

Step Eight Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

Made a list—In the first half of Step Eight we were asked to list everyone who had been harmed by our personal unmanageability. Our name came first and the reason was obvious. We had been the least able to escape from our own codependence and, therefore, in most cases, we received the greatest injuries. A change in behavior toward ourselves would have to come first. Nothing we could have possibly done as children ever warranted the abuse we'd received. What was important here was to discover if we had harmed ourselves or others as a way of venting our rage, grief, or hurt at these past injustices. Became willing to make amends to them all—The purpose of Step Eight was to focus our attention on becoming ready to face those we had harmed. And it was in becoming willing that we got stuck. We wondered what action we could take to prepare ourselves for this new task. This self-forgiveness would be instrumental in moving us out of our codependence and into healthy, whole relationships with God, ourselves, and our fellow human beings.

To this point, we have made great strides in establishing or renewing and healing our relationships with God and ourselves. It's time to turn our attention and energy to healing our relationships with ourselves and others, both past and present. Step Eight helps us to prepare to be accountable to others in a direct and positive manner for our codependent behaviors.

Step Eight consists of two parts. First, we concentrate on making our list. Then, we focus on becoming willing to make amends.

As we make our list, we find it helpful to refer to our Fourth Step inventory. We review our inventory and highlight the names of all those whom we have harmed—including God and ourselves. We may think we can avoid highlighting some aspects of our inventory. After all, some people may not know we had harmed them. However, we find it important at this stage of our recovery work to include even the smallest inappropriate behavior. As in all our previous work, we need to be thoroughly honest with ourselves about those people we've hurt.

Because we were raised in families where abuse, abandonment, neglect, enmeshment, alcoholism, sex addiction, eating disorders, or any other addiction may have existed, we need to be clear about how these influences have affected our adult lives. Have we ignored our relationship with God or taken it for granted? Have we blamed God, ourselves, or others for our life experiences? Have we, as a result of emotional abuse, become critical and judgmental of ourselves or others? Have we, as a result of neglect, ignored our personal needs or those of our mates and children? Have we secretly held onto resentment, bitterness, or hatred toward those who had neglected, abused, or abandoned us in our childhood and adult life? Can we let go of fear and resentment as false power and establish healthy boundaries?

We must ask ourselves these types of questions as we prepare our list and discuss it with our sponsor. As we do, we may add more names. Once we feel we have thoroughly completed our list, we move on to the second half of Step Eight.

This part of the Step asks us to become willing to make amends. Once again, we have an opportunity to let go of our will or control and allow our Higher Power to guide us. We remember why we entered the program of Co-Dependents Anonymous. Most of us made a commitment to be willing to go to any lengths for our recovery. Making amends for our past wrongs is important and vital to this process.

In many cases we find willingness to be the most difficult part of this Step. It's natural to feel some fear as we consider our willingness to make amends; we're literally facing our codependent past head-on.

Some of us fear facing the members of our families of origin or people we have skillfully avoided for many years. Some of us fear how others will react to our amends. There are those of us who fear the consequences of our past codependent behaviors.

No matter how severe the consequences, we must be willing to address them all. We must be willing to become accountable in all areas of our lives: our spirituality, our families and friendships, as well as our sexual, social, business, financial, and legal lives. We must face the reasonable consequences of our codependent behaviors. We're not helpless victims or offenders anymore. Rationalizing, judging, procrastinating, explaining, avoiding, minimizing, and manipulating are now useless tools of our codependent past. They've been replaced with willingness and honesty.

Our emotional wounds and boundaries may require more work and healing before we are ready to complete this Step with some people on our list. Our willingness will come in time. We must commit, however, to healing these wounds and boundaries and to completing Steps Eight and Nine when we have the strength.

Our job is to list the exact nature of our wrongs, to accept and forgive ourselves for our wrongdoings, to be willing to make amends to those we have wronged, and to be willing to face the reasonable consequences for our actions. We leave the outcome of these efforts to God. We have come to trust in God's time and way that the outcome of our willingness and honesty always works for the benefit of all involved.

We remember that making amends is meaningless without the willingness and effort to change our codependent behaviors. Otherwise, we're simply putting a temporary bandage on the problem. Sooner or later the problem always returns.

In our efforts to complete this Step, we find invaluable the strength and support of our sponsor and recovery friends. Our sponsors are helpful in determining what, and in how much detail, to share with each person on our lists. We may practice our amends with our sponsor, whose

experiences offer us hope and add to our willingness. Most importantly, we rely upon our Higher Power for the courage to maintain our willingness to make amends.

Through our self-forgiveness, and with our integrity and dignity humbly and spiritually fortified, we can address those whom we have harmed and attempt to make right our wrongs. We are ready to complete Step Nine.