – every one? If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing.

While the <u>Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions</u> provides additional guidance for experiencing and living Step Six, many people in 12 Step recovery gloss over this critical Step, particularly during the early years on their healing journey. A summary and synthesis of some of the information available regarding Step 6 may prove useful for those whose defects of character continue to cause suffering – to themselves and to those around them.

<u>The Little Red Book: A Collection of Alternative 12 Steps</u> provides 20 alternatives to the original wording of the Steps. Such alternatives come from a variety of sources including agnostic groups, Realistic Recovery, Indigenous perspectives, versions used by psychologists, and Buddhists interpretations. For example, and regarding Step 6:

- We accepted our moral and personal weaknesses and accepted that they needed to change.
- Were ready to accept help in letting go of our defects of character.
- Became willing to let go of our behaviours and personality traits that could be construed as defects and were creating problems.
- I am entirely ready to allow realistic and rational thinking to reveal my destructive patterns of addictive thinking and behavior.
- I focus on healing, abolishing self-blame and shame, and understanding the boundaries of my responsibility. I remain open to the help and support of others as I address the challenge of change.
- Be entirely ready to acknowledge our abiding strength and release our personal shortcomings.
- Became entirely ready to work at transforming ourselves.
- Became entirely ready to have our Higher Power transform unwholesome characteristics into wholesome ones.

Sometimes, single words are used to express the virtue or principle behind each Step. From a Judeo-Christian perspective, the word or spiritual principle or virtue for Step 6 is **willingness**. From a Buddhist perspective, the spiritual principle is **right intention**. From an Islamic perspective, the spiritual principle is **self-restraint**.



## What is Step Six?

(https://alcohol.org/alcoholics-anonymous/step-6)

Before getting to Step 6, you first must admit that you have a problem, explore the concept of higher power, and begin developing a relationship with that higher power. You also must look honestly at yourself and your shortcomings so that you can get ready to ask your higher power to remove them. This challenging Step, which is the culmination of all the work done beforehand, asks one to admit that they are powerless over all their negative behavior, not just their addiction, and consider turning these behaviors over to their higher power. This can be scary or embarrassing just like admitting powerless over a substance or behavior in Step One. However, Step 6 doesn't ask you to turn over your defects yet – it just asks you to become willing to do so.

Many may struggle with understanding that Step 6 isn't a one-time event. Some may believe that once they perform Step 6 for the first time, they no longer need to return to the Step. However, the 6th Step is a continuing process, one that may need to be performed frequently. Acknowledging that one needs assistance in working toward change can be necessary at several points in one's journey of recovery. It is pivotal for having realistic expectations.

A common problem that may cause trouble for some working Step 6 is the belief that the Step focuses entirely on one's behavior. This is often not the case, as the outlook and attitude one has towards seeking and accepting help can play a significant role. This can be frustrating for those who want controlled, regimented steps to fix a problem. Some helpful methods for improving your outlook would be to have an open dialogue with yourself. Every morning when you get up, ask yourself whether you feel willing to turn your negative qualities over to your higher power. Throughout the day before speaking, ask yourself if what you want to say is positive and based on a belief that your higher power will work things out or negative and based on self-will.

Character Defects and Their Opposites									
Character Defects	Opposites	Character Defects	Opposites						
Laziness	Diligence	Impurity	Purity						
Pessimism	Faith	Ingratitude	Gratefulness						
Blame-shifting	Accountability	Fickleness	Steadfastness						
Gullible	Skeptical	Greed	Generosity						
Materialistic	Spiritual	Self-centered	Considerate						
Defensive	Tolerant	Negligent	Responsible						
Pessimism	Optimism	Confrontational	Diplomatic						
Vindictive	Forgiving	Indifference	Concern						
Anger	Patience	Uncooperative	Supportive						
Dishonesty	Truthfulness	Defensive	Accepting						
Condescending	Empowering	Impulsiveness	Thoughtfulness						
Inflexibility	Adaptability	Indecisiveness	Decisiveness						
Defensive	Open	Suspicious	Trusting						

## **Psychological Help with Step Six**

Given the popularity and the effectiveness of 12 Step recovery, it is not surprising that the popular magazine <u>Psychology Today</u> publishes information on understanding and helping clients with Step Six. In his Psychology Today blog (https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog), Dr. Cermak writes:

Step Six initially looks like a simple and agreeable path toward real change. But surface waters are deceptive. They hide the great depth that must be plumbed to find the fruits promised by the Steps. Step Six especially requires introspection into deep recesses that lie below one's character defects. The promise of change will come true only after diligent work, patience, and a level of humility matching that required in Step One.

