

The Tenth Step Acid Test

Principles to Live By

By Rick R.

Each of our steps takes a certain amount of thoroughness but for most of the steps, it seems we will be working on them for the rest of our lives as they involve practicing principles that we have incorporated into our day to day living experiences, and after the Ninth Step has been given due diligence, we can go on to Step Ten. This is not the time to rest on our laurels. Having put a little time between us and our last drink required a lot of effort, and it would be a shame to lose interest in the growing process at this time. My ego is always ready to move right into those empty spaces when I vacate my growing efforts. My approach to Step Ten was confusing at first, as I thought I was going to be running around with a clipboard for the rest of my life, and I didn't like the idea of credit and debit lists and penciling out things, but I tried it for a while, and I still didn't like it. I couldn't see monitoring myself on every face-to-face verbal transaction and running around apologizing to everyone that I may have made a mistake with. That was my first impression of step ten. What I discovered was that the tenth step is a framework for the upkeep and maintenance of all of the previous nine steps, and as I incorporated those principles into my value system it made me aware of my mistakes and it became easier and easier for me simply because the more I live by unselfish, proven principles, the less mistakes I make, and the easier it became to right those mistakes on the spot. When I first heard the term, "cash register honesty", it meant more to me than just being honest with a cashier. It meant that I had to stop taking advantage of everyone. That is a principle to live by. Since I started on this journey, I have wanted to be free of all the sick feelings I had about myself and, at first, I couldn't find anything in the Big Book or the 12&12 that I could sink my teeth into. The one thing that came close was the term: *sins of omission, but that was too direct*. I was looking for a broader term that would have covered the things that I was unaware of. All my life, under a mountain of misdeeds and inappropriate behavior was the word **NEGLECT**. I then Googled it and found it twice in the Big Book (pg.97 and 129) and twice in the 12&12 (pg.81 and 151) but I don't think I ever saw it addressed as seriously as all of the other major defects are, but it was *major for me*. I discovered it in the process of doing the tenth step. To set the tone for my day-to-day activities I start by making my bed when I get up in the morning. By doing this I am making a statement that I won't be neglectful, irresponsible, lazy, etc. If I am at the market, I'll find a stray cart and return it to the rack, just to make up for all the times I pushed a cart into the flower bed and fled. The acid test is how diligent I am at continuing these exercises in selflessness until they become second nature. You may have your own way of giving back to make it right and these things cost us nothing, but if I'm willing to do them, it's a cinch I won't be ripping anyone off today. It helps to have a clear conscience, and it may be what a good role model should be doing. I want to be quick to address my mistakes, for we know that nobody's perfect, and I don't want to miss the spiritual boat. Now it all comes down to *going through each day without doing anything I regret*, and I hope I pass the acid test.