

# 12 steps

Dear Michelle:

I am answering your letter from last week about what happens in treatment by breaking down some of the parts for the next few weeks.

Today I have chosen to write about the 12 step programs that are a big part of most treatment plans. I'm choosing this as my first segment of detailed information because it is a means of support that can be used before, during, and/or after treatment. Those who do not ever choose to go to treatment can still participate in this kind of support. It is a free and readily available option to get support from those who have had similar experiences.

The majority of support groups for those suffering from or having suffered from alcohol abuse or substance use disorder stem from the original philosophy of alcoholics anonymous (AA) and their 12 steps. Over many years both AA and NA (Narcotics Anonymous) were really the only resource for those suffering from these issues. They began as and still remain as self supporting, free to all, no hierarchical method (no president or CEO in each group) support groups who meet in many places and at many times for those to go to have a safe place where people won't judge and can identify with the same kind of life issues.

Before cognitive therapies, Medically Assisted Treatments, and other kinds of one on one and group therapies were developed, 12 step meetings were the standard of help. Now there are other options offered as medical and therapeutic professionals learn more and more how substance abuse affects the brain and the body. These are often combined with some 12 step participation.

The 12 step programs are presented as Spiritual, not religious. For many the program is a way of life. I am going to include the actual steps in this article so you can see what they are. At a 12 step meeting these steps are always recited as a reminder. When you hear someone say they are going to a meeting or if a court mandates a certain number of meetings a week it is usually an hour or 1 ½ hour meeting where there is thoughtful presentation of the 12 steps, a reading from some of the AA or NA literature and a presentation by someone who is attending. Welcoming new and returning attendees is always a part of the meeting. Meetings are considered "fellowship" and meant to be a safe place with no judgement. People are acknowledged for their time milestones in the program. One of their program key philosophies is "one day at a time".

The Twelve Steps:

- 1: We admitted we were powerless over alcohol (other substance or process)– that our lives had become unmanageable.
- 2: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
- 3: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
- 4: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
- 5: Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
- 6: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
- 7: Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

8: Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

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

10: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

11: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood Him , praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

12: Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

To many people these steps becoming life changing. (Google AA for more details). Check out our website [www.surrycountycares.com](http://www.surrycountycares.com) for meetings in Surry County. I hope this helps to answer a small part of what is treat

Regards,  
Denise Krochta