



Alternative  
12 Step  
Discussion  
Guide  
*for*  
Secular  
Overeaters

Version 2



# Table of Contents

Introduction.....**3**

Freethinker Alternative 12 Steps for Overeaters.....**4**

The Serenity Poem.....**4**

Tenth Step/Daily Inventory Formats.....**5**

Step One Versions.....**6**

Step One Insights.....**7**

Step Two Versions.....**8**

Step Two Insights.....**9**

Step Three Versions.....**10**

Step Three Insights.....**11**

Step Four Versions.....**12**

Step Four Insights.....**13**

Step Five Versions.....**14**

Step Five Insights.....**15**

Step Six Versions.....**16**

Step Six Insights.....**17**

Step Seven Versions.....**18**

Step Seven Insights.....**19**

Step Eight Versions.....**20**

Step Eight Insights.....**21**

Step Nine Versions.....**22**

Step Nine Insights.....**23**

Step Ten Versions.....**24**

Step Ten Insights.....**25**

Step Eleven Versions.....**26**

Step Eleven Insights.....**27**

Step Twelve Versions.....**28**

Step Twelve Insights.....**29**

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## Credits

This *Guide* was originally produced in 2020 by the Emeryville, CA, OA Freethinkers for the unregistered OA monthly Alternative Step Discussion meeting. We began as a face-to-face group of locals in February 2020 and then quickly became international as we moved to Zoom in April 2020 during the Pandemic.

The content was updated in January 2024 to provide variety for the Secular Overeaters Alternative 12 Step Discussion meeting.

We are extremely grateful to Roger C, author of *AA Agnostica: A Collection of Alternative 12 Steps*, for letting us use excerpts of his book in our guide.

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## Introduction

This *Guide* was created for use by the Secular Overeaters Alternative 12 Steps Discussion meeting, where different secular versions of the Step of the month are screen-shared and talked through. It was inspired by Roger C's *The Little Book of Twelve Steps*.

To attend this Zoom meeting go to:

<https://secularovereaters.org/so-meeting-schedule/>

Look for the listing for the third Sunday of the month for more details. To get the most out of the meeting, we suggested printing out the two pages up for discussion so you can have them handy and so you can make notes. We've also recorded meetings where members share their own thoughts on each Step:

<https://secularovereaters.org/so-alternative-steps/>.

The information in this *Guide* is also useful for secular members who are working the Steps. You will find seven versions of each Step as well as insights provided by authors of six different 12 Step books.

The 2024 version brings all new insights and includes three new sources. If you'd like to read Version 1, go here:

<https://bit.ly/FT-Alt12StepGuide22>

If you're interested in starting a meeting or study group based on this *Guide*, here's a link to a sample script for a one-hour discussion:

<https://bit.ly/SO-AltStepDiscSampleScript>

For more information, visit or contact us:

<https://secularovereaters.org/>

secularovereaters@gmail.com

— Secular Overeaters, January 2024



# Freethinker Alternative 12 Steps for Overeaters<sup>1</sup>

**Step 1:** We admitted we were powerless over food—that our lives had become unmanageable.

**Step 2:** Came to believe and to accept that we needed strengths beyond our awareness and resources to restore us to sanity.

**Step 3:** Made a decision to entrust our will and our lives to the care of the collective wisdom and resources of those who have searched before us.

**Step 4:** Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

**Step 5:** Admitted to ourselves without reservation and to another human being, the exact nature of our wrongs.

**Step 6:** Were ready to accept help in letting go of all our defects of character.

**Step 7:** With humility and openness sought to eliminate our shortcomings.

**Step 8:** Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

**Step 9:** Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

**Step 10:** Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

**Step 11:** Sought through meditation to improve our spiritual awareness and our understanding of the OA way of life and to discover the power to carry out that way of life.

**Step 12:** Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to compulsive eaters and to practice these principles in all of our affairs.

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## The Serenity Poem<sup>2</sup>

*We seek the serenity to accept the things we cannot change,  
courage to change the things we can, and  
wisdom to know the difference.*

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### Sources

<sup>1</sup>Adapted with permission from the Steps created by the San Francisco Alcoholics Anonymous Freethinkers and in use by the Emeryville, California, OA Freethinker meetings which began February 2016. In November 2019 the meetings were told by OA they would be delisted if they continued using these Steps, and that's what motivated members to start the "unregistered" Step Discussion meeting.

<sup>2</sup>San Francisco Alcoholics Anonymous Freethinkers, 2019.



## Tenth Step/Daily Inventory Formats

The Freethinker and traditional versions of Step Ten read, “Continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.” You can do these short writing exercises at any point in your Step work, even if you haven’t completed any of the Steps!

### AEIOUY

In this format, each letter stands for a question:

**A** = Have I been **Abstinent** today?

**E** = Have I **Exercised** today?

**I** = What have I done for **Myself** today?

**O** = What have I done for **Others** today?

**U** = Am I holding on to **Unexpressed** emotions today?

**Y** = **Yeah** or **Yippy!** What is something good that’s happened?

### The 4 Gs

Write about these four **G** words:

What went **Great** today?

What **Glitches** did I encounter?

What am I **Grateful** for?

What are my **Goals** for tomorrow?

### GRAPES

Write about the concepts represented by the letters in the word grapes!

**G** = One way you are **Gentle** with yourself.

**R** = One way you **Relaxed** today.

**A** = One thing you **Accomplished** today.

**P** = One thing you did for **Pleasure** today.

**E** = One thing you did for **Exercise** today.

**S** = One **Social** interaction you had today.

### Ten Things

1. List 10 things you wish you’d done differently. (These can be little or big.)

2. List 10 things you are grateful for.

### What’s on your plate today?

This about your schedule, not food. It’s sort of an action plan or to-do list.

1. How was the food yesterday, and how has it been today?

2. What feels hard for me? Do I have any resentments?

3. What do I need to turn over to the care of the universe so I can get present?

4. When was I wrong? Did I promptly admit it? Do I have unfinished business?

5. How have I participated in my own recovery and self-care in the last day?

6. Have I done anything I love or that made me happy recently?

7. What did I do that took courage?

8. List 10 things I am most grateful for.

### Traditional Alcoholics Anonymous

(AA) Tenth Step Nightly Inventory

1. Was I resentful today?

2. Was I dishonest?

3. Did I promptly admit when I was wrong?

4. Do I owe an apology?

5. Did I do or say something out of fear?

6. Have I kept something to myself that should be discussed with another person at once?

7. Did I think of what I could do for others?

8. Was I kind and loving towards all?

9. Did I reach out to someone in recovery to see how they were doing?

10. Did I take the time to connect with my higher power through prayer or meditation?





# Secular Step Discussion

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## Step One Versions

**OA Principle:** Honesty

**Traditional OA and Freethinker<sup>1</sup>:** We admitted we were powerless over food, that our lives had become unmanageable.

**Buddhist<sup>2</sup>:** We admitted our addictive craving, and recognized its consequences in our lives.

**Cleveland<sup>3</sup>:** Admit we are powerless over other people, random events, and our own persistent negative behaviors, and that when we forget this, our lives become unmanageable.

**Humanist<sup>4</sup>:** We accept the fact that all our efforts to stop [eating] have failed.

**Practical<sup>5</sup>:** Admitted we were caught in a self-destructive cycle and currently lacked the tools to stop it.

**Proactive<sup>6</sup>:** I face reality. I am not able to control what I do, and this has serious consequences.

**SOS<sup>7</sup>:** I have a life-threatening problem. My best efforts to establish sobriety have been unsuccessful. I believe that I have choices and that my life no longer need be unmanageable. I accept responsibility for myself and my recovery.

