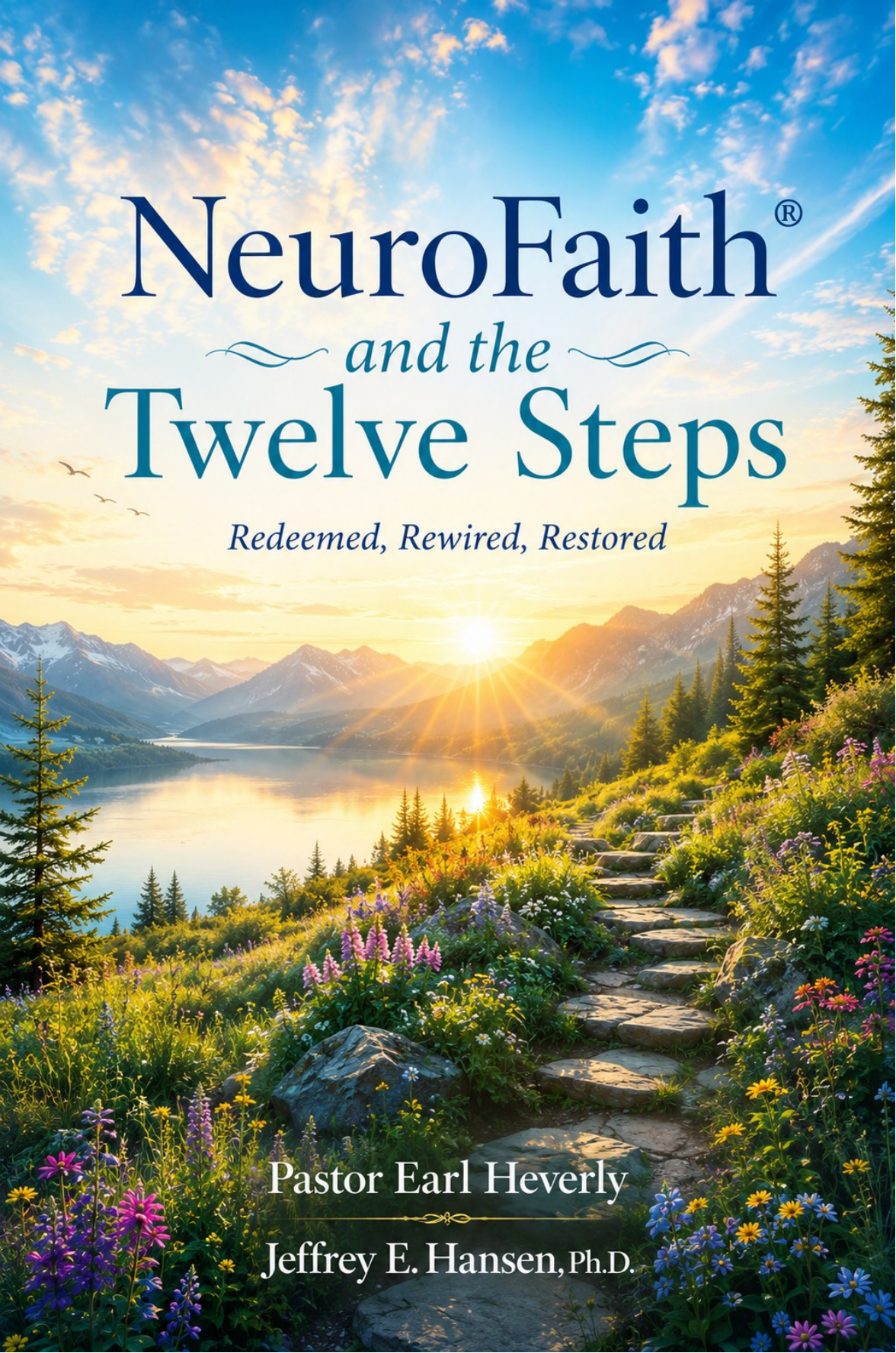




NeuroFaith[®]

and the

Twelve Steps

Redeemed, Rewired, Restored

Pastor Earl Heverly

Jeffrey E. Hansen, Ph.D.

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By Pastor Earl Heverly and Jeffrey E. Hansen, Ph.D.

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Author's Note on AI Collaboration

This book is the product of years of clinical work, research, personal reflection, and prayer. We have drawn extensively from our past publications, clinical experience, and therapeutic model development, particularly the NeuroFaith® model, which integrates neuroscience, trauma-informed therapy, and Christian spirituality.

In preparing this book, We made use of advanced AI tools, including ChatGPT, to assist with brainstorming, drafting, editing, refining structure, and organizing complex ideas. This technology functioned as a supportive collaborator, helping us clarify language, summarize research, and format content. All the clinical insights, theological direction, and original research come from me and my team.

This work reflects my voice, my convictions, and our hard-won experience. The AI never generated original research, therapeutic models, or claims on its own. Rather, it served as a helpful tool under my direct guidance, offering efficiency in the writing process and allowing me to articulate more clearly what has been at the heart of our professional mission for decades.

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We believe in transparency and integrity, especially when integrating new technologies. It is my hope that this disclosure affirms the honesty of this process while giving full credit where it is due. The ideas, models, and framework presented in this book are ours, and we stand behind them.

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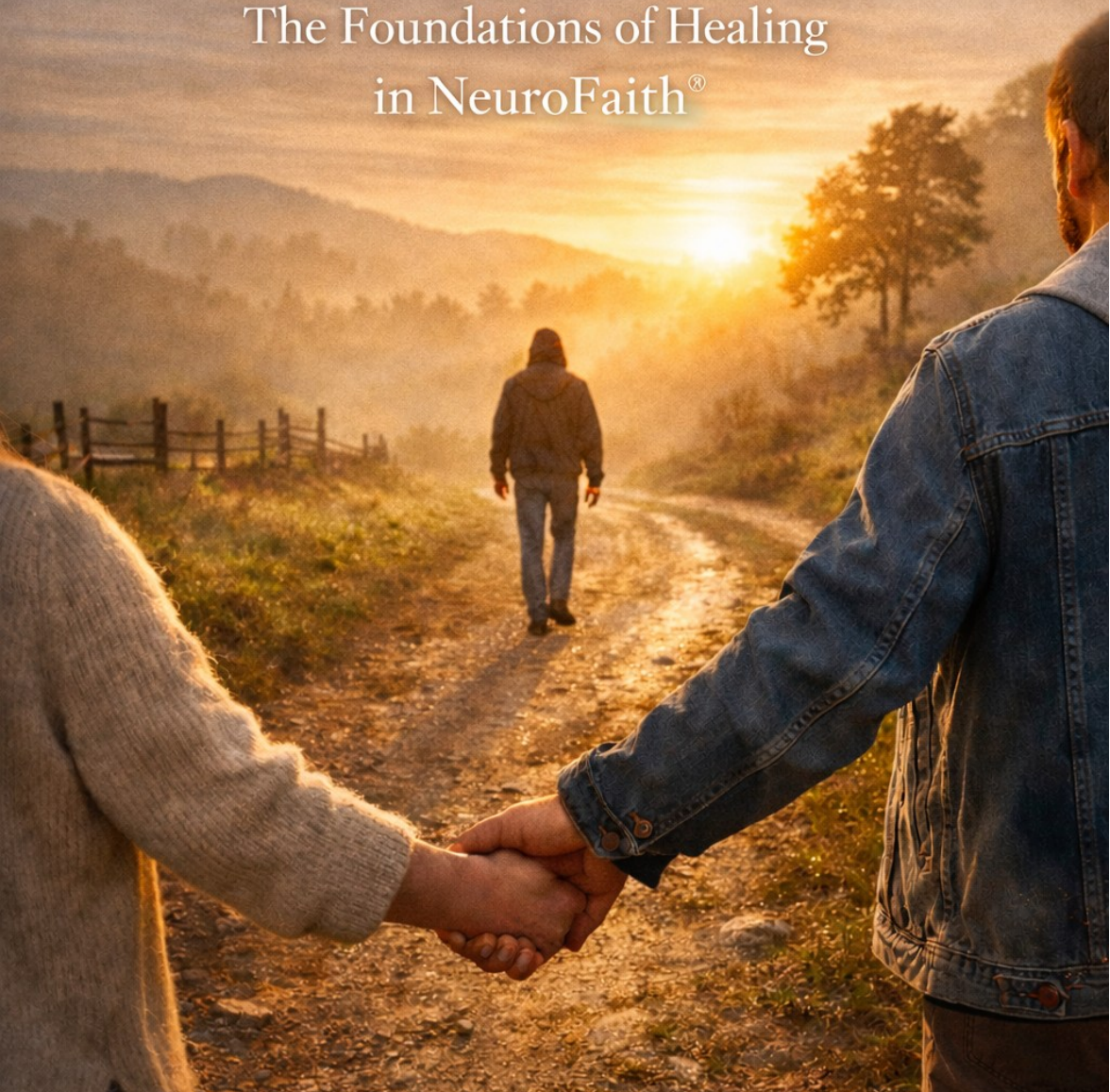
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— PART ONE —

A Welcome to the Journey

The Foundations of Healing
in NeuroFaith®



If you are holding this book, something in you is already stirring. Perhaps it is hope, faint but persistent. Perhaps it is weariness that has finally grown tired of carrying everything alone. Perhaps it is a longing you cannot quite name, only feel. Wherever you are coming from, whatever brought you here, you are welcome.

You do not need to be fixed before you begin. You do not need the right words, the right beliefs, or the right amount of strength. You do not need to know where this journey will lead. You only need a willingness to take one honest step toward healing. This book was written for people exactly where you are.

This work did not emerge from theory or abstraction. It grew slowly and tenderly out of real lives, real struggles, and sacred moments shared in quiet rooms. It grew out of conversations marked by courage, by tears, by long silences, and by the deep human desire to be known without being judged. It took shape through walking alongside men and women who longed for freedom but did not know where to begin, and through witnessing again and again what becomes possible when truth, grace, and relationship meet.

NeuroFaith® and the Twelve Steps: Redeemed and Rewired is an invitation to walk a path of healing that is both deeply human and deeply holy. It brings together two streams that were never meant to be separated: the wisdom of modern neuroscience and the redemptive heart of the Christian faith, expressed through the lived wisdom of the Twelve Steps. This is not a program to master or a formula to perform. It is a journey to be entered gently, honestly, and together.

You do not have to rush. You do not have to understand everything at once. Healing does not unfold through pressure or perfection. It unfolds

through safety, truth, and relationship. It unfolds as we learn to listen to what our bodies carry, what our stories hold, and what God has been patiently speaking all along.

This book grows out of an earlier work, *NeuroFaith®: The Intersection of Science and Faith in the Healing of Trauma and Addiction*, written by Dr. Jeffrey Hansen PhD, Pastor Earl Heverly, and Tim Hayden. In that book, we introduced a holistic framework for understanding healing that honors the brain, the body, relationships, and the spiritual life as deeply interconnected. As that book took shape, it became increasingly clear that the Twelve Steps deserved more space, more breath, and more room to be lived.

They are not merely a section or a supporting idea. They are a journey. A way of becoming whole.

This volume is the natural unfolding of that realization. It stands on its own while remaining rooted in the NeuroFaith® model. Here, the Twelve Steps are explored slowly and relationally, integrated with what we now understand about the nervous system, trauma, attachment, and the healing presence of God.

The Twelve Steps have endured for nearly a century because they speak honestly about the human condition. They name powerlessness where pride once ruled. They invite truth where denial once hid. They call forth humility, courage, confession, accountability, and restoration. From the beginning, they were never meant to be abstract principles or moral ideals. They were meant to be lived, together.

At their heart, the Steps point toward relationship. Relationship with God, with others, and with oneself. Recovery was never meant to be a solitary effort or a purely intellectual exercise. It is embodied. It is relational. It unfolds over time.

We embrace the Twelve Steps fully and unapologetically as a Christian pathway of healing. This book does not treat spirituality as vague or interchangeable. Jesus Christ is not one option among many. He is the center. He is the One who heals, restores, forgives, and makes all things new. When Christ stands at the center of the Steps, they become more than a method of sobriety. They become a way of transformation, discipleship, and renewed life.

At the same time, we take seriously what neuroscience now confirms. Addiction and trauma shape the brain, the nervous system, emotional regulation, and identity itself. Healing therefore must be more than good intentions or moral resolve. It must be embodied. It must be compassionate. It must engage the whole person. This is where the NeuroFaith® model offers a hopeful integration, bringing together faith, brain science, psychology, and lived experience into a coherent and humane path of restoration.

Before we walk step by step through the Twelve Steps themselves, we begin with a brief and accessible review of the NeuroFaith® model and its Four Pillars. For readers who have already read *NeuroFaith®: The Intersection of Science and Faith in the Healing of Trauma and Addiction*, this section serves as a gentle refresher. For those encountering NeuroFaith® for the first time, it offers a welcoming foundation for what follows.

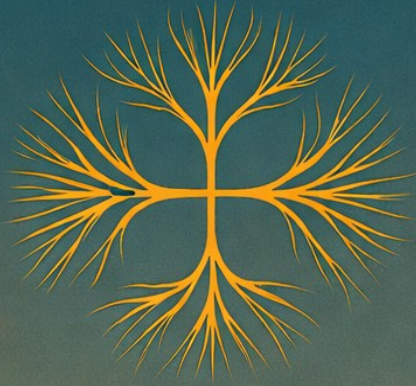
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You are free to move at your own pace. You may linger. You may skim. You may return later. There is no pressure here.

What matters most is this: you do not have to walk this road alone.

We will walk it with you, step by step, with honesty, compassion, and hope, trusting that the God who began this work in you is faithful to carry it forward.

PART II



**THE
NEUROFAITH[®]
FRAMEWORK
FOR HEALING**



The NeuroFaith® Model

The Four Pillars of Healing

A Restorative Pathway for Adult Depression and Anxiety

*“Let all that I am praise the Lord
may I never forget the good things he does for me. He forgives all my
sins and heals all my diseases.”* Psalm 103:2 to 3

Trauma-related depression and anxiety are not merely mental states. They are whole-person afflictions. They touch the body, the brain, the heart, relationships, identity, and the soul. For many people, these struggles reflect not a single event or failure, but years, sometimes decades, of accumulated sorrow, unresolved trauma, chronic stress, autonomic dysregulation, and disconnection from self, others, and God.

When someone is suffering in this way, it is rarely enough to simply “think differently” or “try harder.” The pain is deeper than cognition alone. It lives in the nervous system. It shapes the stories we tell about ourselves. It settles into the body and quietly rearranges how we experience the world.

And yet, even here, healing is possible. Not just symptom relief, but true restoration. A return toward wholeness.

The NeuroFaith® model was developed out of this conviction: that lasting healing must honor the full complexity of the human person. We are embodied beings, relational beings, psychological beings, and

spiritual beings. Any model that neglects one of these dimensions will inevitably fall short.

Before we introduce the four pillars themselves, it is important to clarify a key distinction that shapes everything that follows.

Incremental Therapy and Transformational Therapy

Many therapeutic approaches are designed to help people cope. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), and other skills-based interventions can be invaluable, especially during periods of acute distress. When anxiety feels overwhelming or depression feels crushing, these tools can help individuals ground themselves, regulate emotion, interrupt harmful behaviors, and stay alive.

In that sense, incremental therapies are often lifesaving.

But coping, while essential, is not the same as healing.

Incremental therapies tend to work at the level of behavior and conscious thought. They help people manage symptoms, but they often do not reach the deeper systems where trauma, shame, and fear have taken root. Many individuals find that even after learning effective coping skills, something inside still feels broken, disconnected, or chronically unsafe.

The NeuroFaith® model is intentionally transformational. Rather than focusing only on symptom reduction, it aims for deep, systemic change. It works with the nervous system, the heart, the inner psychological world, and the spiritual core of the person. It seeks to calm what has

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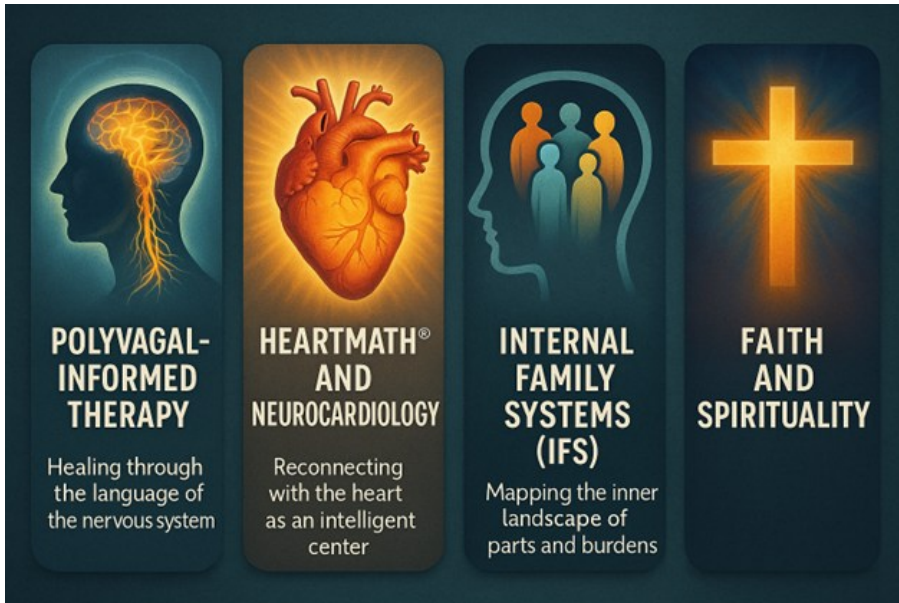
been chronically activated, to restore what has been fragmented, and to rewrite the shame-based narratives that have come to dominate the inner life.



At the neurological level, transformational healing often involves changes in the Default Mode Network, the brain network associated with self-referential thought, autobiographical memory, and internal narrative. When trauma and shame dominate this network, a person can feel trapped in looping stories such as “I’m broken,” “I’m unsafe,” or “I don’t matter.” Transformational therapies help interrupt these loops and allow new, more truthful narratives to emerge.

This is not about becoming a different person. It is about returning to who you were always meant to be.

An Overview of the Four Pillars



The NeuroFaith® model rests on four interlocking pillars. These are not standalone techniques. They are synergistic pathways that reinforce one another as healing unfolds.

1. Polyvagal-Informed Therapy
Learning the language of the nervous system and restoring a lived sense of safety and connection.
2. HeartMath® and Neurocardiology
Reconnecting with the heart as an intelligence center that regulates emotion, coherence, and relational presence.
3. Internal Family Systems (IFS)
Mapping and healing the inner world of parts, restoring Self-leadership and integration.

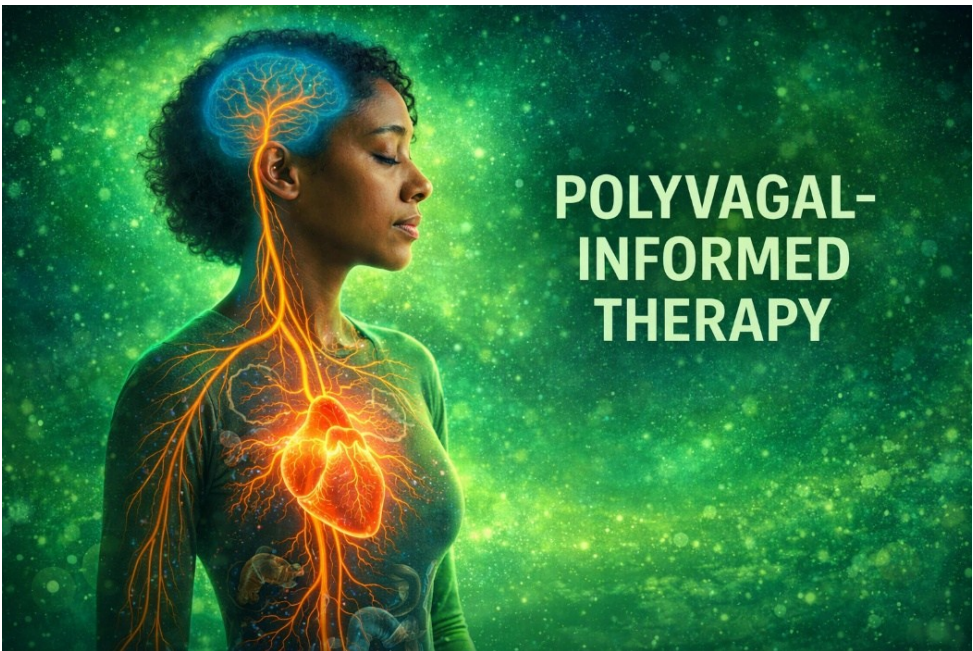
4. Faith and Spirituality

Re-establishing living connection with God, where grace replaces shame and identity is restored in Christ.

Together, these pillars form a coherent, hope-centered framework for recovery. This is not simply about coping better. It is about becoming whole.

Pillar One

Polyvagal Informed Therapy



Healing Through the Language of the Nervous System

At the foundation of the NeuroFaith® model is a simple but transformative insight: how safe we feel shapes everything.

Polyvagal-informed therapy focuses on the autonomic nervous system and how it responds to cues of safety and danger. Dr. Stephen Porges and his son, Seth Porges, capture the essence of Polyvagal Theory in a

single sentence: “How safe we feel is crucial to our physical and mental health and happiness” (Porges & Porges, 2023, p. 13).

This perspective invites a compassionate reframe of anxiety and depression. Rather than seeing them as personal failures or defective thinking, Polyvagal Theory understands them as state-based responses, patterns of nervous system activation shaped by experience. Many people are not broken; their nervous systems are doing exactly what they learned to do in order to survive.

When the body does not feel safe, it organizes around protection. Over time, these protective patterns can become chronic, even when the original threat is no longer present.

Neuroception: When the Body Decides Before the Mind

A central concept in Polyvagal Theory is neuroception, the nervous system’s automatic, unconscious process of scanning for safety or danger. Neuroception happens beneath awareness. It is shaped by past experiences, attachment history, trauma, and present-moment cues such as facial expression, tone of voice, posture, unpredictability, and relational tension (Porges, 2017).

When neuroception detects safety, the nervous system shifts toward regulation, connection, and openness. When it detects danger, the body moves into protection. Importantly, this process does not require conscious thought. The body decides first.

For many people struggling with anxiety or depression, the nervous system is responding to the present as if the past is still happening. The

body reacts before the mind has a chance to evaluate whether the threat is real.

Healing begins when we learn to notice these responses with curiosity rather than judgment.

Autonomic States and Emotional Experience

Polyvagal Theory helps us understand why certain emotional patterns feel so persistent. When the nervous system senses safety, people tend to experience calm, curiosity, engagement, and connection. This is often described as a ventral vagal state, where the body is regulated and available for relationship.

When safety is compromised, the nervous system shifts into protection. Two common patterns emerge. One is hyperarousal, associated with fight or flight—anxiety, panic, irritability, agitation, racing thoughts, and difficulty sleeping. The other is hypoarousal, associated with shutdown or freeze, depression, numbness, withdrawal, fatigue, shame, and a sense of collapse (Dana, 2018).

These states are not character flaws. They are biological responses shaped by experience. Understanding this can be profoundly relieving for people who have spent years blaming themselves for how they feel.

