12 STEPPERS

Step 9 Worksheet

A Guide to Making Amends

Plan each amends with your sponsor, check your motives, decide what to do when direct contact would cause harm and reflect on what you learn along the way. For AA, NA, Al-Anon, OA, CoDA and other 12 step programs.

What's inside

Before You Begin. What Step 9 asks, five kinds of amends and the exception

Part 1. Are You Ready? Readiness and motive questions

Part 2. Amends Planning Chart, with worked examples

Part 3. Amends Prep Sheet (copy one for each person)

Part 4. After the Amends: reflection questions

Next Steps and Resources

Work this step with your sponsor

Step 9 calls for judgment and timing. Talk through every amends with your sponsor before you act, especially anything involving money, the law, another person's secrets or your safety.

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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Understanding Step 9

Step 9: "Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others."

In Step 8 you listed the people you harmed and became willing to set things right. Step 9 is where you act. Saying sorry is only the start. An amends means owning exactly what you did, without excuses, doing what you can to repair it and then proving it with how you live.

Five kinds of amends

Direct	Meeting in person when you can, or reaching out by phone or letter when you can't. The default whenever contact won't cause harm.
Restitution	Repaying what you owe or making good on what you broke or took, even in small installments.
Indirect	When someone can't be found, giving what you owe to a cause they'd value or doing something useful in their honor.
Living	Lasting changes in how you treat people. Used when contact would hurt someone, and alongside direct amends to show you mean it.
Unsent letter	Writing everything you'd say, then reading it to your sponsor. Often used when the person has died.

About the exception

Step 9's exception is about **injury to others**, not about our embarrassment or fear. Discomfort is a reason to call your sponsor, not a reason to skip someone. At the same time, never ease your own conscience at someone else's expense, and get consent before taking action that involves other people.

If an amends involves money, a crime, your job, a no-contact request or anyone who has harmed you, decide it with your sponsor first and get legal or financial advice where needed. Never contact anyone who is protected by a court order.

PART 1

Are You Ready?

Answer these before you make your first amends. Honest answers here prevent most of the problems people run into later.

1. Have you already tried to make amends to anyone? What did you do, and what did you learn from it?

2. Why do you want to make these amends? Be honest about any hidden motives, such as wanting to be forgiven, liked again or proven right.

3. Are you still angry at anyone on your list? Write them a letter saying everything you feel, but **don't send it.** Talk it over with your sponsor. What did you notice?

4. Who on your list are you most afraid to face? What's the worst thing you imagine happening, and how likely is it really?

5. Is your recovery steady enough right now to handle a hard conversation? What support will you line up before and after each amends?

Part 2: Amends Planning Chart

Copy each name from your Step 8 list. Check the type (or types) of amends, then decide each one with your sponsor. **Shaded rows are fictional examples.** Several continue the examples from the 12steppers.org Step 4 harms list.

		TYPE OF AMENDS							
Who **Person or institution**	The harm **What I did, in plain words**	Direct	Restitution	Indirect	Living	Letter	Sponsor OK? **Yes, wait or no**	Date **When I made it**	Notes **What I'll offer, what's next**
My sister	Lied about why I skipped two holidays. Borrowed $300 and never paid it back.	✓	✓				Yes	March 2	Coffee at her place. Bring a plan to repay $50 a month.
Former employer	Padded expense reports and took supplies home.	✓	✓				Yes, after legal advice	Not yet	Talk to a lawyer first about how to repay without making things worse for anyone.
My kids	Missed their school play and kept breaking promises to show up.	✓			✓		Yes	Ongoing	A short, age-appropriate apology. Then show up, every time.
Ex-partner	Embarrassed her in front of friends. Lied to her often.				✓		No direct contact	Ongoing	She asked me not to contact her. I respect that and practice honesty in my relationships now.
Old roommate	Moved out without paying my share of the last month's rent.			✓			Yes	April 10	Can't find him. Gave the same amount to a local housing charity.
My dad (passed away)	Years of angry, drunk phone calls.				✓	✓	Yes	May 1	Read the letter to my sponsor. Call my mom every Sunday.

Part 2: Amends Planning Chart (continued)

Need more rows? Print this page again or add rows in the Word version. Start with the amends you feel most ready for.

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Who **Person or institution**	The harm **What I did, in plain words**	Direct	Restitution	Indirect	Living	Letter	Sponsor OK? **Yes, wait or no**	Date **When I made it**	Notes **What I'll offer, what's next**

PART 3

Amends Prep Sheet

Print or copy this page for each person on your chart. Fill it in, then go over it with your sponsor before you reach out.

Person:

What I did, in plain words (no reasons or excuses):

What would help repair it, from their point of view:

Why am I making this amends? Check anything that's true.

- ☐ To stop feeling guilty
- ☐ To be forgiven
- ☐ To be liked or trusted again
- ☐ To get something back from them
- ☐ To finally explain my side
- ☐ Because it's right, whatever they do

Safety and consent check

Could contacting them hurt them or anyone else?	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Not sure
Would it reveal someone else's private business?	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Not sure
Does it involve money, the law or my job?	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Not sure
Have they asked me not to contact them?	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Not sure

What my sponsor said:

If direct contact isn't right, what I'll do instead:

What I'll offer (repayment, time, a changed behavior):

How I'll open the conversation:

PART 4

After the Amends

Fill this in soon after each amends, then call your sponsor. Your part is done once you've shown up honestly. Their reaction doesn't change that.

6. What happened? What did the other person say or do?

7. Did you feel the urge to defend yourself or bring up what they did to you? What did you do with that urge?

8. Is anything left to do, such as a payment plan, a follow-up or a promise to keep? When will you do it?

9. What did you learn that will make the next amends go better?

10. Has anyone new come to mind who belongs on your list? Add them to your chart.

NEXT STEPS

Keep Going and Find Support

Step 9 often takes months, and living amends never really end. Keep your chart somewhere private and update it as you go.

Where Step 9 leads

The Ninth Step Promises. Right after its Step 9 directions, the Big Book describes what many members find as they make amends (pages 83 to 84).

Step 10. Daily inventory keeps new harms from piling up. When you're wrong, you admit it promptly and make amends as you go.

Read the Step 9 Literature Free Online

- Alcoholics Anonymous World Services. "Chapter 6: Into Action." *Alcoholics Anonymous (PDF).* Step 9 directions begin on page 76.
- Alcoholics Anonymous World Services. "Step Nine." *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (PDF).* Pages 83 to 87.
- Narcotics Anonymous World Services. "How It Works." *Narcotics Anonymous (PDF).*
- 12steppers.org. "Step 9 Worksheet With Questions." *12steppers.org.* Examples, FAQs and a guide to direct, indirect and living amends.
- 12steppers.org. "Step 8 Worksheet With Questions." *12steppers.org.* Build your list of people harmed first.

Support

- 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. "988 Lifeline." *988lifeline.org.* Call or text 988 any time.
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. "SAMHSA's National Helpline." *SAMHSA.* Free and confidential, 24/7: 1-800-662-4357.

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