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## Step Sources

<sup>1</sup>Used by the OA Emeryville Freethinkers from February 2016 until November 2019, based on the San Francisco AA Freethinkers Steps.

<sup>2</sup>A Buddhist's Non-Theist 12 Steps, created by Bodhi in Australia.

<sup>3</sup>*The Alternative 12 Steps: A Secular Guide to Recovery*, by Martha Cleveland and Arlys G, Second Edition, 2014.

<sup>4</sup>BF Skinner, 1987.

<sup>5</sup>*Staying Sober Without God: The Practical 12 Steps to Long-Term Recovery from Alcoholism and Addictions* by Jeffrey Munn, 2021.

<sup>6</sup>*The Proactive Twelve Steps: A Mindful Program for Lasting Change* by Serge Prenel, Sixth Edition, 2021.

<sup>7</sup>12 Statements from SOS, aka Secular Organization for Sobriety/Save Our Selves.

Other sources: *The Little Book: A Collection of Alternative 12 Steps* by Roger C.

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## Your Notes

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## Step One Insights

**Beth Aich<sup>1</sup>:** I had been living under the mistaken belief I can control what other people think of me by showing them only what I wanted them to see. It's called impression management. (p. 92)

**Martha Cleveland and Arlys G<sup>2</sup>:** We throw ourselves into arranging the outcome we desire. And the outcome we desire is to keep on doing what we are doing. We want to feel good about ourselves without facing the pain and difficulty of admitting that we aren't able to control other people, the random events around us, and even our own persistent negative behavior. (p. 17)

**Stephanie Covington<sup>3</sup>:** By taking the First Step, we regain the power to decide for ourselves. We can choose whether we want to continue to try to control the things we can't, like our addictive cycle, or control the things we can, like our participation in recovery. (p. 25)

**Jeffrey Munn<sup>4</sup>:** Being fully honest about our behavior is a crucial part of recovery. You can't get better from something you don't acknowledge. (p. 37)

**OA 12&12<sup>5</sup>:** For the first time in our lives, we recognized, acknowledged, and accepted the truth about ourselves. We are compulsive eaters. We do have an incurable disease. Diabetics who need to be on insulin risk blindness and possible death unless they recognize the truth of their diabetic condition, accept it, and take the prescribed medication. So it is with compulsive overeaters. As long as we refuse to recognize that we have this debilitating, progressive, and ultimately fatal disease, we are not motivated to get the daily treatment that brings our recovery. (pp. 6-7)

**Serge Prengel<sup>6</sup>:** In Step One you have the stark realization that you have been in denial. You have a problem that you can't ignore, and what you've been doing about it has essentially been making things worse. (p. 72)

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## Step Insight Sources

<sup>1</sup>**Beth Aich:** *We're Not All Egomaniacs: Adapting the Twelve Steps for Alcoholics with Low Self-Esteem*, 2021.

<sup>2</sup>**Martha Cleveland and Arlys G:** *The Alternative 12 Steps: A Secular Guide to Recovery*, Second Edition, 2014.

<sup>3</sup>**Stephanie Covington:** *A Woman's Way Through the Twelve Steps*, 1994.

<sup>4</sup>**Jeffrey Munn:** *Staying Sober Without God: The Practical 12 Steps to Long-Term Recovery from Alcoholism & Addictions*, 2021.

<sup>5</sup>**OA 12&12:** *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, Second Edition, 2018.

<sup>6</sup>**Serge Prengel:** *The Proactive Twelve Steps: A Mindful Program for Lasting Change*, Sixth Edition, 2021.



# Secular Step Discussion

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## Step Two Versions

**OA Principle:** Hope

**Traditional OA:** Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

**Freethinker<sup>1</sup>:** Came to believe and to accept that we needed strengths beyond our awareness and resources to restore us to sanity.

**Buddhist<sup>2</sup>:** Came to believe that a power other than self could restore us to wholeness.

**Cleveland<sup>3</sup>:** Came to believe that spiritual resources can provide power for our restoration and healing.

**Humanist<sup>4</sup>:** We believe that we must turn elsewhere for help.

**Practical<sup>5</sup>:** Trusted that a healthy lifestyle was attainable through social support and consistent self-improvement.

**Proactive<sup>6</sup>:** I understand that I cannot force change through willpower. I need to disentangle my life patiently.

**SOS<sup>7</sup>:** I believe that a power within myself in tandem with supports and strengths beyond my own awareness and resources can restore me to a healthier, more balanced, and positive state of mind, body, and soul.

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## Step Sources

<sup>1</sup>Used by the OA Emeryville Freethinkers from February 2016 until November 2019, based on the San Francisco AA Freethinkers Steps.

<sup>2</sup>A Buddhist's Non-Theist 12 Steps, created by Bodhi in Australia.

<sup>3</sup>*The Alternative 12 Steps: A Secular Guide to Recovery*, by Martha Cleveland and Arlys G, Second Edition, 2014.

<sup>4</sup>BF Skinner, 1987.

<sup>5</sup>*Staying Sober Without God: The Practical 12 Steps to Long-Term Recovery from Alcoholism and Addictions* by Jeffrey Munn, 2021.

<sup>6</sup>*The Proactive Twelve Steps: A Mindful Program for Lasting Change* by Serge Prenel, Sixth Edition, 2021.

<sup>7</sup>12 Statements from SOS, aka Secular Organization for Sobriety/Save Our Selves.

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## Your Notes



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## Step Two Insights

**Beth Aich**<sup>1</sup>: The recovery work is learning how to feel and express my feelings, changing my perception of myself and others, letting go of self-limiting beliefs, trying new behaviors, allowing myself to take risks and be vulnerable, clearing away the wreckage of the past, and more. I cannot do these things by myself. (p. 97)

**Martha Cleveland and Arlys G**<sup>2</sup>: Some of us will reach out to nature, some to the calm, ordered events of everyday living. Some of us will find energy in the support of another person or the wise words in a book. Some of us will become healed by connecting with the deepest parts of our own nature, our internal wiser self. The sources of spiritual power are both outside of us and within us. (p. 29)

**Stephanie Covington**<sup>3</sup>: In recovery we learn to listen to our inner wisdom and acquaint ourselves with what we know to be right and true for ourselves. (p. 29)

**Jeffrey Munn**<sup>4</sup>: We are the ones doing the work. Yes, we will get help from others. Yes, social support is important. We aren't doing this completely alone. That being said, we are still the primary driver of the process, not any other entity. (p. 42)

**OA 12&12**<sup>5</sup>: This willingness to act on faith, then, was the key to Step Two. It was the beginning of the healing process and relief from the food compulsion. We began to see stability in our unbalanced lives. (p. 15)

**Serge Prengel**<sup>6</sup>: To be totally clear, the central belief of Step Two is a belief in the process of the Twelve Steps. It has worked for others and can work for you. (p. 17)

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## Step Insight Sources

<sup>1</sup>**Beth Aich**: *We're Not All Egomaniacs: Adapting the Twelve Steps for Alcoholics with Low Self-Esteem*, 2021.

<sup>2</sup>**Martha Cleveland and Arlys G**: *The Alternative 12 Steps: A Secular Guide to Recovery*, Second Edition, 2014.

<sup>3</sup>**Stephanie Covington**: *A Woman's Way Through the Twelve Steps*, 1994.

<sup>4</sup>**Jeffrey Munn**: *Staying Sober Without God: The Practical 12 Steps to Long-Term Recovery from Alcoholism & Addictions*, 2021.