Trauma Is Stored in the Body

One of the most important contributions of Polyvagal Theory is its recognition that trauma is not confined to memory or thought. Trauma alters how the entire nervous system functions. Porges and Porges (2023) emphasize that trauma affects sensory processing, organ

function, immune response, and emotional regulation. It becomes embedded in the body through the vagus nerve, which serves as a primary communication highway between body and brain.

Approximately 80 percent of vagal fibers are sensory, carrying information from the body to the brain, while only about 20 percent are motor, sending signals from the brain to the body (Porges, 2017). This means the brain is constantly being informed by the body about safety or danger. When the body remains dysregulated, purely cognitive approaches often have limited impact.

This is why healing must include the body.

Bottom-Up and Top-Down Healing

There are two primary pathways to healing, and both are necessary.

Bottom-up approaches work directly with the body and nervous system. These include breath, posture, movement, rhythm, sensory grounding, and safe relational connection. By shifting physiological state first, these approaches create the conditions for emotional and cognitive flexibility.

Top-down approaches work with meaning-making, reflection, and narrative. These include insight, reframing, and conscious choice.

When the body is dysregulated, top-down strategies are often inaccessible. When the body becomes regulated, the mind becomes more available. Effective healing integrates both pathways.

The Four R's: A Gentle Roadmap

Deb Dana (2018) offers a practical and compassionate framework known as the Four R's, which aligns closely with the NeuroFaith® approach.

The Four R's

- Recognize the autonomic state
- Respect the adaptive survival response
- Regulate or co-regulate in a ventral vagal state
- Re-story

First, we recognize our autonomic state. This means learning to notice what is happening in the body without judgment. Many people confuse state with identity. Polyvagal work gently separates the two. “I am anxious” becomes “My nervous system is activated.” This shift alone can reduce shame.

Dimension	Lethargic	Calm	Active/Alert	Fight/Flight	Hyper Freeze	Hypo Freeze
Primary Experience	Shutdown, Depression	Safety, Social engaged	Ready to act	React to danger	Overloaded	Collapse, Numb
Body Response	Low energy, slowed body	Relaxed, steady rhythm	Energized, focused	High arousal, tense body	Rigid, panicked	Flaccid, shutdown
Emotional Tone	Numb, sad, withdrawn	Clear, connected, at peace	Interested, engaged, curious	Fear, anger, urgency	Terror, frozen in fear	Empty, detached, despair
Therapeutic Focus	Gently activate energy	Maintain connection	Channel energy	Ground, create safety	Contain, stabilize	Emergency support

Next, we respect the adaptive survival response. Dr. Porges emphasizes that people did not do anything wrong; their bodies adapted to keep

them alive (Porges, 2017). What once served survival may now limit growth, but it was never a moral failure.

Then we regulate or co-regulate. Regulation is the ability to return toward safety after activation or collapse. Co-regulation is the experience of another person's steady presence helping the nervous system settle. Humans are biologically wired for connection, and isolation, real or perceived, undermines regulation and health (Cacioppo & Cacioppo, 2014; Porges & Furman, 2011).

Finally, we re-story. Once the body is regulated, the mind can revise the narrative. In dysregulated states, the brain defaults to negativity and catastrophizing (Hanson & Mendius, 2009). In regulated states, people can reinterpret experiences with greater accuracy and compassion, allowing new, healthier stories to emerge (Dana, 2018; Kain & Terrell, 2018).

Scripture echoes this process of renewal: ***“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind”*** (Romans 12:2, NIV).

Safety as the Foundation of Hope

Polyvagal-informed therapy does not promise a life free of pain or stress. What it offers is something more realistic and more hopeful: the capacity to move through life with greater regulation, resilience, and connection.

As the nervous system begins to experience safety, everything else becomes more accessible. The heart becomes more open. The inner world becomes less hostile. Spiritual truths become easier to receive.

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This is why Polyvagal-informed therapy forms the foundation of the NeuroFaith® model. It prepares the ground so that deeper healing—in the heart, the psyche, and the soul—can take root.

Pillar Two

HeartMath® and Neurocardiology



Reconnecting the Heart and Brain Through Coherence

If Polyvagal-informed therapy teaches us how to feel safe in our bodies, HeartMath® and neurocardiology invite us to rediscover something just as essential: how to live from the heart.

For much of modern history, the heart has been treated as little more than a mechanical pump; important, yes, but essentially passive. Yet Scripture has always told a different story. The heart is described as the center of wisdom, intention, devotion, and life itself. ***"Above all else,***

guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it” (Proverbs 4:23, NIV). Across Scripture, the heart is referenced hundreds of times as the seat of discernment, courage, sorrow, joy, and faith.



What ancient wisdom understood intuitively, modern science is now rediscovering.

Neurocardiology and HeartMath® research reveal that the heart is an intelligent organ, deeply involved in emotional regulation, relational presence, and physiological coherence. The heart does not merely respond to the brain; it actively informs and shapes brain function. In many ways, the heart serves as a central integrator, helping align body, mind, and spirit.

This matters profoundly for those struggling with depression, anxiety, trauma, and addiction.

The Intelligence and Wisdom of the Heart

Gregg Braden has been one of the most accessible voices bridging science and spirituality, helping translate complex research into language that speaks to both mind and soul. Drawing on HeartMath® research and neurocardiology, Braden (2015a, 2015b) describes the heart as possessing its own form of intelligence, one that becomes most accessible when the autonomic nervous system is calm and regulated.

Wisdom of the Heart
Across Traditions

Religious and mystery traditions often regard the heart as a path to deep wisdom.

- Bible:** The heart is mentioned **826** times. It represents our mind, will, and spirit. Proverbs 4:23 says, “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.”
- Qur'an:** Mentions the heart 132 times, describing it as a **center of reasoning, intentions, and decision-making**. A healthy or diseased heart shapes human destiny.
- Egyptians:** Believed the heart, not the brain, was the seat of wisdom, memory, and the soul. It was where God's will was first heard.
- Across Traditions:** The heart is more than an organ—it is the gateway to truth, compassion, and higher understanding.

Research has shown that the heart contains approximately 40,000 sensory neurites, specialized cells similar to neurons in the brain (Braden, 2020). These sensory neurites form complex networks capable of processing information, influencing emotional experience, and even contributing to forms of memory. As Braden notes, the heart appears to hold a kind of embodied wisdom, what many traditions have long referred to as “knowing in the heart” (Dispenza & Braden, 2019).

What – Heart Intelligence?

- Dr. Armour, MD, PhD., at the University of Montreal in 1991, discovered that the heart has its own "little brain" or "intrinsic cardiac nervous system" (cited in Braden, 2015).
- This "heart brain" is composed of approximately 40,000 neurons, called sensory neurites that are similar to neurons in the brain, meaning that the heart has its own nervous system.
- In addition, the heart communicates with the brain in many methods: neurologically, biochemically, biophysically, and energetically.
- The vagus nerve, which is 80% afferent, carries information from the heart and other internal organs to the brain.
- Signals from the "heart brain" redirect to the medulla, hypothalamus, thalamus, and amygdala and the cerebral cortex (Braden, 2015a, 2015b).



Brain and Heart Working Together

Research shows the heart has its own “little brain,” able to think, remember, and influence our lives in powerful ways.

For years, science said the brain ruled, while artists and intuitive thinkers trusted the heart.

New evidence reveals that the heart and brain work best together (Braden, 2015a, 2015b).



This helps explain why people often describe “gut feelings” or “heart knowing” that precede conscious thought. When trauma or chronic stress disrupts this system, individuals can become trapped in their

heads—overthinking, ruminating, and analyzing—while feeling increasingly disconnected from themselves and others.

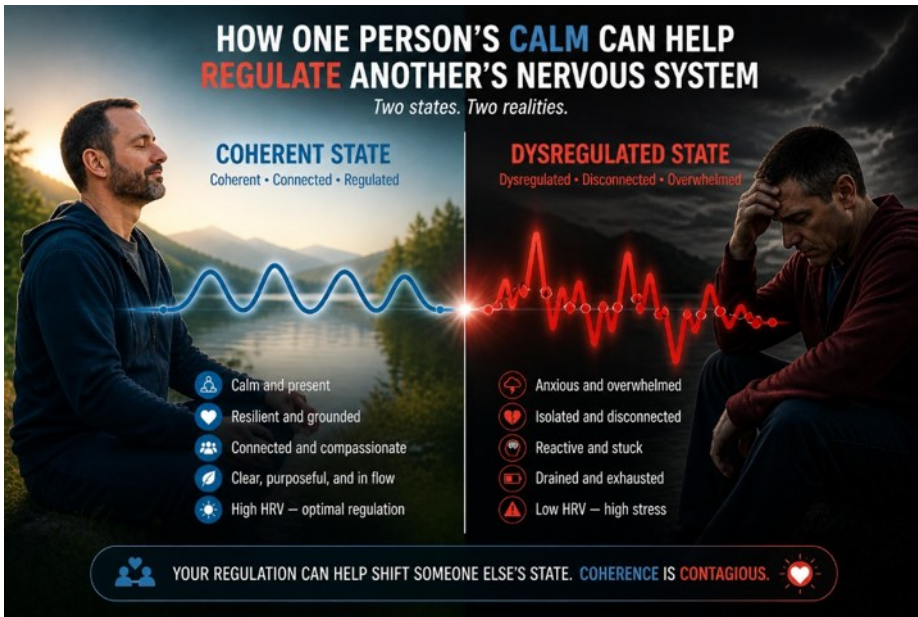
Healing often involves learning how to return to the heart.

Heart Rate Variability and Coherence

HeartMath® research focuses heavily on heart rate variability (HRV), which refers to the naturally occurring variation in time between heartbeats. Contrary to what many assume, a perfectly steady heartbeat is not a sign of health. Healthy hearts are flexible and responsive, adjusting rhythmically to internal and external demands.

HRV is considered one of the most reliable indicators of autonomic nervous system balance and resilience (McCraty, 2023). When HRV is low or chaotic, individuals are more vulnerable to stress, emotional reactivity, anxiety, depression, and physical illness. When HRV is higher and more organized, people tend to experience emotional stability, mental clarity, and physiological efficiency.

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HeartMath® uses the concept of coherence to describe a state in which heart rhythms become smooth, ordered, and wave-like—often resembling a gentle sine wave. This coherent pattern is associated with calm alertness, emotional balance, and improved cognitive functioning (McCraty, 2023).

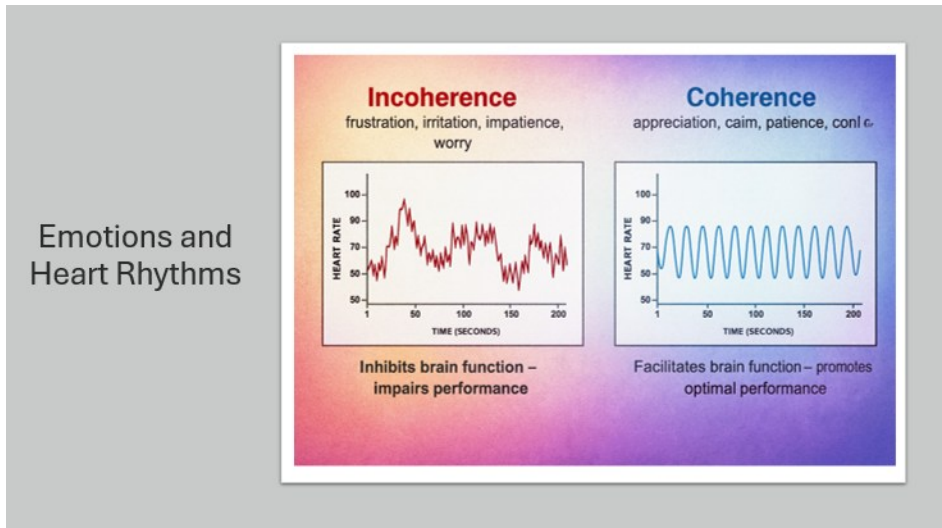
Importantly, coherence is not achieved through positive thinking alone. It emerges when physiological rhythms, emotional state, and attention become aligned.

Emotion, the Heart, and Regulation

One of the most hopeful findings in HeartMath® research is the role of emotion in shaping heart rhythms. Negative emotional states such as frustration, fear, anger, or despair tend to produce erratic, incoherent heart rhythm patterns. Positive emotional states, such as gratitude,

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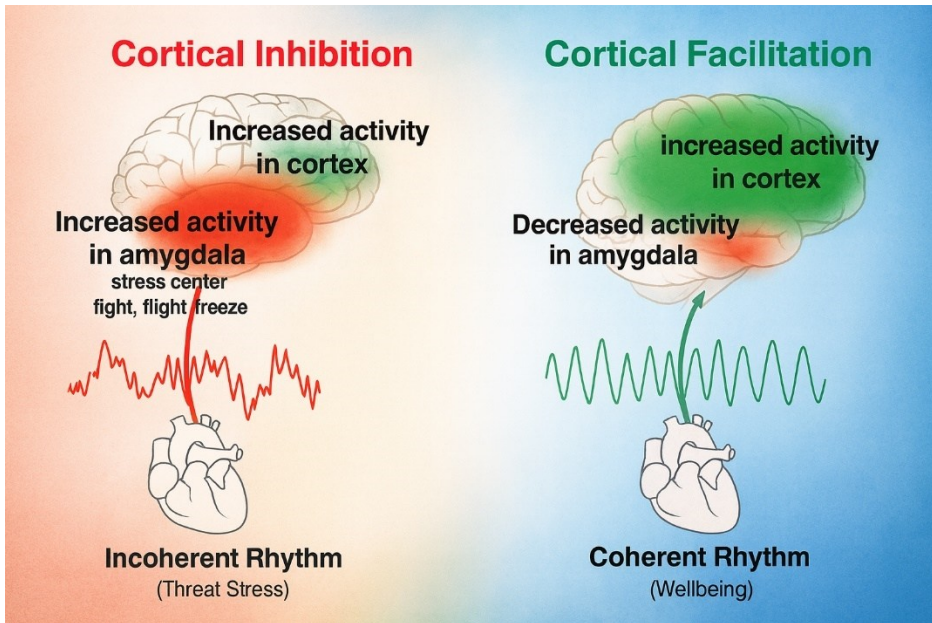
appreciation, compassion, love, and reverence, naturally promote coherence (McCraty et al., 2009).



This does not mean suppressing pain or pretending everything is fine. Rather, it means learning how to access regenerative emotional states that help stabilize the nervous system. When positive emotion is present in the heart, HRV naturally organizes into a coherent, sine-wave-like pattern, which supports cardiac health and regulates the entire body.

This following graphic nicely illustrates how an incoherent heart increases the activity of the amygdala and diminishes the activity of the prefrontal cortex (thinking brain/executive functioning). In this state, our thinking is governed by lower brain centers, and we thus make impulsive, emotionally driven decisions. On the other hand, the right side of the graphic demonstrates how a coherent heart signals the amygdala to quiet down, allowing the higher order processes of the prefrontal cortex to reign so great decisions can be thereby authored.

This is why HeartMath® practices emphasize not only breathing but also emotional focus.



Breathing, the Vagus Nerve, and the Heart

Breathing is one of the most direct ways we can influence heart rhythm and nervous system regulation. Slow, rhythmic breathing—particularly with an elongated exhale—activates the parasympathetic nervous system through the vagus nerve, helping slow the heart rate and promote calm (McCraty, 2023).

When breathing is paired with positive emotion, its regulatory effects are significantly enhanced. This aligns with what many clinicians, including Bruce Eckert, have long taught experientially: breath alone helps, but breath combined with heart-based emotion helps far more.

Learning to breathe *with* the heart, rather than just from the lungs, becomes a powerful act of self-regulation.

How the Heart Communicates With the Brain

Once the heart enters a coherent state, it begins to influence the brain in four primary ways. McCraty (2023) describes these pathways clearly:

First, through neural pathways, particularly the vagus nerve, which carries information from the heart to the brain. As noted earlier, the majority of vagal fibers are afferent, meaning the heart and body send far more information to the brain than the brain sends to the body.

Second, through hormonal signals. The heart releases hormones and neuropeptides that influence emotional state, stress response, and immune functioning.

Third, through blood pressure rhythms. Changes in heart rhythm affect baroreceptors, which influence brain centers involved in emotional regulation.

Fourth, through the heart's electromagnetic field, which is the strongest rhythmic field produced by the body. Research suggests this field can be detected several feet beyond the body and may influence the physiological states of others nearby (McCraty et al., 2009).

When the heart is incoherent, it amplifies amygdala activity and suppresses prefrontal cortex functioning, making it harder to think clearly or respond thoughtfully. When the heart is coherent, it quiets threat circuitry and supports executive functioning, discernment, and emotional regulation (McCraty, 2023).

In simple terms: when the heart is regulated, the brain works better.

Living in the Heart Rather Than the Head

Many people suffering from trauma-related anxiety or depression live almost entirely in their heads. Trauma drives excessive thinking, rumination, and hypervigilance. Heart-based practices invite a different posture—one that is embodied, present, and relational.

Learning to live from the heart does not mean abandoning reason. It means restoring balance. The heart provides context, grounding, and integration that the thinking mind alone cannot supply.

As individuals practice heart coherence, they often report feeling more emotionally stable, more relationally present, and more spiritually receptive. Decision-making becomes less reactive. Relationships feel safer. The body settles.

Coherence, Connection, and Entrainment

One of the most beautiful implications of HeartMath® research is the concept of entrainment. When one person is in a coherent heart state, their physiological rhythms can influence those around them, helping others move toward coherence as well (McCraty et al., 2009).

This aligns with what we already know about co-regulation from Polyvagal Theory. Humans are biologically wired to influence one another's nervous systems. Calm, coherent presence tends to invite calm. Dysregulation tends to spread dysregulation.

In this way, heart coherence becomes a gift we offer not only ourselves, but others.

This has profound implications for families, therapy, ministry, leadership, and community. A regulated heart creates relational safety. And safety is the soil in which healing grows.

Heart Lock-In® Technique:

The Heart Lock-In® Technique is a practice developed by the HeartMath® Institute, designed to help individuals enter a state of heart coherence, where the heart, mind, and emotions are aligned. This technique is beneficial for reducing stress, enhancing emotional stability, and fostering a sense of inner peace and well-being. Here is a step-by-step guide we expanded for clarity on how to perform the Heart Lock-In® Technique:

Step 1: Center and Breathe

- Focus your attention on your heart area
- Imagine your breath flowing in and out through your heart or chest
- Breathe slowly and deeply from the abdomen, letting your belly rise with each inhale
- Keep the in-breath shorter, drawing in energy and life. Some find it meaningful to imagine they are breathing in the breath of God
- Let the out-breath be longer than the in-breath. This engages the parasympathetic nervous system and fosters relaxation, calm, and peace

Step 2: Focus on Regenerative Feelings

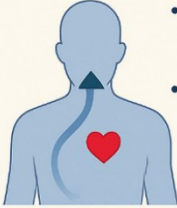
- While maintaining this rhythm, shift your attention to feelings of gratitude, appreciation, love, care, or compassion
- Hold your focus there
- Allow yourself to fully experience these emotions as they grow stronger and more stable in your heart

Step 3: Radiate and Receive

- With each in-breath, take in those renewing feelings. Allow yourself to be filled with love, compassion, and appreciation
- With each out-breath, send those feelings outward, radiating care, compassion, and love to yourself and to others
- Continue this cycle of receiving on the inhale and radiating on the exhale
- Sustain the flow of coherence for several minutes

The Heart Lock-In® Technique

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HeartMath®

HeartMath® as a Bridge to Deeper Healing

Within the NeuroFaith® model, HeartMath® and neurocardiology serve as a vital bridge. They help stabilize the physiological foundation so deeper psychological and spiritual work can unfold.

When the heart is coherent, the nervous system feels safer. When the nervous system feels safer, psychological defenses soften. When defenses soften, the inner world becomes accessible. And when the inner world opens, faith-based healing can reach places that were previously guarded by fear or shame.

Learning to live from the heart is not sentimental. It is profoundly practical. It is also deeply biblical.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8, NIV).

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Heart coherence does not just regulate physiology. It prepares the soul to perceive truth, receive grace, and reconnect with God.

Pillar Three

Internal Family Systems (IFS)



Healing Through Self Leadership and Integration

*“Let all that I am praise the Lord;
may I never forget the good things he does for me.
He forgives all my sins
and heals all my diseases.”*

—Psalm 103:2–3

There are few discoveries in modern psychology as quietly breathtaking as Internal Family Systems therapy, developed by Dr. Richard C.

Schwartz. For many people, encountering IFS feels like someone has finally handed them a map of terrain they have wandered through for years without language. What once felt like chaos inside begins to reveal itself as an organized system shaped by intelligence, adaptation, and survival (Schwartz, 1995; Schwartz & Sweezy, 2020).

IFS begins with a liberating and deeply human premise. You are not one single inner voice. You are not your anxiety, your depression, your addiction, or your shame. You have an inner system made up of different parts, each with its own role, history, and intention. These parts carry burdens, protect you, react to threat, and attempt in their own ways to keep you safe. They are not signs that something is wrong with you. They are signs that your psyche adapted.

When trauma, chronic stress, or relational wounding enters a person's life, it does not remain confined to memory or thought. It becomes stored in the body and nervous system, shaping emotional responses, physiological states, and patterns of behavior (van der Kolk, 2014; Porges, 2017). The body remembers what the mind may try to forget. IFS offers a way to understand how those bodily memories become organized psychologically through parts.

In this sense, IFS fits beautifully within the NeuroFaith® model. Polyvagal-informed therapy helps the body regulate and feel safe. HeartMath® helps stabilize the heart and bring coherence to the system. IFS then helps us understand the psychological defenses that formed around that dysregulated physiology. These approaches are not competing frameworks. They are deeply complementary.

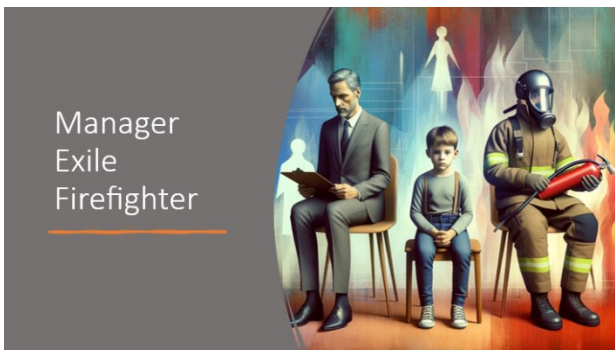
Trauma, Protection, and the Inner System

Trauma, anxiety, and depression often show up as internal conflict. One part of a person longs to move forward, to heal, to connect. Another part feels paralyzed, terrified of what might happen if defenses are lowered. One part strives relentlessly for control, perfection, or performance. Another collapses into exhaustion or hopelessness. One part attacks with shame, believing criticism will prevent failure or rejection. Another seeks relief through numbing, avoidance, or addiction.

IFS does not approach these inner dynamics with judgment. It approaches them with curiosity and compassion.

Rather than asking, “What is wrong with me?” IFS gently shifts the question to, “What happened to me, and how did my system adapt?” This shift alone can be profoundly relieving. It removes shame from the healing process and replaces it with understanding.

