



12 Stepping a Problem for Nonbelievers

When applied to compulsive eating, the Steps can be a long and wide-reaching process. When applied to one problem, they can be a way to focus energy and break through barriers that have resisted our efforts. Use this form to take such a focused, systematic approach. Please note: the Steps listed here are a secular interpretation and practical application of the traditional Steps. If you want to read more about this rendering of the Steps, download *Write Your own 12 Steps*, by C. Riven Wood: <https://rivenwoodbooks.com/WriteYourOwn.pdf>

Step 0: What do I want to change?

If you have named a behavior (thinking is behavior), you are good to go. If you've written another person or a situation you want to change, fill out, "Finding the Underlying Need" on page 4.

Step 1: Am I willing to stop what I've been doing?

I need to stop trying things that don't work. If I'm not willing to stop now, how can I become willing?

Step 2: Am I willing to assume there is an answer that works, and look for it?

If I really don't believe there is an answer, I won't try very hard to find it. What would convince me the effort is worth it?

Step 3: Am I willing to pay the price of changing my life to healthier, happier, and ethically sound?

This is a commitment to find and use real answers. I may lose dysfunctional behavior, relationships, and thinking, but I will replace it with something better for my health, happiness and integrity. Am I ready to make that commitment? If not, how might I resolve my misgivings?

Step 4: What are the obstacles to change?

What happens when I stop the old behavior? The thoughts, feelings, and situations that push me back toward the old ways are the obstacles I'll need to address. Any sustained urge toward old behavior probably comes from a need that I'll have to find a better way to meet. As I list obstacles, it's helpful to watch for the needs that underlie them.

Step 5: Get outside perspective on the list.

Anyone who is not me has a perspective that can be helpful. To find someone who cares enough to think about me but is also willing to tell me things I don't want to hear, might require searching beyond my personal friends.

Step 6: Identify the needs driving problem behavior. Become mentally, emotionally, and practically ready to replace maladaptive strategies for meeting those needs with better ones.

How will I face the feelings that dysfunctional behavior has been masking? Do I need to make practical changes to address issues on my Step 4 list? How does my thinking need to change to allow for other solutions than the one I've been using?

Step 7: Find better ways to meet the needs.

How will I seek better strategies for meeting the needs I've identified in Step 6? The answers have always been there—at meetings, in role models, in books—but I didn't recognize them as answers since I hadn't yet asked the questions. How will I go about working through the whole Step 6 list until I can meet every need in a healthy, effective way?

Step 8: Incorporate new strategies into my social thinking about past events.

What might I have done differently if I'd had the answers I have now during past times when I needed them?

Step 9: Incorporate new strategies into existing relationships.

Can I “do over” anything on my Step 8 list? If I apologize for speaking disrespectfully to a friend, my chances of repeating the mistake in the future are much reduced; making amends is protection against relapse. How can I turn the people around me into allies for my recovery? How can I practice my new social behavior in a setting I have arranged, rather than waiting for the need to arise and perhaps getting caught unawares?

Step 10: Make new behaviors into habits.

Did I use my new behaviors today when they were called for, or did I miss some opportunities?

Step 11: Broaden my use of the principles I've adopted.

Where else could I use these new strategies I've discovered? Is meditation a place I can practice new skills?

Step 12: Incorporate these principles into my future life.

What will I build on the foundation I've laid? How will I start new relationships on a sound footing?

Finding the Underlying Need for Step 0

When your goal depends on other people, you can help yourself by digging below that goal to something under your control. For example, suppose I want my spouse to stop drinking. I might or might not be able to achieve that. But why do I want them to stop? Maybe my life is too chaotic or unpredictable. Maybe they do destructive things when drunk. So the underlying need might be peace, predictability, or safety. Those things are all attainable. They are also more to the point, since a spouse can get sober and still be unreliable.

This worksheet uses Marshal Rosenberg's list of universal human needs to help you state a goal that is attainable and to the point. **The questions on the next page** are meant to direct attention to the motive behind the goal. There is no need to answer them all; stop when you see what the fundamental need is and use that for Step 0 on the 12 Stepping a Problem for Nonbelievers worksheet.

Before going to the questions, look over this list below and see if you can simply spot the need that your current Step 0 statement is trying to address.

Connection

Acceptance
Affection
Appreciation
Belonging
Cooperation
Communication
Closeness
Community
Companionship
Compassion
Consideration
Consistency
Empathy
Inclusion
Intimacy
Love
Mutuality
Nurturing
Respect/
Self-respect
Safety
Security

Connection

Continued

Stability
Support
To Know and Be
Known
To See and Be Seen
To Understand and
Be Understood
Trust
Warmth

Physical Well-being

Air
Food
Movement/Exercise
Rest/Sleep
Sexual Expression
Safety
Shelter
Touch
Water

Honesty

Authenticity
Integrity
Presence

Play

Joy
Humor

Peace

Beauty
Communion
Ease
Equality
Harmony
Inspiration
Order

Autonomy

Choice
Freedom
Independence
Space
Spontaneity

Meaning

Awareness
Celebration of Life
Challenge
Clarity
Competence
Consciousness
Contribution
Creativity
Discovery
Efficacy
Effectiveness
Growth
Hope
Learning
Mourning
Participation
Purpose
Self-expression
Stimulation
To Matter
Understanding

If you don't spot your need right away, write down what will change if you achieve your goal.

How will you feel if you fail?

What need will be met that is not being met now?

What will change if you decide your current goal is unattainable?

How will you feel if that need is being met?

If you still aren't able to state an attainable goal, you can probably get help from someone else. Because they don't think the same way you do, they won't go down the same rabbit holes.

You can also find a PDF of feelings and needs here: <https://www.nonviolentcommunication.com/learn-nonviolent-communication/feelings/>