<sup>5</sup>**OA 12&12**: *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, Second Edition, 2018.

<sup>6</sup>**Serge Prengel**: *The Proactive Twelve Steps: A Mindful Program for Lasting Change*, Sixth Edition, 2021.



# Secular Step Discussion

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## Step Three Versions

**OA Principle:** Faith

**Traditional OA:** Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

**Freethinker<sup>1</sup>:** Made a decision to entrust our will and our lives to the care of the collective wisdom and resources of those who have searched before us.

**Buddhist<sup>2</sup>:** Made a decision to go for refuge to this other power as we understood it.

**Cleveland<sup>3</sup>:** Made a decision to be open to spiritual energy as we take deliberate action for change in our lives.

**Humanist<sup>4</sup>:** We turn to our fellow men and women, particularly those who have struggled with the same problem.

**Practical<sup>5</sup>:** Committed to a lifestyle of recovery, focusing only on what we could control.

**Proactive<sup>6</sup>:** Moment by moment, I take a mindful pause to deal with my life calmly and effectively.

**SOS<sup>7</sup>:** I make a decision to entrust my will and life to the care of myself, the collective wisdom of those who have struggled with the same problem, and those in support of me.

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## Step Sources

<sup>1</sup>Used by the OA Emeryville Freethinkers from February 2016 until November 2019, based on the San Francisco AA Freethinkers Steps.

<sup>2</sup>A Buddhist's Non-Theist 12 Steps, created by Bodhi in Australia.

<sup>3</sup>*The Alternative 12 Steps: A Secular Guide to Recovery*, by Martha Cleveland and Arlys G, Second Edition, 2014.

<sup>4</sup>BF Skinner, 1987.

<sup>5</sup>*Staying Sober Without God: The Practical 12 Steps to Long-Term Recovery from Alcoholism and Addictions* by Jeffrey Munn, 2021.

<sup>6</sup>*The Proactive Twelve Steps: A Mindful Program for Lasting Change* by Serge Prenel, Sixth Edition, 2021.

<sup>7</sup>12 Statements from SOS, aka Secular Organization for Sobriety/Save Our Selves.

Other sources: *The Little Book: A Collection of Alternative 12 Steps* by Roger C.

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## Your Notes

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## Step Three Insights

**Beth Aich<sup>1</sup>:** What worked for me was to make a commitment to being in recovery. It's a good exercise to write out what being in recovery means to you. (p. 100)

**Martha Cleveland and Arlys G<sup>2</sup>:** The Third Step teaches us another way. We learn to make active, examined decisions. We push ahead in a time of crisis rather than fall back into our old ways. We learn to step back from ourselves, to take time and to apply new knowledge. With the help of the Third Step, we take full responsibility and begin to guide our own destiny. (p. 38)

**Stephanie Covington<sup>3</sup>:** The difference between willfulness and willingness is this: willfulness is gaining power over people and situations; willingness is being receptive to new possibilities. (p. 53)

**Jeffrey Munn<sup>4</sup>:** The practical version of this step keeps your life in your hands. Instead of turning anything over, you are empowering yourself to commit to a lifestyle of consistent self-improvement. (p. 47)

**OA 12&12<sup>5</sup>:** When we're considering taking an unusual action, we will want to consult with a sponsor or spiritual guide. It is not this person's job to decide for us; no human can do that. (p. 22)

**Serge Prengel<sup>6</sup>:** As we have seen in Step Three, there are two components to every situation you're in. There is the situation itself, and there is what it triggers in you. Taking a pause allows you to pay attention to the two components. (p. 45)

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## Step Insight Sources

<sup>1</sup>**Beth Aich:** *We're Not All Egomaniacs: Adapting the Twelve Steps for Alcoholics with Low Self-Esteem*, 2021.

<sup>2</sup>**Martha Cleveland and Arlys G:** *The Alternative 12 Steps: A Secular Guide to Recovery*, Second Edition, 2014.

<sup>3</sup>**Stephanie Covington:** *A Woman's Way Through the Twelve Steps*, 1994.

<sup>4</sup>**Jeffrey Munn:** *Staying Sober Without God: The Practical 12 Steps to Long-Term Recovery from Alcoholism & Addictions*, 2021.

<sup>5</sup>**OA 12&12:** *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, Second Edition, 2018.

<sup>6</sup>**Serge Prengel:** *The Proactive Twelve Steps: A Mindful Program for Lasting Change*, Sixth Edition, 2021.



# Secular Step Discussion

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## Step Four Versions

**OA Principle:** Courage

**Traditional OA, Freethinker<sup>1</sup> and Buddhist<sup>2</sup>:** Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

**Cleveland<sup>3</sup>:** Search honestly and deeply within ourselves to know the exact nature of our actions, thoughts, and emotions.

**Humanist<sup>4</sup>:** We have made a list of the situations in which we are most likely to [eat].

**Practical<sup>5</sup>:** Made a comprehensive list of our resentments, fears, and harmful actions.

**Proactive<sup>6</sup>:** I examine my life with honesty, searching for patterns in how I have been relating to people and situations.

**SOS<sup>7</sup>:** I make a searching and fearless inventory of myself, of my strengths and weaknesses. I choose not to permit problems to overwhelm me, rather to focus on personal growth and the unconditional acceptance of others and myself.

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## Your Notes

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### Step Sources

<sup>1</sup>Used by the OA Emeryville Freethinkers from February 2016 until November 2019, based on the San Francisco AA Freethinkers Steps.

<sup>2</sup>A Buddhist's Non-Theist 12 Steps, created by Bodhi in Australia.

<sup>3</sup>*The Alternative 12 Steps: A Secular Guide to Recovery*, by Martha Cleveland and Arlys G, Second Edition, 2014.

<sup>4</sup>BF Skinner, 1987.

<sup>5</sup>*Staying Sober Without God: The Practical 12 Steps to Long-Term Recovery from Alcoholism and Addictions* by Jeffrey Munn, 2021.

<sup>6</sup>*The Proactive Twelve Steps: A Mindful Program for Lasting Change* by Serge Prenel, Sixth Edition, 2021.

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## Step Four Insights

**Beth Aich<sup>1</sup>:** I find it helpful to force myself to complete the sentence: Because if this happens, it means \_\_\_\_\_ [fill in the blank]. There's what's actually happening and then there's the story we tell ourselves about what's happening. (p. 108)

**Martha Cleveland and Arlys G<sup>2</sup>:** Someone once said that when we look outward, we see all the problems, large and small, littering the landscape. And also that when we look inward we look to the source of them all. When we look inward we see not only the source of our problems, but the source of the solutions too. (p. 44)

**Stephanie Covington<sup>3</sup>:** We must be compassionate towards ourselves as we write our inventory, but we also must be willing to admit where we've been and what we've done. (p. 65)

**Jeffrey Munn<sup>4</sup>:** This step is going to give us an opportunity to process our resentments a little more thoroughly. This is done by looking at exactly why we were so hurt by whatever happened and also looking at whatever part we may have played in it. Remember that personal responsibility is a crucial part of recovery. (p. 52)

**OA 12&12<sup>5</sup>:** After writing our inventory, we review it. Have we listed everything we can think of about ourselves, destructive as well as constructive? We've found that we need to write down all of our characteristics, tendencies, feelings, prejudices, and actions we have taken as a result. Some of our actions are painful for us to recall, but we write them down anyway. When we face the guilt that truthfully tells us, "You made a mistake," we're freed of shame that falsely tells us, "You *are* a mistake." (p. 36)

**Serge Prengel<sup>6</sup>:** But you're starting to be more aware of the differences between being in your default mode, between being in a kind of mindless state, and being at least a little more mindful. So now, in Step Four, you're making use of this growing ability to shift from mindless to a more mindful state. It helps you pay more attention to patterns in your life. (p. 25)

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## Step Insight Sources

<sup>1</sup>**Beth Aich:** *We're Not All Egomaniacs: Adapting the Twelve Steps for Alcoholics with Low Self-Esteem*, 2021.