The Core Parts of the IFS Model



While every person's inner system is unique, IFS describes several common roles that tend to emerge across individuals and cultures.

Exiles are the wounded parts of us that carry pain too overwhelming to be held consciously at the time it occurred. These parts often hold experiences of trauma, rejection, abandonment, fear, grief, humiliation, or shame. Because their pain feels so intense, they are frequently pushed out of awareness by other parts. Exiles are not weak. They are burdened. And they are often very young.

Managers are protective parts that work proactively to prevent the pain of exiles from surfacing. They attempt to maintain control, order, and predictability. Managers often show up as perfectionism, people pleasing, intellectualization, hyper-responsibility, emotional avoidance, spiritual performance, or relentless achievement. Their goal is simple: “If I can keep everything under control, we will not be hurt again” (Schwartz & Sweezy, 2020).

Firefighters are also protective parts, but they are reactive rather than proactive. They emerge when exile pain breaks through despite the managers’ efforts. Firefighters seek immediate relief, often through numbing or distraction. This can include anger, impulsivity, dissociation, compulsive behaviors, substance use, bingeing, pornography, self-harm, or other emergency strategies. Firefighters are not trying to destroy the system. They are trying to extinguish unbearable pain as quickly as possible.

The Inner Critic (Feedback) is a powerful and often misunderstood part of the internal system. It commonly develops in response to environments where mistakes, vulnerability, or failure felt dangerous.

At its healthiest, the inner critic can provide feedback, promote accountability, and guide behavior in alignment with values. When

distorted by fear, however, it becomes harsh, condemning, and relentless.

Spiritually, this distinction matters. Condemnation does not come from God. Learning to place the critic under appropriate authority allows its feedback to be received without being crushed by shame.

The Self (Who We Were Created to Be) is not another part competing for influence within the internal system.

Rather, it represents what we are ultimately seeking to restore.

From a NeuroFaith® perspective, the Self reflects the essence of who God created us to be — a centered,

connected, and relational being designed to live in safety, truth, and love.



Scripture teaches that humanity was created good, bearing the image of God. In that original design, the self functioned in harmony — internally aligned, relationally connected, and securely grounded in God's presence. However, through original sin, that connection was fractured. The self did not cease to exist, but it became wounded, distorted, and disconnected from its true source.

Trauma further compounds this fracture. Pain, fear, and loss obscure access to the self God intended, giving rise to protective parts that attempt to survive in the absence of safety. Over time, individuals lose touch with their true self, not because it is gone, but because it has been overshadowed by fear-driven defenses.

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Internal Family Systems helps individuals begin to reconnect with this deeper center. It teaches that beneath layers of protection lies a capacity for calm, compassion, clarity, and courage. Yet NeuroFaith® affirms that full restoration of the self does not occur through psychological insight alone.

Restoration comes through our new identity in Christ, replacing the SELF damaged by sin with the new self, the new creation Christ gives to each of us. This is not just the redemption of the old SELF but replacing it with the new SELF, that is completely aligned with Christ.

“Throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy. Ephesians 4:22-24 (NLT)”

“This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!” 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NLT) We will explore this process and these passages in more detail in the next section on spirituality.

Through our new relationship with Christ, the SELF God intended us to be has full access to Him, His Spirit, His Kingdom, and our entire inner world. IFS works best when the SELF is aligned with Christ and empowered by His Spirit to bring healing and restoration to all the fractured parts of our inner world. Therapy can help remove obstacles; grace brings transformation.

IFS identifies this centered presence through what it calls the Eight Cs:

Calm
Curiosity
Clarity
Compassion
Confidence

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Courage

Creativity

Connectedness

When individuals begin to operate from this restored center, they are more regulated than reactive, more grounded than defensive, and more capable of leading their internal system with wisdom and care.

From a faith perspective, these qualities closely parallel the Fruit of the Spirit described in Galatians 5:22, 23 — love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. When the SELF has been renewed under Christ's leadership, Behavior increasingly reflects these qualities, not through effortful striving, but through inner transformation and alignment with God's design.

Why IFS Matters for Trauma, depression and anxiety

Depression often includes collapsed parts carrying hopelessness or shame, managers exhausted by constant effort, exiles flooded with grief or worthlessness, and firefighters seeking escape. Anxiety often includes hypervigilant managers scanning for threat, inner critics pushing performance, protectors preventing vulnerability, and reactive firefighters responding to overwhelm.

IFS helps people stop fighting themselves.

Rather than trying to eliminate symptoms, IFS invites relationship. It teaches a new posture toward the inner world. Curiosity replaces contempt. Compassion replaces shame. Understanding replaces fear. This is not indulgence. It is integration.

As Schwartz notes, when parts feel heard and respected, they no longer need to scream (Schwartz & Sweezy, 2020).

IFS as a Bridge Between Body and Soul

Within the NeuroFaith® framework, IFS serves as a vital bridge. Polyvagal-informed therapy and HeartMath® help establish physiological safety. IFS helps us understand the psychological strategies that formed in response to bodily threat. Faith then brings redemption to the deepest layers of identity and meaning.

This sequence matters. Without safety, parts will not relax. Without compassion, parts will not trust. Without Self-leadership, healing cannot integrate. And without grace, shame will continue to dominate the narrative.

IFS also integrates beautifully with faith-based work. Clinicians and authors such as Jenna Riemersma have shown how IFS aligns with Christian theology, particularly in its emphasis on compassion, truth, and restoration (Riemersma, 2020). Emotions, she reminds us, are not enemies to be avoided but messages to be listened to. Words are the language of the mind. Emotions are the language of the body and heart.

When emotions are suppressed or medicated away without understanding, vital information is lost. When emotions are welcomed with discernment, they often guide us toward healing.

The Goal of IFS Therapy

The goal of IFS is not to eliminate parts. It is to restore harmony under the leadership of the Self.

In therapy, this means helping individuals access Self-energy, build relationships with protectors, and gently unburden exiles of the pain they have carried. Over time, parts begin to trust that they no longer have to carry their burdens alone. As this happens, behaviors change not through force but through relief.

Healing becomes possible not because parts are defeated, but because they are finally understood.

In the NeuroFaith® model, IFS reminds us of something deeply hopeful. Even the parts we hate, fear, or wish away are trying to protect something precious. When met with compassion, they often become our greatest allies in healing.

As we close this section, it is important to appreciate that the first three pillars of the NeuroFaith® model do not stand beside one another as separate techniques. They function more like living systems within a single body, each dependent on the others for vitality and coherence. Polyvagal informed therapy helps the nervous system sense safety. HeartMath® and neurocardiology support rhythm, coherence, and regulation. Internal Family Systems helps us understand the inner world of parts shaped by protection, pain, and adaptation. Together, they teach us how to listen differently to the body, the emotions, the protectors, and the wounds, with curiosity rather than judgment, with compassion rather than control.

Yet something more is required for these approaches to remain alive rather than merely technical. Regulation alone does not give meaning.

Insight alone does not sustain hope. Even self-leadership, when isolated, can become another form of effort. What allows these three pillars to function as a living whole is the presence of spirituality moving through them.

Within the NeuroFaith® model, spirituality is not an added layer placed on top of psychology. It is the animating current that runs through the entire system. It is like the circulatory flow that carries oxygen and nourishment to every organ of the body. Without that flow, the organs may still exist, but they cannot thrive. In the same way, spirituality brings vitality, coherence, and direction to the work of regulation, integration, and healing.

Spirituality gives meaning to safety, purpose to coherence, and depth to self-leadership. It infuses the nervous system with hope, the heart with trust, and the inner system with a larger story in which healing is held. It allows the work of polyvagal regulation, neurocardiology, and Internal Family Systems to move beyond technique into relationship. Not performance, but presence. Not control, but surrender. Not self-improvement, but restoration.

In this way, spirituality does not replace the science that comes before it. It weaves through it. It carries it. It animates it. It allows the work of healing to become not only something we do, but something we participate in.

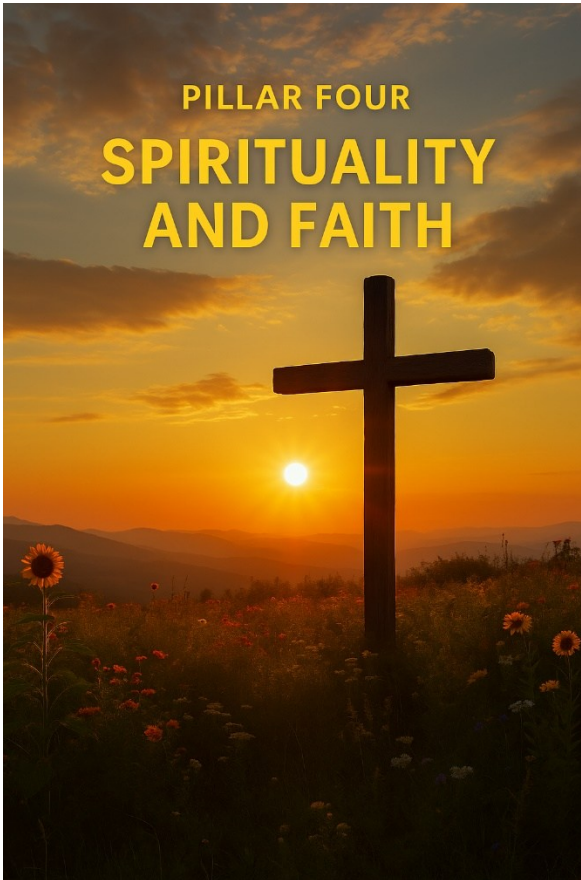
As we turn now toward this next pillar, you are invited to see spirituality not as a separate domain, but as the living current that gives coherence to the whole NeuroFaith® model. It is the flow that connects

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body, heart, and inner life. It is the space where meaning, grace, and transformation quietly take root and begin to grow.

Pillar Four

Spirituality and Faith



Transformational Healing Through Christ, Truth, and the Renewal of the Soul

Of all the pillars in the NeuroFaith® model, this one reaches the deepest. Not because it is more important than the others, but because it addresses what none of the others can fully resolve on their own. Polyvagal-informed therapy helps regulate the body. HeartMath® and neurocardiology bring coherence to the heart. Internal Family Systems helps us understand and integrate the inner psychological world. But spirituality and faith speak to the question that inevitably emerges beneath all suffering.

Who am I now?

What does my pain mean?

Is there hope for restoration?

Can my story be redeemed?

These are not merely clinical questions. They are soul questions.

Spirituality is not a secondary add-on to healing. It is the deep structure beneath every healing process. Whether acknowledged or not, every person lives out of a framework of meaning, identity, and ultimate hope. When trauma strikes, that framework is often shattered. Depression and anxiety frequently reflect not only dysregulation of the nervous system, but a collapse of meaning and belonging.

Within the NeuroFaith® model, spirituality is not treated vaguely or sentimentally. It is grounded, relational, and Christ-centered. Not because faith is merely comforting, but because it aligns with what

neuroscience, developmental psychology, and trauma research are increasingly revealing about how human beings heal.

Trauma, Shame, and the Default Mode Network

One of the most significant contributions of recent neuroscience is the growing understanding of the Default Mode Network. The DMN is the brain network most active when we are at rest, reflecting on ourselves, remembering our past, and telling ourselves the story of who we are. It is where narrative identity lives.

Tim Fletcher, a Canadian trauma educator and counselor, has helped many people understand how trauma hijacks this internal narrative system. Fletcher observes that unresolved trauma often writes core beliefs into the DMN that become a person's operating system. These beliefs are not fleeting thoughts. They are lived assumptions that quietly govern perception, emotion, and behavior (Fletcher, 2022).

Common trauma-based narratives include:

I am not lovable

I am not safe

I do not matter

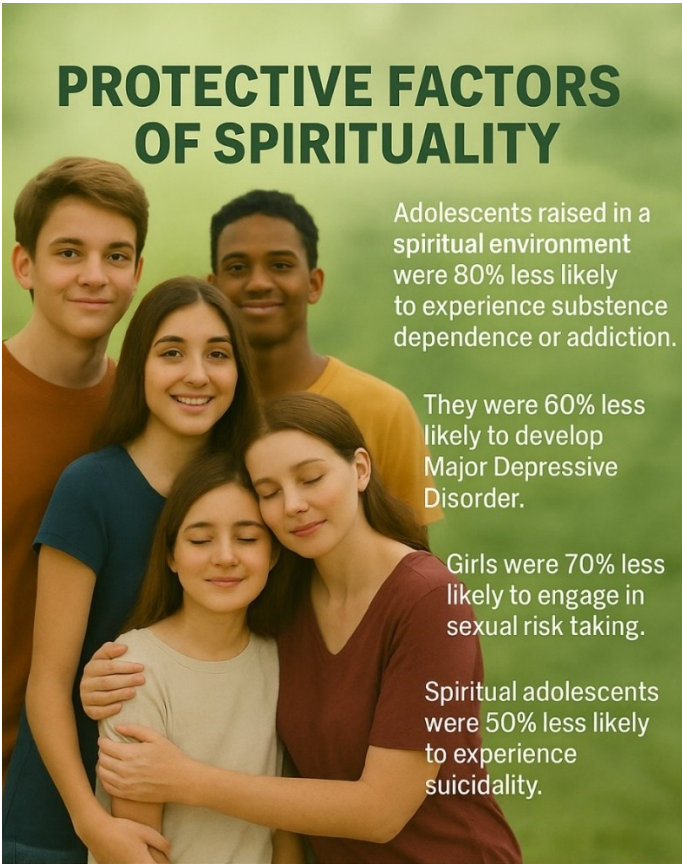
I am bad

These beliefs do not simply reside in cognition. They are embodied. They shape nervous system responses, relational patterns, and emotional tone. This is why people can achieve sobriety or symptom control and still feel empty, ashamed, or disconnected. The narrative has not changed.

The NeuroFaith® model takes this reality seriously. Healing must reach the story level. Without rewriting the narrative housed in the Default Mode Network, recovery remains incomplete.

Spirituality as a Neurobiological Resource

Dr. Lisa Miller's research has been groundbreaking in demonstrating that spirituality is not only meaningful but neuroprotective. In her work at Columbia University, Miller has shown through longitudinal and neuroimaging studies that spiritual engagement significantly reduces risk for depression, addiction, and suicidality (Miller, 2021).



PROTECTIVE FACTORS OF SPIRITUALITY

Adolescents raised in a spiritual environment were 80% less likely to experience substance dependence or addiction.

They were 60% less likely to develop Major Depressive Disorder.

Girls were 70% less likely to engage in sexual risk taking.

Spiritual adolescents were 50% less likely to experience suicidality.

Most powerfully, children whose mothers were also highly spiritual showed an 80% reduction in depression risk.

Her findings are striking. Adolescents raised in a spiritually engaged environment are significantly less likely to develop substance dependence or major depressive disorder. They demonstrate greater resilience under stress and show structural differences in brain regions associated with emotional regulation, reflection, and meaning-making.

Fletcher (2022, 2025) notes that spiritual experience influences the Default Mode Network. Practices such as prayer, worship, gratitude, awe, and relational communion with God appear to soften shame-based narratives and introduce new identity scripts rooted in purpose, belonging, and divine value (Hansen et al., 2024).

In other words, spirituality does not merely comfort the soul. It reshapes the brain.

The Biopsychosocial Spiritual Whole

For many years, the biopsychosocial model represented an important advance in mental health care. But it is incomplete. Human beings are not only biological, psychological, and social. We are also spiritual.

Brian Udermann's extensive review of the literature demonstrated that spiritual involvement correlates with reduced incidence of cardiovascular disease, stroke, substance abuse, depression, and overall mortality, even when controlling for health behaviors and socioeconomic variables (Udermann, 2000).

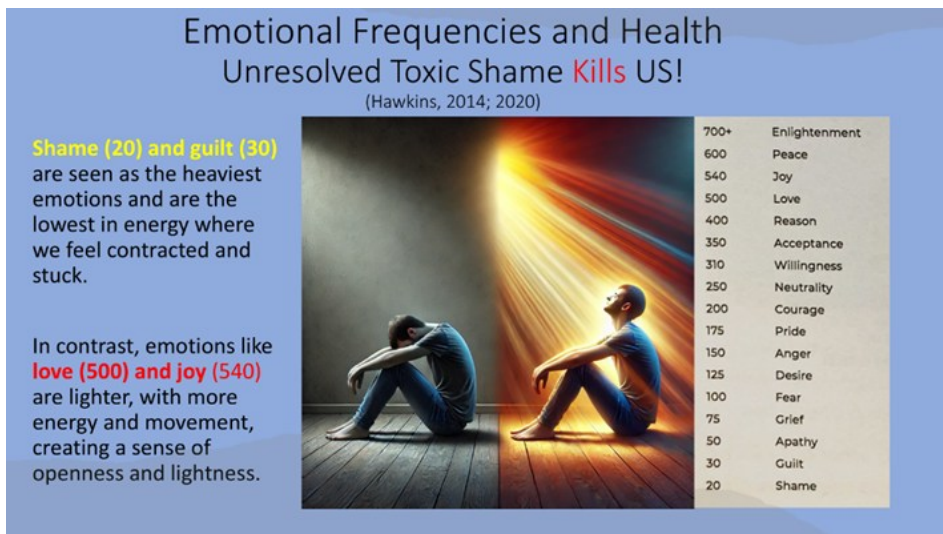
These findings suggest something profound. Spirituality is not merely a coping strategy. It is a dimension of human wholeness. When the spiritual dimension is neglected, healing often stalls. When it is integrated with Biblical accuracy, humility, and care, healing deepens.

Shame as a Soul Wound

At the center of much trauma and addiction lies shame. Guilt says, I did something wrong. Shame says, I am wrong. Shame is totalizing. It isolates. It collapses hope. It fuels addiction and despair.

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Dr. David Hawkins described shame as the lowest emotional state on his scale of consciousness, associated with withdrawal, self-loathing, and physiological collapse (Hawkins, 2014, 2020). While his methodology has been debated, his observations resonate deeply with clinical experience. Shame constricts the nervous system, disrupts immune functioning, and distorts the Default Mode Network.



Psychology can name shame and sometimes soften its impact. But shame is also a spiritual wound. It requires more than insight. It requires grace.

The Redemptive Center of the NeuroFaith® Model

This is where the NeuroFaith® model becomes explicitly Christian. Not moralistic. Not performance-based. Not vague. But rooted in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ.

In Christ, shame is not managed. It is forgiven.

In Christ, identity is not earned. It is given.

In Christ, the story does not end with survival. It ends with redemption.

Scripture speaks directly to this transformation. ***“If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here.”*** (2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV) This is not metaphor alone. It describes a fundamental shift in identity.

Romans 12:2 calls us to be transformed by the renewing of the mind. The Greek word used here is *metamorphoo*, the same word used to describe the transfiguration of Jesus. It implies radical change, not incremental improvement.

Within the NeuroFaith® framework, this renewal of the mind includes the rewriting of the Default Mode Network. Trauma-based narratives are replaced with truth-based identity. I am loved. I am forgiven. I belong. I am not alone.

This transformation is not instant. It is relational. It unfolds through prayer, Scripture, worship, confession, community, and honest surrender. It is progressive restoration, not perfection.

Integration of Body, Soul, and Spirit

Christian anthropology affirms the human person as body, soul, and spirit. Trauma fractures this unity. The body becomes dysregulated. The emotions become guarded. The will collapses. The mind distorts. The spirit feels distant.

Spiritual practices restore integration. As the heart becomes coherent and the nervous system settles, the soul becomes more receptive. As shame loosens its grip, truth finds room to take root.

Philippians 1:6 offers profound reassurance in this process. ***“He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion.”*** Healing is not something we accomplish alone. It is something God continues to author.

A Final Word on Spiritual Healing

The world often treats trauma with shallow tools. Diagnosis. Medication. Technique. These are not inherently wrong. But they are insufficient.

What we are witnessing in depression, anxiety, addiction, and dysregulation is not only a clinical crisis. It is a spiritual one. The soul has been wounded. The story has been hijacked. Identity has been distorted by pain and shame.

The NeuroFaith® model calls us to something deeper. A science that honors the soul. A faith that engages the brain. A healing journey that restores the whole person.

Because without grace, shame remains.

Without truth, the narrative stays distorted.

And without Christ, healing remains incomplete.

A Final Word on the NeuroFaith® Model

Wholeness Is Possible

If you have read The Four Pillars of the NeuroFaith® Model with mind and heart slowly and thoughtfully, you may notice something important stirring beneath the words. What we have described here is not a program to master or a formula to perform. It is an invitation. An invitation back to wholeness.

Trauma-related Depression and anxiety have a way of convincing us that something is fundamentally wrong with who we are. That we are broken beyond repair. That healing is for other people, not for us. The NeuroFaith® model offers a different story. Not a naïve story. Not a shallow one. But a deeply grounded, compassionate, and hope-filled truth.

Something happened.

Your system adapted.

Your body learned how to survive.

Your heart learned how to protect itself.

Your inner world organized around pain.

And none of that makes you defective. It makes you human.

The four pillars we have explored are not separate paths. They are one integrated movement toward restoration.

Polyvagal-informed therapy reminds us that healing must begin with safety. When the nervous system no longer lives in constant threat, the body can rest, emotions can soften, and connection becomes possible (Porges, 2017; Porges & Porges, 2023). Safety is not a luxury. It is a biological and spiritual necessity.

HeartMath® and neurocardiology invite us back into the wisdom of the heart. When the heart becomes coherent, the entire system benefits. The mind becomes clearer. Emotional regulation improves. Relational presence deepens. The heart, long honored in Scripture as the wellspring of life, is rediscovered as a central integrator of healing (McCraty et al., 2009; McCraty, 2023).

Internal Family Systems helps us make peace with the inner world. Instead of fighting ourselves, we learn to listen. Instead of shaming our defenses, we begin to understand their protective purpose. And beneath every burdened part, we rediscover the Self, steady and unbroken, capable of compassion, clarity, courage, and connection (Schwartz, 1995; Schwartz & Sweezy, 2020).

And faith, the deepest pillar of all, restores meaning where trauma has erased it. Spiritual experience does not merely comfort us. It reshapes the brain, rewrites the internal narrative, and restores identity at its core (Miller, 2021). Where shame once ruled, grace enters. Where fear once dominated, love takes root. Where the story once ended in survival, redemption begins.

This is why the NeuroFaith® model insists on treating the whole person. Body. Heart. Mind. Soul. Spirit. None can be fully healed in isolation. Healing unfolds when these dimensions begin to speak to one another again, when what was fragmented is gently re-integrated.

It is also important to say this clearly. Healing is not linear. There will be moments of progress and moments of setback. There will be days when the nervous system settles easily and days when old patterns re-emerge. This does not mean you are failing. It means you are human and healing.

Again, Philippians 1:6 offers a quiet but profound assurance. ***“He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion.”*** Healing is not something you must accomplish alone. It is something that unfolds in partnership with grace.

If you are reading this while still struggling, take heart. Your pain does not disqualify you from healing. It is the very place where healing begins. If you are reading this while supporting someone you love, know that your regulated presence, your compassion, and your patience matter more than you realize.

