

Step Six...

Were entirely ready to have God remove all our defects of character

Keep Moving!

In the Big Book, Steps 6 and 7 take up a paragraph apiece. There is no need to spend a month on Step 6. Remember that in the early days, people worked all the steps in an afternoon. It is most effective to take these steps while the pain and results of your defects are fresh in your mind.

The List of Defects

After you have read your 5th step to your sponsor, if you were fearless in your inventory and rigorously honest in your revelations, you should have a complete list of your **defects** and the habitual **bad behaviors** they engender. This is a tremendous gift, and one of the miracles of the 12-step process (after all, we started by listing how others had wronged us!). Many people spend thousands of dollars on therapy and don't end up with a list like this.

To test your readiness, look over your list with your sponsor. Each item is something you do that brings pain to yourself or others. Read each defect or behavior out loud and ask yourself: "do I want to hold on to this?" Hopefully, the answer will be "no" to most of them.

Looking at your list, you might feel like it's impossible to stop doing all the things on your list of behaviors – and you'd be right! But remember that Step Six is NOT "Were entirely ready to stop engaging in defect-related behavior tomorrow." All you have to do is be ready to have your defects removed. Are you ready? I think you're ready.

... and Step Seven

Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings

The first time you work step seven, you will have just been asked to review your progress so far, and you will be very in touch with the fact that you have a number of painful character defects that cause you and others to suffer.

Luckily, the next step is easy! All you have to do is ask for those defects to be removed.

Non-theist 7th Step Prayer

The 7th Step Prayer in the Big Book is on page 76. If you prefer a less theistic version, here's an alternative:

Thank you for keeping me sober. Please keep me sober today. Please remove my defects of character and give me the strength to do the next right thing at all times. Help me let go of my will. Show me how I can be of service.

Say that prayer every day for a month. When specific defects arise, ask for them to be removed. You simply cannot ask for defects to be removed too often.

The Return of Defects & The Rise of Ego

Daily maintenance of your spiritual condition is essential to continued sobriety, but is never a guarantee of perfection. Sometimes your defects will come roaring back with force, and sometimes they creep in slowly. The steps don't promise you'll never make a mistake or cause harm again; they simply give you tools to deal with it when you do.

But once we've been sober a while and things have been going well, our alcoholic ego reflexively begins to claim credit for our progress, and we begin to identify strongly with our new, sober personality. So what happens when defects come back, and we engage in behavior that conflicts with our new self-image? The ego tries to take control of handling the problem, going on the defensive in several common ways:

- Denying that the defect has returned;
- Keeping the defect secret (e.g., from your sponsor, friends, or group) in hopes it will go away;
- Obsessing about the defect;
- Trying to fix the problem with elaborate plans or other forms of self-will.

These are clearly doomed to fail, but it is instinctual to try them. We can't help it! But once you recognize these coping mechanisms, you can learn to let go and use Step 7 again.

It's all too easy to forget Step 7's central lesson of humility. I'll put it in a little box:

REMEMBER!

You don't remove your defects – you ask for them to be removed.

Ask for your defects to be removed. Keep asking.

From now on, when the defects arise, ask for them to be removed, either with a catch-all "please remove my defects" or a more specific prayer, such as "please relieve me of my desire to gossip" or "please help me stop surfing the internet for hours when I should be working."

It may be that your oldest, worst defects aren't the ones that are troubling you. As you get more sober time, you may find a whole new set of defects rising to the top. Watch out for these defects that tend to plague people with time:

gossip	complacency	control
judgment	superiority	bitterness
overworking	laziness	overplanning
overspending	lust	codependence

Oh, and one more thing...

Don't let the defect of **procrastination** keep you from starting Step 8 after you've done Step 7!