<sup>2</sup>**Martha Cleveland and Arlys G:** *The Alternative 12 Steps: A Secular Guide to Recovery*, Second Edition, 2014.

<sup>3</sup>**Stephanie Covington:** *A Woman's Way Through the Twelve Steps*, 1994.

<sup>4</sup>**Jeffrey Munn:** *Staying Sober Without God: The Practical 12 Steps to Long-Term Recovery from Alcoholism & Addictions*, 2021.

<sup>5</sup>**OA 12&12:** *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, Second Edition, 2018.

<sup>6</sup>**Serge Prengel:** *The Proactive Twelve Steps: A Mindful Program for Lasting Change*, Sixth Edition, 2021.





# Secular Step Discussion

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## Step Five Versions

**OA Principle:** Integrity

**Traditional OA:** Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

**Freethinker<sup>1</sup>:** Admitted to ourselves without reservation and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

**Buddhist<sup>2</sup>:** Admitted to ourselves and another human being the exact moral nature of our past.

**Cleveland<sup>3</sup>:** Will talk to another person about our exact nature.

**Humanist<sup>4</sup>:** We ask our friends to help us avoid those situations.

**Practical<sup>5</sup>:** Shared our lists with a trustworthy person.

**Proactive<sup>6</sup>:** I explore these patterns and describe them to another person, noticing the healing power of compassionate listening.

**SOS<sup>7</sup>:** I admit to myself, and if I choose, to another person or persons the exact nature of the negative, injurious aspects of my thinking and behavior. I explore the goodness within myself: the positive, courageous, and compassionate.

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## Step Sources

<sup>1</sup>Used by the OA Emeryville Freethinkers from February 2016 until November 2019, based on the San Francisco AA Freethinkers Steps.

<sup>2</sup>A Buddhist's Non-Theist 12 Steps, created by Bodhi in Australia.

<sup>3</sup>*The Alternative 12 Steps: A Secular Guide to Recovery*, by Martha Cleveland and Arlys G, Second Edition, 2014.

<sup>4</sup>BF Skinner, 1987.

<sup>5</sup>*Staying Sober Without God: The Practical 12 Steps to Long-Term Recovery from Alcoholism and Addictions* by Jeffrey Munn, 2021.

<sup>6</sup>*The Proactive Twelve Steps: A Mindful Program for Lasting Change* by Serge Prenel, Sixth Edition, 2021.

<sup>7</sup>12 Statements from SOS, aka Secular Organization for Sobriety/Save Our Selves.

Other sources: *The Little Book: A Collection of Alternative 12 Steps* by Roger C.

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## Your Notes

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## Step Five Insights

**Beth Aich<sup>1</sup>:** When we do Step Five with the right person, we will realize many of the things we have felt so shameful about and hidden are actually fairly common in other people too. (p. 113)

**Martha Cleveland and Arlys G<sup>2</sup>:** A guide's non-judgmental feedback helps us break through denial and decreases the probability of self-deception and helps us to examine our values and explore new options. Finally we listen to our guides, really hear what they say and then have to confront our mental backtalk which instantly contradicts the good things others tell us about ourselves. (p. 57)

**Stephanie Covington<sup>3</sup>:** Much of the power of the Fifth Step lies in our interaction with another person. The results are clear and immediate. We tell our story and see the compassion in another person's face. In the telling, our stories become real; they're more "true" having been spoken aloud to a caring listener. (p. 91)

**Jeffrey Munn<sup>4</sup>:** The person you read these lists to will likely be one of the first people in your life to ever get a full picture of your "darker" side. It's possible you've told a few people different bits of your story, but having someone who knows everything can feel very liberating. You are no longer alone with the knowledge of your resentments, fears, and harms. (p. 69)

**OA 12&12<sup>5</sup>:** We are not looking for someone to tell us how to solve our problems. What we need is a loving witness, someone who can keep our confidences and listen without judging us or seeking to fix us. (p. 42)

**Serge Prengel<sup>6</sup>:** Talking to another person means that you need to find words to communicate the experience more clearly than when you are on your own. Your friend asks you questions, which also helps you find ways to capture better what happened. As a result, you gain more understanding of your behavior pattern. (pp. 29-30)

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## Step Insight Sources

<sup>1</sup>**Beth Aich:** *We're Not All Egomaniacs: Adapting the Twelve Steps for Alcoholics with Low Self-Esteem*, 2021.

<sup>2</sup>**Martha Cleveland and Arlys G:** *The Alternative 12 Steps: A Secular Guide to Recovery*, Second Edition, 2014.

<sup>3</sup>**Stephanie Covington:** *A Woman's Way Through the Twelve Steps*, 1994.

<sup>4</sup>**Jeffrey Munn:** *Staying Sober Without God: The Practical 12 Steps to Long-Term Recovery from Alcoholism & Addictions*, 2021.

<sup>5</sup>**OA 12&12:** *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, Second Edition, 2018.

<sup>6</sup>**Serge Prengel:** *The Proactive Twelve Steps: A Mindful Program for Lasting Change*, Sixth Edition, 2021.



# Secular Step Discussion

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## Step Six Versions

**OA Principle:** Willingness

**Traditional OA:** Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

**Freethinker<sup>1</sup>:** Were ready to accept help in letting go of all our defects of character.

**Buddhist<sup>2</sup>:** Became entirely ready to work at transforming ourselves.

**Cleveland<sup>3</sup>:** Be entirely ready to acknowledge our abiding strength and release our personal shortcomings.

**Humanist<sup>4</sup>:** We are ready to accept the help they [our friends] give us.

**Practical<sup>5</sup>:** Made a list of our unhealthy character traits.

**Proactive<sup>6</sup>:** I understand how these patterns have been ways of coping with my fears.

**SOS<sup>7</sup>:** I focus on healing, abolishing self-blame and shame, and understanding the boundaries of my responsibilities. I remain open to the help and support of others as I address the challenge of change.

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## Your Notes

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## Step Sources

<sup>1</sup>Used by the OA Emeryville Freethinkers from February 2016 until November 2019, based on the San Francisco AA Freethinkers Steps.

<sup>2</sup>A Buddhist's Non-Theist 12 Steps, created by Bodhi in Australia.

<sup>3</sup>*The Alternative 12 Steps: A Secular Guide to Recovery*, by Martha Cleveland and Arlys G, Second Edition, 2014.

<sup>4</sup>BF Skinner, 1987.

<sup>5</sup>*Staying Sober Without God: The Practical 12 Steps to Long-Term Recovery from Alcoholism and Addictions* by Jeffrey Munn, 2021.

<sup>6</sup>*The Proactive Twelve Steps: A Mindful Program for Lasting Change* by Serge Prenel, Sixth Edition, 2021.

<sup>7</sup>12 Statements from SOS, aka Secular Organization for Sobriety/Save Our Selves.

Other sources: *The Little Book: A Collection of Alternative 12 Steps* by Roger C.