The NeuroFaith® model does not promise a life without suffering. Scripture never makes that promise. What it offers instead is something far deeper. Restoration. Renewal. Transformation.

“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit” (Psalm 34:18, NIV).

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That nearness is not theoretical. It is lived. It is embodied. It is written not only into Scripture, but into the nervous system, the heart, the inner world, and the soul itself.

Wholeness is possible.

Healing is real.

And your story is not over.

From Foundation to Practice: Entering the Twelve Steps Through
NeuroFaith®

With this foundation in place, we are now ready to move forward.

Everything you have just read was not meant to remain theoretical. The four pillars of the NeuroFaith® model were never designed as abstract concepts or merely explanatory frameworks. They exist to be lived. Practiced. Embodied. Integrated into daily life where healing actually unfolds. And this is where the Twelve Steps enter the story, not as a separate system, but as a natural next movement.

The Twelve Steps have helped millions of people recover from addiction, compulsion, and despair. At their core, they are a profoundly relational, spiritual, and experiential path of transformation. What NeuroFaith® offers is not a replacement for this wisdom, but a deepening of it. A way of understanding *why* the Steps work, *how* they work in the brain and body, and *how to walk them with greater clarity, compassion, and effectiveness.*

You now carry something powerful as you enter this next section: a working understanding of how trauma shapes the nervous system, how safety restores regulation, how the heart organizes coherence, how

inner parts carry burdens and protection strategies, and how faith reshapes identity from the inside out. This knowledge does not complicate the Twelve Steps. It strengthens them.

In the chapters that follow, we will walk through the Twelve Steps through a NeuroFaith® lens, explicitly, unapologetically, and with deep respect for their spiritual origins. Each step will be explored not only as a spiritual directive, but as a neurobiological, relational, and embodied process. You will see how surrender affects the nervous system, how confession and inventory promote integration, how amends restore relational safety, how prayer and meditation shape neural pathways, and how service naturally flows from a regulated, integrated self.

This is where neuroscience and spirituality meet in lived experience. The brain, the body, the heart, and the soul are no longer treated as separate domains but as cooperating partners in healing. Recovery becomes more than abstinence. Growth becomes more than behavior change. Transformation becomes something that can be felt, practiced, and sustained.

If you have walked the Twelve Steps before, you may find that they come alive in new ways here. If you are new to them, you will be entering a path that is both ancient and remarkably aligned with modern science. Either way, you are not starting from scratch. You are building on a foundation that honors your story, your adaptations, and your courage to survive.

The NeuroFaith® approach does not ask you to abandon what has helped you. It asks you to deepen it. To understand it. To embody it. To let grace and neuroscience work together rather than compete. To

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bring compassion where there was shame. Safety where there was fear.
Meaning where there was confusion.

As we turn now to the Twelve Steps, remember this: you are not being asked to fix yourself. You are being invited to participate in a process of restoration that is already underway. A process supported by your biology, your relationships, your spiritual life, and a God who is not intimidated by your wounds.

You are ready for this next movement.

The work ahead is not about perfection. It is about presence.

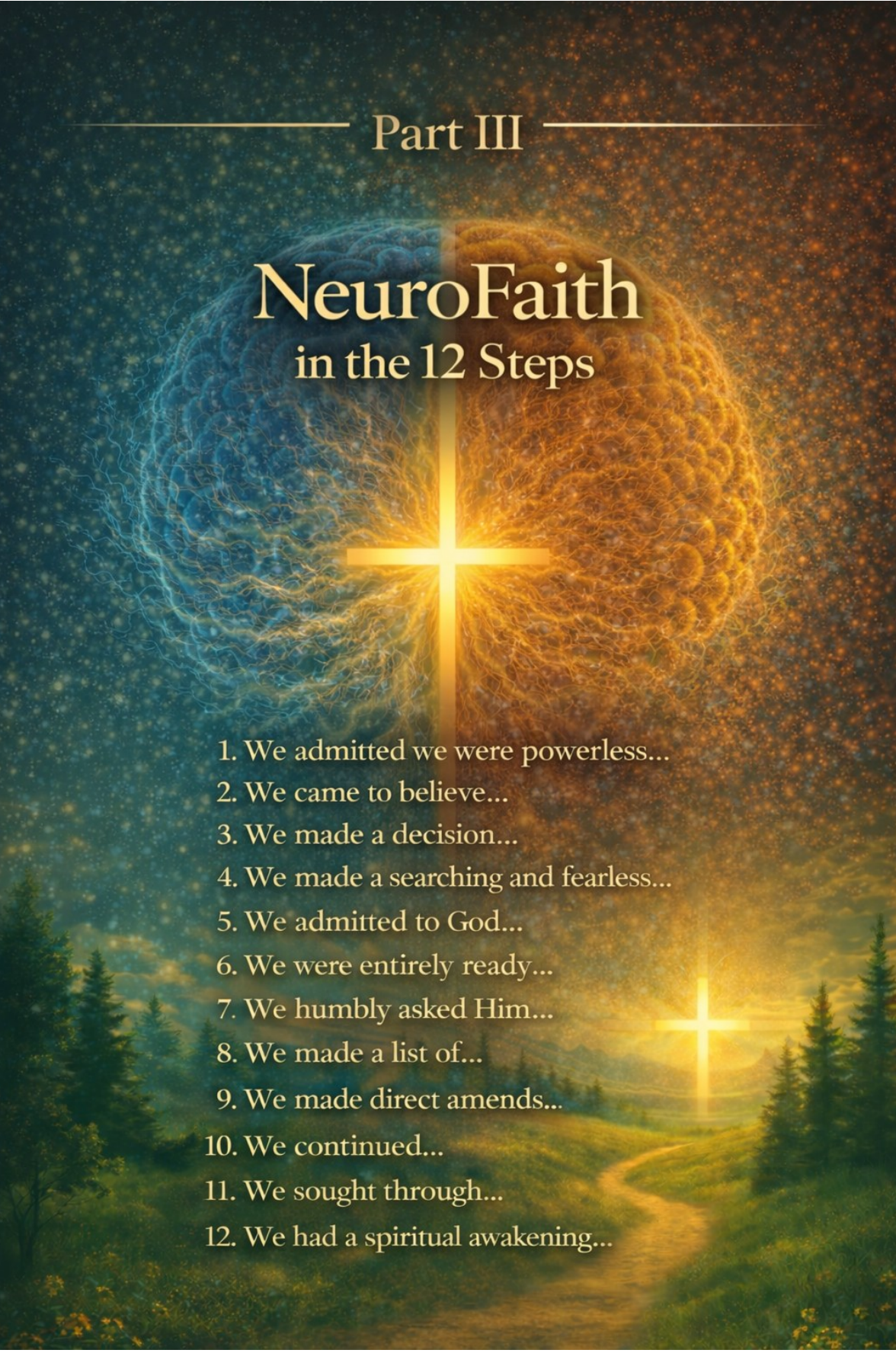
Not performance, but practice.

Not self-condemnation, but courageous honesty.

This is the Twelve Steps, NeuroFaith® style, rooted in science, anchored in faith, and oriented toward wholeness.

Part III

NeuroFaith in the 12 Steps

- 
1. We admitted we were powerless...
 2. We came to believe...
 3. We made a decision...
 4. We made a searching and fearless...
 5. We admitted to God...
 6. We were entirely ready...
 7. We humbly asked Him...
 8. We made a list of...
 9. We made direct amends...
 10. We continued...
 11. We sought through...
 12. We had a spiritual awakening...

Entering the Twelve Steps

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.”

— Proverbs 3:5–6

If you have walked with us through the foundations of the NeuroFaith® model, you have already been introduced to the deeper architecture of healing, the ways the nervous system seeks safety, the heart longs for coherence, the inner world organizes itself around protection and meaning, and faith restores purpose where pain once ruled. What follows now is not a departure from that foundation, but its natural expression.

This section marks the movement from understanding to practice.

The Twelve Steps have long stood as one of the most enduring and effective pathways of recovery ever articulated. Their wisdom has helped millions find freedom from addiction, compulsion, and despair. What NeuroFaith® offers is not a replacement for this sacred path, but a way of illuminating it, helping us understand *how* and *why* the Steps

work, and how they engage the whole person: body, heart, mind, and spirit.

Some readers may arrive here having already walked the Steps before. Others may be encountering them for the first time. Wherever you are, you are welcome. You do not need to be fully healed, fully certain, or fully prepared. You only need a willingness to begin where you are.

In the pages that follow, each of the Twelve Steps will be explored through the integrated lens of NeuroFaith®. You will see how the practices of surrender, honesty, inventory, repair, prayer, meditation, and service align naturally with what we now understand about nervous system regulation, emotional integration, relational safety, and spiritual formation. The Steps are not merely moral instructions or behavioral corrections; they are embodied processes that gently reorganize the inner world toward wholeness.

This is why the Twelve Steps remain so powerful. They do not demand perfection. They invite participation. They do not shame struggle. They dignify it. They do not bypass suffering; they transform it through relationship, truth, and grace.

As you enter this section, you are invited to move slowly. Read with both mind and heart. Notice what resonates. Notice what resists. Allow curiosity to replace judgment. Let compassion lead where effort once dominated. Healing, as you have already seen, is not something we force into existence. It is something that unfolds when safety, meaning, and grace converge.

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The journey ahead is not about fixing what is broken, but about restoring what has always been there. Step by step, breath by breath, this path opens toward freedom.

Let us now turn to the Twelve Steps, grounded in neuroscience, shaped by faith, and oriented toward the restoration of the whole person.

Before we begin this journey together, take a moment to prepare yourself in a few simple but very important ways:

- Get a good journal for writing down your insights and assignments. Handwritten notes are great, but you may also use an electronic tablet with a dedicated section for NeuroFaith 12 Steps.
- Have a contemporary translation of the Bible in your possession. We recommend paper over electronic, but it is your choice. Many of the Scriptures in this book are excerpted from the New Living Translation and the New International Version. We encourage you to obtain one of these or another contemporary translation you are familiar with and comfortable reading. A Study Bible version is preferable but not required.
- Determine the place you will work on these 12 Steps, preferably in your home. Returning to that location will create a sense of meeting with God and with us as you work on your assignments.

When you're ready, take the next step with us.

Step One — Honest Surrender

We admit we are powerless over our addictions and compulsive behaviors and that our lives have become unmanageable.

The first step in healing often begins quietly, long before we have the language to explain it. It begins when something inside us finally exhales and admits what we have been carrying for far too long. This is the moment when we stop carrying it alone. It is not a moment of failure, but a moment of truth, when the ego loosens its grip just enough for the heart to speak plainly. Striving gives way to honesty, and pretending gives way to being real.



For many of us, our addictions and compulsive patterns were never simply bad choices or moral weaknesses. More often, they were attempts to survive. They were ways of numbing pain that felt overwhelming, quieting fears we did not know how to name, or regulating a nervous system stretched thin by loneliness, shame, grief, or exhaustion. These patterns once served a purpose. They helped us endure days we were not sure we could survive.

The tragedy is not that these strategies existed. The tragedy is that, over time, they began to cost us more than they gave. What once helped us cope now isolates us. What once soothed us now drains us. What

once promised relief now fragments us from God, from others, and from the deepest parts of who we were created to be.

Step One is not about humiliation or self-condemnation. It is not about tearing ourselves down. It is about honesty. It is the gentle and courageous acknowledgment that the self alone cannot create the healing it longs for. Willpower, insight, and effort, no matter how sincere, are not enough to mend wounds that were formed in isolation. We confess our powerlessness not to surrender hope, but to make room for it.

When we admit that we cannot carry this alone, something sacred begins to unfold. We become receptive, open, and reachable in ways we could not be while striving to manage everything ourselves. Christ carries what we cannot. The Spirit strengthens us where we are depleted. The Father holds us when we no longer have the strength to hold ourselves.

This is where healing truly begins. Not through isolation. Not through trying harder. But through connection. Connection to God. Connection to others. Connection to our own wounded humanity. And it all begins when we stop carrying it alone.

The body and soul agree on this:

- The nervous system does not settle in isolation. It regulates in the presence of safety.
- Interpersonal Neurobiology shows the brain is literally shaped in relationship.

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- Polyvagal Theory teaches that safety is experienced through connection, not self-reliance.
- HeartMath research shows our heart rhythms synchronize with those we attach to.

Scripture taught this long before neuroscience gave us the vocabulary:

“He restores my soul.” Psalm 23:3 (NIV)

When we turn toward God, the body softens. The shoulders lower.

The jaw unclenches. Breath returns.

This is not sentiment; it is physiology responding to love.

And when our primary attachment is restored in God, we become able to receive relationship from others again. The community of believers becomes the steady presence that helps our nervous system relearn peace.

The Prodigal as the Addict

Jesus tells the story of a son who runs from home to prove he can do life on his own. He spends everything trying to feel alive. But eventually, he hits bottom, starving in a pigpen, and the world that fueled his downfall gives him nothing in return.

“But no one gave him anything.” Luke 15:16 (NLT)

That is addiction’s secret.

It will take everything from you and offer nothing back.

But then something shifts:

“When he finally came to his senses...” Luke 15:17 (NLT)

This is Step One.

Not the fixing.

Not the cleaning up.

Not the explaining or promising to do better.

Just truth.

And the moment he turns, just turns, toward home, the Father runs to him. Not with condemnation, but with embrace. Christ meets us exactly where we can no longer pretend.

The Biblical exposes this truth:

“I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.”

Romans 7:18 (NIV)

Step One:

We admit we are powerless over our addictions and compulsive behaviors and that our lives have become unmanageable.

This is the return to relationship: with God, with others, and with our truest self.

Pause here — and reflect.

Not to perform.

Not to impress.

Just to be honest:

1. Where in your life do you still have genuine control?
(Name it - even small things count.)

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2. Where have things become unmanageable?
(Say it simply. No dramatics needed.)
3. Where are you beginning to drop denial, even a little?
(What truth have you finally stopped arguing with?)

Let your answers be imperfect but record them in your journal for further study.

God works with honesty, not polish.

Three important decisions for Step One.

1. Stop trying to play God.
“With God everything is possible.” Matthew 19:26 (NIV)
Allow yourself to be helped.
2. Admit your powerlessness.
“I want to do what is right, but I don’t do it.” Romans 7:15 (NLT)
This isn’t failure. It’s clarity.
3. Acknowledge your unmanageability.
“I was so swamped I couldn’t see my way.” Psalm 40:12 (MSG)
This is where the Father runs toward you.

Step One is the courageous beginning of freedom.

Not because we become stronger, but because we finally allow ourselves to be held.

This is where healing starts.

This is where the body rests.

This is where the Father runs.

This is where we come home.

As you come to the end of this first step, there is nothing more you need to do right now. You do not need to understand everything, fix anything, or feel a certain way for this to count. Step One is not measured by insight or intensity. It is measured by honesty, even when that honesty feels fragile or unfinished.

If all you can say is, “I am tired of doing this alone,” that is enough. If all you can feel is a quiet softening, a small loosening inside, that is enough. God does not wait for clarity before He draws near. He meets us in the moment we stop running and allow ourselves to be seen.

You are not behind. You are not failing. You are not weak for needing help. You are human, and you are responding exactly as humans heal, through truth and through relationship.

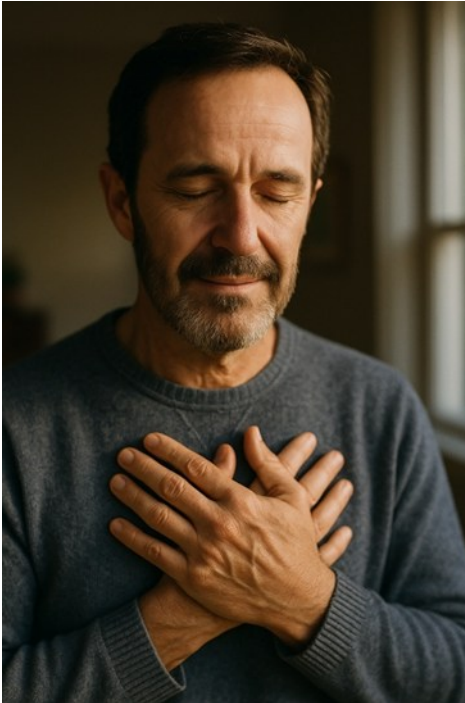
So, take a breath here. Let your body register that you are not being asked to carry the weight of your healing by yourself anymore. There is time. There is grace. There is companionship on this road.

Step Two will invite you to consider where hope begins to form and how trust slowly takes shape again. But for now, rest here. Let this first step settle. Let yourself be held just as you are.

We are walking with you. And you do not have to do the next step alone either.

Step Two — Trust in Christ

We believe that a power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity.



If Step One was the moment we stopped carrying our lives alone, then Step Two is the moment we begin to notice that we are not alone after all. Something shifts here, often quietly. A small stirring. A hesitant openness. We do not suddenly feel confident or healed, but we begin to wonder if healing might actually be possible.

Step Two does not ask us to believe everything at once. It simply invites us to consider that there may be a Presence, a Power, a Love

greater than our woundedness and stronger than what has held us captive. After the honesty of Step One, this is where hope begins to breathe again. Not as certainty, but as permission.

This is not naive optimism or forced positivity. It is not denial of pain or minimization of loss. It is the slow and sometimes fragile recognition that God has not abandoned us. Even in addiction. Even in collapse. Even in the exhaustion of trying to hold everything together. Long before we were aware of Him, God has been working, drawing, calling, and waiting.

Scripture names this mystery with tenderness. *"For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases Him."* Philippians 2:13. Hope, then, is not something we manufacture by trying harder or thinking better thoughts. Hope is something we receive when we finally stop resisting love.

Step Two is the beginning of that turning. Not a leap, but a glance. Not certainty, but openness. Not strength, but willingness. It is the moment we allow ourselves to believe, even faintly, that restoration is possible because God is already nearer than we thought.

The Prodigal: The Awakening of Hope

In the story of the Lost Son, he reaches the bottom. He is hungry, ashamed, alone, and covered in the smell of the very animals his faith tradition taught him to avoid. And yet, in this lowest place, something awakens. He remembers his father. Not just the home he left, but the love he had once known.

He says to himself, *"Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you."* Luke 15:18-19 (NLT)

There is no bravado in this moment. No speeches to prove worth. Just the quiet realization that he is not alone in the universe, and that the One he has wounded is still the One who can receive and restore him.

He believes, even faintly, that there is a way home. This is the beginning of sanity returning. Not just emotional clarity, but the realignment of the heart, the mind, and the nervous system.

How Neuroscience Describes This Turning

Hope is not only spiritual. It is embodied. When we turn toward God, even in weakness, even with shaking hands, something shifts in the nervous system:

- The fight-flight-freeze state begins to soften.
- The heart rate pattern moves away from jagged survival rhythms.
- The vagus nerve signals that safety is possible.
- The heart and brain begin communicating in coherence again.

This is what HeartMath® calls a coherent rhythm, a smooth sine-wave pattern associated with clarity, emotional stability, and the capacity to connect. This is what Polyvagal Theory describes as returning from survival mode into grounded presence. This is what Scripture has always called peace.

“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.” Psalm 147:3 (NLT)

Healing is not self-generated. It is received. We do not heal by effort. We heal by turning toward love.

The Restoration of Sanity

The prodigal's actions had become irrational and self-destructive. This is what addiction does. It makes the unreasonable feel necessary and the destructive feel inevitable. Sanity, in its most ancient meaning, is wholeness of mind. It is the return of clarity, truth, and grounded identity

Luke describes this clearly, writing about the crowd who came to see what had happened along the shore of the Sea of Galilee. They

discovered the man they had known to be demon possessed was now completely changed by Jesus:

“They found the man sitting at Jesus’ feet, clothed and in his right mind.”

Luke 8:35 (NLT)

What bound him did not release him because he tried harder. It released him because he came into the presence of a power greater than the power that held him.

Step Two invites us to believe this:

Healing is possible.

We are not beyond restoration.

There is a way home.

Reflection Questions for Step Two

Take your time here. Let the answers be honest and unfinished as you record them with additional space in your journal.

1. How do you view your Heavenly Father today? In what ways is this similar to or different from how you have viewed your earthly father?
2. What do you believe about God’s character? What do you struggle to believe about Him? Be specific.
3. What patterns or behaviors in your life feel like “doing the same thing but expecting different results.” Which of these are you willing to release?

Three Practices for Step Two

1. Admit that the old pattern of trying to manage life alone has not worked.

Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. Romans 6:12-13 (NLT)

2. Acknowledge that God is not distant, angry, or withholding, but compassionate and ready to restore.

“The Lord is compassionate and merciful, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. He knows how weak we are; He remembers we are only dust.” Psalm 103:8,14 (NLT)

3. Identify one area today you are ready to release from your control and place into God’s care. Write it down. Say it aloud. Tell someone safe.

“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted. He rescues those whose spirits are crushed.” Psalm 34:17-18 (NLT)

As you come to the end of this step, you may notice that nothing dramatic has happened, and that is exactly as it should be. Step Two is not about certainty or sudden change. It is about allowing hope to exist without having to defend it. It is about letting the idea of restoration feel possible, even if it still feels distant.

If all you have right now is a quiet willingness to believe that God might be different than you once assumed, that is enough. If your trust feels tentative or fragile, that is enough. Faith, at this stage, does not require confidence. It only requires openness.

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You are not being asked to solve your life, fix your patterns, or prove your sincerity. You are being invited to keep turning, gently and honestly, toward the One who has already been turning toward you. Healing unfolds at the pace of safety, and God is patient with the time it takes for trust to grow.

So, take a moment here. Let what you have read settle in your body, not just your thoughts. Notice any small softening, any slight shift toward calm or clarity. These are not signs of arrival, but signs of direction.

Step Three will invite you to respond more intentionally to this growing awareness of God's nearness. But for now, let hope remain simple. Let it stay small enough to carry. You are not walking this path alone, and you do not have to be ready for everything that comes next.

We are still walking with you.

Step Three — Surrendered Will

We make a heartfelt decision to turn our lives and wills over to the care of God as we understand Him.



This step is not about resignation or giving up. It is about alignment. It is about coming back into right relationship with the God who made us and knows us more fully than we know ourselves. Surrender, as it is meant here, is not an act of defeat. It is an act of trust. It is the choice to allow the

heart, the mind, the body, and the spirit to move together again toward the One who created them.

For many of us, the word surrender carries fear. We have learned to associate it with loss, weakness, or danger. But Step Three invites a very different understanding. This surrender is not to chaos or abandonment. It is to a God who is safe, present, and deeply invested in our healing. It is the decision to stop living from the constant storm of self-protection and to rest, even tentatively, in Love that does not require us to manage everything alone.

Within the NeuroFaith® framework, this movement of surrender is never merely cognitive. It involves the whole person. The nervous system must be included. The heart must begin to soften. The breath must slow. The inner parts of us must sense that it is safe to come forward without fear of condemnation or rejection. Surrender often begins as a felt sense, a subtle bodily recognition that the burden we have been carrying does not have to be held the same way anymore.

To turn our will and our lives over to God is to release the exhausting illusion that we must be our own savior. It is to allow the nervous system to shift from hypervigilance into rest. It is to permit the heart's rhythm to move back toward coherence and peace. It is to invite the true self, the part of us made in God's image and likeness, to take its rightful place again.

