

THE NATIONAL ONLINE RECOVERY COURSE

SESSION SEVEN

■ THE
■ RECOVERY
■ COURSE

FREEDOM FROM ADDICTION

Welcome

We would like to welcome you to the Recovery Course and we are glad that you have chosen to take a step forward on your journey in Recovery by joining this course with us.

We have created this workbook so that it will make the coursework easier to follow.

What is The Recovery Course?

The Recovery Course is a Twelve Step programme albeit one that focuses on all kinds of addiction from alcohol and drug dependency through to gambling, sex addiction, pornography, self - harming and eating disorders. It is designed to bring freedom to people who struggle with addiction or any compulsive behaviour.

The Recovery Course also differs from a typical Anonymous Fellowship is that it is designed to enhance our recovery work by integrating texts from the Bible with the Twelve Steps.

The course works alongside conventional AA and NA programmes and guests are positively encouraged to join these other Anonymous Fellowships in conjunction with The Recovery Course should they so wish.

Who is it for?

The Recovery Course is open to anyone struggling with any sort of addiction or any compulsive behaviour that is spoiling one's life, such as using drugs, alcohol, pornography, sex, gambling and self-harming to name just a few. The course is a good starter for those completely new to recovery as well as those whom have been in recovery for years, but would like to take a fresh look at the steps from a Christian perspective

Format of the course

The virtual course runs once a week for 12 weeks, typically starting at 7pm for a 7:15pm start with a 15-20-minute talk and testimony and then discussion in single-sex small groups for around 45 mins. The evening ends around 9pm. Each week there is some simple 'Coursework' that helps each participant to explore each of the 12 steps in a deeper way. Nobody has to do the 'Coursework', but it's fair to say that the guests who throw themselves into this are the ones who profit the most. The Coursework is entirely for the guest's benefit and no one else gets to see it; it is completely private.

*We look forward to welcoming you and walking with you on this journey
to freedom from addiction.*

Session 7 - The Removal Business

There are no right or wrong answers to the following questions, just honest answers. Honesty is the key because as Jesus says in John 8:32:

“Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

Step 7: We humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings

“Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.” James 4:10 (NIV)

“If we claim that we're free of sin, we're only fooling ourselves. A claim like that is errant nonsense. On the other hand, if we admit our sins—make a clean breast of them—he won't let us down; he'll be true to himself. He'll forgive our sins and purge us of all wrongdoing. If we claim that we've never sinned, we out-and-out contradict God—make a liar out of him. A claim like that only shows off our ignorance of God.” 1 John 1:8-10 (The Message)

Topic for thought

This week we are tackling Step 7, which is all about humbly asking God to actually begin removing our character defects and shortcomings that we have spent the last week identifying. We are now voluntarily submitting to every change God wants to make in our lives.

The Issue

The purpose of Step 7 is to actually ask God to remove our character defects and shortcomings. He will probably do this one defect at a time rather than all in one go. He will do this in partnership with you and it will take time. We need to give him our permission and let Him get on with it in his own time and way.

The Goals

On completion of Step 7 we should be able to...

- Realise that there is more to life than merely abstaining
- Realise that if I no longer want to live like I have been doing then the character defects have to go
- Realise that I don't fail when I fall
- Realise that my shortcomings will probably not disappear overnight
- Realise I am not looking for perfection, just progress
- Realise that God wants to ultimately change more than just my behaviour; He wants to change the way I think

The Lies

With our addiction many of us have only ever known defeat. We have come to believe that lasting change is not possible for us. This is a lie! We can change. God can do it. The persuasive voice in our head tells us:

- “I can't help it. I have to do this”
- “I'll never be able to stop”
- “I'm a naturally volatile person, anger is in my DNA”
- “I am weak, I just don't have what it takes”
- “God might be interested in others, but not me”

In this week's questions we are getting ready to humbly ask God to remove our shortcomings, but what does it mean to 'humbly ask'?

God is not going to remove them against our will. We need to give Him our permission. If you realise that time has now come then this week's Pause For Thought will help.

Before you begin each day pray the Prayer for Serenity and also pray that God will bring into your mind the things he wants you to bring out into the light. Be courageous and honest as you face your past and present. God is with you and He will see you safely through.