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## Step Six Insights

**Beth Aich<sup>1</sup>:** Take some time while doing Step Six to note the ways your low self-esteem has manifested in behavior patterns like these. As we build our self-esteem, they will become unnecessary. But they still may be habitual. Changing habits takes work. (p. 115)

**Martha Cleveland and Arlys G<sup>2</sup>:** Being entirely ready is not just a conscious mental decision. If we try to make our lives change by altering the thinking of our rational mind alone, it won't work. It won't work because becoming entirely ready has to happen in our subconscious thought. (p. 62)

**Stephanie Covington<sup>3</sup>:** For now, Step Six asks only that we become ready. We ask ourselves what we most want to change and find out how vulnerable we're willing to be. Are we willing to open up and approach life differently? (p. 106)

**Jeffrey Munn<sup>4</sup>:** We are trying to shape our character traits over a period of time. Shaping is a process that requires consistency and discipline. (p. 75)

**OA 12&12<sup>5</sup>:** In Steps Four and Five, we took a long hard look at each trait and acknowledged it as a part of our lives. Now we ask ourselves what it is doing for us as well as what it is doing to us. We search out our reasons for hanging on to each trait . . . Every character defect we have today has been useful to us at some point in our lives, and we need to recognize that fact. (p. 48)

**Serge Prengel<sup>6</sup>:** You have to understand how these so-called defects are an attempt to cope with something that feels overwhelming. It is then possible for you to replace them with something else that fulfills the same function but works better and has fewer side effects. (p. 36)

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## Step Insight Sources

<sup>1</sup>**Beth Aich:** *We're Not All Egomaniacs: Adapting the Twelve Steps for Alcoholics with Low Self-Esteem*, 2021.

<sup>2</sup>**Martha Cleveland and Arlys G:** *The Alternative 12 Steps: A Secular Guide to Recovery*, Second Edition, 2014.

<sup>3</sup>**Stephanie Covington:** *A Woman's Way Through the Twelve Steps*, 1994.

<sup>4</sup>**Jeffrey Munn:** *Staying Sober Without God: The Practical 12 Steps to Long-Term Recovery from Alcoholism & Addictions*, 2021.

<sup>5</sup>**OA 12&12:** *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, Second Edition, 2018.

<sup>6</sup>**Serge Prengel:** *The Proactive Twelve Steps: A Mindful Program for Lasting Change*, Sixth Edition, 2021.



# Secular Step Discussion

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## Step Seven Versions

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**OA Principle:** Humility

**Traditional OA:** Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

**Freethinker<sup>1</sup>:** With humility and openness sought to eliminate our shortcomings.

**Buddhist<sup>2</sup>:** With the assistance of others and our own firm resolve, we transformed unskillful aspects of ourselves and cultivated positive ones.

**Cleveland<sup>3</sup>:** Work honestly, humbly, and courageously to develop our assets and to release our personal shortcomings.

**Humanist<sup>4</sup>:** We honestly hope they [our friends] will help.

**Practical<sup>5</sup>:** Began cultivating healthy character traits through consistent positive behavior.

**Proactive<sup>6</sup>:** I learn to accept the sense of vulnerability that goes with life's pressures and uncertainties.

**SOS<sup>7</sup>:** I embrace introspection and work towards alleviating my shortcomings. I strive for personal growth and fulfillment over perfection, and to become integrated with collective humanness.

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## Your Notes

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## Step Sources

<sup>1</sup>Used by the OA Emeryville Freethinkers from February 2016 until November 2019, based on the San Francisco AA Freethinkers Steps.

<sup>2</sup>A Buddhist's Non-Theist 12 Steps, created by Bodhi in Australia.

<sup>3</sup>*The Alternative 12 Steps: A Secular Guide to Recovery*, by Martha Cleveland and Arlys G, Second Edition, 2014.

<sup>4</sup>BF Skinner, 1987.

<sup>5</sup>*Staying Sober Without God: The Practical 12 Steps to Long-Term Recovery from Alcoholism and Addictions* by Jeffrey Munn, 2021.

<sup>6</sup>*The Proactive Twelve Steps: A Mindful Program for Lasting Change* by Serge Prenel, Sixth Edition, 2021.

<sup>7</sup>12 Statements from SOS, aka Secular Organization for Sobriety/Save Our Selves.

Other sources: *The Little Book: A Collection of Alternative 12 Steps* by Roger C.



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## Step Seven Insights

**Beth Aich**<sup>1</sup>: Of course, we don't expect our old habits to go away instantaneously. Remember the switching dominant hands example. We will likely not even notice the many times we resort to our old ways. With practice, we may see it after we do it. Later, we will catch ourselves while we're doing it and change course. Eventually, we will have new habits. We will lose them if we stop doing the self-reflection, stop attending meetings, or become complacent. Recovery is a lifelong journey. (p. 117)

**Martha Cleveland and Arlys G**<sup>2</sup>: We cannot force change in ourselves. We simply cannot do it. Forcing change is a fight against self and most often leaves us wounded, defeated, and despairing. (p. 72)

**Stephanie Covington**<sup>3</sup>: In Step Seven we work in partnership with our Higher Power or Higher Self to bring about change in our lives. We learn to "take action and let go of the result," to do our part and let go of the outcome. (p. 107)

**Jeffrey Munn**<sup>4</sup>: Notice, I use the word "cultivate." We aren't flipping a switch and suddenly becoming selfless, nor are we doing a week-long personality makeover boot camp. This is a process that will last us the rest of our days. We are cultivating it like one would cultivate a garden. (p. 80)

**OA 12&12**<sup>5</sup>: We have admitted our need for help as we have begun to let go of self-will, have become willing to acknowledge our true selves—defects and all—and have become willing to have our self-defeating attitudes and traits changed. (p. 52)

**Serge Prengel**<sup>6</sup>: The coping mechanism is essentially a way to avoid staying in what is literally an unbearable experience. Getting in touch with the physicality of the experience and how much it blocks you helps you understand why words and logic are not adequate at such moments. (p. 39)

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## Step Insight Sources

<sup>1</sup>**Beth Aich**: *We're Not All Egomaniacs: Adapting the Twelve Steps for Alcoholics with Low Self-Esteem*, 2021.

<sup>2</sup>**Martha Cleveland and Arlys G**: *The Alternative 12 Steps: A Secular Guide to Recovery*, Second Edition, 2014.

<sup>3</sup>**Stephanie Covington**: *A Woman's Way Through the Twelve Steps*, 1994.

<sup>4</sup>**Jeffrey Munn**: *Staying Sober Without God: The Practical 12 Steps to Long-Term Recovery from Alcoholism & Addictions*, 2021.

<sup>5</sup>**OA 12&12**: *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, Second Edition, 2018.

<sup>6</sup>**Serge Prengel**: *The Proactive Twelve Steps: A Mindful Program for Lasting Change*, Sixth Edition, 2021.



# Secular Step Discussion

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## Step Eight Versions

**OA Principle:** Self-discipline

**Traditional OA and Freethinker<sup>1</sup>:** Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

**Buddhist<sup>2</sup>:** Made a list of all persons we had harmed.

**Cleveland<sup>3</sup>:** List all people who we have harmed, including ourselves, and be willing to make amends to them all. Be willing to forgive those who have harmed us.

**Humanist<sup>4</sup>:** We have made a list of the persons we have harmed and to whom we hope to make amends.

**Practical<sup>5</sup>:** Determined the best way to make amends to those we had harmed.

**Proactive<sup>6</sup>:** I explore alternative behaviors and rehearse them in safe settings.

**SOS<sup>7</sup>:** I will consider those that I have harmed and those that have harmed me. I will become willing to explore my feelings regarding those harms.

