

Step Six & Seven: Defects and Short Comings

The Habits of Credibility Lead to Integrity

By Rick R.

Sometimes the wording used in The Big Book (Alcoholics Anonymous) and in The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (12&12) mean something different to individuals often based on how they evolved with respect to Religion, Agnosticism, Atheism, and other developmental histories. This may be confusing to some of us, especially Step Six in the 12&12 as it talks of God removing these defects of character the way God removed the obsession to drink. In simple terms I try to word the Step Six process in a way anyone can understand it and my goal is not to offend anyone by being over simplistic but most of our actions and behaviors stem from our thinking and if our thinking is of a fearful nature, we are bound to make bad decisions while trying to defend ourselves. The defects we identify in the Step Four inventory, disclosed in step five and address in step six, are biproducts of our fears and insecurities and are of a spiritual nature as in our inner self. The shortcomings we address in step seven are of a material nature (actions and behaviors) that result from those fears and insecurities. If, in the program, we discover a defect of character and address it properly the shortcoming diminishes and becomes irrelevant. A simpler way I try to describe this process is as follows: Suppose you purchased a new car and drove off the lot and as you reached the first stop sign you hit the brakes, the car slowed down but did not stop as it should and drifted out into the intersection. You then returned to the car lot and explained what happened, they checked it out and discovered that the wrong brakes were installed at the factory. They agreed to correct the mistake. This time when you drove away and approached the stop sign the car stopped as it was supposed to, and it also stopped at every other stop sign or red light. Once the defect was identified and corrected, the shortcoming went away. I look at defects as the unseen part of our makeup such as: thoughts, motives, fears, feelings, ego, etc. I look at shortcomings as the results of those inner thoughts and feelings such as: gossip, lying, verbal abuse, cheating, theft, criticism, and so on. In step four we identified our defects of character (fear and Insecurity) and in step five we owned and exposed them. In Step Six and Seven we start to replace our selfish and shameful thoughts and motives with unselfish habits and deeds. There is no need to overcomplicate the process. As we begin to stay on the unselfish side of the behavioral ledger, we begin to establish a new record, and if all our motives are of an unselfish spirit, we start to establish some credibility, which, in time, leads to integrity. If individuals employ the dynamics, I described in Step Six and Seven, he/she will be a different person, in Spirit, when they reach Step nine, and it will make it much easier to make amends backed up by a mountain of integrity. The steps of the program are numbered in order for a reason and if a person is struggling with one of these steps it might be wise to look back and be sure that they did not skimp on an earlier step or leave out something important. If an Alcoholic has a desire to live a happy and useful life, the steps of the program are a pathway to achieve that goal provided they stick with the plan. Not everything will go our way in the beginning but, if we persist, in time things will go exceptionally well. In the words of (Edward Charles Roe, American Baseball Player) Preacher Roe: "Sometimes you eat the Bear, Sometimes the Bear eats you." I say, "Perseverance will always eat the Bear"!