Step Study Outline

**Step One:**

**We admitted we were powerless over dual disorders of chemical dependency and emotional or psychiatric illness - that our lives had become unmanageable.**

**Spiritual Aspect: Honesty**

Why Step One is Needed

Living with a loved one’s dual diagnosis was too much for many of us. We mistakenly believed we could change our loved one’s addiction and diagnosis. We tried to force them to stay clean & sober, seek treatment or take medications. We became too involved in our loved one’s lives, making decisions for them, making excuses for them and covering for their mishaps. As a result we damaged our own health and peace of mind. What we were doing was not helping our loved one; perhaps we were even making the situation worse. We were not letting our dual diagnosed loved one suffer the consequences of their actions and have the dignity of managing their illness and their recovery.

As a result, our own lives became unmanageable. We became emotionally withdrawn, were unable to sleep, could not concentrate or make decisions. Some of us felt like failures as a parent or spouse. We hid the truth from family and friends, became exhausted, neglected other responsibilities and perhaps even stretched our finances beyond limits. Some of us were in denial that there was a problem. When we faced reality, we discovered we could not control our loved ones or their illnesses. We began to believe that we were fighting a battle we could not win. It was like trying to stop the wind from blowing, or the ocean tide from coming in.

How Step One Works

We learn the 3 C’s - we didn’t cause it, we can’t control it and we can’t cure it. When we accept the present condition and surrender the false idea that we can fix another person, we can move forward. Step One is the beginning of recovery and the foundation for all the other Steps.

We admit to ourselves that we are powerless over dual diagnosis and the resulting problems. We realize that we can no longer fight the battle, and we don’t have to. We detach from our dual diagnosed loved one with love and compassion and focus on our own recovery. We learn that caring for our loved one does not mean controlling our loved one. We find ways to support their recovery without losing ourselves.

We separate our loved one from the dual diagnosis. We can love the person, but hate the diseases. At some point we recognize that our recovery is separate from that of our dual diagnosed loved one. We may have parallel paths to recovery but we accept that the recoveries may not proceed at the same rate. Because we may have defined ourselves by our relationship to our dual diagnosed loved one, we must learn to re-define ourselves, take care of ourselves, and focus on our own recovery.

By admitting powerlessness, we become empowered to work on our own recovery. Powerless does not mean helpless—there are things we can do to aid our own recovery. We learn new coping skills so that our lives will begin to change, as will the lives of those around us.

The Tools to Help Us

There are many tools available to us to aid our recovery and help us manage our lives. The fellowship of others at Dual Anon meetings helps us realize that we are not alone, and it is primal to our recovery. After we attend Dual Anon meetings for awhile we may find a special connection with another member, and when ready, we may ask that person to sponsor us in our recovery.

Reading is also helpful - Twelve-Step literature guides our path. Spiritual readings, prayer and meditation help us see new possibilities. It is also helpful to become informed about chemical dependency and emotional and psychiatric illnesses.

The Serenity Prayer reminds us to accept the things we cannot change, and change the things we can.

Many of us find it helpful to have our own counselor, apart from that of our loved one, to help us see things in a new way.

Writing affirmations and looking at them often helps retrain our thinking. It is also helpful to read affirmations written by others. A positive attitude helps, but if it seems too difficult, we “fake it until we can make it” or “act as if”.

If we understand our personal and family history of addiction and co-dependence and our own addictions and compulsions we may see a pattern. Control issues are often rooted in our family dynamics.

Writing a journal is helpful in recovery, and by dating our record of recovery we can later look back and see how far we’ve come.

We learn to be gentle, patient and good to ourselves. Some of us find it helpful to do something nice for ourselves every day, in whatever manner we define “nice.”

We try to be open-minded and willing to try things that have worked for others. For example, we may need to reinforce our personal boundaries. We decide to no longer be manipulated by determining what we will and will not do, or tolerate. Perhaps we express those new boundaries to others, including our dual diagnosed loved one.

We challenge ourselves to move forward and replace old habits of obsessive thoughts and actions with new routines that reinforce recovery.

As members share their stories, we are inspired by the success they’ve achieved in finding serenity and peace. In hearing their strength, believable hope and experience, we learn strategies and behaviors that we can emulate to begin making progress in our own recovery.

Challenges

Old patterns of behavior are hard to change; it is not always easy to take this first Step. We have to learn a new way of living and thinking.

Denial can be a barrier in several different ways. We may deny that we need recovery. After all, our dual diagnosed loved one is the one with the problem that needs fixing, we may think. We may deny that our loved one is ill, or we may still think we can do something to change or cure them. Once we accept that we have been in denial of our obsession with our loved one we can begin to change.

Isolating ourselves can be a barrier to recovery—it may be helpful to make new social contacts who aren’t aware of our history. Plus, attending Dual Anon meetings regularly keeps us connected.

Cycles of obsessive thinking that run “like a train on a track”, endlessly looping in our brains, create “stinking thinking” and keep us from moving forward. We must learn to “get off the track” and stop the cycles.

Feelings of hopelessness can also be a barrier to recovery. We learn to struggle through by trying things that have worked for others. Plus, we learn to live in the present, taking one day at a time. We can’t relive the past, nor can we predict the future.

Barriers are overcome by realizing that recovery takes its own time, and cannot be rushed. You can’t make a flower bloom any faster by pulling the petals apart.

Benefits

It is a relief that the recovery of our loved one is not our responsibility—their dignity is gradually restored as they learn to take responsibility for themselves and make their own decisions. If they face the consequences of their behavior rather than being constantly rescued, they may find recovery sooner. They may be surprised to find that we are no longer obsessing over them.

We begin to relax and find a new calm. We have permission to take care of ourselves and focus on our own recovery. We may also be surprised to see a new, different future and a new way at looking at life.

Stepping Forward

We realize that we want recovery. We look to the future with new hope that we can find peace and serenity—and we want to move forward. We are left with a desire to fill the void left by no longer focusing in an unhealthy way on our loved one. We come to believe that power lies not in changing another person’s life; our power lies in building our own lives.

We recognize that we follow our own path to recovery, at the pace that is right for us. We believe that we are where we’re supposed to be at this point in time, progressing in our recovery as our Higher Power guides us forward along our unique path. There is no right or wrong method or time-frame by which recovery can be defined or pursued. We can be at peace with our progress, knowing our path is guided by our Higher Power. There is no need to rush through working the Steps to get to Step Twelve, for growth comes through the process, as each Step Study builds upon the foundation of insight gained in the prior Steps. No one is grading us on our progress. We strive for progress, not perfection; and we never graduate. We are continually evolving and growing in our efforts to be the best person we can be and to strengthen our connection with our Higher Power.

Step One is only the beginning of recovery. We begin to understand what has been happening in our obsession with fixing our loved one and become ready to look to another source of help for our continued recovery in Step Two.

Dual Anon Step Study Literature Credits:

The Twelve Steps and Dual Disorders by Tim Hamilton and Pat Samples

How Al-anon Works for Families and Friends of Alcoholics

Paths to Recovery Al-Anon’s Steps, Traditions and Concepts

Courage to Change – One Day at a Time in Al-Anon II

Codependents Guide to the Twelve Steps by Melody Beattie

A Woman’s Way through the Twelve Steps by Stephanie S Covington

A Gentle Path through the Twelve Steps by Patrick Carnes

[NA Recovery.org](http://www.na-recovery.org/)

[[12 Wisdom Steps.com](http://12wisdomsteps.com/%22%20%5Co%20%2212%20Wisdom%20Steps)](http://12wisdomsteps.com/)

Members’ Experience, Strength and Believable Hope