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## Your Notes

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## Step Sources

<sup>1</sup>Used by the OA Emeryville Freethinkers from February 2016 until November 2019, based on the San Francisco AA Freethinkers Steps.

<sup>2</sup>A Buddhist's Non-Theist 12 Steps, created by Bodhi in Australia.

<sup>3</sup>*The Alternative 12 Steps: A Secular Guide to Recovery*, by Martha Cleveland and Arlys G, Second Edition, 2014.

<sup>4</sup>BF Skinner, 1987.

<sup>5</sup>*Staying Sober Without God: The Practical 12 Steps to Long-Term Recovery from Alcoholism and Addictions* by Jeffrey Munn, 2021.

<sup>6</sup>*The Proactive Twelve Steps: A Mindful Program for Lasting Change* by Serge Prenel, Sixth Edition, 2021.

<sup>7</sup>12 Statements from SOS, aka Secular Organization for Sobriety/Save Our Selves.

Other sources: *The Little Book: A Collection of Alternative 12 Steps* by Roger C.

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## Step Eight Insights

**Beth Aich<sup>1</sup>:** We often repeat behaviors that on the surface seem counterproductive because they have some kind of hidden payoff. (p. 119)

**Martha Cleveland and Arlys G<sup>2</sup>:** We ask ourselves who makes us uneasy, who makes us angry, who confuses us, who do we resent or want to avoid? Usually these feelings are clues that we are being harmed. (p. 81)

**Stephanie Covington<sup>3</sup>:** The next time you tell yourself you're worthless, hopeless, neurotic, or to blame, think about how another woman would feel if you made the same comments to her. You'd owe her amends for your harsh judgments. Consider treating yourself with the same consideration. Put your name on your list of Eighth Step amends and begin healing your relationship with yourself. (p. 132)

**Jeffrey Munn<sup>4</sup>:** Remember that making amends is not about saying you're sorry; it's about repairing the damage you caused as thoroughly as you can. (p. 97)

**OA 12&12<sup>5</sup>:** Here, we meet guilt head-on and get rid of it. We learn about the healing power of forgiveness as we discover how to forgive ourselves and others. Most important, we begin to become willing to make amends—that is, to make changes—in the way we deal with the people who share our lives. (p. 58)

**Serge Prengel<sup>6</sup>:** Here we are very much in the thick of the step-by-step approach to changing dysfunctional behavior patterns. By now, you have much more understanding of why it's not a "Just Do It" attitude. We are talking about behaviors that have risen to cope with something overwhelming. (p. 44)

**Thérèse Jacobs-Stewart<sup>7</sup>:** If making a list of all the people we have harmed evokes deep remorse, it can be likened to a wound that stings because it's starting to heal. The pain of seeing our failings is helpful, motivating us to lay down our defenses and take full responsibility for our deeds. (p. 113)

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## Step Insight Sources

<sup>1</sup>**Beth Aich:** *We're Not All Egomaniacs: Adapting the Twelve Steps for Alcoholics with Low Self-Esteem*, 2021.

<sup>2</sup>**Martha Cleveland and Arlys G:** *The Alternative 12 Steps: A Secular Guide to Recovery*, Second Edition, 2014.

<sup>3</sup>**Stephanie Covington:** *A Woman's Way Through the Twelve Steps*, 1994.

<sup>4</sup>**Jeffrey Munn:** *Staying Sober Without God: The Practical 12 Steps to Long-Term Recovery from Alcoholism & Addictions*, 2021.

<sup>5</sup>**OA 12&12:** *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, Second Edition, 2018.

<sup>6</sup>**Serge Prengel:** *The Proactive Twelve Steps: A Mindful Program for Lasting Change*, Sixth Edition, 2021.

<sup>7</sup>**Thérèse Jacobs-Stewart:** *Mindfulness and the 12 Steps: Living Recovery in the Present Moment*, 2010.



# Secular Step Discussion

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## Step Nine Versions

**OA Principle:** Love

**Traditional OA and Freethinker<sup>1</sup>:** Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

**Buddhist<sup>2</sup>:** Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others. In addition, made a conscientious effort to forgive all those who harmed us.

**Cleveland<sup>3</sup>:** Whenever possible, we will carry out unconditional amends to those we have hurt, including ourselves, except when to do so would cause harm.

**Humanist<sup>4</sup>:** We shall do all we can to make amends, in any way that will not cause further harm.

**Practical<sup>5</sup>:** Determined the best way to make amends to those we had harmed.

**Proactive<sup>6</sup>:** I apply these new mindful behaviors in my everyday life. I sincerely apologize to people I have hurt, except when counterproductive.

**SOS<sup>7</sup>:** I will make direct amends, as I deem appropriate and not injurious, to those whom I have harmed or negatively impacted and to myself.

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## Step Sources

<sup>1</sup>Used by the OA Emeryville Freethinkers from February 2016 until November 2019, based on the San Francisco AA Freethinkers Steps.

<sup>2</sup>A Buddhist's Non-Theist 12 Steps, created by Bodhi in Australia.

<sup>3</sup>*The Alternative 12 Steps: A Secular Guide to Recovery*, by Martha Cleveland and Arlys G, Second Edition, 2014.

<sup>4</sup>BF Skinner, 1987.

<sup>5</sup>*Staying Sober Without God: The Practical 12 Steps to Long-Term Recovery from Alcoholism and Addictions* by Jeffrey Munn, 2021.

<sup>6</sup>*The Proactive Twelve Steps: A Mindful Program for Lasting Change* by Serge Prenzel, Sixth Edition, 2021.

<sup>7</sup>12 Statements from SOS, aka Secular Organization for Sobriety/Save Our Selves.

Other sources: *The Little Book: A Collection of Alternative 12 Steps* by Roger C.

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## Your Notes

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## Step Nine Insights

**Beth Aich<sup>1</sup>:** Many of our amends will be living amends. We are learning how to treat ourselves better . . . We will replace our critical voice with affirmations. We will not do any more dangerous, reckless behaviors that show little regard for our health, lives, and others. (p. 123)

**Martha Cleveland and Arlys G<sup>2</sup>:** Amends are unconditional. We make them with no strings attached. We admit to another that we did a hurtful thing to him or her, we commit ourselves to not doing it again, and we don't do it again. If we do do it again, our amend is worthless and we have to start over. (p. 75)

**Stephanie Covington<sup>3</sup>:** To begin making amends, look at each name on your list and decide what you need to do to re-create the best possible relationship with that person. A direct discussion may be the best approach in some cases. In others, you may make "living amends" by practicing new behavior. Your amends may be as simple as adopting a new attitude toward someone on your list. Or it might mean not including a certain person in your life anymore. Each situation is unique; no two amends are alike. (p. 138)

**Jeffrey Munn<sup>4</sup>:** Making amends is about doing the right thing so that we can become people of integrity and clearing our conscience of guilt and shame so that we can walk around feeling free and unburdened by our past. It's about healing ourselves just as much as it's about repairing the damage we've inflicted on others. (p. 99)

**OA 12&12<sup>5</sup>:** The Ninth Step specifically warns us of the danger of doing more harm than good as we face people directly and talk with them about hurtful situations of the past. For this reason, many of us have found it advisable to discuss the actions we are about to take with another person who has already taken the Step, an adviser who has personal experience with the Twelve Step way of life or preferably our sponsors. (p. 64)

**Serge Prengel<sup>6</sup>:** An apology that is just an apology without changing behavior is nice, but not that great. It is much better to change how you act so that the apology corresponds to a genuine change. From now on, you are going to behave differently. Not because you're going to force yourself to, but because you're a changed person, and you can now act differently, naturally. (p. 54)

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## Step Insight Sources

<sup>1</sup>**Beth Aich:** *We're Not All Egomaniacs: Adapting the Twelve Steps for Alcoholics with Low Self-Esteem*, 2021.

