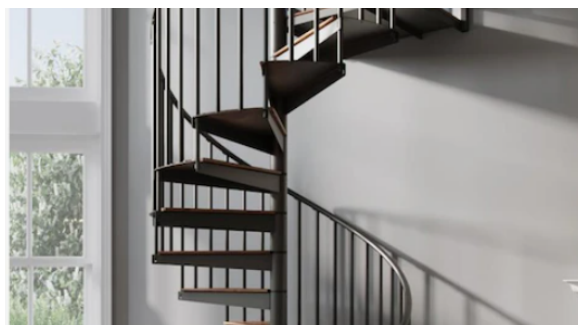


CHAPTER EIGHT

The age of miracles is still with us. Our own recovery proves that! – *Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, page 153*

In this chapter, I pull everything together. by discussing how the Step One science informs each the other steps. I also share what I have learned in program over the past 5 years.



The Steps

Step 1 – What I have just shared with you is how the science of our disease informs Step One for me. But let me tell you how the science affects the way I work the other steps.

Step 2 – *Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.* – My HP doesn't change the reality or the science of how my brain and body work. What my HP does do (and this is something I cannot do for myself) – is help me navigate the science. Then I am restored to the sanity of understanding that I am part of nature and I cannot make my brain and body other than they are. I finally stopped the insanity of blaming myself for my disease and trying to control my food or trying to fix my physiology. Instead, I saw my sanity could start by

aligning with the laws of nature the way my body works, and the way I was born.

Step 3 – *Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him.* – I stop trying to play God with my brain and body. Instead, I rely on my HP 100% for the guidance on how to best live within the strengths and limitations of the body and brain I have. I don't ask my HP to change my reality - just how to best navigate it. I no longer interpret emotional or physical discomfort as a sign that something is wrong. I recognize it as part of the process and look to my HP for help in dealing with the stress.

Step 4 – *Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.* – I took an objective look at the “causes and conditions” of the drivers of my disease. My inventory showed me very clearly how much I hurt myself and others by demanding that my brain and body be able to do what they cannot do. I caused myself and others a lot of grief because I kept demanding that I should be able to eat one cookie and stop. Trying to control my brain, body, everyone and everything in my life was THE main driver of my disease.

Step 5 – *Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.* – This Step helped me to see my humanity. We all do this stuff. We all fight against the reality of our disease. We all fight against reality period. We all try to control others and the world around us. But for me, because of my addiction and the way my brain and body work, the



consequences of this fight guaranteed my destruction.

Step 6 – *“Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.”* – Step 6 helped me get really clear on how unwilling I had been to accept the truth about how my body and brain work in this disease AND how I had been unwilling to feel the emotional and physical discomfort that abstinence and following a food plan caused me.

Step 7 – *Humbly asked him to remove our shortcomings.* – The science showed me what I needed to humbly ask of my HP. It was not asking that my disease be magically erased or that I somehow be given the willpower of a saint. Today I constantly ask my HP for guidance on how to better align with the reality (the science) of how my brain and body work.

Step 8 – *Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.* – I honestly looked at the ways I harmed my body and psyche by refusing to accept the truth about how they truly work in this disease. In order to become willing to make amends, I had to forgive my brain and body for how they work and I had to forgive myself for trying to force them to be something they weren't.

Step 9 – *Made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.* – Working and living within the science of my addiction is my living amends to my body and brain. Period.

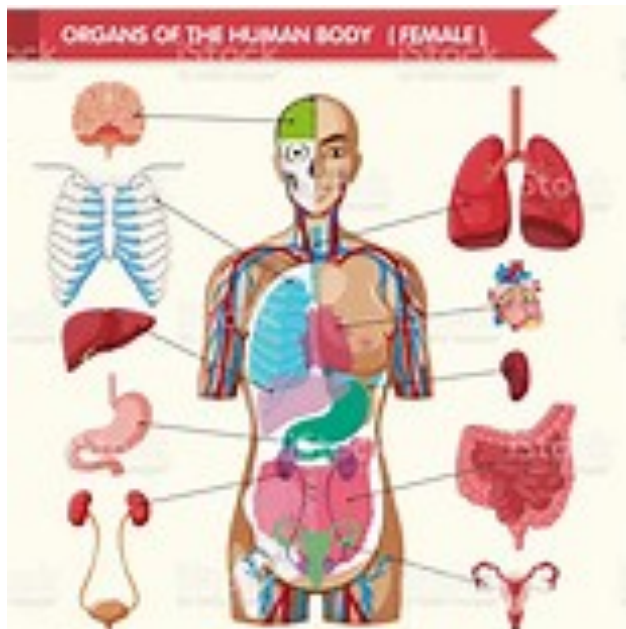
Step 10 – *Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong*

promptly admitted it. – I work really hard at being aware of when I fall back into trying to control my disease - trying to force my body and brain to handle things they can't. I also keep on the lookout for when I try to blame others or make others responsible for my disease.

