The History of the Twelve Steps of ITAA

Tradition Two: For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving Higher Power as may be expressed through our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

On May 1st 2022, our fellowship voted in the current wording for the Twelve Steps of ITAA. This final vote came after several years of discussion, development, committee meetings, and fellowship-wide group-consciences.

As a fellowship, we chose to engage in this process because the previous wording of our Steps hadn't been developed through group conscience. When ITAA got started, a handful of our members adopted the wording of the Steps used in another fellowship, which themselves were different from the original Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. Because the Steps are so central to our recovery from internet and technology addiction, we wanted to spend time and energy developing our Steps so that they could best meet the needs of our community as a whole.

To help support this process, ITAA created a special committee called the Step Wording Committee. Through dozens of committee meetings and three fellowship-wide group consciences, we arrived at a wording of the Twelve Steps that was intended to reflect as accurately as possible all the group consciences we have engaged in. Below is a chronological history of our work:

A Timeline of the Development of the Twelve Steps of ITAA

In October 2019 ITAA formed the Step Wording Committee and charged it with the responsibility of drafting an official wording of the Twelve Steps to submit to the worldwide fellowship for consideration. Here are the decisions the committee took while developing the draft:

- First, the committee decided to adopt the original AA wording as a starting place, noting that these steps have helped millions of addicts to recover.

- Next, they changed "alcohol" in Step 1 to "internet and technology". Several options were considered and this was considered to be the most broad and fitting.

- The committee voted to change "God" to "Higher Power". Great care and discussion was expended on this point, with multiple meetings, rounds of voting, and minority opinion. In the end, group conscience came broadly together in favor of Higher Power. This decision has been reaffirmed by multiple fellowship-wide group consciences and committee meetings since that time.

- The committee voted to remove gendered language such as "Him" and "His".

- The committee changed "all persons we had harmed" to "all those we had harmed" to allow for amends to non-humans. Similarly, in Step Nine they changed “such people” to “those we had harmed.”

After submitting the above changes to the fellowship for approval, in February 2021 the fellowship voted to continue working on the Steps with the hopes that several additional details could be addressed. Following this, the committee incorporated the following changes into a new proposal:

- Whereas previously “Higher Power” had been presented with no article (e.g. “Humbly asked Higher Power to remove our shortcomings”), an article was added before each instance of “Higher Power”. The committee used the article “a” in Step 3, and the article “our” thereafter.

- The committee changed the italicized phrase in Step 3:
  “...to the care of a Higher Power *as we understood Higher Power*.”
  to
  “...to the care of a Higher Power *of our own understanding*.”

- The committee removed the word “moral” from Step 4, based on the observation that the 4th step inventory can also include items of a nonmoral nature (such as childhood trauma).

- The committee considered alternatives to the phrase “defects of character” and proposed “flaws of character” and “harmful character traits” as possible alternatives for the fellowship to vote on.

Following the second submission of the Steps in September 2021, the fellowship voted again to continue working on the Steps. The majority of those who voted against wished to adjust Step 11, which used the pronoun “they” in “Their will for us”. There was concern that non-english speakers might find this confusing, implying that Higher Power is plural. A few members also voted against the steps because of the absence of the word God. In addition, the group conscience favored “defects of character” over both “flaws of character” and “harmful character traits”. In light of these comments, the following changes were made:

- The phrase “defects of character” was adopted for Step 6.

- Step 11 was updated to remove the use of the word “Their” so that it reads as follows: “Sought through practices such as prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with a Power greater than ourselves, praying only for knowledge of our Higher Power’s will for us and the power to carry that out.”

- After discussing whether to re-introduce the word “God” into the Steps, the committee voted to keep the phrase “Higher Power” noting that this had consistently received the most widespread support in our fellowship’s group consciences, and that it is inclusive of members who refer to their Higher Power as God.

Finally, in May 2022, our fellowship voted on the current wording of the Steps. After deep, heartfelt discussion from members representing a wide-cross section of our community, we concluded with an unprecedented unanimous vote of 42 in favor and 2 abstentions in what will surely be remembered as one of the most moving and powerful days in the history of ITAA. Thank you to everyone who participated throughout the entire process, and for everyone who lives and works the Steps every day.

Additional resources

Below you can find links to all of the minutes from past group consciences in which the Steps were discussed:

October 26, 2019 ITAA Business Meeting
- This business meeting approved a motion to form a committee to develop a draft of the Steps and present it to the worldwide fellowship.

December 12, 2020 ITAA Business Meeting
January 2, 2021 ITAA Business Meeting
- These two business meetings discussed and approved a process for the first round of voting on the Steps.

January 17, 2021 ITAA Business Meeting
February 7, 2021 ITAA Business Meeting
- These two business meetings comprise the first fellowship-wide discussion and voting on the Steps, during which it was voted to not adopt the then-proposed wording and to instead continue working on the Steps.

August 1, 2021 ITAA Business Meeting
- This Business meeting discussed and approved a process for the second round of voting on the Steps.

September 5, 2021 ITAA Business Meeting
September 19, 2021 ITAA Business Meeting
- These two business meetings comprise the second fellowship-wide discussion and voting on the Steps, during which it was voted to not adopt the then-proposed wording and to instead continue working on the Steps.

April 2, 2022 ITAA Business Meeting

- This Business meeting discussed and approved a process for the third and current round of voting on the Steps.

May 1, 2022 ITAA Business Meeting

- At this final ISM, our fellowship voted in the new wording of the Steps with 42 votes in favor, 2 abstentions, and 0 against.

Step Wording Committee Running Agenda and Past Minutes

- This document contains minutes from the Step Wording Committee's meetings going back until February 28, 2021. The committee's work between October 2019 and February 2021 was primarily conducted through live meetings and in various email chains.