



STEP SIX

I become entirely ready to have God remove all of these defects of character.

A major question that arises at this point is: are we genuinely willing to ask God to remove all of our addictions and dependencies? We may be forced into recovery by the sheer pain of a primary addiction, such as alcoholism, and we may genuinely desire freedom from that addiction. However, we may have other more subtle dependencies that, in a way, we still enjoy and want to cling to. For example, an alcoholic may ask God to remove his addiction to alcohol, but remain in denial about his compulsive overeating. Perhaps his eating has not yet led him into much trouble, and so he is reluctant to surrender that compulsion. In fact, he may lean on it even more heavily in the absence of the alcohol. So, this is the real struggle in Step 6: are we entirely ready to ask God to remove all of our defects, even the ones to which we cling tenaciously?

It is important to realize that we may be blind to some of our flaws. The ones who have forced us into recovery are probably obvious, but we may have to search to recognize others. Therefore, we must be sensitive to God's guidance and to feedback from significant people around us. Are they seeing certain patterns in our lives that we cannot see?

Looking back at the relationship inventory we conducted in Step 4 for recurrent patterns may be helpful in identifying these character defects. For example, when we review our relationship history, do we realize that in every important, intimate relationship, we "had to" be the passive, subservient partner? A pattern that surfaces over and over again hints at a character defect. This defect may be either or both of the relationship extremes of passivity or aggression. We should also examine the boundaries we set between ourselves and other persons. Are the boundaries too fragile? Can people spill into our lives in destructive ways, or are our boundaries too thick? Are we too well defended? Do we keep people far away? Finally, do we see and respect the boundaries of others?

We must be specific in our identification of individual defects of character, and we must be specific about the changes required to recover from them. One cure does not fit all! The approach for addressing one addiction may not work at all for another. For instance, the rageaholic may need to reduce anger expression. Conversely, the anger phobic person, who has no permission to feel or experience anger, may need to mobilize anger expression and assertiveness. The treatment has to be very specifically tailored to the defect and to the person.

As a rule, most defects of character involve some imbalance in the expression of and the experience of our most basic human needs. For example, sexuality and ambition are not bad unless our experiences of those drives are imbalanced or codependent. If we are addicted to sex or driven by ambition to the point of workaholism, these expressions have become defects that we must address. Our sixth step prayers would not be "Make me asexual," or "Take away my ambition." Rather, we might pray, "Grant me a healthy expression of my sexuality," or "Channel my ambition into enhancing my private life as well as my work life."

As we hold known defects of character up to God, we must avoid self-shaming and self-condemnation. The goal here is spiritual release, not spiritual self-punishment. For most of us, this process is ongoing. We will not be healed and sent forward immediately, rather, recovery will be a daily effort to evaluate, balance, and adjust the healthy expression of all of our God-given needs.



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Describe situations and events where you have been full of pride. What has this brought into your life that you like or enjoy? What problems has it caused you?

Why do we have to have our defects of character removed?

Describe the kind of activities you really enjoy (of course, NOT your addictive behavior).

What are some healthy eating or exercise habits that you could start?



Describe situations and events where you have avoided responsibility for your actions or lack of actions. What has this brought into your life that you like or enjoy? What problems has it caused you? Are you ready to allow God to help you take responsibility for your actions?