Direct Amends

Making a **direct amends** is a core part of Step 9 in the 12 Steps:

“Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.”

A direct amends is more than just saying "I'm sorry" - it's about **taking responsibility** for harm caused and, if possible, **correcting the wrong** with sincere action. Here’s how you guide a sponsee through the process:

How to Make a Direct Amends – Step by Step

1. Pray and Prepare Spiritually

- Ask God for **humility**, **courage**, and the **right heart**.
- Review their Step 8 list with you (the sponsor) to determine readiness.
- Consider the timing and approach that honors the other person’s needs.

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2. Understand the Harm

- Reflect on:
    - What did I do to hurt this person?
    - What motivated my behavior?
    - How did my actions affect them emotionally, spiritually, financially, or otherwise?

Encourage written clarity—many sponsees benefit from writing this out.

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3. Choose the Right Time and Setting

- Amends should be:
    - **Private** and free of distractions.
    - **In person** whenever possible (or by phone/video if distance requires).
    - **Respectful** of the other person’s boundaries and consent to meet.

Example phrasing to request a meeting:

"I'm working on personal growth and would like to speak with you briefly to take responsibility for some harm I caused in the past. Would you be open to meeting or talking soon?"

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4. Make the Amends – Speak Simply and Honestly

Use this 4-part framework:

1. **Acknowledge the harm**

   "I want to take responsibility for [specific action]. I know it hurt you when I…"

2. **Own your part**

   "There's no excuse for what I did. I was selfish and dishonest…"

3. **Express willingness to make it right**

   "I'd like to know if there's anything I can do to make amends…"

4. **Commit to changed behavior**

   "I've been working on changing and I no longer want to be someone who causes that kind of harm."

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5. Listen Without Defensiveness

- Let them respond, even if they're angry, hurt, or not ready to forgive.
- Don't justify, minimize, or try to control their reaction.

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6. Make Restitution (If Appropriate)

- If the harm involved money, theft, damage, broken commitments, etc.—offer to repay or restore:
  - "I still owe you $400 and would like to work out a repayment plan."
  - "I broke your trust. I can't undo that, but I'll do everything I can to live with integrity now."

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7. Close the Amends Gracefully

- If they respond kindly: express gratitude.
- If they don't want a relationship or forgiveness: honor that.
- End with peace:

> "Thank you for letting me say this. I wish you the best moving forward."

Important Notes for Sponsors

- **Don't let the sponsee go too soon.** Roleplay the amends first if needed.
- **Safety and wisdom matter.** If making direct amends would cause harm to the other person (e.g., old affair, abusive person, criminal consequences), help the sponsee consider a *living amends* instead.
- **Follow up in Step 10.** Ongoing amends happen through changed behavior and continued spiritual growth.

A person conducts a **direct amends in Step 9** by taking intentional, humble, and responsible action to **personally repair the harm they caused—wherever possible**—without causing further injury to the other person or anyone else. Here's a clear and compassionate way to walk someone through it:

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

What Is a Direct Amends?

Direct amends is:

- A face-to-face or personal conversation (or phone/video if necessary)
- Focused on *taking ownership* for specific harms
- An *offering* to make things right (not a demand for forgiveness)
- Done in a way that considers the well-being of everyone involved

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How to Conduct a Direct Amends – Step by Step

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1. Pray for Willingness and Guidance

- Seek humility and wisdom.
- Ask God to prepare your heart and theirs.
- Ask yourself: *Am I truly ready to own my wrong without defending or excusing it?*

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2. Identify What You Did and Who Was Harmed

- Be specific: What did I do?
- Understand the impact emotionally, relationally, financially, spiritually.

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3. Discern Whether Direct Amends Is Appropriate

- Ask:
    - Will this amends help the person heal or only reopen wounds?
    - Could this amends hurt someone else (e.g., by revealing a secret or involving someone vulnerable)?
- If harm could result, consider **indirect or living amends** instead.

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4. Request a Conversation

Use gentle, respectful language:

"I'm working on a process of making things right with people I've harmed. Would you be open to talking briefly? I want to take responsibility for something I did in the past."

Let them choose the time and method.

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5. Make the Amends – Simply, Honestly, and Humbly

Structure:

1. **State the Harm Clearly**

   "I want to acknowledge that I lied to you about [X], and I know that damaged your trust."

2. **Take Full Ownership**

   "There's no excuse for what I did. I was selfish and acted out of fear and pride."

3. **Offer to Make It Right**

   "Is there anything I can do to repair the damage I caused you?"

4. **Express Commitment to Change**

   "I'm working daily to become someone who lives differently."

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6. Listen Without Defensiveness

- Let the other person speak freely.
- Don't argue, explain, or minimize.
- Accept whatever response they give—even if it's anger, silence, or rejection.

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7. Make Restitution If Possible

- If you owe money, property, or trust, offer realistic and timely ways to restore it.

  "I owe you $500. Can I begin a repayment plan?"

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8. Close with Respect

- Thank them for listening.
- Don't push for reconciliation.
- Let the results be up to God and time.

Important Notes

- **Not every harm can be repaired**, but willingness is key.
- **The goal is healing, not clearing your conscience at someone else's expense.**
- **Changed behavior is the long-term proof of your sincerity** (continued in Steps 10–12).

Example of Direct Amends Statement:

"I'm here because I want to take responsibility for how I hurt you. I lied and manipulated you, and that caused real pain. I've been working on myself, and part of that is acknowledging the harm I've done. I'm not here to ask for anything—just to own what I did and ask if there's anything I can do to make it right."

Direct Amends – Script & Preparation Checklist

(Step 9 – "Made direct amends... wherever possible…")

Preparation Checklist

Before the conversation:

☐ **Pray** for humility, willingness, and guidance.
☐ **Clarify the harm** you caused — be specific.
☐ **Ensure the timing is right** — will this amends help or harm?
☐ **Check with your sponsor** about your readiness and approach.
☐ **Decide the setting** — in person is best, but phone/video is OK if necessary.
☐ **Be ready to accept any outcome** — including anger, rejection, or silence.
☐ **Prepare restitution**, if appropriate (repayment, service, etc.).
☐ **Stay grounded** — this is about healing, not gaining approval or forgiveness.

Direct Amends Script (Suggested Format)

[1. Greeting and Purpose]
"Hi [Name], thank you for taking a few minutes to talk. I'm working through a process of personal growth and recovery, and part of that means facing people I've harmed and taking responsibility."

[2. State the Harm Clearly and Specifically]
"I want to acknowledge that I [state clearly what you did — e.g., lied, stole, cheated, betrayed trust]. I know this caused you pain and confusion, and I take full responsibility for it."

[3. Own the Impact and Motive]
"There's no excuse for my behavior. It came from a place of [fear, selfishness, dishonesty, etc.], and I deeply regret the pain I caused."

[4. Offer to Make It Right]
"If there's anything I can do to make things right or repair any part of the harm, I'm willing to do that."

[5. Express Changed Behavior]
"I've been working to change and live differently now. I can't undo what I did, but I'm committed to living with honesty, integrity, and respect going forward."

[6. Listen and Thank Them]
"Thank you for hearing me out. I understand this may be difficult or bring up emotions. I appreciate your willingness to listen."

Reminder

- This is not about **getting forgiveness** - it's about **offering accountability**.
- Let go of the outcome.
- Keep the door open to healing through your actions over time.