

## **Step 1 of the Proactive Twelve Steps**

6th edition

### **I face reality. I am not able to control what I do, and this has serious consequences.**

#### Discussion of Step 1

So, you have a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day. And it's not just today. It's been weeks and months, and everything you do seems to make things worse sooner or later. It's like that feeling that kids have when they feel like nothing will ever be right. But you're not a kid. And this is not all in your head, far from that.

#### **Life challenges**

There are a lot of genuine difficulties, challenges, problems in your life. It has been dawning on you that it's not just about the external challenges, however tricky they are. It's also how you're responding to them. And so, you know that you must change the way you're responding to things. And you have been trying, but nothing seems to work out, and the consequences are daunting.

It's not good now, and it will get much worse in the future unless something changes dramatically. You have tried to change what you do and found yourself relapsing. Even, in some way, enjoying the relapsing while you were doing it, even though you would deeply regret it afterward.

One way or another, it comes down to the difficulty in controlling your impulses. This is the case with addiction. But it's not necessarily something that people usually describe as an addiction. It could be your tendency to procrastinate or, more generally, be avoidant: this results in a backlog of unresolved issues. Or it could be your tendency to get overly angry. Despite repeated efforts to control your anger, you find yourself erupting in a rage you end up regretting.

You have tried to control your impulses, only to fail so many times. You face a harsh reality: There's a big difference between what you want to do and what you actually do.

#### **Denial**

For a long time, you have been in denial. There are many forms of denial: "It's no big deal," or "I don't really have a problem," or "I can handle it," or "I could stop anytime I want," or...

What happens, essentially, is that you don't see what is now blindingly obvious to everybody else. You have a problem. Your life is out of control.

Why have you been in denial? Well, you didn't invent denial. It is a mechanism that is in all of us. It is a coping mechanism that allows us to function under extreme circumstances.

For instance: We are all mortal. It is an inescapable truth that we are all eventually going to die. It is sad and scary. But, if we kept thinking about our death every moment of our existence and feeling sad and scared about that, what kind of life would we have?

So, denial helps us disengage from problems we cannot solve and focus on living in the moment. But there are times when it is not helpful, even harmful. It would be much more effective to take action.

### **A new beginning**

It's not enough to just say: I believe it will work one day if I just keep trying. You need to take action. You need to create a setting in which change is possible and sustainable. This is why you are following a program instead of just improvising as you go along.

At the onset of this program, you are looking squarely at reality. You acknowledge that what you're doing is not working. When you do, you are left with a feeling of emptiness. You don't know what to do or even whether there is a solution. It is terrifying. However, it is this emptiness that allows you to make room for new, unexpected ideas.

Step 1 is a bleak moment in the sense that you are facing the full catastrophe head-on. It is also a new beginning, the first step on a journey to change the structures of your life.

For the full book, see <http://proactive12steps.com/book/>