So, when we say, "We make a decision," we are not speaking only of thought or intention. We are speaking of posture. Of orientation. Of the direction we choose to face.

It is a turning.
A leaning toward Love.
A willingness to be held.

In this turning, we return to the One who has been waiting for us, not with judgment or disappointment, but with gentleness. And the soul, long scattered by fear and effort, begins to come home.

Jesus names this invitation with tenderness. *"Come to Me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you. Let Me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."* Matthew 11:28 to 30.

Step Three is a critical movement in the Twelve Step process, not because it demands perfection, but because it restores direction. It has three distinct components, each inviting us more fully into trust, alignment, and life.

A. We make a heartfelt decision. We've all been here, perhaps hundreds of times, but this time is different. This time our decision is to surrender once and for all. Surrender means to give up, to stop where you are and what you're doing and decide "No more, I've had enough. I choose to quit living the way I've been living." Proverbs says it this way:

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight." Proverbs 3:5-6 (NIV)

B. We turn our lives and wills over to the care of God. Maybe you've tried this in the past, and it didn't hold. We believe that the problem isn't God but you not turning yourself completely over to Him and remaining in His care. That's the essence of Proverbs 3:5-6, but this goes a step further. 2 Chronicles spells this out well:

"If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land." 2 Chronicles 7:14 (NIV)

You may be reading this and think this passage only applies to Christians. You are mostly right, but you are missing a key point: God is already calling you to be His child and sees you in this relationship with Him before you do! God has already made a way for this to happen and is inviting you to join Him in it. Humility, confession, and repentance are the pathways to relationship and healing.

C. We turn our lives and wills over to the care of God as we know Him. The best way, God's preferred way, is that we get to know Him through His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus describes it this way:

“My Father has entrusted everything to Me. No one truly knows the Son except the Father, and no one truly knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.” Luke 10:22 (NLT)

Everything we need to know about God is revealed to us through Jesus Christ. Jesus said this very thing to Philip, one of His first disciples:

“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through Me. If you had really known Me, you would know who My Father is. From now on, you do know Him and have seen Him.... Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father!” John 14:6-7, 9 (NLT)

Three questions to answer before going forward. Record your answers in your journal.

1. Do you desire to turn your life and will completely over to Jesus Christ, who is God revealed to us?
2. Have you ever previously committed your life to Christ. What proof do you have to support this statement?
3. Do you believe Jesus can forgive you for your past failures and sins and give you a fresh start?

Five Practices for turning your life and will over to Jesus Christ:

1. Declare out loud that you are making this choice, this commitment, and believe it in your heart.

“If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is

by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved.” Romans 10:9-10 (NLT)

Declaration is a whole-person act involving my heart, mind, mouth, and ears. Declaring says I’m all in. This is not something I do alone but needs to be done in the presence of others I love and trust.

2. Express that belief in heartfelt words that communicate your commitment to Christ. In the Greek language, the language of the Bible, believe is the same word for trust. It’s more than just believing with my head on a bunch of facts but it’s placing myself fully into Christ’s hands from this day forward for all of eternity.

Write down your personal statement of belief in your journal.

3. To commit myself fully to Christ, I must repent, turn away from my sinful past and tendencies. (The word “sin” is an archery term that is used to describe an arrow missing the mark, missing the bulls eye.)

“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.” Acts 3:19 (NIV)

4. Recognize Jesus as your Savior, the One who paid the price for your sins, and as your Lord, and acknowledge Him as the One whom you will seek to obey for the rest of your life.

“All glory to Him who alone is God, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord. All glory, majesty, power, and authority are His before all time, and in the present, and beyond all time! Amen.”

Jude 1:25 (NLT)

A sample prayer for you to pray out loud: (So your ears will hear you say it, and your mind and heart can align with it.)

“God, I don’t understand everything yet, but I believe You love me and made me for Your purposes. I’m sorry I’ve lived for myself instead of for You. Please forgive me and thank You for sending Jesus to pay for my sins. I want Him to be the Lord of my life. I receive Your gifts of eternal life and Your Holy Spirit who helps me serve You and live a life that pleases You. Amen.”

Write down the date and time you prayed this prayer in your journal. Then please let us know you prayed this prayer. We rejoice with you and would like to pray for you and with you, and we would love to share some additional information with you at no charge which can help you grow in your newfound faith in Jesus. Jeff can be reached at jeffreyhansen@NeuroFaith.onmicrosoft.net. Earl can be reached at revhev@comcast.net

5. You step into the unknown, trusting that God’s plan for you is good, even when you can’t yet see it.

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

Welcome to the family of God!

The Lord directs the steps of the godly. He delights in every detail of their lives. Psalm 37:23 (NLT)

As you come to the end of this step, pause for a moment. Not to evaluate yourself, not to replay whether you did it perfectly, but simply to notice what has shifted inside you. Step Three is not measured by how strongly you felt or how clearly you understood everything. It is measured by your willingness to entrust yourself, even imperfectly, to a God who already knows you and loves you fully.

If you prayed these words with sincerity, we rejoice with you. Heaven rejoices with you. You have not merely said a prayer. You have turned toward relationship. You have chosen alignment over isolation, trust over self-protection, and life over control. That is holy ground.

If you are still hesitant, still processing, still unsure, you are not behind. God is not disappointed in you. Surrender unfolds at the pace of safety, and God is patient with the time it takes for trust to grow. What matters is that you are no longer walking away. You are turning toward. We want you to hear this clearly. We are proud of you.

Proud of your courage.

Proud of your honesty.

Proud of your willingness to step into something deeper than survival.

You are not alone in this. God walks with you. Christ intercedes for you. The Spirit strengthens you. And we walk alongside you as fellow travelers who know both the cost and the beauty of this road.

Step Three restores direction. It does not complete the journey. It simply orients the heart toward Love and allows the soul to breathe again.

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As we move forward, the work will become more specific and more practical. Step Four invites us to look honestly and compassionately at our inner world, not with condemnation, but with courage and curiosity. Because now, we do not look alone. We look with God.

Take your time. Let what has begun here settle. When you are ready, we will take the next step together.

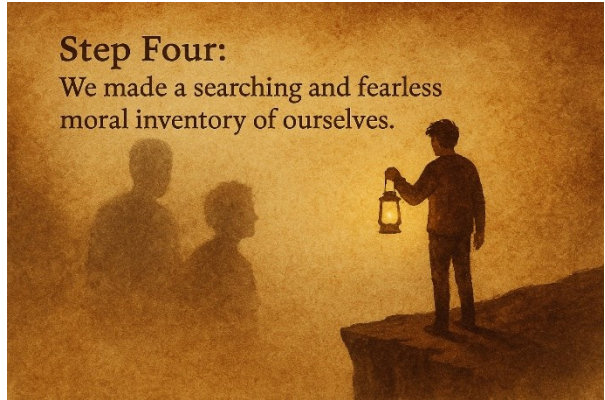
Turn gently toward Step Four.

Step Four — Courageous Self-Examination

We make a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

This step invites us to look within with honesty and courage, but it does not rush us or corner us. It is not an exercise in self-condemnation, nor is it an invitation to rehearse shame. It is an invitation to see clearly,

and to do so in the presence of safety. To make a moral inventory is to turn toward our inner world with care and curiosity, noticing what has been shaping our choices, reactions, patterns, and wounds, not to judge them, but to understand them.



We also want to acknowledge something important at the outset. If you take this step seriously, it may be painful and difficult at times. Looking honestly at ourselves often brings us face to face with regret, grief, and uncomfortable truths. Because of that, this step must be done with a measure of grace. Just as God extends grace to us, we are called to extend grace to ourselves. Grace does not mean avoidance, denial, or minimizing responsibility. It means refusing to punish ourselves while we tell the truth.

This kind of honesty requires gentleness. When we approach ourselves with harsh judgment or self-attack, the nervous system tightens and retreats into defense. The body braces, the breath shortens, and the

inner world goes quiet. But when we bring compassion, patience, and openness, the body begins to feel safe enough to tell the truth. This is where healing becomes possible. This is the heart of Polyvagal informed awareness, learning to stay grounded and regulated while we notice what is happening inside us.

In Step Four, we also begin to recognize the parts of ourselves that have been working hard to protect us. Some parts attempt to control. Others avoid. Others numb, distract, or escape. Internal Family Systems helps us understand that these parts are not failures or defects. They are survivors. They developed in response to pain, fear, and being overwhelmed. Step Four is not about attacking these parts or shaming them into submission. It is about listening to them with respect and learning what they have been trying to protect us from.

As we name our patterns and motivations with honesty and grace, something begins to shift. The heart settles. Clarity restores coherence. The inner world, long divided by fear and defense, begins to unify. Truth, when spoken without condemnation, has a freeing effect. We are not dissecting ourselves or tearing ourselves apart. We are remembering who we are beneath the fear, the defenses, and the pain.

This is a sacred inventory, and we do not do it alone. We do it with God, in the presence of a Love that does not turn away. God's role in this step is not to punish us for what we discover, but to walk with us into understanding, healing, and renewal. We tell the truth not to collapse into shame, but to release shame's hold on our lives.

Step Four is the beginning of seeing ourselves with accuracy, tenderness, and hope. It prepares the soul for healing that is not superficial or performative, but deep, honest, and lasting. Responsibility and grace walk together here. We take ownership of our

lives, and we do so without cruelty toward ourselves, trusting that we are held while we learn to see.

"Test me, O Lord, and try me, examine my heart and my mind; for your love is ever before me, and I walk continually in your truth." Psalm 26:2 (NIV)

A. This step is not for you to pursue on your own but is best accomplished in conjunction with an accountability partner, a sponsor.

Here are three biblical reasons for this:

1. Two are better than one.

"Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble....A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer." Ecclesiastes 4: 9, 10, 12 (NLT)

2. Two are able to bring out the best in each other.

"As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."
Proverbs 27:17 (NIV)

3. Two are able to motivate and inspire each other.

"Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works." Hebrews 10:24 (NLT)

B. The NeuroFaith® recovery process includes these five spiritual disciplines that are found throughout the rest of these 12 Steps. Record these five disciplines in your journal, make a decision to follow them, then keep track of your progress in engaging in them. The

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sooner you are able to activate these disciplines, the better you will be able to accomplish the NeuroFaith® 12 Step Process.

1. Maintain an honest view of reality as you proceed through the NeuroFaith® process. A sponsor and a strong support team are important resources for this to happen.
2. Make NeuroFaith® recovery meetings a priority, knowing that your sponsor will be there for you.
3. Maintain a program of personal spiritual growth through prayer, worship, Bible Study, and meditation.
4. A good sponsor or accountability partner will give you feedback on your progress, call you on any fallbacks, and celebrate your breakthroughs as you travel this path with them. Be confident that they'll confront you with love and the truth, not guilt or shame.
5. When you are ready, get involved in serving others as a sponsor or accountability partner.

C. Make a list in your journal of all the significant events in your life, good and bad, and allow God to show you your part in them and how they have affected you and others.

This is the process of making a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you and lead me along the path of everlasting life.” Psalm 139:23-24 (NLT)

Five practices for completing part C:

1. Do not do this on your own! You need someone to keep you balanced and objective in this step. No one can do this work for you, but you will need the encouragement along the way from someone who will affirm your progress and hold you accountable.
2. Set aside a specific time with yourself, clearing your mind from the current issues you are facing and open your heart and mind to feel the pain of the past you have either blocked or denied exists. Use these questions to help guide you and record your answers in your journal:
 - a. What do I feel guilty about?
 - b. What/who do I resent?
 - c. What /who do I fear?
 - d. What are my traps in self-pity or stinkin' thinkin'?
3. Rely on Jesus Christ to give you the courage and strength necessary to finish this exercise. God alone knows everything about us, even things we've buried, denied, or tried to forget.

O Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I'm far away. You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do. You know what I am going to say even before I say it, Lord. Psalm 139:1-4 (NLT)

Christ has provided everything we need to be set free from all that has bound us in our past, is binding us in the present and will seek to bind us in the future.

He gave His life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, and to make us His very own people, totally committed to doing good deeds.

Titus 2:14 (NLT)

Keep in mind that Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before His eyes, and He is the one to whom we are accountable.” Hebrews 4:13 (NLT)

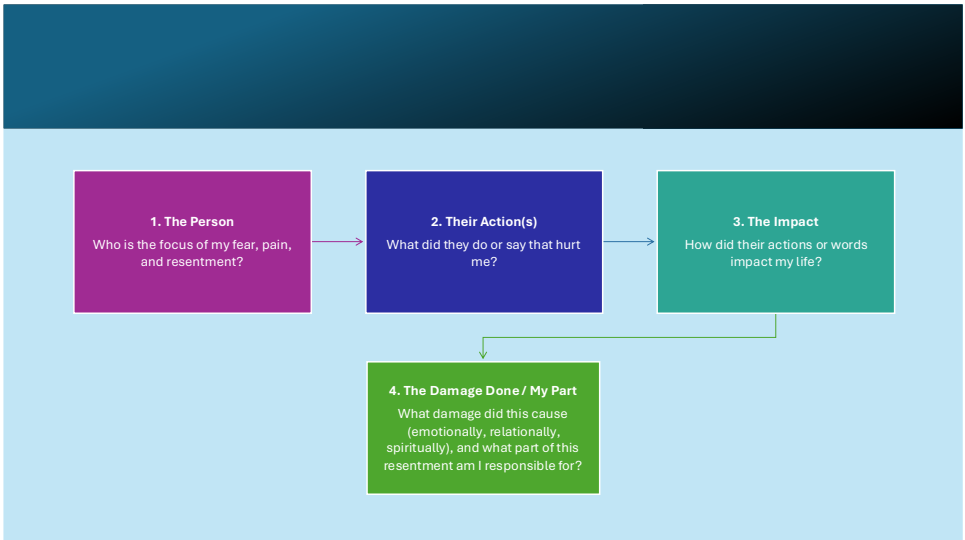
4. Analyze your past honestly. All of us deal with hidden faults, but it is God who wants to expose them and deliver you from them.

“How can I know all the sins lurking in my heart? Cleanse me from these hidden faults. Keep your servant from deliberate sins! Don’t let them control me. Then I will be free of guilt and innocent of great sin. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.” Psalm 19:12–14 (NLT)

5. List the good and the bad. Keep your inventory balanced so you don’t distort your inventory and expose yourself to unnecessary pain and guilt.

D. Create your own Two-part **NeuroFaith®** Recovery Inventory:

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Part One of the inventory addresses the hurts and harm caused by others upon us. Record each one as you ask the Lord to reveal them to you making sure to cover all four areas. You may already have a list of those who have harmed you, but now is the time to address that list and analyze exactly what transpired. Leave plenty of space in your journal as you record these. Do not hurry through this but trust the Holy Spirit to guide you. Once you have completed this list, submit it in its entirety to the Lord, asking Him to guide you in the healing process.

Part Two of the inventory addresses the hurts and harm you have caused others.

1. The person: to whom have I caused fear, pain, or resentment?
2. My actions: what did I do or say that hurt them?
3. The impact: how did my words or actions impact their life?
4. The damage done: what damage did my words or actions do to the other person?

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Again, leave plenty of space in your journal as you record these. Do not hurry through this but trust the Holy Spirit to guide you. Once you have completed this list, submit it in its entirety to the Lord, asking Him to guide you in the healing process of the Steps that follow.

Before you move on, pause here for a moment.

You have just engaged in one of the most demanding and courageous steps in the recovery journey. You chose to look honestly at your life, your wounds, your patterns, and your impact. That kind of truth telling is not easy, and it is not common. It requires strength, humility, and a willingness to trust that healing is possible.

If this work stirred grief, anger, regret, or tenderness, let that be a sign that you are doing it sincerely. Do not rush past what you are feeling, and do not punish yourself for what you have discovered. Responsibility and grace belong together. You are called to own your story, but you are not called to be cruel to yourself while doing so.

Remember this. Nothing you have written has surprised God. Nothing you have uncovered has pushed Him away. You are not more broken than you were before you began this step. You are simply more honest. And honesty, when held in the presence of love, becomes the doorway to freedom.

We want you to hear this clearly. We are proud of you for doing this work. Proud of your courage. Proud of your willingness to face the truth without collapsing into shame or denial. That posture itself is evidence that healing is already underway.

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Do not hurry to fix, explain, or justify what you have written. Step Four is about seeing. Step Five will be about sharing and releasing. For now, allow your body to settle. Take a breath. Let your heart rest in the knowledge that you are not alone in what you have uncovered.

When you are ready, we will take the next step together. Step Five invites what has been written in honesty to be brought into relationship, where truth is met with grace, and healing deepens through connection.

There is no rush. Take the time you need. And when you are ready, turn gently toward Step Five.

Step Five — Confession and Truth-Telling

We admit to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.



There comes a point in the healing journey where honesty must begin to move from the inside out. Up to this point, much of the work has happened quietly, often in silence, as we reviewed our

story with God and faced our memories, patterns, and pain in prayer and reflection. That private honesty matters deeply. But healing was never meant to end there. Step Five gently calls us into relationship, into shared space, where restoration unfolds in the presence of another human being.

This step is not about shame. It is about integration.

Trauma teaches the nervous system to hide. In order to survive, we learn to compartmentalize our experience, tucking fear into one place, guilt into another, anger into another, and numbness into still another. These inner rooms help us endure what once felt overwhelming. But over time, hiding fragments us. When parts of our story remain unspoken, the heart stays guarded, the body stays vigilant, and peace feels distant and fragile.

Step Five is where fragmentation begins to heal.

When we speak the truth of our story out loud, in the presence of someone who remains calm, compassionate, and grounded, the body receives a new message. I am not alone here. The nervous system responds. The polyvagal system senses safety. The heart rate begins to soften. Breathing steadies. The muscles of the chest and shoulders relax. What once felt threatening becomes bearable. What once felt unbearable becomes shareable. And what once felt defining begins, slowly, to loosen its grip.

This is not confession for condemnation. It is confession for release. To admit the exact nature of our wrongs is to name, with clarity and honesty, both the harm we caused and the pain that drove us to cause it. We do not do this to excuse our behavior, and we do not do it to shame ourselves. We do it to see the whole story, the wound and the reaction together, held in truth and grace.

In the language of Internal Family Systems, this is the Self emerging, calm, curious, and compassionate. The parts of us that have carried fear, addiction, secrecy, or self hatred finally exhale in the presence of love. They begin to trust that they no longer have to survive alone. When truth is spoken in safety, shame loses its power. Something sacred happens here.

Shame breaks, not by force, but by being seen. We speak our story. God listens. A trusted witness listens. And, often for the first time, we listen to ourselves with compassion rather than contempt. In that held space, the nervous system begins to reorganize around truth spoken in love rather than fear. Patterns shaped by trauma and secrecy begin to unwind. The heart becomes capable of coherence again. The mind becomes capable of clarity. The soul remembers what peace feels like.

This is what HeartMath® describes as a return to coherence, when the heart and brain begin communicating in a steady, regulated rhythm that supports emotional stability, clarity, and connection. Scripture has always called this peace.

Step Five is not a courtroom. It is a homecoming. We do not confess to be rejected. We confess to become whole. By sharing our burdens, we release the shame that has kept us trapped and receive the forgiveness already secured for us through Jesus Christ.

You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for He forgave all our sins. He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. In this way, He disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by His victory over them on the cross. Colossians 2:13-15 (NLT)

A. Confessing Our Sins to God.

After writing out the inventories in Step four, we have to deal with what we have written. This begins with the sins we identified in the second inventory then confessing them to God. This includes our shortcomings, resentments and failures. Sin is first and foremost an offense against God, so coming to Him first opens the door for complete repentance, forgiveness and healing.

Key: God already knows everything we've done, so confessing these things to Him is really just admitting to Him and agreeing with Him about what He already knows.

Read Psalm 32:1-5 aloud that is printed on the next page, and let the results of confession demonstrated in it convince your heart and mind to enter into this process humbly but confident of its outcome:

Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight! Yes, what joy for those whose record the Lord has cleared of guilt, whose lives are lived in complete honesty! When I refused to confess my sin, my body wasted away, and I groaned all day long. Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat. Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide my guilt. I said to myself, "I will confess my rebellion to the Lord." And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone.

B. Confessing our sins to ourselves.

We can only confess to God those sins that we have already admitted and confessed to ourselves. We have to own each one by admitting and confessing them to ourselves then bringing the offense and our admission of guilt to Him for forgiveness and healing.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9 (NIV)

Confessing our sins to God includes confessing and admitting them to ourselves. There is no place here for minimizing the offense, telling ourselves it's not that bad or that other people do it. Anything that falls short of God's plans and desires for our lives is a sin. God is faithful and just, completely forgiving that which we have committed against Him. *In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.* Ephesians 1:7 (NIV)

Here is a sample prayer you can pray: "Lord, I accept responsibility for my sin _____. I have done what is evil in Your sight. I repent of _____ and ask You to forgive me. Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean through the shed blood of Jesus."

C. Confessing our sins and wrongs to another person.

This opens the door to a greater complete healing.

Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results. James 5:16 (NLT)

This step is not admitting our wrongs to another person in order for them to forgive us, but it allows them to affirm the forgiveness we've already received from God. Sharing our secrets, struggles and failures with another person is part of God's healing plan for us. We are not meant to walk this road to recovery alone.

The power of secrets is based on a lie: "If I don't talk about it, no one else will know." The truth about secrets is what Jesus told His followers, ***"The time is coming when everything that is covered up will be revealed, and all that is secret will be made known to all. Whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered behind closed doors will be shouted from the housetops for all to hear!"*** Luke 12:2-3 (NLT)

Secrets keep us in chains by thinking we can hide the truth from God and others, but admitting and confessing our secrets breaks the bondage those sins create in our lives and opens the door for our complete forgiveness, healing and restoration.

D. Return to your personal inventory and determine if you have kept any secret sins off the list.

If you are not ready to do this now, you can do this later. God is always ready to pour out His forgiveness when you are ready to acknowledge the secret sins.

Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord"—and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Psalm 32:5 (NIV)

Questions for personal application:

1. What is your biggest fear in sharing your inventories with another person?
2. List three people you are considering sharing your inventories with. List the pros and cons of each one, and then ask the Lord to show you which one He wants you to contact.
3. Establish a time and quiet place that will work for you to share your inventories with the other person, then go for it.

Do not be in a hurry. True healing is available, but it can take time to get there.

E. Repeat this process with the first inventory (those who offended or hurt you), once you have completed the second inventory process.

As you come to the end of this step, pause and let yourself breathe. What you have just done takes courage that many people never summon. You have allowed truth to move out of hiding and into relationship. You have named what was once locked inside. That matters more than you may yet realize.

If this step felt vulnerable, tender, or emotionally exhausting, that is not a sign that something went wrong. It is a sign that you showed up honestly. Confession done in safety has a way of stirring both relief and fatigue. Give yourself permission to rest. Healing does not deepen through pressure. It deepens through patience.

We want to say this clearly and without hesitation. We are proud of you. Proud of your willingness to speak the truth. Proud of your humility. Proud of your courage to let yourself be seen. This step breaks isolation and weakens shame's grip, not because you were perfect in it, but because you were real.