The problem with Step Six is that people are usually unconscious of two critical aspects of character defects. First, the impact of their defects, both on themselves and others, may not be immediately apparent. For example, the defect of habitual defensiveness, which appears on many peoples' Step Four inventory, destroys intimacy and leads to feeling isolated. Every character defect has a similar ripple effect. Refusing to accept responsibility for one's behavior and blaming others damages others' self-esteem and, again, leads to isolation. Step Six requires uncovering the negative consequences of character defects before room becomes available for new ways of behaving.

A second layer of complexity in becoming entirely ready to have character defects removed is that many character defects have seemingly helped us, at least in the short run. For example, we developed habitual defensiveness to avoid the shame and embarrassment of acknowledging our mistakes and bad behavior. Defensiveness spares us from acute feelings of shame. As a result, people often fail to realize that they are ambivalent about having the shield of defensiveness removed. How naked would that feel? Could we tolerate such vulnerability? Truth be told, we are quite attached to our character defects.

Working Step Six means becoming aware of the true cost of our character defects and being honest about our fear of letting go of the apparent protection each defect offers. It takes diligent work to remain fully aware of the consequences of our defects and our ambivalence about their removal

the moment a defect rises up and starts taking control. In a very real sense, this is the same process addicts need to go through when they stop to think through the consequences using. When a person has absorbed Step Six deeply enough that they pause before acting on a character defect, the opportunity for change is created. It takes constant

	Character Defect:	Replace with Character Strength:		
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				

work to absorb Step Six to that degree.

## **Step Six Worksheet with Questions**

https://12steppers.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Step-6-Worksheet-with-Questions.pdf

Step 6, as outlined by Alcoholics Anonymous and other 12-Step programs, marks an important juncture in an individual's journey towards recovery. With the title "Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character," this Step beckons us to a state of readiness and acceptance, following a deep self-examination that began in earlier Steps.

After undergoing a fearless moral inventory, as prompted by Step 4, individuals confront and admit their flaws. This recognition isn't just for us but also extends to others and, most crucially, to a Higher Power. This emphasis on a Higher Power, regardless of its traditional or non-traditional form, signifies the program's foundational belief in the necessity of surrendering to a force greater than oneself. It's this submission that acts as a linchpin for breaking the bonds of addiction, bringing a semblance of sanity to the chaotic whirlwind that life may have become.

Step 6 doesn't impose or demand; it encourages an internal state of readiness. Instead of asking a Higher Power to eradicate our imperfections, we position ourselves willingly, preparing to cast away self-destructive habits and attitudes. This transformation isn't immediate; it's a steady journey marked by patience, persistence, and the guiding hand of a Higher Power.

Interestingly, our relationship with our flaws is complicated. Often, these flaws masquerade as endearing quirks, deeply embedded in our self-identity. Yet, as we progress, the realization dawns that these very characteristics might be getting in the way of our path to recovery, acting against the wishes of our Higher Power. The challenge lies not just in identifying these barriers but in the genuine willingness to relinquish them. Perfection isn't the goal here; it's about the persistent intent and earnest effort to become better.

Inner reflection plays a pivotal role. It's essential to approach this Step with honesty, admitting when one isn't ready to part with certain flaws, without succumbing to procrastination or self-deception. The overarching theme of Step 6 is to underscore intentionality over perfection. By actively fostering a genuine desire to shed detrimental habits, we can now set the stage for genuine transformation, ensuring that the fruits of recovery are within reach.

**How to Work Step:** Venturing into Step 6 requires a holistic understanding of the journey we have undertaken in the previous Steps, coupled with a deep desire for change. This Step is encapsulated by the declaration: "Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character." It's a journey from acceptance to readiness.