Step 11 – *Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood him, praying only for knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry that out.* – I am always listening for my HP's guidance on Step One. My HP and the reality of how my body and brain work are the spiritual anchors for everything I do. My deep understanding and acceptance of my powerlessness is my touchstone.

Step 12 – *Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to compulsive overeaters and to practice these principles in all our affairs.* – The science of Step One was an important spiritual awakening for me. I am carrying this message to you and I try to practice living in alignment with reality in all my affairs. I practice accepting life on life's terms to the best of my ability every day.





What I've Learned

By not understanding and accepting the scientific truth about my disease, I spent most of my life trying to do perfectly what my disease makes impossible for me to do at all – namely, eat and react to food like a normal person. My inability to understand how truly powerless I am over food kept me in and out of relapse for decades. I had to stop demanding perfection from myself because it made me afraid of making mistakes. When I am afraid of making mistakes, it keeps me from being able to learn from my mistakes. Worst of all, I let my mistakes (imperfection) give me permission to unleash my bingeing. Because, after all, I had already blown it for the day!

I also learned that there isn't a way to get and stay abstinent painlessly. There are ways to cope and to help our bodies heal and re-regulate. BUT I don't know how to do this painlessly.

What is abstinence really? My science journey taught me that abstinence is absolute surrender to the reality that I have this disease – this addiction. It taught me that food addiction is just as destructive as any other addiction. I MUST admit and accept to my deepest core that I am truly bodily and mentally different from my fellows. Not worse, just different and I have to do things differently in order to take proper care of myself. OR I SUFFER! Abstinence is simple for me. It is just refraining from my alcoholic foods. My food plan is not my abstinence. It is just a tool I use to lose weight and then maintain my weight loss.

The science taught me that I can't take a day off from what I need to do to manage my chronic disease. I can't make an exception – no matter what is going on in my life or anyone else's. Alcoholics and drug addicts don't take a day off. If we think we can get away with it – we are telling ourselves that our disease, our addiction, is not really as serious as other addictions. And that, my friends, is a lie. I believe it is called denial. At least it was for me. As long as I operated under this delusion, I remained in relapse for 20+ years.

The science explained why I couldn't just focus on my body – the physical allergy. We do this when all we we're concerned about - is our food plan and how much we weigh. Yes, these are important, but they are only half of the story and probably the less important half.

The whole point – the entire point – of the 12-step program is to elicit a spiritual awakening. A spiritual awakening that will solve our problem. This is where I



had to concentrate most of my work in program. This focus on a spiritual solution is what helped most with the mental obsession.

My spiritual awakening started when I began reading spiritual literature that really spoke to me. It made me question all of my beliefs, perceptions and actions involving my disease. It led me to question how I had been living my life. It all came down to what Rami Shapiro calls an addiction to control. My bottom line was that I did not feel safe in this world and my addiction to control was my way of trying to feel safe. My addiction to food was just my solution to how bad I felt because I could not control what I thought I needed to control to be safe.

Maybe your addiction to control is based on not feeling loved; not feeling accepted; not belonging; not being good enough. Whatever it is, the spiritual work in this program can help - not by changing our past; not by changing how others behave; not by changing reality; but by changing **US**.

My spiritual experiences in program are primarily shifts in perception – the way I see and understand things. I've had a few mountaintop experiences and they are wonderful, but the more enduring experiences are these perceptual shifts. The biggest perceptual shift I have had with regard to my eating and weight was the realization that there was a scientific explanation for my disease and that it was not my fault. It was nothing I did or didn't do. – it was just the way I was made. Plain and simple.

This perceptual shift led me to further explore the science. I was finally able to

understand the physical discomfort of my disease. When I felt a terrible urge to binge, I knew it was because my brain wasn't seeing my leptin. It wasn't because I was a loser or a failure or that I didn't TRULY take step one – things I told myself for years. The science taught me how to support my body and brain. How to navigate my physical reality; not how to control it or change it.

After my perceptual shift, I began to see how acceptance of other realities was crucial to my continued recovery - to the recovery of my mental obsession. Trying to control and change my physical reality always led me back to the food. Trying to control and change the reality of my world also always led me back to the food. I had to learn, with the help of program and my HP, to surrender to and accept all reality. It didn't mean I had to like it or condone it, but I had to accept it as being real AND as out of my control. I can try to influence people, places and things – but I know full well that the outcome is outside of my control.

It was such a relief to stop fighting, to stop demanding that everything and everyone be the way I want them to be. I cannot say enough about the importance of finding a HP or spiritual philosophy that works for you. It was absolutely critical for my recovery. Once I found it, everything else fit into place.





****Please feel free to ignore everything I've said in this workshop. If it doesn't resonate for you, if it doesn't work for you, then it's not useful. Leave it and find what does help you. With all the love in my heart, I wish you recovery. It doesn't matter to me how you find it – just that you find it!!!****