Day 1

1. Last week you made a list of the character defects that are prevalent in your day-to-day relationships. An extensive list of 65 were provided, which included the primary ten of Fear, selfishness, resentment, envy, self-will, dishonesty, hubris (unwarranted pride), self-pity, insecurity, and an unwillingness to take responsibility for your own life. List one or two of the main shortcomings you want God to begin removing. Identify the main character fault that causes you the most trouble first.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. Having identified your main character defect, how does it tend to express itself in your behaviour?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. What kind of stressful situations or pressure causes your defects of character to come to the fore?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

4. With this in mind, what do you need to stop doing?

.....

.....

.....

.....

5. What do you need to start doing?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Day 2

6. Describe what you think that your life will be like with your defects of character removed. Do you think your life will be better or worse and in what way?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

7. List any specific ways in which you have already turned from relying on your own strengths to relying on God's power. Have there been positive changes? If so, what are they?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

8. What do you think that you can do to leave the world a better place and fulfill your purpose in life?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Day 3

9. Before we move on it will be useful to examine in what areas of our life we are proud so that we can ask God to forgive us and fill us with His humility. Answer yes or no to the following statements. The ones you answer yes to are what you need to sort out with God. If you answer no to all of them you can call yourself Mother Teresa from now on.

Statement	Yes / No
<i>I have a stronger desire to do my will than God's</i>	
<i>I rely more on my experience and understanding than seeking and obeying God's guidance</i>	
<i>I rely more on my strength and ability than I rely on the power of the Holy Spirit</i>	
<i>I am more concerned with controlling others than developing self-control</i>	
<i>I am often too busy doing 'important' things to take time doing small things for other people</i>	
<i>I have a tendency to think that I don't have any needs</i>	
<i>I find it hard to admit I am wrong</i>	
<i>I find it hard to say sorry</i>	
<i>I find myself more interested in pleasing people than pleasing God</i>	
<i>I am concerned that I get the credit I feel I deserve</i>	
<i>I tend to think I am more humble and spiritual than others</i>	
<i>I enjoy the recognition that my job title or qualifications afford me</i>	
<i>I often feel that my needs are more important than other people's needs</i>	
<i>I tend to consider myself better than others because of my abilities, job, qualifications or accomplishments</i>	

10. Having highlighted above the areas in which you are proud and lacking in humility why not pray the following prayer asking for forgiveness. If you want, you can rewrite it in your own words as the prayer is only a guideline. God is more interested in your heart than the way you express yourself with words. You can pray these prayers any way you wish – out loud, in the quietness of your own heart, in a church, in your bedroom, out in the sunshine – wherever. The only recommendation is that you do it where you won't be distracted or interrupted.

**“Dear God, I have been proud in so many ways. (Now read out the lines, one by one, of question seven that you answered ‘yes’ to).
 Thank you that you forgive me for my pride. I am willing and choose to humble myself before you and those around me. I no longer want to put my confidence in my own abilities; I want to place my confidence entirely in you and I ask you to empower me by your Holy Spirit. Thank you for hearing and answering my prayer.
 Amen”**

11. Now with the list of current character defects you made last week and the areas you highlighted in question one this week, let's humbly ask God to remove all our shortcomings, and not just our pride. Below is the Seventh Step prayer from AA's 'Big Book' that you can pray as it's written or you can put in your own words. We have also written another prayer below, which you can use if you wish.

Seventh Step Prayer

***“My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad.
I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character, which stands
in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows.
Grant me the strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding,
Amen”***

- Anonymous, Big Book, AA World Services, 1939

***“Dear God, thank You for bringing me this far in my journey.
I now turn all my character faults and shortcomings over to you. I ask that by the
power of your Holy Spirit you begin to remove...(name the defects you have
specifically highlighted that are causing you the biggest problem).
“Help me to accept the changes you want to make in my life and enable me to
become the person that You want me to be and which, deep down, I also long to be.
Please guide every part of my life and help me to live each day in your power and
not mine, forgetting the past and not being concerned about the future. Help me to
make the very best out of today. Thank You.
Amen!”***

Congratulations! If you prayed those prayers, you have completed Step 7

The Top 8 Relapse Busters

In recovery there are times when we all get frustrated that we are not making the progress we feel we should be and there may also be times when we seem to grind to a complete halt and maybe even relapse. We all lose our way at times, but hopefully the following eight guidelines will get us back on track.

