

# Step Nine: Responsibility or Accountability?

Leveling the Playing Field

By Rick R.

Most of the problem drinkers that come to Alcoholics Anonymous are riddled with guilt, shame and other mental issues based on their perception of past behaviors. They believe that they are responsible for all those faulty actions. This is one of the most misunderstood symptoms of alcoholism. No one is responsible for becoming an alcoholic unless, at birth, they understood alcoholism and had the ability to sign on to become an alcoholic. Alcoholism is a disease and we alcoholics are a product of our environment when growing up. Our first drink did something for us that it did not do for the normal drinker. It mellowed out all the guilt and shame that we suffered as we approached maturity. We are not responsible for contracting a disease, but we are accountable for the behaviors that were the symptoms of that disease, like it or not. Without this understanding it may take years of failed attempts at staying Sober. If we are fortunate enough to understand this concept we can cut to the chase and start the process of cleaning up the wreckage of the past and that is where the steps of the AA program come in. It sounds simple and it is simple, but it is also a slow and serious process. There are Twelve Steps to the program. Each step is preparatory to the next and it would be wise to avoid rushing through them just to get your ticket punched. Most of the damage that we have done, in and before our drinking days, was to other people and to this day those things weigh heavy on our conscience and by rushing into apologizing for them too early, may fall on deaf ears. Most of those people have only a snapshot of you when you were in the depth of your disease and until you have a track record of the person you are today, they may assume that you have not changed much. In Steps Four and Five, we acknowledge those behaviors and discuss them with another person and in Step Eight we try to make a list of the ones we harmed and in what way we harmed them and if we are still willing to enact those behaviors on others, we are not ready to move into Step Nine. You are ready to make those amends when you can add the phrase: I no-longer do those things and I have not done them in such and such a time, what can I do to make it right. On page 83 and 84 in the Big Book are the Promises as follows: (if we are painstaking about this phase of our development. We will be amazed before we are halfway through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scales we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.)

We are not Responsible for becoming an Alcoholic, but we are Accountable for our behaviors and if we can recognize that we have a disease, address that disease, and make restitution, who can fault us?

When I made my amends, I always started with this question: Have you ever did something you really regretted, and their answer was always the same. "Hell yes, who Hasn't. Next, I say, can we talk? That was my way of Leveling the playing field.