



NOVATIONS

Step Five: Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Spiritual Principle: Integrity



Letter from the Chair

This was, without a doubt, the most difficult step for me. It's hard enough for me to admit that I am wrong to myself. The idea of sharing it with another person? Please. And the concept of examining the exact nature of my wrongs was unfathomable to me. Self-examination is too much work! It hurts too much. Easier to believe that the world has done me wrong, that I deserve better than I've gotten. Easier to tell myself that my weight is a matter of genetics, that if I just find the right diet I'll lose the weight and get everything I've dreamed of.

The problem with not facing my own responsibility and admitting the exact nature of my wrongs is that it does nothing but fester in my heart and soul and keeps my eyes closed to the fact that there is so much more to my disease than calorie counting and exercising. I can be slim as a wand, but if I am not being spiritually and emotionally honest with myself, I will still be suffering. And if I don't speak it out loud to another person, I'm cutting myself off from not only the accountability and truth of that sharing, but also the comfort of having someone say to me, "I did that, too."

Sometimes, with the advantage of more time in the program and an impartial viewpoint, that person may even tell me, "It's not as bad as you think," or "How you felt was natural." And always I have been listened to with love and understanding. This is the nature of grace.

The point of confession is not to assume the weight of blame, but to release the burden of shame. The gift of Step Five is to honestly admit failings and say to your higher power, to yourself, and to another witness, "Today I choose to no longer be that person," and to move forward for today into a life of integrity.

Wishing you all a peaceful and abstinent month. Keep safe and healthy, friends.

Kate I.



The Inside Scoop

Story One

I have done Step Five many times over the more than 30 years I have been in Program. The first time I gave my Fifth Step to my sponsor, I had no idea what I was doing, and it took hours. I have usually given it away to my sponsor or someone else in Program. But I have also done Step Five with

a therapist and with a Catholic priest, who was flattered to be asked.

Sometimes I just write about whatever issue is bothering me at the time. I like using spiral notebooks because they're easy to throw away afterward. Other times I have done it the way the Big Book describes.* I don't burn my Fourth Steps because I have asthma and the smoke aggravates it. (Plus, when I was living with my family, I would have had a hard time explaining to them why I was burning anything!)

The next time I will again do Steps Four and Five according to OA's Twelve Step Workbook and with a sponsor. One problem I have had in the past was not going beyond Step Five because of fear of Step Nine. Or because I was just told to read Steps Six and Seven in the Big Book, which I did. But I was too new to understand what it all meant.

Every time I get ready to give away my Fifth Step I am scared—but once I start, I am okay. I find out that I am still liked as a person. As I have grown and changed in OA, I have discovered new things that need to be inventoried and given away. This has often been a relief, but not always.

Michelle O.

Story Two

When I first thought about talking to another human being about the exact nature of my wrongs, I panicked. How could I tell someone all the horrible things I had previously done? After hearing that other people had done this Step and felt relieved, I decided to proceed. My sponsor did not faint or criticize me. She was very understanding and shared about some similar traits of her own. I felt relieved after doing this step.

Looking back, I think the hardest part of this Step is admitting to myself the exact nature of my wrongs—even though I had written them down in Step Four. I had felt SHAME all my life, and I thought this would make it worse. Instead I felt less shame and more acceptance of myself. I no longer felt the self-hatred that plagued me all my life.

For anyone who is hesitant to do this Step, I urge you to try. I think you will find relief in no longer having shameful secrets.

Anonymous

Evolution of Integrity

My understanding of the spiritual principle of integrity has evolved over my time in Program.

javascript:void(24) initially equated "integrity" with posture – sitting and standing correctly. So I felt certain that I had integrity.



Then I heard the phrase "people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program." (Alcoholic Anonymous, Fourth Edition, AA World Services, p. 58) Over and over I've heard people in recovery ponder if they were "constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves." Was I?

So I determined to work the Steps diligently and honestly so I could be made perfect.

Oopsie daisy. Perfect? Fortunately the Big Book covered that too: "No one among us has been ABLE to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles... The point is, we are willing to grow along spiritual lines." (Alcoholics Anonymous, Fourth Edition, AA World Services, p. 58) Who among us came into recovery for spiritual awareness?

Talking and texting with people in recovery, I yearn for each of us to feel that deep reprieve from the compulsion of our addictions. I hope we are willing to be free of our demons, to unchain ourselves from the ogres of our addiction(s). So how do we become

and remain ABLE to unchain ourselves from the same old mechanical reactions?

