



## STEP NINE

### **I make direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.**

The making of amends needs to be approached cautiously by codependent people. There are three things amends are or can be. There is one thing they definitely should not be.

Amends can be these things:

1. Sincere efforts to offer apology for past harm.
2. Wonderful bridge-builders for more positive future relationships.
3. Effective agents for removing the tremendous weight of guilt, shame, and remorse.

The one thing amends should never be, though, is installment payments on false guilt or false shame. To treat them in that way is to drift into a kind of legalism and perfectionism that believes if we can do enough or apologize enough, we can somehow earn our own redemption and salvation. This is a particular danger for codependent persons who already tend to assume guilt for people and situations over which they have no real control.

The second half of this step is very important in that it identifies a group to which we should not offer amends, that is, to those who would be more hurt than helped by our action.

There are five categories of persons to whom we may consider making amends. Notice how this contrasts with what we did in Step 8. There we included everyone to whom we were willing to make amends. In Step 9, however, as we prepare to execute the step, we use a high degree of discretion regarding to whom we will make amends and when this should happen. The five categories to consider as we think about making amends are these:

1. Those to whom we may turn immediately, such as spouses or close family members.
2. Those to whom only partial disclosure can be made, because to do more would cause harm to others. For example, if we have taken part in unethical business dealings, we may want to make limited disclosure concerning our involvement, because full disclosure may jeopardize other persons who were in conspiracy with us. We need to always consider the risks to another individual's security, privacy, and confidentiality.
3. Those to whom amends should be deferred until a later date. Perhaps the hurts are so fresh that our presence would only trigger rage on their part. Maybe we also need to work through some anger and resentments of our own.

4. Those, whom we should never contact, because doing so would only open up old relationship doors that need to stay closed. This may be true, for example, in the case of a sex addict who wants to make amends to former partners.
5. Those who cannot be contacted directly. They may be dead, or we may not have access to them for whatever reasons. Three techniques can be used if we want to make amends with persons who are no longer living. One is called the "empty chair" technique in which we imagine the person in a chair and talk with him. A second technique is to write letters to the deceased as a form of journaling. Finally, we can carry on graveside communications with the dead, in which we visit the place of entombment to offer our amends through a spoken monologue.

Refer back to your "Step 8: Amends Worksheet" as you discuss each person and situation with your sponsor. You may decide to change the original plan you had in your "Amends I Will Make" column based on the work with your sponsor. When you have completed your amends, put a check mark in the last column "Done?". If you are not able to make amends at this time, you can leave the "Done?" column blank.

By its very nature, the amends process of Step 9 is one-sided, the people to whom we extend amends may not reciprocate by forgiving us for hurts we have done to them, or by asking our forgiveness, if they have hurt us. Nevertheless, from the spiritual perspective, casting off old bitterness and tendering amends can be both freeing and healing.



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**Why is *whenever possible* important?**

**Why are we careful about not *injuring them or others*?**

**Just because you have tried to make amends, does not always mean that the relationship is totally healed. This often takes time when someone has been hurt deeply. Are you willing to extend God's grace, forgiveness, and love to that person, even if they don't restore the relationship as quickly as you would like?**

**How are you dealing with the feedback from others after making amends? How are you feeling? How are you dealing with the desire to defend yourself?**