1. We are still in denial

We may have been successfully in recovery for decades, but 'denial' is always lurking around the corner seeking to trip us up. As soon as we even start vaguely thinking about the possibility of 'using' again and how we might 'get away with it', alarm bells should be ringing very loudly. Remember, relapse is a process so we need to nip it in the bud straight away before it gets the chance of taking on a life of it's own. Go back to your Session 2 and 3 (Step 1) 'Pause For Thought' and review just how insane your life had become. Do you really want to go back to that? And always remember, giving up the second time is so much harder than giving up the first time although of course, Denial will tell you something different because it only knows how to lie! The antidote to denial is truth, which brings us to relapse buster number 2....

2. We have not fully turned our will and life over to the care of God

Go back to your Session 4 and 5 (Step 3) Coursework. It's natural for all of us to want to be in control of our own destiny, but the sad truth is, that doesn't work. No matter how much we may long for this programme to work without the involvement of God, the sad truth is it doesn't. We need God in everything. It is not enough to just turn the big things in our life over to Him; He needs all the little things as well. Recovery doesn't work successfully until God gets the lot.

3. We are still hanging on to some of our resentments!

Go back to your Session 6, 7 and 8 (Steps 4 and 5) Coursework. Forgiveness is essential to our spiritual wellbeing. Don't beat yourself up that you are finding forgiving so difficult; it's enormously difficult, but it also needs to be resolved if we are going to be free of our daily struggles. Resentment is one of the food supplies our addiction feeds off and our addictive impulses will only die once we begin to starve them of food. Forgiveness is not something we can do merely by human effort; it is a spiritual act and therefore we need to ask the Holy Spirit to empower us to let go of the pain and harm of the past. Until we are able to forgive we will continue to be held hostage. We will not fully know what it is to be free.

4. We haven't forgiven ourselves

We are comfortable with the idea that God forgives others, but we think our faults are just too big. "I know God loves and forgives them, but me? I'm not so sure. He knows what I'm really like". While we are in a place where we can't forgive ourselves we will get stuck. It is a form of spiritual pride and self-pity that says, "God's love and mercy is not big enough to deal with my sin". Review Steps 4 and 5 and, if you haven't begun doing it already, start listening to God (as suggested in Step 11). How do I know what God thinks of me? Pick up a bible and read it. One of the best places to start is the Psalms, which were written by King David, and he really wears his heart on his sleeve. On the one hand he felt just like you and me, condemned and often a worthless failure, but he also began over time to see how much God loved him despite of himself. Don't get side-tracked by self-pity and all those "Woe is me" thoughts and start looking God in the face and accepting the truth – you are loved despite who you are and what you have done.

5. We are trying to be better people by our own efforts and in our own strength

Review Sessions 9 and 10 (Steps 6 and 7). One of the biggest frustrations on this journey is when we feel we are not really becoming a better person. We try so hard to be 'good', but it just doesn't seem to work. There are fleeting moments when we subconsciously think, "well done" and then we revert to the old ways of doing things and the smell of defeat rises in our nostrils again. Becoming a better person is not primarily our responsibility, but God's and he is remarkably good at it. Give him permission to change you into the person that He, and deep down you,

long to be. Hold nothing back. Identify your specific shortcomings and character faults and give Him permission to start changing you from the inside out.

6. We are too proud to take responsibility for our past actions

Review Sessions 11 and 12 (Steps 8 and 9). We need to take responsibility for past damaged relationships. We must not rationalise or justify our actions. Yes, there may have been good reasons why you behaved as you did and the other person may have also been at fault, but that does not matter. We need to own and take responsibility for our part. We need to clean our side of the street and not get side-tracked by what they did. Until we make amends we will always feel a little guilty and what feeds off guilt? Yes, you got it in one.