- Start by revisiting the moral inventory you compiled in Step 4. Reflect on each flaw, recognizing which ones have caused the most harm to yourself and others. Remember, this is not about self-blame but about understanding and accepting these imperfections. The realization of these flaws is crucial in Step 6, as you prepare yourself for their removal.
- While you have previously shared these shortcomings in Step 5, Step 6 requires a different kind of openness: a willingness for transformation. Approach this with a mindset focused not on immediate removal but on becoming completely prepared for the eventual transformation. This internal readiness is key.
- Understand that while you are aspiring for these defects to be removed by a Higher Power, it is not about making demands or trying to hasten the process. It's about being patient and trusting the timing of your Higher Power. The beauty of Step 6 lies in this trust and the personal growth it spurs.

- One major obstacle many of us face is an attachment to certain flaws. These defects, which often camouflage as unique personality traits or "just the way I am," need special attention. Ask yourself why you cling to these defects. Dive deep into self-reflection, considering the possibility that letting go might be in your best interest.
- Always remember, the essence of Step 6 is not about achieving flawlessness but about developing a sincere and continuous intent to improve. When confronted with a defect that seems too challenging to overcome, acknowledge your current limitations but remain hopeful. Commit to revisiting this flaw with a fresh perspective in the future.
- Lastly, working Step 6 is a dance between self-awareness, acceptance, and wanting to experience change. While it requires confronting uncomfortable truths, it also promises a life less burdened by the weight of these defects. Embrace the process, trusting that with genuine intent and the support of your Higher Power, transformation is not just possible but inevitable.

**Focus of Step 6:** The journey through the previous Steps has allowed us to cultivate a sense of humility, making us more open to introspection and self-awareness. Hopefully, we have not only identified our shortcomings but also recognized our strengths and virtues. These positive traits will support and guide us as we navigate the path to recovery.

As we approach Step 6, our preparedness is evident. We're poised to present ourselves to our Higher Power, sincerely hoping for guidance to overcome our flaws. However, our approach is one of respect and submission; we aren't making demands or setting conditions. Instead, we humbly seek assistance, understanding, and enlightenment. The following questions are tools to further facilitate this deep introspective process, encouraging us to engage more meaningfully with our aspirations for positive change and growth.

#### **Step 6 Questions**

- 1. Have you ever not been genuine in your conversations or prayers with your Higher Power? Do you feel your Higher Power understands and forgives?
- 2. When you are feeling down or stressed, how do you cope? Are these coping methods good for you?
- 3. What steps can you take to be a better version of yourself? Think about easy changes that could make a big difference.
- 4. Which bad habits do you find yourself repeating? Why do you think you keep going back to them even if you know they are not good?
- 5. Are there things you do that hurt you or others? What can you do to stop or change these actions?
- 6. Do you help out in your community? Think of more ways you could contribute. What are some things you can start doing every week?
- 7. Would you say you are an honest person? Have the first five Steps made you more truthful?
- 8. Do you often find yourself wanting what others have? Have the first five Steps taught you to be thankful for what you have?
- 9. Do you own up to your actions? Has working on the first five steps made you more responsible?
- 10. Write down the top five defects of character about yourself that you believe need change. How have these affected you and the people around you?

- 11. For each flaw you listed, can you think of a way to reduce its impact on your life?
- 12. Are there certain flaws from your list that you are not ready to let go of? Why do you think that is?

**How Step 6 helps us recover:** Step 6 serves as a pivotal point in our healing process. Engaging with this Step and its accompanying questions provides us with a mirror, reflecting both our flaws and the ways in which we have unconsciously anchored them into our lives. It pushes us to acknowledge these imperfections, not just on a surface level, but by delving into the depths of how and why we have held onto them for so long.

Understanding our flaws is only half the battle. Recognizing them means confronting the pain, fear, or comfort associated with them. By identifying what we desire to eliminate from our lives, we are taking a crucial step toward self-improvement.