Remember that what you have shared has already been met by grace. God has not withdrawn from you in this process. He has drawn nearer. The forgiveness secured for you in Christ is not fragile or conditional. It is complete. What you have done here is not to earn forgiveness, but to receive it more fully and allow it to take root in your life.

Do not rush to move on. Let what has been spoken settle in your body and heart. Notice any softening, any sense of relief, any quiet clarity. These are signs of integration beginning to take hold.

As we prepare to move forward, know this. Step Six will not ask you to fix yourself or to force change through willpower. It will invite you to consider what you are now willing to release and allow God to transform. It is a step of readiness, not effort. Of openness, not control. You are not behind. You are exactly where this work leads when it is done honestly. We are walking with you. God is with you. And what lies ahead is not exposure, but freedom.

Do not be in a hurry to work through the process of forgiving others who have harmed you. It is important for you to address each individual and each offense, declaring your willingness to forgive them to yourself, to the Lord, and to another person

When you are ready, we will take the next step together

Step Six — Readiness for Transformation

We are entirely ready to have God remove all these defects in our character and replace them with righteousness.



Step Six is not about effort. It is not about trying harder to be better, stronger, or more disciplined. For many of us, effort has been the very thing that kept us stuck. We pushed, resisted, and fought against ourselves, hoping force would bring freedom. But when we fight ourselves, the nervous system tightens, the heart rhythm becomes jagged, and stress ripples through the body. Old neural pathways reinforce themselves, and the body learns to brace rather than open. The harder we push, the more the

system locks down.

Step Six invites a different way.

Healing does not come through force. Healing comes through release. At this point in the journey, something important has already shifted. You have told the truth. You have brought what was hidden into the light. You have allowed your story to be witnessed without rejection. Now, Step Six invites you to notice that you no longer have to survive the way you once did. The patterns that once protected you no longer need to be gripped with fear or urgency. You are not being asked to rip them away. You are being invited to loosen your hold.

Neuroscience helps us understand why this matters. When we approach ourselves with kindness rather than condemnation, the nervous system receives a signal of safety. The polyvagal system shifts out of threat and into connection. The heart responds as well. When the heart experiences goodness, mercy, and righteousness, its rhythm begins to smooth and synchronize. HeartMath® describes this as coherence, a state where the heart and brain communicate in a steady, ordered pattern associated with peace, clarity, and emotional stability.

Scripture has always named this truth in relational language. The kindness and goodness of God are not abstract ideas. They are regulating forces. When we trust in God's righteousness rather than striving to manufacture our own, the body begins to rest. The heart settles. The mind becomes clearer. Peace is not forced. It is received. Step Six, then, is about readiness. It is about becoming willing to let God remove what no longer serves us, not through pressure or self-attack, but through love. Willingness creates space. Kindness keeps the space open. God does the transforming work.

You are not being asked to change yourself here. You are being asked to trust that God is good, that His ways are safe, and that release is healthier than control. This step invites you to place your nervous system, your heart, and your habits into the care of a God whose goodness brings life.

We are walking with you in this step. There is no rush. No demand for perfection. Just an invitation to open your hands a little more and allow the peace of God to do its quiet work in you.

This is where effort gives way to readiness.
This is where striving yields to trust.
This is where healing becomes embodied.

A. This is the gift of allowing.

It is voluntarily submitting to every change God wants to make in our lives and humbly asking Him to remove our character defects.

The early Christian contemplatives understood this, and so did many of the Eastern mystics, that freedom comes when we unclench the heart. When we stop trying to control transformation and simply allow God to work, the soul exhale is unmistakable. It is a surrender that does not defeat, it *restores*.

This step is where we say to God:

“I am willing. I am not fighting anymore. I trust You to heal me from the inside out.”

Not perfectly willing. Not flawlessly willing. Just *open*.
And God meets openness with grace.

Scripture holds this truth tenderly:

“Be still and know that I am God.” Psalms 46:10

Be still — not strive.

Know — not force.

Allow — not fight.

In stillness, we remember we are held. In release, we remember we are safe. In surrender, we remember we are loved.

Step 6 is not the work of *fixing* ourselves. It is the work of letting God restore us into who we have always truly been.

Key: God is a gentleman and will never force Himself into an area of your life where He has not been invited. God will not come in where He is not welcomed.

B. Addressing our character flaws

This step is more than helping us no longer do wrong but addresses the very character defects that caused us to sin. This is the power and process of transformation.

“And we all... are being transformed into His image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” ² Corinthians 3:18 (NIV)

This transformation began the moment we received Jesus Christ into our hearts as our Savior and Lord.

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.” Ezekiel 36:26 (NIV)

Our new heart and new spirit are already in place. Our new heart replaced the heart of stone. Our new spirit (spirit-man), which is eternal, replaced our original spirit that was dead due to sin.

Jesus identified the role of a sinful heart:

“For from within, out of a person’s heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, lustful desires, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. All these vile things come from within; they are what defile you.” Mark 7:21-23 (NLT)

Together they represent the sinful nature that has been replaced by our new eternal nature, which is made in God’s image and as He originally intended us to be. Take a moment to stop and thank the Lord for the new heart and spirit He has given you.

“Thank You, Lord, that my heart of stone has been replaced with a heart that is tender and open to You. Thank You that my spirit-man is now alive in You and with You for eternity!”

“We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin.” Romans 6:6 (NIV)

C. We recognize that our old nature has been removed, and we put on our new nature. This was so beautifully described by the Apostle Paul: *“Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from Him, throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.” Ephesians 4:22-24 (NLT)*

The Greek words reflect how replacing our old nature with our new nature is like taking off an old filthy garment and putting on a completely new one. Step 6 is allowing God to do just this...putting on our new nature through renewing our thoughts and attitudes. Only the Spirit can do this work, but we must allow Him full access to our inner selves.

Here is a sample prayer you can pray to voluntarily submit yourself to God's Spirit.

"Thank you, Lord, for bringing me this far in my recovery. Thank You for never giving up on me, and I'm trusting that You never will. Lord, I'm ready for You to do whatever You need to do to heal all my fears, failures and shortcomings. Give me the strength and the courage to deal with each character flaw You bring to my attention, that I turn over each one to You. Help me accept these changes and give me the grace to trust You and praise You for each one as I become more like You. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen."

Steps to complete this process:

1. List the areas in your life that you have already been able to turn over to Jesus Christ, including those areas of unforgiveness toward yourself and toward others who have harmed you and write down the reasons.
 2. List the areas in your life you are still holding on to and write down the reasons: "Why am I holding on to this?"
 3. List the positive changes you have already seen in your life. What are some additional areas of change you would like to make regarding your personal life, your family, your job, etc.?
- D. Submit yourself to the changes God wants to make

The process of character change takes time and continues throughout our lives on this planet. Remember this key passage from Romans 12:

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of

this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.” Romans 12:1-2 (NIV) Character transformation originates with the Holy Spirit and emanates through our heart, mind and body.

1. Do not be in a hurry. This is a process.
2. Return to #1 in the previous list on page 110 and identify which character defect you want to work on first. Ask God if this the one He wants you to work on!
3. Change your thinking about this character flaw and identify the right attitude or attribute you want to replace it with.
4. Turn the character defect, which is part of your old nature, over to the Lord, and stop relying on your willpower. This is where the phrase, “Let go and let God.” is most fitting.
5. Do not look for perfection but rejoice in steady progress. God will complete the work He began in you!

“I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.” Philippians 1:6 (NIV)

6. Do not do the change journey alone.

Be confident in the relationships you've developed thus far and remain transparent with them.

As you come to the end of this step, pause and notice what has begun to settle inside you. Step Six is quiet in its power. Nothing dramatic may have happened on the surface, yet something essential has shifted underneath. You have moved from fighting yourself to allowing God to work. From striving to trusting. From bracing to opening.

This readiness is not something you manufactured. It grew as you told the truth, released control, and allowed kindness to meet you where you are. By becoming willing to let God remove what no longer serves you and replace it with righteousness, you have given your nervous system permission to rest. The heart steadies. The body senses safety. The soul begins to feel grounded rather than driven

This is not passivity. It is alignment.

You are learning to relate to yourself without judgment, to notice your imperfections without condemnation, and to trust that God's work in you is steady and faithful. That posture creates stability. It gives you a place to stand. You are no longer defining yourself by what you are trying to get rid of, but by what God is already forming within you.

Righteousness, as Scripture describes it, is not something we achieve through effort. It is something we receive and grow into as we remain open to God's transforming presence. And as righteousness takes root, it brings peace, clarity, and confidence that does not depend on perfection.

"The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever." Isaiah 32:17 (NIV)

This peace is not the absence of struggle. It is the presence of trust. It is the settled assurance that God is at work even when change feels slow. That assurance is what allows us to move forward without fear. Step Seven builds naturally from here. It does not ask you to fix what remains or to scrutinize yourself more closely. It invites humility, not humiliation. It invites cooperation with God's grace, trusting that what He has begun, He is faithful to complete.

You are not behind. You are not failing. You are becoming ready. Take a breath. Let what has been established here hold you. And when you are ready, we will take the next step together.

Turn gently toward Step Seven.

Step Seven — Humble Dependence

We humbly ask Him to remove our shortcomings.



In Step Six, something essential begins to soften. We become willing. Not perfect. Not finished. Simply willing. This is the internal shift where resistance loosens and the heart begins to open. We stop fighting our patterns and stop trying to change ourselves

through force. And when that struggle eases, the body responds.

The nervous system relaxes. The breath deepens. The mind becomes clearer. In neuroscience terms, the body moves out of defense and into receiving. The heart rate settles. The prefrontal cortex comes back online. We are no longer braced against our own healing. Step Six is where we quietly say, “God, I am open. I am willing to let You do what my effort alone has never been able to accomplish.”

Step Seven is where that inward openness becomes relational action.

Now that the body is no longer resisting, we are able to ask. Not from desperation. Not from shame. Not from pressure to be better. We ask from trust. From the growing awareness that God is already for us,

already present, already moving. In this step, we come to understand the relationship more clearly. God is the power. We are the participant.

The image is less about striving and more about alignment. Like two gears designed to work together, one carries the force and motion, and the other is shaped to receive that power and move with it. Christ provides the movement. We are created to align with it.

For the gears to turn smoothly, they must be aligned.

When we fight, brace, or strain, the inner world tightens. The nervous system constricts. Heart rate variability drops. Stress hormones rise. The mind becomes chaotic or shuts down. Protector parts step in to overmanage, control, criticize, or numb. And when those strategies fail, we often find ourselves acting out in ways we later regret. This is not because we are weak, but because our system is overwhelmed.

As God begins to remove our shortcomings, something important happens internally. The Inner Critic no longer has to shout to keep us in line. The manager parts no longer have to work overtime to prevent collapse. The firefighter parts no longer need to rush in to extinguish unbearable pressure. In the language of Internal Family Systems, these parts are finally allowed to rest. They begin to trust that transformation no longer depends on their vigilance.

When that inner gripping releases, the body shifts into peace and receptivity. From this place, asking God to remove our shortcomings is no longer a demand or a bargaining attempt. It becomes a joining with His movement. A cooperation with grace.

We show up.

We say yes.

We attune to His presence.

And He provides the power.

Step Seven is not about effort. It is about humility. It is about alignment. It is about trusting that the same God who has carried you this far is able to continue the work, gently and faithfully, as you remain open.

Step 7 is not passive; it is *participatory surrender*. It is the moment where our willingness becomes relationship, where our openness becomes trust, where our healing shifts from something we *attempt* to something we *receive*.

This is how transformation actually happens in the human person:

God moves,
and we move with Him.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify (cleanse) us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9 (NIV)

A. Submit yourself to the changes God wants to make.

The process of character change takes time and continues throughout our entire lives on this planet. Remember this key passage from Romans 12:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and

approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:1–2 (NIV)

Character transformation originates with the Holy Spirit and then flows through our heart, mind and body.

1. Do not be in a hurry. This is a process.
2. Review the list of character defects you developed in Step 6 and identify which one you want to work on first, then ask God if this is the one He wants you to work on.
3. Change your thinking about this character flaw and identify the right attitude or attribute you want to replace it with.
4. Turn the character defect, which is part of your old nature, over to the Lord, and stop relying on your willpower. This is where the phrase, “Let go and let God” is most fitting.
5. Do not look for perfection but rejoice in the process you have begun. God will complete the work.

I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns. Philippians 1:6 (NIV)

6. Do not work on this change journey alone. Review each step with your accountability partner before moving forward. Be confident in the relationships you have developed thus far and remain transparent with them.

As you come to the close of this step, pause for a moment and notice what has begun to change, even if it feels quiet or subtle. Step Seven does not announce itself with dramatic breakthroughs. Its work is steadier and deeper. You have practiced humility without humiliation. You have learned to ask

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without demanding. You have allowed God to do what effort alone could never accomplish.

This is not weakness. This is strength rightly ordered.

By humbly asking God to remove your shortcomings, you have stepped out of control and into alignment. You have trusted that transformation is not something you force, but something you cooperate with. That posture brings steadiness. It gives your nervous system permission to remain open rather than braced. It allows your heart to stay receptive rather than guarded.

You may even notice the effects of this in your body. When humility replaces striving and trust replaces control, the nervous system receives a signal of safety. The body no longer has to stay on high alert. Breathing becomes fuller. The heart rhythm steadies. The mind gains clarity rather than urgency. This is not coincidence. It is the body responding to alignment, to goodness, to the kindness of God.

In this regulated state, change becomes sustainable. When the nervous system is calm and the heart is coherent, we are far less likely to react from old patterns or defend against truth. Instead, we are able to remain present, receptive, and grounded as God continues His work. This is why Step Seven matters so deeply. It does not just shape belief. It reshapes the body's readiness for lasting transformation.

You are learning how change actually happens. Not through self-judgment. Not through relentless effort. But through honesty, humility, and trust. God moves, and you move with Him.

Let yourself rest here for a moment.

What comes next will grow naturally from this place of openness. Step Eight does not ask you to scrutinize yourself more harshly or to repair the past through sheer effort. It invites readiness for relational healing, grounded in

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the stability you are now developing. Because when the heart is settled and the body feels safe, we are finally able to face our relationships with clarity, courage, and compassion.

There is no rush. Healing unfolds in sequence for a reason.

Take a breath. Let what God is doing continue its quiet work within you. And when you are ready, we will take the next step together.

Turn gently toward Step Eight.

Step Eight — Willingness to Make Amends

We make a list of all persons we have harmed and become willing to make amends to them all.



Step Eight: A Relational Turning

Step Eight marks an important shift in the healing journey. Up to this point, much of the work has focused on what happens within us — telling the truth, releasing resistance, and allowing God to do the transforming work we could not do on our own. Now, that healing begins to move outward into our relationships.

This step unfolds in two distinct but connected movements.

In Part A, we turn toward those we have harmed. We become willing to acknowledge the impact of our actions and to consider amends where it is appropriate and safe.

In Part B, the outward movement continues in another direction. We turn toward those who have harmed us and begin the process of forgiveness — not to excuse what was done, but to release ourselves from the burden of carrying unresolved pain.

Both movements matter. One addresses responsibility. The other addresses release. Together, they form a single step toward relational healing. Neither is rushed. Neither is forced. Both are guided by wisdom, safety, and grace.

With that orientation in mind, we begin with Part A.

Step 8: Part A



In Step 6, we opened our hearts to the possibility of change. In Step 7, we turned outward toward God, asking Him to do the healing work within us that we could not do on our own. And now in Step 8, that same outward movement continues, but this time toward the people in our lives. Healing has begun inside of us, and now it begins to extend beyond us.

This step is not about revisiting shame or condemning ourselves. It is about gently acknowledging that our pain did not stay contained within us, but it also touched others as well. The ways we protected ourselves,

defended ourselves, numbed ourselves, or survived may have caused harm along the way. Step 8A invites us to look at this truth with honesty, but also with compassion. Not the harsh inner critic. Not the self-blaming judge. But the healing, grounded Self, the one who is learning how to live in peace.

We do not make this list to punish ourselves. We make it because healing is relational. The work God is doing in us is meant to ripple outward into the world around us. As the nervous system settles, as the heart becomes softer and more secure, as we begin to live from a place of openness rather than survival, we are now able to see others with clearer eyes. We can acknowledge the impact of our actions without collapsing into guilt or defensiveness. This is the fruit of the inner work already happening.

Step 8A does not yet require us to act. It simply asks us to become willing to open the door to the possibility of restoration. Some relationships may be repairable. Some may not. Some may require time, wisdom, and boundaries. But willingness is the posture that says, “I am no longer hiding. I am no longer avoiding. I am allowing love to move through me.”

This is the preparation for redemption, the steadying of the heart for reconciliation where it is possible and safe. God has begun mending us from the inside. Step 8 is where we prepare to let that healing flow outward.

Not rushed.

Not forced.

Just open and willing.

Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. Matthew 5:23-24 (NIV)

1. Making your amends is the beginning of the end of your isolation.

We have already listed the hurts, resentments, and wrongs others have caused us. Now we address the wrongs we have caused others to endure.

a. Return to your inventory #2 (Step 4) and you will find the list of people to whom you owe amends. Before you go further, ask the Lord to reveal to you any other people you need to add, then make your list.

“Treat others the way you would like them to treat you.” Luke 6:31 (TLB)

b. Meet with your accountability partner and allow them to assure you that your motives are on track. He can give you valuable feedback and encourage you in this step.

We who are strong must be considerate of those who are sensitive about things like this. We must not just please ourselves. We should help others do what is right and build them up in the Lord. Romans 15:1-2 (NLT)

To be completely free from resentment, anger, shame, and guilt, we must give and accept forgiveness in all areas of our lives. Failure to do this stalls our recovery and leaves it incomplete.

“And forgive us our sins as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us.” Matthew 6:12 (NLT)

2. Fill in the worksheet to begin making amends:

Amends and Restoration Worksheet

Owe amends to: _____

Offense: _____

God's forgiveness ☐ Yes ☐ In process ☐ Not yet

Self-forgiveness ☐ Yes ☐ In process ☐ Not yet

3. Prayerfully ask the Lord to guide and direct you in how to make amends with each person.

After writing down the person's name and your offense toward them, take a moment to search your heart and mind, making sure you can confidently check the boxes in the last two sections before proceeding. If there is a check or hesitation, take a moment and revisit the steps on these key principles.

As you continue praying, ask God to direct the time and the place for making amends with each person as possible. Review this list with your accountability partner before moving to Step 9A.

If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and He will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. James 1:5 (NLT)

Before going on to Step 8B, continue the work you have done on 8A by completing Step 9A on p. 132.

Step 8B:

Step 8B continues the outward movement begun in Step 8A, but this time it turns in a different direction. We now face the people in our lives who have hurt, wounded, or offended us. Healing continues inside of us, and once again, it begins to move beyond us.

This step is not about revisiting shame or condemning ourselves for what others have done to us. It is about gently acknowledging that pain did not stay contained within us. The wounds we carry, especially when they remain unresolved, often shape how we see ourselves, how we relate to others, and how we experience God. The ways we protected ourselves, defended ourselves, or numbed ourselves in response to harm may have created additional suffering, both internally and relationally. Step 8B invites us to look at this truth honestly, but always with compassion.

In Internal Family Systems language, this is often where the inner critic becomes more visible. This part may have developed in response to trauma, violation, or abandonment. At first, it may have tried to protect us by keeping us alert, guarded, or self-controlled. But over time, when it grows too strong or unchecked, it can turn harsh and destructive. It may tell us we are to blame for what happened. It may insist we should be over it by now. It may replay accusations that keep us bound to the past.

A mild inner critic can sometimes motivate growth. But when it becomes dominant, it no longer protects. It condemns. And condemnation does not come from God. Left unresolved, this voice can align more closely with accusation than truth, eroding hope and

undermining healing. That is why forgiveness is not optional for inner freedom. It is essential.

Step 8B invites us to approach this work not from the harsh inner critic, saying, ***“I am to blame for what happened to me,”*** and not from the self-judging voice that says, ***“I should be able to just get over this.”*** Instead, we are invited to move from the grounded, healing Self, the part of us that is learning to live in peace and truth. From this place, we can say, ***“I have been forgiven by God. I am learning to forgive myself. And I am becoming willing to forgive those who caused me harm.”***

This is not denial. It is not minimizing what happened. And it is not forced reconciliation. It is further preparation for redemption, the steadying of the heart for reconciliation where it is possible and safe. God has continued mending us from the inside. Step 8B is where we prepare to let that healing flow outward, even toward those who have wounded us, without placing ourselves back in danger.

Jesus speaks clearly about the spiritual weight of forgiveness, not as a threat, but as an invitation into freedom:

“For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.” Matthew 6:14–15 (NIV)

Forgiveness does not mean excusing sin. It means releasing ourselves from carrying the burden of it. It loosens the grip of resentment, accusation, and self-destruction, and allows God’s justice and mercy to take their rightful place.

As you walk through this process, remember to do so with genuine love, not forced sentimentality, but honest goodwill. God loves you both deeply and desires restoration, whether that restoration takes the form of reconciliation, boundary-setting, or inner release.

“Love prospers when a fault is forgiven, but dwelling on it separates close friends.” Proverbs 17:9 (NLT)

Step 8B is not about forgetting the past. It is about refusing to let the past continue to rule your inner world. This is how the inner critic loses its power. This is how peace begins to take root. And this is how healing continues to move outward, guided by truth, grace, and the love of Christ.

The Apostle Paul gives us this warning when dealing with the harm done to us by others: ***Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone. Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God.*** Romans 12:17–19 (NLT)

1. Offering forgiveness to those who have harmed you brings you closer to the end of your isolation.

a. Return to your inventory #1 (Step 4) and you will find the list of people who have harmed you. Before you go further, ask the Lord to reveal to you any other people you need to add, then make your list.

“Treat others the way you would like them to treat you.” Luke 6:31 (TLB)

b. Meet with your accountability partner and allow them to assure you that your motives are on track. He can give you valuable feedback and encourage you in this step.

We who are strong must be considerate of those who are sensitive about things like this. We must not just please ourselves. We should help others do what is right and build them up in the Lord. Romans 15:1-2 (NLT)

To be completely free from resentment, anger, shame, and guilt, we must give and accept forgiveness in all areas of our lives. Failure to do this stalls our recovery and leaves it incomplete.

“And forgive us our sins as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us.” Matthew 6:12 (NLT)

2. Fill in the following worksheet to begin offering forgiveness to others:

Forgiveness Inventory – make a list as follows:

1. I need to forgive:

2. Their offense:

3. I've acknowledged God's forgiveness for this offense:

☐ Yes ☐ In process ☐ Not yet

4. I've forgiven them for this offense:

☐ Yes ☐ In process ☐ Not yet

3. Prayerfully ask the Lord to guide and direct you in offering forgiveness to each person.

After writing down the person's name and their offense, take a moment to search your heart and mind making sure you can confidently check the boxes in the next two columns before proceeding. If there is a check or hesitation, take a moment and revisit the steps on these key principles.

As you continue praying, ask God to direct the time and the place for meeting with each person as possible. Review this list with your accountability partner before moving to Step 9B

If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and He will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. James 1:5 (NLT)

Once you finish Step 8B, continue with the process in 9B on p. 60

Bringing Step Eight Together

Step Eight brings together two movements that were never meant to be separated. In Part A, we turned toward those we have harmed and became willing to take responsibility for the impact of our actions. In Part B, we turned toward those who have harmed us and became willing to forgive, not to excuse what happened, but to free ourselves from carrying its weight. Together, these movements complete a single relational arc of healing.