We become willing to write our first Fourth Step and share it in Step Five. Then we can sit straight up in the rooms, in front of our Zoom screen, and in front of a Power greater than ourselves: a gradual awareness of spirit in addition to ego. For me, the idea of a Higher Power began in Steps Two and Three. I thank the person who said that "the way to know if you've done Step Three right is to do Step Four." That revised my definition of "perfection." The same applies to the other Steps.

I now believe "integrity" means having the ethical intelligence to witness choices. I believe choosing to live in the moment was my first step towards ethical intelligence. Doing that usually revealed some fear. Then I could ponder paths out of that fear: fight, flight, surrender. All are appropriate at one time or another. Now, with consciousness of kindness, affection, abilities, I can choose a path with the highest probability of connecting with the peace of a loving Higher Power. I don't always... still not perfect. :-)

Anonymous



Upcoming Events

Region VII Zoom Workshop:
Remembering our Powerlessness
Memorial Day, Monday, 25 June,
9:00-11:30
[Click here for more information](#)

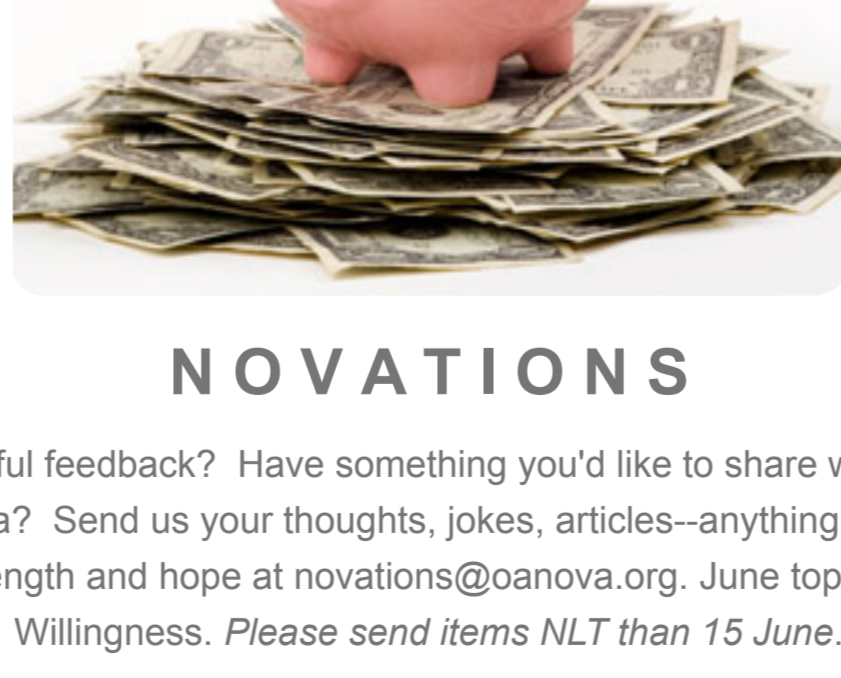
NoVA Intergroup Zoom Workshop:
Preventing Relapse
Saturday, June 6, 3:00-4:30 pm
[Click here for more information.](#)

**OA Virtual Region
Zoom Workshop**
Sunday, June 14, 3:00-4:30 pm
Recovery through Grief and
Traumatic Times.
[Click here or more information.](#)

**NoVA Outreach Intergroup Zoom
Meeting**
Saturday, June 20, 10:00-12:00
Intergroup Zoom Room Meeting #
635 187 2048
Send request for passcode to
info@oanova.org

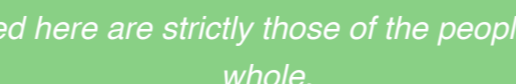
Don't Forget the Seventh Tradition!

Who knows when this crazy quarantine will end. Unfortunately, the bills still have to be paid. Some groups—like Arlington Sunrise—have designated post office boxes to receive donations. The shutdown has hit World Service Office in New Mexico especially hard. You can donate online at oanova.org, oa.org, oaregion7.org, oavirtualregion.org. As always, however, we need you more than we need your money.



NOVATIONS

Have some useful feedback? Have something you'd like to share with fellow OAs in Northern Virginia? Send us your thoughts, jokes, articles—anything that reflects your experience, strength and hope at novations@oanova.org. June topics: Step Six and Willingness. Please send items NLT than 15 June.



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