However, acknowledgment alone isn't enough for true recovery. The next, equally important, step is actively seeking their removal. This might involve soliciting help from a Higher Power, seeking guidance from trusted individuals, or actively working on personal self-improvement strategies. The essence of Step 6 is about setting intentions for change and taking proactive measures to actualize this transformation, paving the way for a more balanced and fulfilling life.

#### STEP SIX FROM DROP THE ROCK

I am punished by my defects of character, not because I have them.

Am I willing to change?

<u>Drop the Rock</u> is a book focussed entirely on Steps Six and Seven. The metaphor is that our character defects are like rocks in our pockets as we try to swim. Those who have swam before us to the recovery lifeboat keep shouting to us that we need to drop the rock as we continue to swim toward freedom and happiness. The main rocks are identified as resentments, fear, dishonesty, self-pity, intolerance, and anger. Why are you holding onto these things? What did these things ever do for you? They may have once helped you survive or at least navigate your world, but they are no longer useful. In fact, they are causing you to drown. The action of Step Six culminates in dropping the rock --"all the stubborn, grasping, stupid holding on to all patterns of behavior, thinking and feeling that are harmful to our progress in recovery."

It is important to get over and beyond the false pride of making getting rid of our character defects a central focus of our lives. We need to accept being human and fallible. Self-acceptance is more important than self-abuse. Many of us have approached Step Six with outrageous self-will to change, or to the other extreme, without no will at all. But the point of recovery is finding balance.

Finding balance incorporates the awareness gained in Steps Four and Five with the action (behaviour change) required in Step Six. Like the pendulum, we swing from one extreme (self will) to another (no will), yet those points of extreme slowly become closer together as we change. Finding balance includes recognizing that a predictable aspect of our disease is extreme action: consumption, deprivation, and repetition. Working Step Six means actively seeking and practicing

a new way of living. A new way of being. A new way of thinking. A new way of behaving. A new way of relating.

Choosing to move into willingness is choosing to take responsibility for our lives and our behavior. We need to develop a new set of habits to work against who we thought we had always been. We need to practice these new habits so that they can replace old habits (character defects.) But we also must recognize our progress and accept and be grateful for the spiritual and healthy emotional progress we have made.

Over time, the personality flaws uncovered in the Fourth and Fifth Steps, while diminished, are still there. They produce thoughts and feelings we may have had while using -- impatience, intolerance, quick temper, arrogance, and especially an unforgiving attitude toward others and myself. If we are sincerely willing to change, why do we remain so much the same? Perhaps we have been paying lip service to the Sixth Step. Compared to most of the other Steps, the Step Six appears simple. There is no dramatic action as may be the case with Step Nine amends or helping others in Step Twelve. There are no enthusiastic witnesses to rush up and shake our hand. It is a rather solitary affair, and hence seems simple. But has the necessary action been taken?

One action associated with Step Six is to daily question our willingness to change. Am I willing to change? Repeatedly asking ourselves this question will increase our ability to be willing to change. Furthermore, a person is entirely ready when they turn fear over to faith and simply act "as if." Act as if I am not afraid, as if I am not resentful, as if I am not self-centered. We must be willing to quietly move toward self-examination, rather than self-absorption. We discover that doing is more important than knowing. Solutions come from direct and specific action.

Although obsession with our character defects can lead us to make lengthy list of such defects, most troubles stem from one large and glaring defect -- self-centredness. How can I wallow in self-pity, weep over resentments, be sick with righteous anger, ache with envy, and tense up with fear unless all my thoughts are exclusively on poor me? By accepting spiritual help, we learn to think clearly, honestly, examine our lives, play fairly, and give generously. Our values change in recovery as we become less selfish and more useful. We find that we feel better about ourselves when we help others. We learned from our program that what we have been searching for our whole lives is wrapped up in the service of others.

On page 45 of <u>Drop the Rock</u>, Sara shares her experience with anger and resentment. Reportedly, she had always had a rebellious attitude, especially toward authority figures. She was very sarcastic, and often made cutting remarks intending to wound. She turned so much anger inward that she was ashamed of herself and her behavior. She was a victim. In recovery, Sara became willing to make changes she needed to deal with the character defects of sarcasm, rage, control, and anger., which are all based on fear. If she could identify the fear, she could deal with it. Sara determined to act out of love, instead of fear and anger. Sara needed courage to be willing to change and courage to build character. She continues to daily assess her spiritual growth by monitoring her anger. Sara learned to express anger in a healthy non-damaging way. It is the inappropriate expression of anger and the out of proportion expression of anger that is a defect and causes us and others harm.