Responsibility without forgiveness leads to shame.

Forgiveness without responsibility leads to avoidance.

Step Eight holds both with wisdom, humility, and grace.

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” Ephesians 4:32 (NIV)

“Make allowance for each other’s faults and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.” Colossians 3:13 (NLT)

As these two movements come together, something important happens not only spiritually, but physically and emotionally as well. When unresolved guilt, resentment, and accusation begin to loosen their grip, the nervous system receives a powerful signal of safety. The body no longer has to stay guarded or hypervigilant. The autonomic system shifts out of chronic defense and into regulation. Breath deepens. Muscle tension softens. The heart rhythm steadies.

This is what coherence feels like.

When we live in unresolved conflict, either with others or within ourselves, the heart remains unsettled and the body stays on alert. But as responsibility is owned and forgiveness is extended, the inner world begins to organize around peace rather than threat. The heart and brain communicate more clearly. Emotional reactions become less reactive and more grounded. We are able to stay present instead of bracing or withdrawing.

This is not weakness.

This is strength restored.

Step Eight is not about fixing every relationship or forcing reconciliation where it is not safe or wise. It is about restoring integrity within ourselves. It is about removing the barriers that keep us isolated, guarded, and divided inside. As those barriers fall, connection becomes possible again, first within our own heart, then with God, and then, where appropriate, with others.

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You have done courageous work here. You have faced both sides of the relational wound, the harm you have caused and the harm you have endured. That honesty creates stability. That stability creates freedom. And that freedom becomes the foundation for the steps that follow.

As you prepare to move forward, take a moment to notice how your body feels now compared to when you began this step. Even small shifts matter. They are signs that healing is not just something you believe in, but something your nervous system is beginning to trust.

Step Nine will invite action, but it will do so from this place of grounding and coherence, not from pressure or urgency. Because when the heart is settled and the body feels safe, we are able to move forward with clarity, courage, and care.

There is no rush.

Healing unfolds in order.

And you are exactly where you need to be.

If you have already completed Step 9A, then proceed to Steps 9B on p. 136.

Step Nine — Restoring Relationships

We make amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would cause injury or harm to them or others.

Step 9A:



In Step 8A, we prepared our hearts. We became willing to face the reality of how our pain touched others. That willingness mattered. It softened resistance, steadied the nervous system, and created the internal safety needed for truth. Now, in Step 9A, we move from willingness into action. This is where healing

becomes visible. This is where the work God has been doing within us begins to take shape in the world around us.

Making amends is different from simply saying, “I’m sorry.” It is the act of showing up with honesty, humility, forgiveness, and care. It is acknowledging the effect of our actions and, where possible and appropriate, taking concrete steps to repair trust and restore connection. This step is not about punishing ourselves for the past, nor

is it about forcing outcomes. It is about participating in healing with wisdom and love.

Step 9A does not arise from guilt. It comes from growth. We are not the person we were when harm was done. God has already begun healing us from the inside out. Because of that inner restoration, we are now strong enough to move outward. In addiction and survival states, many of us lived as though we had no control, reacting instead of choosing. Recovery teaches us otherwise. We are responsible for our choices, past and present, and we are now empowered to respond to them with maturity rather than collapse.

In the NeuroFaith® model, this is where internal regulation meets relational repair. As the nervous system stabilizes and the heart experiences safety again, we are able to approach others without defensiveness, shame, or urgency. We can listen. We can stay present. We can speak truth without aggression and humility without self-erasure. Repair becomes possible because our inner world is no longer ruled by chaos or fear.

Interpersonal neurobiology helps us understand why this step carries such healing potential. As Daniel J. Siegel has described, human beings are wired for connection. Our nervous systems do not operate in isolation; they are shaped in relationship. When we become more regulated, integrated, and coherent within ourselves, that state is communicated to others, often without a single word being spoken. Calm invites calm. Presence invites presence. Safety signals safety.

HeartMath® research beautifully complements this understanding. When the heart moves into coherence, when its rhythm becomes

smooth and ordered, the electromagnetic field generated by the heart becomes more stable and measurable. That field does not stop at the boundaries of the body. It extends outward, influencing those around us. In practical terms, when we approach someone from a regulated nervous system and a coherent heart, we bring peace with us. Our internal state becomes an offering. Healing within us begins to create safety between us.

The aspen grove offers a living picture of this truth. Aspens do not grow as isolated trees; they share a single root system beneath the surface. When one part of the grove is weakened, surrounding trees send nutrients to support it. In the same way, our lives are interconnected. Our healing strengthens others. Our willingness to make amends nourishes the relational ecosystem we belong to. Where harm once created separation, responsibility and humility make reconnection possible.

This step is sacred because it is where love becomes active. It is where we stop merely hoping things will be better and begin participating in the making of peace. We move gently, wisely, and with discernment. Not all situations are safe. Not all relationships can be restored. But we move where we can. We speak where we can. We repair what we can. And as we do, we step more fully into the person God is forming us to be.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”

Matthew 5:9 (NIV)

This is the work of peace — and we are strong enough now to do it.

“Fools mock at making amends for sin, but goodwill is found among the upright.” Proverbs 14:9 (NIV)

It is also the work of grace, receiving and modeling the gift we have already been given through Christ. The Apostle Paul writes of this activated grace:

Yet God, in His grace, freely makes us right in His sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when He freed us from the penalty for our sins.
Romans 3:24 (NLT)

This grace is enduring, restorative, and sufficient. It is the ground beneath our courage and the source of our strength as we make amends.

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who loved us and by His grace gave us eternal comfort and a wonderful hope, comfort you and strengthen you in every good thing you do and say.
2 Thessalonians 2:16–17 (NLT)

Key questions for preparing Step 9A, to make amends:

1. In what ways have you experienced God’s grace in your walk with Him, especially in your recovery?
2. Why is it important to focus only on your part in making amends (inventory 2)?

Steps to making amends:

1. Review the list of names you wrote on your amends chart and highlight the ones you can take care of immediately.

2. Review them with your accountability partner to ensure that making amends will not injure the individual or someone else.
3. Pray and ask God to show you the right time and place to make amends. Here's a sample prayer you can pray:

“Thank You, Lord, for Your love and grace so freely and abundantly given to me. I know I can make amends because You have forgiven me. Help me model Your ways when I make amends to those I have hurt. Help me set aside my selfishness and pride and speak the truth in love. Help me focus only on my responsibility in the issue, and I trust You completely for the outcome. I pray this Jesus’ name, Amen.”

4. Develop a plan for making amends to those on your list you cannot address immediately. If you cannot locate someone on your list or they have died, write them a letter. Once that letter is written, share it with your support group.

Before continuing with Step 9B, return to P. 123 to complete Step 8B

Step 9B: We extend forgiveness to the people who have harmed us wherever possible.

In Step 8B, we prepared our hearts. We became willing to face a difficult and often painful reality: some of the wounds we carry were caused by others. That willingness mattered. It took courage to stop minimizing, stop spiritualizing, and stop blaming ourselves for what we did not choose. Now, in Step 9B, we move from willingness into action. This is where healing becomes visible. This is where we begin to loosen the grip that past harm may still have on our inner world.

Forgiving those who have offended us is not about excusing what happened, pretending it didn't matter, or saying, "It's okay," when it wasn't. Forgiveness is a relational and embodied act. It is showing up with honesty, humility, and care. It is acknowledging the real impact of another person's words or actions and, where possible and safe, taking steps to release their power over our hearts. Forgiveness is not something we do *for* the offender. It is something we do *for freedom*.

Step 9B does not come from guilt or shame. It comes from growth. We are not the same person we were when we were harmed. God has already begun healing us from the inside out. And because of that inner restoration, we are now strong enough to move outward. We have agency to forgive. In survival states, many of us learned to believe we had no control, that our only options were to endure, numb, or harden. Recovery teaches us something new. We are not powerless over our responses anymore. This step is not about being crushed by what others did. It is about being empowered to respond with love, humility, and maturity — without denying truth.

In the NeuroFaith® model, this is where internal regulation and relational release meet. When the nervous system stabilizes and the heart experiences safety again, forgiveness becomes possible at a biological level. We are no longer operating from fight, flight, freeze, or collapse. The body is not braced. The heart is not guarded. From this regulated place, we can approach the memory of harm without being overwhelmed by it.

Neurobiology helps explain why forgiveness is so deeply freeing. When resentment, bitterness, or unresolved anger remains active, the nervous system stays in a low-grade threat state. Stress hormones circulate. The

heart rhythm becomes jagged. The body remains vigilant. But when forgiveness begins — even imperfectly — something shifts. The nervous system receives a signal of safety. The heart rate slows. Breathing deepens. The system moves toward regulation rather than reactivity.

HeartMath® research describes this as a return to coherence. As the heart rhythm becomes smoother and more ordered, the brain and body synchronize. Emotional clarity increases. The inner world settles. Forgiveness, then, is not just a moral act. It is a physiological release. What we let go of internally no longer has to be carried in our bodies.

In Internal Family Systems terms, this is often the moment when the inner critic can finally soften. This part may have developed after trauma, violation, or betrayal, trying to protect us by staying alert, suspicious, or self-blaming. At first, the Inner Critic may have believed that harshness would keep us safe. But over time, that voice can become condemning, replaying accusations that keep us trapped in the past. Forgiveness allows that part to rest. It no longer has to police the pain. It can step back as trust in God's justice and mercy grows.

Step 9B is sacred because it is where love becomes active in one of its most difficult forms. It is where we stop merely hoping things will be better and begin participating in the making of peace within ourselves. We move gently, wisely, and with discernment. Not all situations are safe. Not all relationships can be restored. Forgiveness does not mean reconciliation, and it does not mean re-entering harm. But we move where we can. We release where we can. We entrust the rest to God.

This step is also the work of grace — receiving and modeling the forgiveness we have already been given through Christ. The Apostle Paul reminds us:

For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God, in His grace, freely makes us right in His sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when He freed us from the penalty for our sins.

Romans 3:23–24 (NLT)

Remember, scripture gives us this guiding principle:

Make allowance for each other's faults and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.

Colossians 3:13 (NLT)

And it brings the heart of this step together with clarity and tenderness:

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Ephesians 4:32 (NIV)

Step 9B is not about forgetting the past. It is about refusing to let the past continue to rule your nervous system, your heart, or your future. This is how peace takes root. This is how the body learns safety again. And this is how healing continues to move outward — grounded in truth, guided by wisdom, and carried by the love of Christ.

Key questions for preparing to forgive those who have harmed you:

1. In what ways have you experienced God's forgiveness in your walk with Him, especially in your recovery?

2. In what ways have you experienced the forgiveness of others, especially in your recovery?

Steps to extending forgiveness to those who have harmed you:

1. Review the list of names you wrote on your forgiveness chart and highlight the ones you can take care of immediately.

2. Review them with your accountability partner to ensure that offering forgiveness will not injure the individual or someone else.

3. Pray and ask God to show you the right time and place to offer forgiveness. Here's a sample prayer you can pray:

"Thank You, Lord, for Your love and forgiveness so freely and abundantly given to me. I know I can forgive others because You have forgiven me. Help me set aside my selfishness, fear, and pride and speak the truth in love. Help me focus only on my responsibility in the issue, and I trust You completely for the outcome. I pray this Jesus' name, Amen."

4. Develop a plan for offering forgiveness to those on your list you cannot address immediately. If you cannot locate someone on your list, or they have died, write them a letter. When the letter is finished, share it with your support group.

A Closing Word on Steps Eight and Nine

As we come to the close of Steps Eight and Nine, it is worth pausing to notice what has changed. What began as willingness has now taken

form through action. You have faced the impact of your pain, both where it flowed outward to others and where it was carried inward from harm done to you. You have named responsibility. You have practiced forgiveness. You have stepped into repair where it was possible and safe. This is not small work. It is courageous, embodied, and deeply relational.

Taken together, Steps 8A and 8B prepared the ground. They softened resistance, quieted the inner critic, and helped restore honesty without collapse. Step Nine then allowed that inner healing to move outward through wise, discerning action. As you made amends and extended forgiveness, something else was happening beneath the surface. The nervous system was learning a new rhythm. Instead of bracing, it began to trust. Instead of defending, it began to regulate. Instead of carrying unresolved charge, it began to release.

Neuroscience helps us understand why this matters so deeply. When truth is spoken, responsibility is taken, and forgiveness is practiced, the autonomic nervous system moves toward safety and connection. The heart settles into coherence. Stress patterns soften. The body no longer has to remain on guard against unfinished relational business. In this state, peace is not just a belief. It is a lived, physiological experience.

And because human beings are wired for connection, that regulation does not stay contained. As interpersonal neurobiology teaches, our internal state is communicated to others through presence, tone, posture, and attunement. HeartMath® research confirms this in measurable ways. A coherent heart rhythm generates a stable electromagnetic field that extends beyond the body, subtly influencing the relational space around us. In other words, when you live from a

regulated nervous system and a coherent heart, you bring safety with you. Healing within you becomes a resource for those around you.

This is why amends and forgiveness are not merely moral acts. They are regulating acts. They restore integrity to the inner world and coherence to the relational field. Where shame once isolated, connection now stabilizes. Where resentment once fragmented, truth now integrates. Where fear once drove behavior, love now informs choice.

From this place, something new becomes possible.

Step Ten is not a return to scrutiny or self-policing. It is the natural continuation of the life you are now learning to live. It is the practice of staying awake to your inner world and responsive to your relationships as life unfolds. Because the nervous system is steadier and the heart more coherent, you can notice sooner when something drifts out of alignment. You can address it sooner, gently, without waiting for accumulation or collapse.

You are no longer cleaning up after long seasons of disconnection. You are tending connection as a way of life.

Step Ten is not about perfection. It is about maintenance through awareness. It allows the healing you have already experienced to remain embodied, integrated, and sustainable. Confession becomes lighter. Repair becomes quicker. Grace becomes something you live inside of rather than something you scramble to recover.

You are not starting over as you move forward. You are continuing, with greater clarity, humility, and peace.

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And you do not walk this road alone. God goes with you. Grace surrounds you. And the life you are learning to live now has a rhythm that can carry you forward, one honest day at a time.

Step Ten — Daily Awareness and Repair

We continue to take personal inventory, and when we are wrong promptly admit it.

Step Ten gently reminds us that recovery is not a moment we arrive at, but a way of living we continue to walk into. Healing is not something we finish or graduate from. It is something we inhabit day by day, moment by moment, in ordinary life. This step is an invitation to remain awake, aware, and connected to our inner life, not with fear or hypervigilance, but with curiosity, humility, and care.



Rather than slipping back into old patterns of denial, defensiveness, or self-protection, Step Ten teaches us how to stay honest with ourselves in real time. We learn to check in with our emotions, our reactions, our relationships, and the state of our hearts as life unfolds. We begin to notice what is happening inside us before it hardens into distance or dysfunction. This is not about catching ourselves doing something wrong. It is about staying close to what is true.

Steps Ten through Twelve are where recovery becomes a lived posture rather than a structured process. These are not simply maintenance steps. They are, in a very real sense, how we want to live for the rest of our lives. They describe a way of being that is grounded, relational, responsive, and aligned with God. They invite us to live awake rather than reactive, connected rather than defended.

In the NeuroFaith® model, Step Ten reflects the ongoing regulation and integration of the nervous system. As healing deepens, we become more attuned to the subtle signals within us. We notice when our shoulders tense, when our breath shortens, when our tone sharpens, when irritation, shame, or fear begins to rise. These signals are not failures. They are information. They are the body's way of inviting us back into awareness and choice.

Rather than letting these patterns silently take over, we pause. We notice. We breathe. We return to center. This is how change becomes durable. Not through dramatic breakthroughs alone, but through gentle, steady awareness practiced over time. This is how the autonomic nervous system remains in a ventral vagal state of safety and connection, rather than slipping into fight, flight, or shutdown.

In Internal Family Systems terms, Step Ten is where the inner critic begins to function in a healthy and aligned way. No longer harsh or condemning, it becomes more like a sensitive inner guide, working in cooperation with the Holy Spirit. From the grounded Self, we can notice when something is off without attacking ourselves. The question shifts from “What is wrong with me?” to “What needs attention right now?” This kind of awareness allows us to respond early, kindly, and effectively.

And when we realize we have acted out of old wounds or old defenses, Step Ten invites us to respond quickly and gently. Not with self-condemnation, but with self-respect and responsibility. When we admit our mistakes promptly, we interrupt shame before it takes root. We keep our hearts open rather than closed. We keep our relationships

clear rather than hidden. We protect trust rather than eroding it through silence or delay.

Neurocardiology helps us understand why this matters. When we live with this kind of ongoing honesty, the heart remains in a coherent rhythm. Its sine-wave pattern stays smooth and regulated. The heart and brain communicate clearly. Emotional clarity improves. Relational presence deepens. From this state, we are far less likely to react impulsively or defensively. We are able to stay connected to ourselves, to others, and to God.

Step Ten is like keeping the inner room gently swept. Each day involves a small tidying of the heart. A quiet reflection. A soft returning to God. A willingness to adjust course without judgment. Just as a skilled sailor makes continual, subtle adjustments to stay on course, we learn to make compassionate corrections as we go, guided by awareness rather than driven by fear.

This step is one of the primary ways peace is maintained. It is how the nervous system stays open rather than collapsing back into survival states. It is how the heart remains free. And it is how relationships deepen, through honesty, humility, and presence practiced consistently over time.

We are not trying to be perfect here. We are learning to stay awake to the life of God within us, to remain aligned with love, and to live from truth rather than avoidance. Step by step. Moment by moment.

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you and lead me along the path of everlasting life.” Psalm 139:23–24 (NLT)

This is not self-monitoring driven by fear. It is staying aligned with love.

Before moving into the practices of Step Ten, take some time to record your responses to the following four “looking back” questions in your journal, allowing honesty, gentleness, and openness to guide you.

1. Since you began this Twelve Steps Journey, how have your behaviors already changed?
2. What relationships have you been able to restore or improve?
3. How has your relationship with Jesus grown since you began this recovery journey?
4. What new relationships have you developed along this journey?

A. Five practices for Step 10:

1. Do a daily inventory by taking time to review your heart and memories for any offense that reappears or shows up for the first time, either from those who have harmed us or those we have harmed. Begin the habit of recording these insights in your journal daily.

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting. Psalm 139:23–24 (NIV)

Make allowance for each other's faults and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.

Colossians 3:13 (NLT)

2. Go back and work the steps, especially 8 and 9, to keep you on track.

Cling to your faith in Christ and keep your conscience clear. 1 Timothy 1:19 (NLT)

3. Pray this sample prayer as you deal with each offense:

"Thank You, Lord, for giving me the tools to work out my recovery and live my life differently, centered in Your will. Help me make amends promptly and to ask for and give forgiveness wholeheartedly. Thank You for helping me do my part in making all my relationships healthy and growing in You. In Jesus' name, Amen."

4. Regularly review the outcome of these inventories with your accountability partner or recovery group.

5. Every three months take a mini-retreat, bringing your daily journal with you. Give God praise for His help in the areas you have seen improvement. Make a list of those areas that you desire to work on in the next 90 days.

B. Make a list of those recurring areas where you are constantly needing to make amends.

1. Submit the list to the Lord and ask Him for additional insights and resources to deal effectively with them.

Test me, O Lord, and try me, examine my heart and my mind. Psalm 26:2 (NIV)

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Psalm 51:10 (NIV)

2. Share this list with your accountability partner. Pray together and develop a strategy for dealing with each one.
3. Ask the Lord to help you prioritize and carry out the plan you developed for #2.

In summary, Step Ten teaches us how to live awake. It is not a burden added to our recovery, but a gift that protects it. By continuing to take personal inventory and admitting our wrongs promptly, we stay aligned with truth, connected to love, and responsive rather than reactive. This practice keeps our hearts soft, our relationships clear, and our inner world from drifting back into secrecy or self-protection.

From a neurobiological perspective, this way of living matters deeply. Small, timely acts of honesty prevent the nervous system from slipping into prolonged threat states. They allow the autonomic system to return again and again to regulation and safety. When we notice early, respond gently, and repair quickly, the heart remains coherent, the mind stays flexible, and the body learns that conflict does not have to lead to collapse or distance. Over time, this rhythm of awareness and repair rewires us for peace.

Spiritually, Step Ten keeps us close to God. It invites us into a daily, lived relationship rather than a distant or occasional one. We learn to bring our whole selves into the light, trusting that grace meets us there

every time. This step teaches us that holiness is not perfection, but responsiveness. Not never failing but never hiding. Not self-monitoring in fear, but self-reflection in love.

As you practice Step Ten, you may notice something quietly changing. Your inner critic loses its sharp edge. Your awareness becomes kinder. Your willingness to repair grows stronger. You become quicker to apologize, quicker to forgive, and slower to withdraw. This is not because you are trying harder, but because you are living more honestly, more regulated, and more connected to God and others.

And this naturally prepares the way for Step Eleven.

Once we are living in this rhythm of awareness, humility, and repair, prayer and conscious contact with God deepen organically. Step Eleven does not come as a demand to be more spiritual, but as an invitation to rest more fully in the relationship that has already been forming all along. Awareness leads to attunement. Honesty opens space for listening. Regulation makes communion possible.

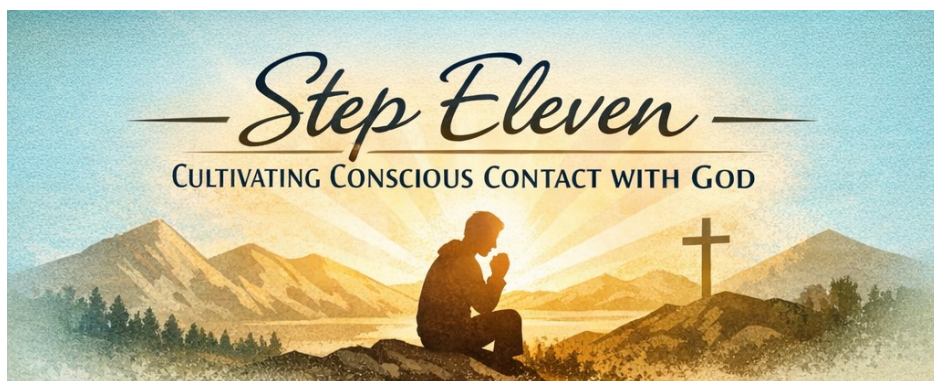
So, take this step gently. Let it become a way of life rather than a task to complete. You are not behind. You are not failing. You are learning how to stay present to the life God is shaping within you.

We are walking with you as you continue forward.

And now, we turn our attention to Step Eleven.

Step Eleven — Deepening Communion with God

We seek through prayer, worship, and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understand Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry it out.



Step Eleven invites us into something deeply relational. Not a new task to master, not a spiritual performance to perfect, but a way of staying close. It is an invitation to nurture a living, ongoing relationship with God, one that grows through presence rather than pressure, and through return rather than intensity.

