

Making Amends is i.e., Mending My Ways

An Apology is Acknowledging My Mistakes

By Rick R.

When describing step nine in the Big Book it says that *"if we are painstaking about this phase of our development we will be amazed before we are halfway through"*, and then it goes on to list the promises. The information in the 12&12 is a lot more direct about the different approaches we could take and tries to encourage us to exercise caution before we rush in and make some major blunders. This suggestion, I think, can't be taken too lightly. I have heard many horror stories about well-meaning people, wanting to put this step behind them, ran to their friends and loved ones and disclosed things that destroyed any trust they may have had in the alcoholic. *"Good judgment, a careful sense of timing, courage, and prudence---these are the qualities we shall need when we take Step Nine"*. (12&12 pg.83) Sometimes we read the **headline** but fail to read the **entire article**. If we do this when we go through this step, we can do more damage to our already strained relationships. Making promises, to my close friends and family, that I'm not sure I can keep, usually fall on deaf ears, but an honest recognition of my past mistakes, without going into too many details, at this time, and a sincere determination to give the program my best effort with the understanding that my behavior will be the measure of my success, is a more acceptable approach. We know that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. After we have put some time between us and our last debacles, we can revisit those amends and go into details about each event, only after we have run it by an experienced and trusted advisor. Rushing into an amend that could bring hardship to our unsuspecting family, or to other third parties, is another mistake that people sometimes make. In Step Nine in the 12&12 it says that *"WE cannot, for example, unload a detailed account of extramarital adventuring upon the shoulders of our unsuspecting wife or husband"*. I would also include Major financial or work-related amends that may result in losing your job, or create heavy financial difficulties for the family. These should be put off until everyone involved is in agreement, and then, only after talking to someone to make sure that you are not overlooking anything. How about all those relatives and friends that we haven't seen in a while, but still have an uncomfortable feeling about the way we left that relationship? These people only have a snapshot of what we used to be like. They don't see the day-to-day changes that we have made in our lives, and they assume that we are the same as when we made our last major mistake. For this type of situations, I would consider a slow but sincere process of reestablishing contact with those involved. I once suggested that, using the opportunity on Birthdays and Holidays, of sending cards can be a nice way to reestablish contact, with a simple *"been thinking about you, hope things are going well for you, Love....."* Sending these out at each opportunity for a year or two with **no return address**, and no expectations, and at some time in the future, you will have to attend a wedding, graduation, or funeral... where you will see them again, and you will be amazed at what will happen. My experience has been that the cards create curiosity and *that* sometimes causes these people to talk to each other and they find out that you are trying hard to mend your ways and it tends to disarm them. Now, that would be the time to put these things to rest. Keeping in mind that, if I can't add the kicker **"I regret what I did, and I don't do that anymore, what can I do to make it right"** then maybe I'm not ready to make that amend yet. I hope these ideas will help you to understand, that most amends can be made in a positive way and the results are so much better than we ever could have expected. We must do these things if we hope to develop the **serenity and peace** that is **promised** in step nine.