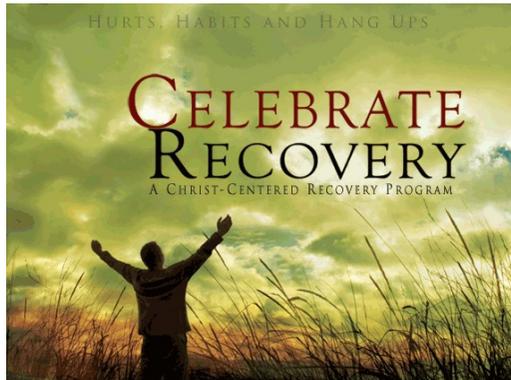
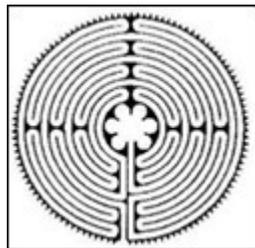




## Walking with our Addictions and Attachments: Wisdom from the Twelve Steps



YOU CAN FIND OTHER MEDITATIVE WALKS  
TO USE ON THE TRAIL AT:  
[peaceproject.northvalleyfriends.org](http://peaceproject.northvalleyfriends.org)



**North Valley Friends Trail**  
A gift of North Valley Friend Church

“To finally surrender ourselves to healing, we have to have three spaces opened up within us—and all at the same time: our opinionated head, our closed-down heart, and our defensive and defended body.” -Richard Rohr

The human condition is paradoxical. We are created with innate goodness; yet we also have a capacity for distraction and destruction. This human capacity goes by many names but is commonly known as addiction.

The world's great religious traditions have always recognized this capacity and provided paths for healing and transformation. In the last century, a broader and growing awareness of addiction has emerged. In 1935, Bill Wilson Bob Smith started a group called "Alcoholics Anonymous," committed to helping alcoholics move toward sobriety and recovery. AA's "Twelve Steps" have helped many and provides a source of wisdom for our own journeys toward healing and wholeness. We have all some form of addiction or attachment that steals our energy and erodes our relationships. May this walk be a time and space to become more conscious of our shadows and bring them into the Greater Presence.

As you walk, you are invited to stop at the peace poles and read about the steps, taking time to reflect on your own life. You may want to begin by praying or speaking the "Serenity Prayer," used by many involved in A.A.

*God, grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change,  
Courage to change the things I can  
And wisdom to know the difference.*

### **Step Eleven: Cultivating Conscious Contact**

Part of keeping a new rhythm with new habits is cultivating conscious contact with a Higher Power through prayer and meditation. Our prayer is only to learn the will of God and to put it into practice. Prayer and meditation put us into contact with the Source of healing and restoration.

*Query: What has been your experience with prayer and meditation and what role do they have in your life?*

### **Step Twelve: Carry the Message**

The steps should result in authentic awakening and life-change. Because of our experiences healing and transformation, we then desire to share the process with others. We continue to practice the process, attend meetings, abide in the Presence, and reach out to others.

*Query: Have you ever been so inspired by a practice or experience that you shared it with others?*

*"Each group has but one primary purpose -- to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers." -Alcoholics Anonymous (Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions)*

### **Step Eight: Make a List of those We Have Harmed**

The next step is to list all those who were/are harmed by our behavior with the intention of making amends. It is important to move beyond abstraction and name the people and relationships that need reconciled.

*Query: Are there people or relationships in your life that have been neglected?*

### **Step Nine: Make Direct Amends**

Once we have listed and named the broken relationships, it is time to make direct amends. In this step, we take concrete steps of reconciliation and restitution. The only exception to these actions is when our efforts would do more harm than good.

*Query: How have you practiced reconciliation or restitution in the past and how are those steps needed now?*

### **Step Ten: Continued Inventory**

Healing and recovery is an ongoing journey, which invites us to “choose life” moment by moment, one step at a time. Living a free and full life means we must replace our destructive habits with life-giving habits. We nurture a rhythm of awareness and accountability.

*Query: What practices or habits do you have that nurture ongoing awareness and accountability?*

### **Step One: Admitting our Powerlessness**

The first step toward healing our addictions is admitting our inability to manage our desires. Though our desires are good, they often take on a life of their own until they “possess” us. Finding freedom begins by admitting our need for help and healing.

*Query: How have you experienced the limits of your power to manage life?*

### **Step Two: Belief in a Higher Power**

When we reach our limits, we fall into the hands of a Living God or Higher Power (or “Greater Presence”) that guides us toward healing. We rely on this Wisdom and Grace for our transformation.

*Query: What words or images would you use to describe your Higher Power?*

“To be alive is to be addicted, and to be alive and addicted is to stand in need of grace.” -Gerald May

### **Step Three: Giving our Lives to God's Care**

Once we recognize our inability to control life and acknowledge a Higher Power, the next task is to surrender to that Power. In surrendering, we are given over to a Mercy and Care that can lead us to recovery. This requires the movement from willfulness to willingness.

*Query: What is the difference between willfulness and willingness?*

### **Step Four: Taking a Moral Inventory**

Surrendered and secure in the Higher Power, we can take a long, honest look at our life. The truth is liberating and what is not revealed cannot be healed. Addictions and attachments thrive on secrecy and denial. Here we take time to search and be searched.

*Query: How is God or life revealing the truth of your inner life?*

#### **Suggested Practice: Prayer of Examen**

Take some time to review the day or week, aware of two dynamics:

*Consolation:* What was life-giving? What am I most grateful for?

*Desolation:* What was life-draining? What am I least grateful for?

"Search me, O God...lead me on the way everlasting." -Psalm 139

"You make known to me the path of life." -Psalm 16

### **Step Five: Confessing our Wrongs**

In this step, we share the discoveries of our moral inventory. We are encouraged to admit the exact nature of our wrongs to God, ourselves, and others. Confession is good for the soul and critical to the path of healing. We bring our hidden wounds and sins "into the Light" so that their secret power can be broken.

*Query: Who are the people in your life with whom you can share the truth of your inner life?*

"Accountability is sustainability" -Richard Rohr

### **Step Six: Readiness to let God Restore Character**

After reviewing and confessing, we recall our willingness and desire for the restoration of the Greater Power and Presence. In this step, we become ready to allow that Presence to remove our character defects and renew our true self.

*Query: What are you willing to let God remove or restore?*

### **Step Seven: Humbly Asking God to Remove Shortcomings**

Willing and ready to experience restoration, we ask our Higher Power to remove our failures and help us begin again. We borrow the words of the Lord's Prayer: "forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."

*Query: How have you asked for and received forgiveness?*