7. We don't go to our Anonymous Fellowship or Church support group as often as we used to

When someone relapses I always ask them, "Have you been going to your local Anonymous Fellowship? Are you still going to church?" More often than not, the answer is 'No' or 'Sometimes'. Recovery does not work in isolation. We are all tempted to use, but before 'picking up' our addiction of choice again we need to pick up a telephone and call our Sponsor or friends who are also in recovery. Keeping clean and sober also entails keeping busy. When I am working hard with others I don't have time to get tempted. When I'm on my own at home not doing anything in particular then that's a different story. Do you keep in contact with the others in your small group? Do you have their phone numbers or e-mail addresses? Have you volunteered to help out in some way on the next Recovery Course or with your local Anonymous Fellowship group? Are you getting involved with your local Church and serving there? If the answer to any of these questions is 'No', that may be where your problem lies. If you think that's the case then do all you can to rectify the situation as soon as you possibly can. As they sometimes say at an AA meeting, *"The only thing you do on your own in recovery is slip."*

The writer of Proverbs in the Old Testament hits the nail on the head when he says, "Become wise by walking with the wise; hang out with fools and watch your life fall to pieces."

8. We have skipped the previous step

Do you notice how these eight 'Relapse Busters' look at each Step in turn? The 12-Step programme works by having a gentle accumulative affect on us. We have to start with Step 1 (and when we have a problem that's the first place we return to as the problem usually lies there) and then go on to each Step in turn. We cannot skip one. As addicts we love a quick fix for our problems and deep down we long for a quick fix in our recovery. Unfortunately it doesn't work like that. There is the temptation to move through the Steps too quickly, but God is not in a rush. So maybe slow down and allow Him to work at His speed, because He knows us better than we know ourselves, and He will go at just the right speed for our needs. This programme is a process not a race!

Verses for Session 7

Step 7: We humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings

- *"God can do anything, you know – far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us."* Ephesians 3:20 - The Message
- *"...if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"* 2 Corinthians 5:17 - NIV
- *"Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him...Let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind."* Romans 12:1-2 - GNB
- *"We plan the way we want to live, but only God makes us able to live it."* Proverbs 16:9 - The Message
- *"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."* Matthew 6:34 - NIV
- *"There has never been the slightest doubt in my mind that the God who started this great work in you would keep at it and bring it to a flourishing finish on the very day Christ Jesus appears."* Philippians 1:6 - The Message
- *"We rely on what Christ Jesus has done for us. We put no confidence in human effort..."* Philippians 3:3 - New Living Translation
- *"It's common knowledge that 'God goes against the wilful proud; God gives grace to the willing humble.' So let God work his will in you"* James 4:6,7 - The Message
- *"Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he's the one who will keep you on track. Don't assume that you know it all. Run to God! Run from evil!"* Proverbs 3:5-7 - The Message

Verses to beat the devil

When the devil makes you feel as though God has abandoned you and you feel lonely

Say, "God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you'" – Hebrews 13:5, clear off!

When the devil makes you feel afraid

Say, Jesus says, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you...Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." – John 14:27, clear off!

When the devil makes you feel anxious

Say, Jesus says, 'do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes...For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.' – Luke 12:22-34, clear off!

When the devil makes you feel that God doesn't know what you are going through

Say, 'For we do not have a high priest (Jesus) who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are— yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.' – Hebrews 4:15-16, clear off!

When the devil makes you feel broken hearted and God doesn't care

Say, 'The LORD is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.' – Psalm 34:18, clear off!

When the devil makes you feel discouraged

Say, 'God is (You) are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in your word.' – Psalm 119:114, clear off!

When the devil makes you feel guilty

Say, 'Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.' – Romans 8:1-2, clear off!

When the devil makes you feel overwhelmed

Say, 'I lift up my eyes to the hills— where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your (my) foot slip— he who watches over you (me) will not slumber...' – Psalm 121, clear off!

When the devil makes you feel judged and condemned by God

Say, 'If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all— how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?...Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all

creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' – Romans 8:31-39, clear off!

When the devil makes you feel unfairly judged by others

Jesus says, 'Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.' – Matthew 5:10-12, clear off!

When the devil makes you feel powerless

Say, 'Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.' – Ephesians 3:20-21, clear off!

Serenity Prayer

*God, grant me the serenity To accept the things I cannot change,
The courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.*

Living one day at a time, Enjoying one moment at a time;

Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace;

Taking, as Jesus did, This sinful world as it is, Not as I would have it;

Trusting that You will make all things right If I surrender to your will;

So that I may be reasonably happy in this life

And supremely happy with You forever in the next.

Amen.

Reinhold Niebuhr

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name.

Your Kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom,

the power and the glory are yours.

Now and for ever.

Amen.