Healing is not a single breakthrough moment. It is a pattern that is practiced into the soul. Just as muscles in the body require regular movement to remain strong and flexible, our connection with God deepens through consistent engagement. Strength is built by repetition, not force. Trust grows through familiarity. Love matures through shared time.

This is where neuroscience beautifully affirms what Scripture has always known. Hebb's Law tells us that *neurons that fire together wire together*. The pathways we use become the pathways we keep. When we repeatedly turn our attention toward God through prayer, meditation, and reflection on Scripture, the brain literally reshapes itself around peace, presence, and trust. The nervous system learns where safety lives. The heart learns where to settle. The soul learns that it does not need to brace in fear.

In the NeuroFaith® model, prayer, worship and meditation are not merely spiritual disciplines. They are regulating experiences. As we pray, the breath slows. As we become still, the vagus nerve signals safety. The heart rate begins to settle into a coherent rhythm. The prefrontal cortex, where insight, compassion, discernment, and meaning reside, comes back online. We move out of survival mode and into connection mode.

This matters because God meets us in safety. Polyvagal theory reminds us that the ventral vagal state, the green zone of connection, openness, and relational engagement, is where we are most receptive to love, guidance, and meaning. When we remain in that state, we are not only safer within ourselves, but safer with others. Prayer, worship, and meditation help us return to that zone again and again, gently pulling us out of hyperarousal, collapse, or shutdown, and back into grounded presence.

Neurocardiology adds another layer of beauty here. When the heart is coherent, its rhythm becomes smooth and ordered. Heart rate variability improves. The electromagnetic field generated by the heart becomes more stable and synchronized. This coherence does not remain

contained within us. It extends outward, shaping how we relate, how we listen, and how we attune to others. In this way, prayer is not only personal communion; it is relational preparation. As we come into sync with God, we become more capable of being in sync with one another.

This is why complacency can quietly erode recovery. Just as unused muscles weaken, unused neural and relational pathways fade. When we stop turning toward God, the mind naturally drifts back toward familiar patterns of self-reliance, worry, or reactivity. Step Eleven gently calls us back—not with guilt, but with invitation. Spiritual strength is maintained through continual returning. Not out of obligation, but out of desire. Not through striving, but through attunement.

And importantly, Step Eleven reminds us that prayer is not only about knowing God's will. It is also about receiving the power to carry it out. Insight alone cannot transform us. Connection can. Grace does not merely inform us; it energizes us. It strengthens what is being healed in us and loosens what once held us captive.

Prayer is how love keeps shaping the heart.

Meditation is how peace keeps anchoring the mind.

Practice is how trust becomes natural rather than effortful.

We are not striving to reach God.

We are learning to stay close.

We are learning to remain in tune.

“May our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who loved us and by His grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and

word.”

II Thessalonians 2:16–17 (NIV)

Step Eleven is not about doing more.

It is about being more available.

More present.

More attuned.

And from that place of attunement, life begins to flow with greater ease, safety, and grace.

A. Practices for a daily quiet time with God.

1. Make a daily appointment with yourself to spend a specific period of time alone with the Lord. Beginners would do well to set aside thirty minutes. The more you practice this daily exercise, the longer and richer that time will grow.

Jesus was known for “getting away alone with the Father.” Christians have been doing this for over two thousand years. We have the opportunity and privilege of doing the same as we draw near to God.

Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer. Luke 5:16 (NLT)

Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Hebrews 10:22 (NIV)

When you set aside time to listen to Jesus, He will speak to you through His Spirit and through His Word, the Bible. Jesus can also speak to us

through other people as well as circumstances, but this quiet time develops the habit of sitting before Him and listening to Him.

Blessed are those who listen to Me, watching daily at My doors, waiting at My doorway. Proverbs 8:34 (NIV)

2. You can connect with and hear from Jesus when you worship. Part of your daily quiet time should include a time of worship—intentionally praising God for who He is and thanking Him for what He does. This can be with words in prayer, but it can also be in a song, listening to familiar worship music or playing it on an instrument as you sing. Remember, worship is intended to be a vertical expression of our relationship with Him, the audience of One.

Enter His gates with thanksgiving; go into His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him and praise His name. Psalm 100:4 (NLT)

Dedicate the first few minutes of your quiet time to worship. Record how the Lord makes Himself known to you during this worship time. Keep track of those songs that are most meaningful to you so you can return to them in following sessions.

3. You can connect with and hear from Jesus when you pray. Too often we think of prayer as only us talking to God. A better definition of prayer is ***dialogue***: us talking ***with*** God. Do not think of prayer as only reading or reciting a formal text but allow prayer to be a two-way conversation with the One who created you, saved you, and loves you more than any other being in the universe.

Expect to hear from Him in every matter that you bring to Him in prayer. That means pausing after each aspect of prayer and listening for God's response.

“Whoever belongs to God hears what God says.” John 8:47 (NIV)

Record what you sense you are hearing. You can review these entries with your accountability partner, and they can affirm that you are truly hearing from the Lord.

Divide your prayer time into three sections: worship (praise and thanksgiving), intercession (praying for others), petition (praying for yourself).

4. You can hear from Jesus when you read, study and meditate on His Word, the Bible. Remember that the Holy Spirit who now lives in you is the same Spirit who empowered the writers of the Bible over two thousand years ago.

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip His people to do every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NLT)

Bible reading needs to include Bible study (systematically learning what it says), meditation (dwelling on the biblical truths that have been revealed to you) and application (asking the Holy Spirit how to apply the principles learned to your life).

There are numerous Bible reading and study plans available online and from your home church. You are encouraged to join a Bible study at

your church, engage in a study with your accountability partner, or we can help you get started by contacting us by email:

Pastor Earl: revhev@comcast.net;

Dr. Jeff: JeffreyHansen@NeuroFaith.onmicrosoft.com

5. Maintain an “attitude of gratitude” file, through prayer, worship, and meditation, recording the areas you have grown in, the people who have invested in and helped you along the way, and the things God has sovereignly accomplished in you during your recovery. This list is a constant source of thanksgiving as well as a tangible reminder of how much God loves you and has changed you.

As you record these things, share them with your accountability partner who will probably have a few more for you to add to your list. Then make time to share with the people on your list how they have invested in you.

Here is a prayer to get you started today and every day:

Lord, thank You for Your incredible love, Your overwhelming goodness, Your complete forgiveness, Your unmerited favor, and Your amazing grace toward me. Thank You for all those You have brought into my life during this recovery and for those who have stood with me in my family and church family (name aloud specific people that come to mind).

Help me to set aside all the noise and chaos of the world around me and to center my attention and affection on You. Help me better understand Your plans and purposes for me and to live in a way that pleases You and You alone. Speak to me now, Lord, I am listening. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Step Eleven teaches us how to stay in relationship. Not just occasionally. Not only when life feels calm. But consistently, honestly, and gently, right in the middle of real life. Through prayer and meditation, we learn how to return again and again to the God who has been returning to us all along.

What you have been practicing here is not merely a quiet time. It is an attunement. A learning of rhythm. A training of attention. Over time, this practice shapes both soul and body. The nervous system learns where safety lives. The heart learns how to settle into coherence. The mind learns how to listen rather than rush, how to receive rather than control. These small, daily returns keep us anchored in peace and responsive to grace.

From a neurobiological perspective, this ongoing contact matters because it stabilizes what healing has already restored. Regular prayer, worship, and meditation reinforce neural pathways of trust, calm, and meaning. They keep the autonomic nervous system oriented toward connection rather than defense. They allow the heart to remain regulated and coherent, creating an internal environment where love flows more easily both inward and outward. In this way, spiritual practice becomes embodied wisdom.

Spiritually, Step Eleven keeps us aligned with God's presence rather than our own effort. We are not striving to figure everything out. We are learning to listen. We are not pushing ourselves toward holiness. We are allowing ourselves to be shaped by love. Over time, this relationship begins to guide our choices, soften our reactions, and steady our lives.

And something important begins to emerge here. As conscious contact with God deepens, it naturally moves beyond the private space of prayer into the public space of living. What we receive in stillness begins to express itself in service. What we hear in quiet begins to shape how we love. What regulates us internally begins to flow outward to others.

That movement prepares us for the final step.

Step Twelve is not a leap into something new. It is the natural outflow of everything that has come before. When we are grounded, regulated, forgiven, and connected to God, love no longer feels forced. It becomes shared. Purpose no longer feels abstract. It becomes lived. Healing no longer stays contained within us. It becomes something we carry into the world.

You are not being sent forward alone. You are being invited forward, strengthened by grace, guided by presence, and supported by a God who delights in walking with you.

Step Twelve — Living the Transformed Life

Having a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we try to carry this message to others and practice these principles in all our affairs.



When the heart has been restored, it does not want to keep that restoration to itself. Something within us begins to move outward with compassion, gentleness, and quiet strength. We do not share because we are trying to convince or convert, and we do not guide others because we believe we are above them. We share because we remember what it felt like to be lost, hurting, ashamed, or alone. And we remember the relief of

being found, supported, and loved.

This is not the loud urgency of trying to fix other people. It is the calm confidence of someone who has tasted peace and simply wants others to know that peace is possible. In the NeuroFaith® model, when healing takes root, the nervous system begins to express coherence. Our presence becomes steadier. Our tone softens. Our posture opens.

Others can feel it. Often, we help far more through the quality of our presence than through any words we speak. Love that has been received becomes love that is naturally extended.

Step 12 invites us to carry the message with humility. We do not force spiritual awakening upon others. We do not make every conversation about our recovery. We do not push, lecture, or elevate ourselves as examples. Instead, we learn to listen for the gentle leading of the Spirit, the quiet nudge, the interior sense of timing. When someone is open, when the moment is receptive, we share simply and honestly. Not with polished speeches or rehearsed theology, but with the authenticity of a heart that has been touched by grace.

This is where the spiritual awakening of the Twelve Steps becomes embodied. As shame loosens its grip and negative core beliefs are healed, we no longer live from the lie that we are broken, defective, or unworthy. The deep wounds of trauma and addiction no longer define us. The nervous system settles. The heart finds rhythm and coherence. Our internal defenses no longer need to operate in extremes. In Internal Family Systems terms, the protective parts relax. They no longer have to manage, criticize, numb, or react. The Self is now leading.

From that Self-led place, we begin to live from what IFS calls the Eight Cs:

calm, curiosity, compassion, clarity, confidence, courage, creativity, and connectedness.

Scripture names this same reality as the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

This is not something we force. It is something that flows. When the polyvagal system remains anchored in safety, when the heart remains coherent, when the mind is no longer dominated by fear or shame, our lives naturally bear this fruit. We do not have to announce it. Others will experience it.

And as we live this way, patiently and without self-importance, the work of the Steps continues in us. Healing deepens. Roots grow wider. Peace becomes steadier. Awakening becomes a way of being rather than an event to remember. Recovery is no longer something we manage. It is something we embody. Step 12 is where recovery becomes life.

This step reminds us that healing multiplies when it is shared. One healed heart strengthens another. One restored life becomes nourishment for those still suffering. And we remember, with humility, that we are always learning, always growing, always being restored. Spiritual awakening is ongoing. It is not a finish line. It is a way of walking in the world with honesty, love, and grace.

“Freely you have received; freely give.” Matthew 10:8

We do not give to prove something.

We give because we have been given much.

We love because we have been loved lavishly first.

And so, we return once more to the end of Jesus’ parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15, also known as the parable of the lavish father:

“But his father said to the servants, ‘Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with

a feast, for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.’ So, the party began.” Luke 15:22–24 (NLT)

This is heaven celebrating over one of God’s precious children being recovered from the depths of trauma and addiction. This is heaven celebrating over you. And now, with humility and gratitude, it becomes your turn to carry that hope forward.

*“We urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else.”*¹ Thessalonians 5:14–15 (NIV)

We are now instruments of the Lord, demonstrating and delivering the Good News through how we live.

“Dear children, let us not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions. Our actions will show that we belong to the truth.”

This is Step 12.

Not an ending, but a sending.

Not a platform, but a posture.

Not perfection, but presence.

And as you carry this forward, know that you are not alone. You are walking in grace, grounded in love, and guided by the One who began this good work in you and will continue it to completion.

So, we will be confident when we stand before God. ¹ John 3:18–19 (NIV)

A. Reflection questions as you complete this phase of your journey:

1. Describe what does Matthew 10:8 ***“Give as freely as you have received”*** mean to you.

2. What are some of your recent victories you could share with someone newly entering the Twelve Step journey?

3. James 1:22 says, ***But don’t just listen to God’s word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves.*** (NLT) What are some ways you can be a doer of the Word in the following groups of people in your life?

- a. family and friends?
- b. in your recovery group?
- c. in your church?
- d. on your job?
- e. in your community?

B. This is the first step to saying “yes” to serving others by bringing them the Good News in actions and in words.

1. Remember that your walk needs to match up with your talk. Your new lifestyle is to reflect the lessons you have learned and the truths you now believe about yourself, the Lord, and other people.

2. Our model for serving others is Jesus.

“Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.” John 13:14-17 (NIV)

This is the great challenge and opportunity of true Christian service. We cannot love or serve others unless we have first been loved and served.

3. Record how have you been loved and served during your Twelve Step journey.

- a. by the Lord
- b. by leaders in the program
- c. by others in the program

C. A prayer you can pray for step 12:

“Thank You, Lord, for all you have done for me and in me during this journey. I am forever grateful to You and those You have brought across my path. Now is the time for me to say ‘yes’ to serving others as you graciously served so many, including me. I am asking you to bring someone today whom I can serve, in whatever way they need to be served. I pray this in Your name, Amen.”

1. After praying this prayer, remain at rest before the Lord, listening for His still small voice. The Lord is pleased when His children pray this

kind of prayer, and He is looking for opportunities to bring someone across your path today and every day.

2. Watch for that encounter, and when it happens, thank the Lord in the moment, then listen as the Spirit guides you in loving this person with God's love.

3. When the encounter ends, record it in your journal noting the person, the time, the place and the kind of service you provided. Also note what kind of follow up, if any, will be needed.

4. If the person gives you their name, address, email or cell#, write it down here and pray for them as the Spirit leads you to pray.

D. Consider ways you can serve others through Twelve Steps or through your church.

There are many service opportunities in the as well as at your church.

1. Which group do you feel led to serve?

2. Record your plan for getting involved:

3. Prayerfully execute your plan and see what God will do through you.

"I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in Me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father." John 14:12 (NLT)

Step 12 brings us home—not to an ending, but to a way of life. What began as a journey of honesty, surrender, and healing now becomes a way of moving through the world. The spiritual awakening described in this step is not something we perform or prove. It is something we live.

NeuroFaith® and the Twelve Steps
Redeemed, Rewired, Restored

It shows up in how we listen, how we respond, how we repair, and how we love.

From a NeuroFaith® perspective, this makes deep sense. When healing has taken root, the nervous system no longer lives in constant defense. The heart settles into coherence. The mind becomes clearer and more flexible. Our internal parts are no longer battling for control, but are organized around a calm, compassionate Self. From this regulated, integrated place, service becomes natural rather than forced. Love flows instead of being manufactured.

This is why Step 12 does not ask us to strive harder, speak louder, or do more. It invites us to *be* more present. More attuned. More available. When our inner world is coherent, our outer life carries that coherence into families, recovery groups, churches, workplaces, and communities. Healing becomes relational. Peace becomes contagious. Safety spreads quietly through presence.

We also remember, with humility, that this awakening is ongoing. We remain learners. We remain dependent on grace. We continue practicing these principles in all our affairs—not perfectly, but faithfully. When we stumble, we return. When we grow weary, we rest. When opportunities to serve arise, we say yes as we are able, trusting that God supplies what love requires.

You have not completed a program.

You have entered a posture.

You are not finished.

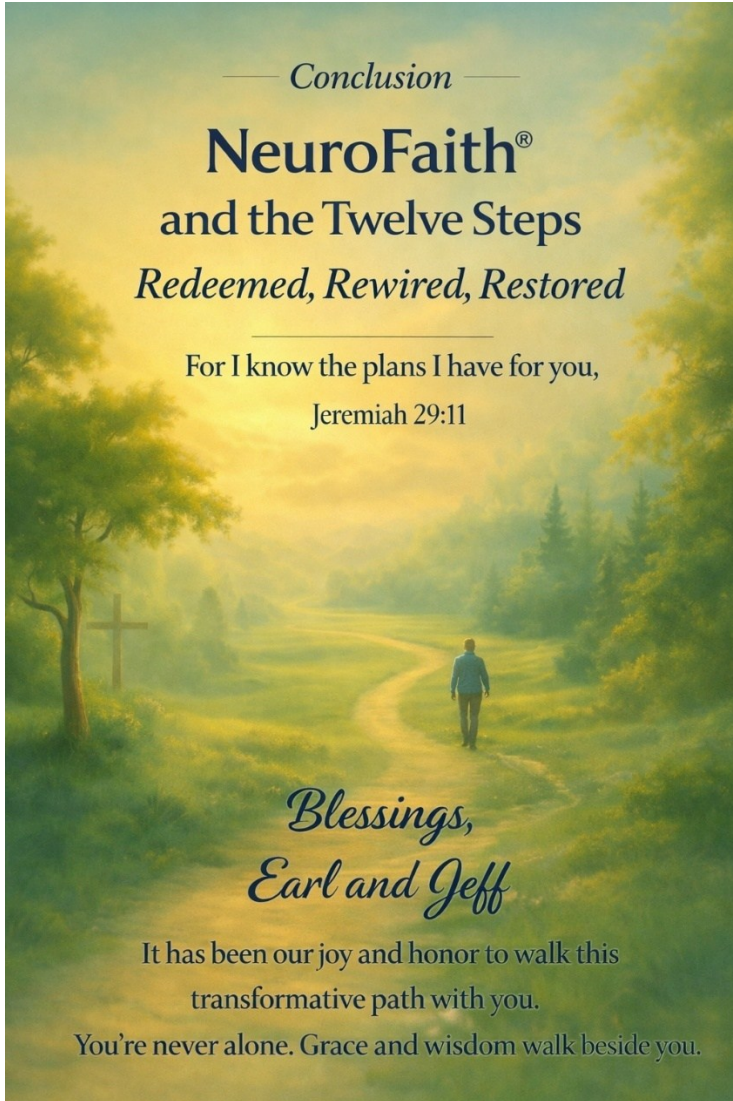
You are being formed.

NeuroFaith® and the Twelve Steps
Redeemed, Rewired, Restored

And you do not walk this way alone. The same God who met you in your brokenness now walks with you in wholeness. The same grace that restored you now flows through you. This is the quiet miracle of Step 12: a healed life becoming a living invitation.

May you continue to walk grounded in love, regulated in body and soul, guided by the Spirit, and confident that the good work begun in you will continue—through you—for the sake of others.

As We Close



As you have walked through these Twelve Steps, you have engaged in far more than a program or a sequence of tasks. You have entered a

sacred process of restoration. What the Steps offer, when held in the light of Christ, is not simply sobriety or behavioral change, but a pathway toward wholeness—healing the heart, renewing the mind, restoring the body, and reawakening the soul.

In the NeuroFaith® model, we recognize that God's redemptive work honors the way He designed us. The same God who formed the soul also formed the nervous system. The same God who heals the heart also shaped the brain, the body, and our capacity for relationship. Grace does not bypass biology. Redemption does not ignore trauma. Instead, God works through the very systems He created.

Through honesty, confession, surrender, forgiveness, and repair, your nervous system has been learning safety again. The polyvagal system has been gently shifting out of defense and back into connection. Where once there was hypervigilance or shutdown, there is now increasing access to calm, presence, and relational openness. This is not accidental. It is how God heals.

Neuroscience helps us understand what Scripture has long revealed: *what we repeatedly turn toward, we become*. Neurons that fire together wire together. Every moment of prayer, reflection, truth-telling, and connection has been forming new pathways within you. Your brain has been learning peace. Your body has been learning rest. Your heart has been learning coherence. Your soul has been learning trust.

Neurocardiology adds yet another layer of wonder. As your heart settles into coherent rhythm, as heart rate variability improves, your internal world becomes more ordered and resilient. That coherence

does not stay contained within you. It extends outward, shaping how you relate, how you listen, how you repair, and how you love. Healing becomes interpersonal. Safety becomes shared.

Internal Family Systems language gives words to what many of you have felt. Parts that once had to protect you through control, numbing, anger, or withdrawal no longer need to operate in extremes. The inner critic no longer has to shame you into compliance. The firefighters no longer have to rush in to extinguish unbearable pain. The managers no longer have to keep everything tightly controlled. Instead, the Self—calm, compassionate, curious, clear—has begun to lead. And the Self reflects the Spirit of Christ at work within you.

This is why the Twelve Steps are not meant to be worked alone. Healing is relational because we were created for relationship. Trauma happens in isolation. Recovery happens in connection. God heals us *with* others, *through* others, and *for* others. Sponsors, accountability partners, groups, churches, and trusted companions are not optional add-ons; they are part of the design. Regulation is contagious. Presence spreads. Love multiplies in community.

What makes this approach different is not that it replaces faith with science, but that it allows science to illuminate faith. Neuroscience does not compete with God; it testifies to His craftsmanship. Trauma-informed care does not diminish spiritual truth; it protects the tender places where healing unfolds. When faith and neuroscience walk together, recovery becomes deeper, kinder, and more sustainable.

You are not the person you were when you began this journey. Something real has shifted.

NeuroFaith® and the Twelve Steps
Redeemed, Rewired, Restored

Something true has awakened.

Something holy has taken root within you.

You have learned not only what to believe, but how to live in alignment with how God designed you. You have discovered that healing happens not by force, but by presence. Not by striving, but by surrender. Not by isolation, but by relationship.

You are not simply recovering.

You are becoming whole.

You are being renewed from the inside out.

As you have walked through these Twelve Steps, you have engaged in far more than a program or a sequence of tasks. You have entered a sacred process of restoration. In the NeuroFaith® model, we recognize that this healing is not only spiritual, but biological and relational. God has designed your brain and nervous system with the capacity to soften, to rewire, and to love again.

Every moment of honesty, every act of surrender, every prayer offered in humility has been shaping new pathways within you. As you turn toward God again and again, your nervous system learns safety. Your mind learns peace. Your heart learns trust. Healing unfolds not through effort, but through returning — gently, honestly, and consistently — into the presence of love.

This is why your work here matters. Not because you tried harder, but because you opened yourself to be seen, known, and held. And as God continues His restoring work within you, that healing will naturally

flow outward into your relationships, your choices, and the way you carry yourself in the world.

So, take heart.

You are not alone.

You are held.

You are being restored.

You are being transformed.

And the story you are living now — this story of humility, courage, and grace — will carry life to others. Not because you are perfect, but because you are present. Not because you have arrived, but because you are willing.

Walk gently.

Stay connected.

Remain open.

And trust the God who knows exactly how to heal what He so lovingly created.

And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue His work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns. Philippians 1:6 (NLT)

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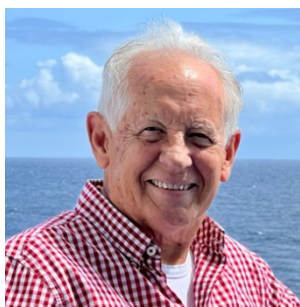
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