<sup>2</sup>**Martha Cleveland and Arlys G:** *The Alternative 12 Steps: A Secular Guide to Recovery*, Second Edition, 2014.

<sup>3</sup>**Stephanie Covington:** *A Woman's Way Through the Twelve Steps*, 1994.

<sup>4</sup>**Jeffrey Munn:** *Staying Sober Without God: The Practical 12 Steps to Long-Term Recovery from Alcoholism & Addictions*, 2021.

<sup>5</sup>**OA 12&12:** *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, Second Edition, 2018.

<sup>6</sup>**Serge Prengel:** *The Proactive Twelve Steps: A Mindful Program for Lasting Change*, Sixth Edition, 2021.





# Secular Step Discussion

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## Step Ten Versions

**OA Principle:** Perseverance

**Traditional OA and Freethinker<sup>1</sup>:** Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

**Buddhist<sup>2</sup>:** Continue to maintain awareness of our actions and motives, and when we acted unskillfully promptly admitted it.

**Cleveland<sup>3</sup>:** Continue to monitor ourselves, to acknowledge our successes, and quickly correct our lapses and errors.

**Humanist<sup>4</sup>:** We will continue to make such lists and revise them as needed.

**Practical<sup>5</sup>:** Practiced daily self-reflection and continued making amends whenever necessary.

**Proactive<sup>6</sup>:** I keep paying attention to the causes and effects of my actions. I act accordingly.

**SOS<sup>7</sup>:** I will continue sincere and meaningful self-evaluation, and strive for personal betterment.

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## Tenth Step/Daily Inventories

See page 5 for a list of Tenth Step writing formats that can help you dig deeper into what's going on for you!

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## Your Notes

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## Step Sources

<sup>1</sup>Used by the OA Emeryville Freethinkers from February 2016 until November 2019, based on the San Francisco AA Freethinkers Steps.

<sup>2</sup>A Buddhist's Non-Theist 12 Steps, created by Bodhi in Australia.

<sup>3</sup>*The Alternative 12 Steps: A Secular Guide to Recovery*, by Martha Cleveland and Arlys G, Second Edition, 2014.

<sup>4</sup>BF Skinner, 1987.

<sup>5</sup>*Staying Sober Without God: The Practical 12 Steps to Long-Term Recovery from Alcoholism and Addictions* by Jeffrey Munn, 2021.

<sup>6</sup>*The Proactive Twelve Steps: A Mindful Program for Lasting Change* by Serge Prenel, Sixth Edition, 2021.

<sup>7</sup>12 Statements from SOS, aka Secular Organization for Sobriety/Save Our Selves.

Other sources: *The Little Book: A Collection of Alternative 12 Steps* by Roger C.

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## Step Ten Insights

**Beth Aich<sup>1</sup>:** If we really want to have a personality change sufficient to overcome [compulsive food behaviors], we have to look at our motivations and unconscious drives. We need to become conscious to change them. The big question in Step Ten for me is “What drove me to do (or say) that?” (p. 125)

**Martha Cleveland and Arlys G<sup>2</sup>:** Step Ten is a practical approach to self-examination, and is a gentle one as well. Our self-correction needs to be loving and firm. We mustn’t attack ourselves with the weapons of self-blame and reproach. We monitor and correct ourselves for our own good, kindly, with great care, the same way we would correct a child we love. (p. 85)

**Stephanie Covington<sup>3</sup>:** A Tenth Step is a review of the day or week or moment, or whatever time interval we choose, that helps us reflect on what we “own” and what we don’t. Just as in Step Nine, we can determine our responsibility, do what is necessary to set things right, and let go of the outcome. In many cases there may be nothing to do, or it may be that someone else “owns” the problem. (p. 159)

**Jeffrey Munn<sup>4</sup>:** For this step, you make a concerted effort to stay mindful of your own behaviors throughout your daily interactions. Even if you feel you’ve been wronged, take the time to look at where you could have done things differently. If you determine that you made a mistake, own up to it as quickly as possible. (p. 105)

**OA 12&12<sup>5</sup>:** Some of us make a daily habit of reviewing our emotions and behavior of the past twenty-four hours . . . Its purpose is to reveal those areas where we’re having difficulties in our daily lives and help us determine what we can do about them. It also serves as a reminder of those things that are going well for us and for which we are grateful. (p. 71)

**Serge Prengel<sup>6</sup>:** As you have a deeper understanding of how your coping mechanisms are related to your fears, you know that you cannot take your new habits for granted. You are aware that fear could quickly bring them back. This is why you keep paying attention to the causes and effects of your actions. That’s Step Ten. (p. 130)

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## Step Insight Sources

<sup>1</sup>**Beth Aich:** *We’re Not All Egomaniacs: Adapting the Twelve Steps for Alcoholics with Low Self-Esteem*, 2021.

<sup>2</sup>**Martha Cleveland and Arlys G:** *The Alternative 12 Steps: A Secular Guide to Recovery*, Second Edition, 2014.

<sup>3</sup>**Stephanie Covington:** *A Woman’s Way Through the Twelve Steps*, 1994.

<sup>4</sup>**Jeffrey Munn:** *Staying Sober Without God: The Practical 12 Steps to Long-Term Recovery from Alcoholism & Addictions*, 2021.

<sup>5</sup>**OA 12&12:** *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, Second Edition, 2018.

<sup>6</sup>**Serge Prengel:** *The Proactive Twelve Steps: A Mindful Program for Lasting Change*, Sixth Edition, 2021.



# Secular Step Discussion

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## Step Eleven Versions

**OA Principle:** Spiritual Awareness

**Traditional OA:** 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.

**Freethinker<sup>1</sup>:** Sought through meditation to improve our spiritual awareness and our understanding of the OA way of life and to discover the power to carry out that way of life.

**Buddhist<sup>2</sup>:** Engaged through the practice of meditation to improve our conscious contact with our true selves, and seeking that [which is] beyond self. Also used prayer as a means to cultivate positive attitudes and states of mind.

**Cleveland<sup>3</sup>:** Increasingly engage spiritual energy and awareness to continue to grow in abiding strength and wisdom and in the enjoyment of life.

**Humanist<sup>4</sup>:** We appreciate what our friends have done and are doing to help us.

**Practical<sup>5</sup>:** We started meditating.

**Proactive<sup>6</sup>:** I make space in my life for mindful reflection. A sense of meaning and purpose naturally arises from that.

**SOS<sup>7</sup>:** I will seek to improve my awareness and understanding of myself, my addiction, and of other individuals and organizations with the common goal of arresting [food] addiction.

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## Step Sources

<sup>1</sup>Used by the OA Emeryville Freethinkers from February 2016 until November 2019, based on the San Francisco AA Freethinkers Steps.

<sup>2</sup>A Buddhist's Non-Theist 12 Steps, created by Bodhi in Australia.

<sup>3</sup>*The Alternative 12 Steps: A Secular Guide to Recovery*, by Martha Cleveland and Arlys G, Second Edition, 2014.

<sup>4</sup>BF Skinner, 1987.

<sup>5</sup>*Staying Sober Without God: The Practical 12 Steps to Long-Term Recovery from Alcoholism and Addictions* by Jeffrey Munn, 2021.