## Fellowship Library News

The Fellowship Library has received four new and helpful donations -- two books and, at long last, some audio material. The Library is now proud to be able to loan the Joe and Charlie Workshop cassette tapes as well as a Step Study on CDs. Please see below a complete list of Library holdings although, at any given time, some items are not on the library shelf because they have been borrowed by individuals trying to stay clean and sober one day at a time. Thank you to the individuals who are continually donating items to the Library. More items are always needed and most welcome. Please simply leave your donations on the library shelves at the Centre and the Librarian will process them.



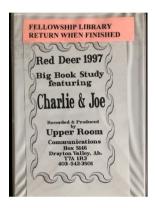
#### **Fellowship Library Books**

- 1. Alcoholics Anonymous (Big Book) 4th Edition
- 2. As Bill Sees It (AA Grapevine)
- 3. As Bill Sees It (AA World Service)
- 4. Daily Reflections
- 5. Days of Healing, Days of Joy, Daily Meditation for Adult Children
- 6. Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers
- 7. Everyday Serenity: Meditations for people who do too much
- 8. Experience, Strength and Hope
- 9. Grapevine Daily Ouote of the Day
- 10. Just for Today
- 11. Living Sober
- 12. Narcotics Anonymous, Sixth Edition
- 13. No Matter What: Dealing with Adversity in Sobriety (AA Grapevine)
- 14. Practicing the Here and Now: Being Intentional with Step 11
- 15. The Naked Mind: Nicotine
- 16. 12 Steps and 12 Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous
- 17. The 12 Steps and 12 Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous
- 18. Under the Influence: A Guide to the Myths and Realities of Alcoholism
- 19. Alcohol and You: How to Control and Stop Drinking (by Lewis David)
- 20. Alcoholics Anonymous Big Book, Special Edition
- 21. The Addiction Recovery Workbook (by C. W. V. Straaten)
- 22. Back to Basics: AA Beginners' Meetings
- 23. There's More to Quitting Drinking Then Quitting Drinking

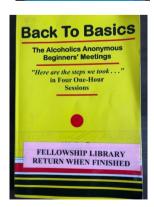
#### Fellowship Library Audio-Visual Material

- 1. The Twelve Steps on three CDs
- 2. Joe and Charlie Big Book Study on Cassettes

## 17 Grapevine Magazines







# June 2024 South Edmonton Fellowship Centre

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						10:00 AM Fellowship     Breakfast Group (AA)     12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA)     2:00 PM Gamblers     Anonymous     7:00 PM Sex Addicts     Anonymous
10:30 AM Girlfriend Hour (AA Women)     12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA)     2:00 Sunday Afternoon Meditation Group (AA) 6:00 PM Sunday Night Step Group (CA)	<ul> <li>7:00 AM Sunrise (AA)</li> <li>12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA)</li> <li>6:30 PM Our Basic Text (AA)</li> <li>8:00 PM Awakenings Men's Meeting (AA)</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>7:00 AM Sunrise (AA)</li> <li>10:30 AM Sunshine (AA)</li> <li>12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA)</li> <li>7:00 PM ISMs (AA)</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>7:00 AM Sunrise (AA)</li> <li>12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA)</li> <li>7:00 PM There is a Solution (CA)</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>7:00 AM Sunrise (AA)</li> <li>12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA)</li> <li>2:30 PM Overeaters Anonymous</li> <li>6:30 PM The Steps We Took (AA)</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>7:00 AM Sunrise (AA)</li> <li>12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA)</li> <li>7:00 PM Serenity by Candlelight (AA)</li> </ul>	• 10:00 AM Fellowship     Breakfast Group (AA)     • 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner     (AA)     • 2:00 -3:30 PM Gamblers     Anonymous     • 7:00 PM Sex Addicts     Anonymous
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