

## Step 6

**Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.**

**Tradition 6.** An SA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the SA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

**Promise 6.** The feelings of uselessness and self-pity will disappear.

**Reward 6.** Self-confidence instead of helplessness

### Readings:

|                          |         |
|--------------------------|---------|
| <b>White Book:</b>       | 115-121 |
| <b>AA Big Book:</b>      | 75-76   |
| <b>12 and 12:</b>        | 64-69   |
| <b>Step into Action:</b> | 91-103  |

### Sixth Step Prayer

*Dear God,  
I am ready for Your help  
in removing from me the defects of character  
which I now realize are an obstacle to my recovery.  
Help me to continue being honest with myself &  
guide me toward spiritual & mental health.*

"Returning home, we find a place where we can be quiet for an hour, carefully reviewing what we have done." (AA 75).

The Big Book continues with specific suggestions to help us become entirely ready. The White Book covers Steps 6 & 7 on pages 115 - 121. Step 6 requires quiet contemplation of the work we have done. There are several questions on pages 75 & 76 of the Big Book. Again, these are not rhetorical questions!

Carefully reading the first five proposals (Steps) we ask:

- Have we omitted anything, for we are building an arch through which we shall walk a free man at last?
- Is our work solid so far?
- Are the stones properly in place?
- Have we skimmed on the cement put into the foundation?
- Have we tried to make mortar without sand?

If we can answer to our satisfaction, we then look at Step Six. We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable.

- Are now ready to let God remove from us all the things which we have admitted are objectionable?
- Can He now take them all - every one?

If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing.

The foundation is complete willingness (page 12):

It was only a matter of being willing to believe in a Power greater than myself. Nothing more was required of me to make my beginning.

The cement is our common solution (page 17):

The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution. We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can join in brotherly and harmonious action. This is the great news this book carries to those who suffer from alcoholism.

The cornerstone is coming to believe in a power greater than ourselves (page 47):

We needed to ask ourselves but one short question. "Do I now believe, or am I even willing to believe, that there is a Power greater than myself?" As soon as a man can say that he does believe, or is willing to believe, we emphatically assure him that he is on his way. It has been repeatedly proven among us that upon this simple cornerstone a wonderfully effective spiritual structure can be built.

The keystone is the 3rd Step concept at the bottom of page 62:

This is the how and the why of it. First of all, we had to quit playing God. It didn't work. Next, we decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was going to be our Director. He is the Principal, and we are His agents. He is the Father, and we are His children. Most good ideas are simple, and this concept was the keystone of the new and triumphant arch through which we passed to freedom.

Step 6 is A.A.'s way of stating the best possible attitude one can take in order to make a beginning on this lifetime job. If we ask, God will certainly forgive our derelictions. But in no case does He render us white as snow and keep us that way without our cooperation. **That is something we are supposed to be willing to work toward ourselves.** The key words "entirely ready" underline the fact that we want to aim at the very best we know or can learn.

How many of us have this degree of readiness? In an absolute sense, practically nobody has it. The best we can do, with all the honesty that we can summon, is to try to have it.

Practically everybody wishes to be rid of his most glaring and destructive handicaps. (For example, the seven deadly sins). No one wants to be:

**Pride:** so proud that he is scorned as a braggart,  
**Greed:** so greedy that he is labeled a thief,  
**Anger:** angry enough to murder,  
**Lust:** lustful enough to rape,  
**Gluttony:** gluttonous enough to ruin his health,  
**Envy:** agonized by the chronic pain of envy,  
**Sloth:** paralyzed by sloth.

Not much spiritual effort is involved in avoiding excesses which will bring us punishment anyway. But when we face up to the less violent aspects of these very same defects, then where do we stand? What we must recognize now is that we exult in some of our defects. **We really love them.**

**Pride:** Who, for example, doesn't like to feel just a little superior to the next fellow, or even a lot superior?  
**Greed:** Isn't it true that we like to let greed masquerade as ambition?  
**Lust:** To think of liking lust seems impossible. But how many men and women speak love with their lips, and believe what they say, so they can hide lust in a dark corner of their minds? And even while staying within conventional bounds, many people have to admit that their imaginary sex excursions are apt to be all dressed up as dreams of romance.  
**Anger:** Self-righteous anger also can be very enjoyable. In a perverse way we can take satisfaction from the fact that many people annoy us, for it brings a comfortable feeling of superiority. Gossip barbed with our anger, a polite form of murder by character assassination, has its satisfactions for us, too. Here we are not trying to help those we criticize; we are trying to proclaim our own righteousness.  
**Gluttony:** When gluttony is less than ruinous, we have a milder word for that, too. We call it "taking our comfort".  
**Envy:** We live in a world riddle with envy. To a greater or less degree, everybody is infected with it. From this defect we must surely get a warped yet definite satisfaction. Else why would we consume such great amounts of time wishing for what we have not, rather than working for it, or angrily looking for attributes we shall never have, instead of adjusting to the fact, and accepting it?  
**Sloth:** And how often we work hard with no better motive than to be secure and slothful later on - only we call that "retiring". Consider, too, our talents for procrastination, which is really sloth in five syllables.

Nearly anyone could submit a good list of such defects as these, and few of us would seriously think of giving them up, at least until they cause us excessive misery.

Are (you) willing to let God remove from (you) all the things which (you) have admitted are objectionable? (AA 76)

Please note that this step does not include willingness to have God remove your nagging spouse, the lawsuit your neighbor slapped upon you, the court appearance you are facing, nor your sexually transmitted disease, even though you may be willing to have them removed. We are dealing here with **your** defects, not those of the world. If you reflect upon the papers you carried away from step 5, one of them was a listing of your character defects. These are the things which you have "admitted are objectionable". Go through your list again. For each item, ask yourself if you are willing to have it removed.

Many will at once ask "How can we accept the entire implication of Step Six? Why - that is perfection!" This sounds like a hard question, but practically speaking, it isn't. Only Step One, where we made the 100 percent admission we were powerless over lust, can be practiced with absolute perfection. The remaining eleven Steps state perfect ideals. They are goals toward which we look, and the measuring sticks by which we estimate our progress. Seen in this light, Step Six is still difficult, but not at all impossible. The only urgent thing is that we make a beginning and keep trying.

If we would gain any real advantage in the use of this Step on problems other than lust, we shall need to make a brand-new venture into open-mindedness. We shall need to raise our eyes toward perfection and be ready to walk in that direction. It will seldom matter how haltingly we walk. The only question will be "Are we ready?"

Step 6 suggests that we ought to become entirely willing to aim toward perfection. However, rationalization, one of our addiction's best weapons against our recovery, notes the impossibility of this and points out that some delay, "Sure I'll head for perfection, but I'm certainly not going to hurry." Of course, this won't do. At the very least we need to continue to come to grips with some of our worst character defects and take action toward their removal as quickly as we can.

The moment we say "No Never!" our minds close against the Grace of God. Delay is dangerous, rebellion may be fatal. This is the exact point at which we abandon limited objectives and move toward God's Will for us.

**Work to do:**

A sponsee of mine introduced me to the Step 6 exercise in the Step into Action page 100 - 103 which asks you to identify your character defects, investigate what they cost you, why you are afraid to let them go and what would life be like if you practiced the opposite. I highly recommend this exercise.