

STEP EIGHT

Became Willing

- 14 In order to gain true freedom and make progress in our recovery we must first accept full responsibility for our own past actions no matter how much we may have felt "justified" in what we did (or did not do) under the circumstances. The point is that by acting on our character defects (rather than on the basis of the love and grace of God), we have inflicted lasting harm on ourselves and others.
- 15 Our objective in taking Step Eight is not to give ourselves a hard time about this but to begin to clean up *our side* of the harm we have caused others by owning up to *our part* in those conflicts, disagreements and misunderstandings. Our purpose in doing this is to alleviate the distress and, in so far as we can, to make peace with them.

" By the time we work our way through the process of making amends, we will surely be astounded by the level of freedom we feel. We are involved in a process designed to free us from our past so that we are able to live fully in the present. Many of us are haunted by memories of our mistreatment of others. Those memories can creep up on us without warning. Our shame and remorse over our past actions are so deep that these recollections can cause us to feel unbearable guilt. We want to be free of such guilt. We begin by making a list of the people we have harmed. " It Works How and Why page 77



The moment we agree to have all of our defects removed (Step Seven), God turns us outward to prepare us to love others. However, before we can love others in a healthy way in the present, it seems that we must do what we can to heal the broken and bruised relationships of the past. The guilt, shame, pain, and resentment surrounding these relationships we have bungled is stored in the basements of our lives; this putrid, musty, hidden material isolates us and makes us want to keep our distance both from other people and from God. We are afraid of new relationships for fear they will be just as painful, or maybe afraid that if we get too close again people might discover the past results of our Sin and reject us. Hunger For Healing page 132

STEP EIGHT

Is Step Eight Necessary?

- 16 When (for whatever reason) we refuse to make amends to others we have harmed we set ourselves up as their Judge. We have, by doing this, shut God entirely out of the relationship. By doing so we, in the language of the Bible, "justify ourselves" and substitute our own agendas, standards and wisdom for God's. We delude ourselves into thinking we know better than God about how to conduct our relationships.

Some of us keep a balance sheet in our heads. We maintain an accounting of sorts as to who owes what to whom. We assess the amount of damage done us, or how often we have been wronged. Surely, we feel, we can't be expected to forgive offences, or injuries which are repeated again and again. Clair W, God Help Me Stop page 53

- 17 By keeping this balance sheet constantly "up to date" in our minds we just strengthen the denial mechanism of our own self-justification and become hardened in our sin-disease. This puts us in the increasingly dangerous situation of being not only unwilling..... but, if we are not careful, potentially *unable* to receive God's forgiveness for our own sin. As Jesus warned:

Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you. {Matthew 7:1 & 2 NKJ}

- 18 To put it another way, when we harshly condemn others for being spiritually sick or doing bad things we will not be able to receive God's forgiveness *for our own Sin and shortcomings* because we are doing exactly *the same type of thing* though perhaps not to the same degree or in a different area of our lives and out of public view {See Romans 2:2}.
- 19 When we refuse to forgive others we create serious problems for ourselves because our hearts tend to harden over time. If our judgement or condemnation of someone is very fierce or becomes deeply rooted {Hebrews 13:14 & 15} our angry and poisonous feelings towards that person can corrupt our whole