

# Step Nine–Types of Amends

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

The amends process is explained on pages 76 through 83 of the “Big Book.” On page 76, paragraph three, the authors tell us:

**“... Now we go out to our fellows and repair the damage done in the past. We attempt to sweep away the debris which has accumulated out of our effort to live on self-will and run the show ourselves. If we haven’t the will to do this, we ask until it comes.”**

Here as elsewhere in the book, the word “ask” implies a prayer. Together, the sponsor and sponsee pray for willingness—the sponsee’s willingness to reconcile with those he or she has harmed.

The “Big Book” authors describe four types of amends. They are:

**Direct amends,  
Living amends,  
Amends-in-kind, and  
Amends to those who cannot be seen.**

The sponsor and sponsee together determine the type of amends to be made. They do this through a back-and-forth role play until the likely outcomes have been discussed in depth and detail.

There are “Big Book” passages that describe each of these amends. Let’s start with people to whom we owe money. Here, we usually make a direct amends. This is explained in the second paragraph on page 78.

**“Most (of us) owe money. We do not dodge our creditors. Telling them what we are trying to do, we make no bones about our (trouble); they usually know it anyway, whether we think so or not. . . . Approached in this way, the most ruthless creditor will sometimes surprise us. . . . We must lose our fear of creditors no matter how far we have to go, for we are liable to (relapse) if we are afraid to face them.”**

In the first paragraph on page 83, we learn about living amends.

**“Yes, there is a long period of reconstruction ahead. We must take the lead. A remorseful mumbling that we are sorry won’t fill the bill**

**at all. . . . So we clean house, . . . asking each morning in meditation that our Creator show us the way of patience, tol-erance, kindness and love.”**

The living amends is straightforward. We live, to the best of our ability, as a recovered member of the Twelve-step community. We pray for “patience, tolerance, kindness and love” toward all.

This is one of the greatest amends we can make to our family and friends. As the “Big Book” authors write, “Our behavior will convince them more than our words.”

The amends-in-kind is described on page 82, paragraph one.

**“Good generalship may decide that the problem should be attacked on the flank rather than risk . . . face-to-face combat.”**

Amends-in-kind implies doing something “instead of” or “in place of.” For example, if the sponsor and sponsee decide that a direct amends would only make a situation worse, they develop an alternative plan of action, such as taking a Beginners’ Meeting into a halfway house or prison, volunteering at a homeless shelter or assisted living facility, or making a service commitment to the Twelve-Step home group.

In the third paragraph on page 83, the “Big Book” authors give directions on what we do if we can’t make amends to someone face-to-face.

**“There may be some wrongs we can never fully right. We don’t worry about them if we can honestly say to ourselves that we would right them if we could. Some people cannot be seen— we send them an honest letter.”**

Here, the sponsor and sponsee sit down together and write a letter. Then the sponsee reads it aloud and puts it into an envelope. Together, they go to the post office and mail it. The envelope has no name on it, no address on it, no return name and no return address. It does have a stamp to help defray the cost of handling.

Another way to send the letter is to burn it after reading it aloud. Again this is something the sponsor and sponsee do together. It is amazing that the letter goes exactly where it needs to go in order for the sponsee to heal.

Taking the Steps is all about healing—overcoming the remorse, pain, guilt and shame associated with past behaviors and activities. We heal as the direct result of making amends to those we’ve harmed and forgiving those who have harmed us. As we heal, we enhance our contact with the “God-consciousness within.”