<sup>6</sup>*The Proactive Twelve Steps: A Mindful Program for Lasting Change* by Serge Prenel, Sixth Edition, 2021.

<sup>7</sup>12 Statements from SOS, aka Secular Organization for Sobriety/Save Our Selves.

Other sources: *The Little Book: A Collection of Alternative 12 Steps* by Roger C.

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## Step Eleven Insights

**Beth Aich**<sup>1</sup>: Meditation actually helps rewire the brain. Instead of identifying with the hamster wheel going around in our heads, we can just watch it. When thoughts and feelings pop up during meditation, we can just let them go; we don't have to run with them; we can just observe them. (p. 130)

**Martha Cleveland and Arlys G**<sup>2</sup>: We reach beyond our conscious self for guidance. Seeking guidance involves putting aside our personal agenda with its rigid opinions and answers. We try to hear a new voice and make new mental and emotional connections. (p. 101)

**Stephanie Covington**<sup>3</sup>: Acceptance may sometimes mean allowing other people to be angry or displeased when we set limits or start to take care of ourselves or go against the status quo. (p. 168)

**Jeffrey Munn**<sup>4</sup>: While you probably won't hear the voice of the creator of the Universe, regular mindfulness meditation can help you develop your intuition: that "gut" feeling you get that tells you what to do in a given situation. It is my personal belief that this is what the more religious members of Twelve-Step programs are calling "God." Unfortunately, assigning this phenomenon to a deity further promotes the idea that we are not capable of making wise, healthy choices without the help of a divine being. (p. 110)

**OA 12&12**<sup>5</sup>: Many of us have spent a lot of time running—running from the food, then running to it—and many of us have turned to excess food for its sedative effect. Eating compulsively was our chief means of relaxation. Meditation offers us a way to stop running and to relax without eating compulsively. (p. 79)

**Serge Prengel**<sup>6</sup>: With a mindful pause, you give yourself a chance to notice the default mode. You see what you do without thinking. You give yourself a chance to notice that there might be alternatives. (p. 61)

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## Step Insight Sources

<sup>1</sup>**Beth Aich**: *We're Not All Egomaniacs: Adapting the Twelve Steps for Alcoholics with Low Self-Esteem*, 2021.

<sup>2</sup>**Martha Cleveland and Arlys G**: *The Alternative 12 Steps: A Secular Guide to Recovery*, Second Edition, 2014.

<sup>3</sup>**Stephanie Covington**: *A Woman's Way Through the Twelve Steps*, 1994.

<sup>4</sup>**Jeffrey Munn**: *Staying Sober Without God: The Practical 12 Steps to Long-Term Recovery from Alcoholism & Addictions*, 2021.

<sup>5</sup>**OA 12&12**: *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, Second Edition, 2018.

<sup>6</sup>**Serge Prengel**: *The Proactive Twelve Steps: A Mindful Program for Lasting Change*, Sixth Edition, 2021.



# Secular Step Discussion

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## Step Twelve Versions

**OA Principle:** Service

**Traditional and Freethinker<sup>1</sup>:** Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to compulsive eaters and to practice these principles in all of our affairs.

**Buddhist<sup>2</sup>:** Having gained spiritual insight as a result of these steps, we practice these principles in all areas of our lives, and make this message available to others in need of recovery.

**Cleveland<sup>3</sup>:** Practice the principles of these Steps in all our affairs and carry the Twelve-Step message to others.

**Humanist<sup>4</sup>:** We, in turn, are ready to help others who may come to us in the same way.

**Practical<sup>5</sup>:** Sought to retain our newfound recovery lifestyle by teaching it to those willing to learn and by surrounding ourselves with healthy people.

**Proactive<sup>6</sup>:** My life reflects a growing sense of respect and compassion for myself and others. I share this process with others who are struggling.

**SOS<sup>7</sup>:** With new-found acceptance and insight I will try to keep awareness, and compassion for others and myself, in the forefront.

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## Step Sources

<sup>1</sup>Used by the OA Emeryville Freethinkers from February 2016 until November 2019, based on the San Francisco AA Freethinkers Steps.

<sup>2</sup>A Buddhist's Non-Theist 12 Steps, created by Bodhi in Australia.

<sup>3</sup>*The Alternative 12 Steps: A Secular Guide to Recovery*, by Martha Cleveland and Arlys G, Second Edition, 2014.

<sup>4</sup>BF Skinner, 1987.

<sup>5</sup>*Staying Sober Without God: The Practical 12 Steps to Long-Term Recovery from Alcoholism and Addictions* by Jeffrey Munn, 2021.

<sup>6</sup>*The Proactive Twelve Steps: A Mindful Program for Lasting Change* by Serge Prenel, Sixth Edition, 2021.

<sup>7</sup>12 Statements from SOS, aka Secular Organization for Sobriety/Save Our Selves.

Other sources: *The Little Book: A Collection of Alternative 12 Steps* by Roger C.

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## Your Notes

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## Step Twelve Insights

**Beth Aich<sup>1</sup>:** The best thing about [OA], to me, is that you can say I don't feel very good about myself and someone else will say me too. Because it's safe to be vulnerable, we begin to learn how to connect. We begin to see ourselves and others as more alike than different. (p. 133)

**Martha Cleveland and Arlys G<sup>2</sup>:** We carry the Twelve-Step message to others by the way we live our lives. We don't have to talk about it or to proselytize. We can if we want to, but it isn't necessary. We don't have to be perfect in order to carry the message either. We just have to live with integrity. (p. 106)

**Stephanie Covington<sup>3</sup>:** Relapse is always possible, and one of the ways we prevent it is to work with others. This is the active spirituality of Step Twelve. We "carry this message" so that others learn about the Steps and so that we continually remind ourselves of the basics of recovery. (p. 181)

**Jeffrey Munn<sup>4</sup>:** The reason we help others is threefold: It reinforces the lessons that we've learned . . . Secondly, we help others because it can provide us with a sense of meaning unlike anything else . . . It will reinforce your commitment to building and maintaining a recovery lifestyle when you see it happen for someone else. Thirdly, we help others because it is just the right thing to do. (pp. 120-121)

**OA 12&12<sup>5</sup>:** The truth, learned from the experiences of thousands of OA members, is that, no matter how great our physical, emotional, and spiritual transformation, we still aren't cured . . . The Twelfth Step invites us to continue the journey one day at a time for the rest of our lives. (p. 82)

**Serge Prengel<sup>6</sup>:** And so it is that a greater understanding of your vulnerabilities makes it possible to connect more with other people. This kind of connection is very different from what preaching would be. (p. 67)

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## Step Insight Sources

<sup>1</sup>**Beth Aich:** *We're Not All Egomaniacs: Adapting the Twelve Steps for Alcoholics with Low Self-Esteem*, 2021.

<sup>2</sup>**Martha Cleveland and Arlys G:** *The Alternative 12 Steps: A Secular Guide to Recovery*, Second Edition, 2014.

<sup>3</sup>**Stephanie Covington:** *A Woman's Way Through the Twelve Steps*, 1994.

<sup>4</sup>**Jeffrey Munn:** *Staying Sober Without God: The Practical 12 Steps to Long-Term Recovery from Alcoholism & Addictions*, 2021.

<sup>5</sup>**OA 12&12:** *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, Second Edition, 2018.

<sup>6</sup>**Serge Prengel:** *The Proactive Twelve Steps: A Mindful Program for Lasting Change*, Sixth Edition, 2021.