

Here are some helpful tips for working Step 8 of the AA step program that can be downloaded in PDF format, read on Adobe Reader, or read right now, with your eyeballs on this screen. As with all the steps, there is no right way to do the Eight Step, and there is no one-size-fits all AA worksheet. This is simply our take. Take what you like and leave the rest.

The eighth step states, “*made a list of persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.*” From the previous steps, this list of people should be coming into focus. When we listed our resentments in our fourth step to discover, uncover, and discard our character defects, we began to become aware of the harms we may have caused others.

The eighth step prepares us for the ninth step—“*Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others*”—but these steps are separate for a reason, and it’s a (surprise!) spiritual reason. When we made a decision to our will and lives over to the care of God as we understood God in Step Three, we signed up to complete the remaining steps with the end goal of a spiritual awakening that enables a psychic change in us. The nature of the new way of life that results from this psychic change begins to be described in the section on the ninth step “promises” in the Big Book. So hold onto your hope and your horses. Because what needs to come before the actual making of these amends is the making of the list. Making the list first allows us to pause and welcome in our higher power, who will help us understand the exact nature of our harms. We remember this is the same loving, gentle, transformative higher power who helped us understand the exact nature of our wrongs in the personal inventory in step four. The goal of this step is just making a list. After we make the list and consider it, in light of our spiritual principles, we begin to start understanding the concept of personal responsibility in a new way.

Maintaining our conscious contact in the process, we can approach working the 8th Step in a similar way to approaching the 4th Step: put pen to paper and trust. Again, there is no 8th step idiot’s guide, but there is a rough outline in the Big Book, which does connect Step 8 with Step 4 because both steps invite us to examine our personal relationships and past actions. This can seem overwhelming and confusing. The greatest peace, though, in working the steps comes from the actual working of them. So just as we said before, the only wrong way to do this step is not do it. Everything we provide here are merely suggestions, we make no claims this is the best way.

8th Step step-by-step

1. Make a list of anyone who comes to mind in considering this step. Anyone. Set a timer (ten minutes is plenty to start) if you need to. Write without stopping. If at the end of ten minutes you still have some more names to get down, keep going until the flow stops. If you are stuck and waiting for the ten minutes to be over, keep writing as well, making little headway whenever a name comes to mind. If you’re not sure, write the name down anyway. This is just the preliminary list, but it ought to be a thorough list in the sense that it captures all the cobwebs of guilt and shame that may have accumulated in your subconscious mind.

2. Add your own name to the list. A lot of people will reach deep, powerful levels of honesty in generating their 8th step list and considering all the ways they may have hurt others but fail to add their own name to the list. In doing this you help yourself to a decent dose of authentic love that will fuel positive action.
3. Talk to your sponsor about this list. You're not doing this alone, right? If you are, stop reading right now, and your next step is to make some phone calls. The members of a 12-step program support one another in everything and stepwork should never be gone alone. It can also be appropriate, depending on what you need in your recovery at the time, to speak with someone with whom you have a fair amount of trust who has worked the steps of Alcoholics Anonymous even if that person is not your sponsor, or not someone with whom you check in on a daily basis.

In talking with another about your list of the people you think you have harmed, discuss what “your side of the street” was in any of the relationship dynamics with the people concerned. Steps eight and nine are about clearing away the wreckage of your past from when you were operating unknowingly in our defects of character, or drug use, or both. It is always a good idea, when considering these memories, to stay close to God, pausing and asking for knowledge of his will (or her, or their) for us and the power to carry it out. Chances are you are gaining some newfound knowledge about who you might owe a sincere apology and who you might want to leave behind and make an indirect amends. As a container for these discoveries, we have proposed a small table below.

Sample 8th Step Format

Person (s)	How I harmed them	How I harmed myself	Character defect operating	Proposed amend*

*Don't worry about this column, because this will get filled out in Step Nine. There are many different ways to make amends—some involving contact with the person harmed and some not having anything to do with them in the present. The measuring stick is usually what will serve the greater good. Luckily you don't really have to figure this out. The answers are in your continuing to practice these 12 steps and 12 traditions in all your affairs and you are, because you are reading this now. So, until next step, happy list-making!