

The Twelve Steps of Heart t' Heart

- 1 We admitted we were powerless over compulsive addictive behaviors* – that our lives had become unmanageable. (Mosiah 4:5; Alma 26:12)
- 2 Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. (Mosiah 4:9; Alma 26:12)
- 3 Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him. (2 Ne. 10:24; Omni 1:26; Mosiah 3:19; 2 Nephi 4:34)
- 4 Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. (Alma 15:17; Mosiah 4:2; Jacob 4:6–7; Ether 12:27)
- 5 Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs. (Mosiah 26:29; Alma 22:18)
- 6 Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character. (Helaman 3:35; 2 Nephi 31:19; Mosiah 2:20–21)
- 7 Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings. (Alma 36:18; Alma 38:8; Moroni 10:32; Mosiah 5:2; Alma 34:15–16)
- 8 Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all. (3 Nephi 12:9; 3 Nephi 12:24; 3 Nephi 12:44–45)
- 9 Made direct amends to such people wherever possible except when to do so would injure them or others. (Mosiah 27:35; 3 Nephi 12:25; Mosiah 26:30)
- 10 Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it. (2 Nephi 4:18; 2 Nephi 10:20; Mosiah 26:30)
- 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. (2 Nephi 32:3; Alma 37:37; Helaman 10:4)
- 12 Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others still suffering from the effects of compulsive behaviors and to practice these principles in all our affairs. (Alma 5:7; Mosiah 27:36–37; Moroni 7:3)

*Any problem may be inserted here, in place of "compulsive addictive behaviors." Permission to use the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous for adaptation granted by A.A. World Services, Inc.

Dearest Friends:

A "Tug-of-Love": What I'm Learning About Imperfection

It's February! That means January is definitely over, and (if you're as mortal as I am) it also means that most, if not *all*, of your glorious New Year's resolutions are over, too.

Actually, I have to confess that I made only one resolution, this year: to love the Lord and continue to practice trusting Him in all things—even all imperfect things, which of course includes me. In fact, from my perspective I am the single most imperfect person I know. I walk around looking at life through my own particular set of childhood "lenses," trying in my faltering way to offer my whole soul as an offering unto God—which amounts to a continual "tug-of-love" between Him and I.

Since the fact of our imperfection is a big deal for most of us this time of year, and the season of daffodils and new life is still a month or so away, I thought I'd take this opportunity to share some thoughts and insights I've gained from the twenty years I've spent applying the Twelve Steps to my imperfections. Through these insights, I've come to know the mercy and kindness of the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, and in Their love I have found hope.

I have spent a lot of years believing that the only way to attain perfection is to *abhor* (hate, detest) imperfection, and to resist and resent its presence in everything and everyone, including myself. For instance, I would try to eat perfectly *permanently*. Any variation, any wavering, and I would leap at the chance to throw myself "off the wagon," doing serious binge-eating, then punishing myself royally for being the "biggest loser." It became pretty obvious to me, after spending some time studying and experimenting upon the Steps, that this kind of thinking actually served to separate me further from God than did my original slip. I am reminded of the Savior's teaching that a lack of willingness to forgive is a greater sin than the original behavior (D&C 64:9).

Dearest Friends

Continued from page 1

Patience = Humility

As I've come to *know* the goodness and mercy of the Lord, my eyes have opened to the truth that responding to imperfection with longsuffering and patience is a core attribute of God. How patient and tolerant and longsuffering He is toward us! How gently He holds out to us the ideal, while forgiving the "real," knowing it is part of the growing and maturing process.

When I am impatient with imperfection, whether in another or in myself, I am actually feeling one of the many forms of pride. Patience, in other words, is a synonym for humility, impatience a synonym for pride. Impatience with the growth process which imperfection represents does not demonstrate a love or trust of God in *all* things, but only in all *perfect* things. Just as I must die to live again, and lose my life (to the Savior's will) to find it, so must I accept and forgive imperfection in order to come to a state of perfection.

Perfect = Finished; Finished = "Still"

Some scholars believe the Greek translation of the word "perfect," as used by the Savior in Matthew 5:48, is actually more accurately translated as "finished," rather than as "without flaw." "Finished," in this context, might also convey the picture of being "at peace," or "at rest," since we are invited to seek His peace (John 14:27) and enter into His rest (Moroni 7:3). I feel the sweet truth in that association of concepts. "Finished" also conveys the image of, "Be ye therefore 'still,'

[as in calm, assured, steady], as my Father in Heaven is still." This is one reason why "still" is such an accurate adjective for the Spirit of God—the voice of the Spirit is "still." It is peaceful. The Spirit of the Lord conveys patience with imperfection. He knows there is no other way to raise up children to love and adore you, to want to emulate your lifestyle, than by exercising firm, but gentle patience.

Resist (Resent) Not Evil

Thus, I have come to realize this is what the Lord meant when He made the otherwise perplexing statement: "Resist not evil" (Matt. 5:39; 3 Ne. 12:39). Pondering these ideas, I have come to believe that God tolerates 'evil' or imperfection. His way is not to resist or resent it, but rather to respond with patience, longsuffering, love unfeigned, even while not condoning it.

So how do I do that? How do I tolerate imperfection in myself and others without appearing to condone it?

I'm not sure we can. Just like we can't live eternally without appearing to die, tolerating imperfection may *appear* as if we're condoning it. I'm reminded those who laid down their weapons against evil, and chose to not resist it, chose to die, to be still and allow God to be God. (Alma 24:21)

The people of Mormon also chose the path of not resisting evil (Mosiah 24:14-20). They cried unto the Lord to deliver them from bondage, and He eventually did. But first, He required them to accept their imperfect existence for a period of time. He gave them the strength and courage to bear up under the burden of continued servitude. And then, *in His own time*

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and in His own way, He delivered them out of their imprisonment. He *delivered* them, He did not have them *fight* their way out. I can almost hear Him saying to them (and to me as I continue to deal with my human frailties): "Be still, and let me be God. Be patient, and wait upon me. I will be your Savior."

I've come to realize that *unless I have a very plain and prayerfully obtained witness* from the Lord to "go to war," to "fight" my way out of a situation, it is better to continue to reconcile myself to my challenges, even as Paul (2 Cor. 12:7-10), and to wait upon the Lord to deliver me. What if, by rushing in to deliver ourselves from evil, we have also, through our impatience, preempted the miracle God would have wrought for us if we had been patient and waited upon Him?

I believe it is actually the tactic of Satan—who hated and refused to participate in a mortal experience where there would be allowance for *any* imperfection—to infect me with impatience and loathing of imperfection. I see that all this angst and resistance and disgust at self and others for being weak and imperfect is really not a spirit or attitude coming from God, but from exactly the opposite source!

Continued on page 3

Dearest Friends

Continued from page 2

'Resist Not' Does Not Mean Embrace

Being human, and an addictive type besides, I'm always prone to leap on any excuse I can find to indulge in my weaknesses. Because of that, I can imagine someone (that natural-person part of me), asking: "So, are you saying that we should rejoice in imperfection? Maybe even go out and embrace some...if you know what I mean?"

Gently, patiently, I perceive the "voice" of Truth answer me: Let's go over it again. A patient attitude toward imperfection is not the equivalent of embracing evil, of intentionally seeking to participate in it.

Patience with imperfection is not evil. Impatience with imperfection only spawns more negative or evil energy.

God does not condone our weaknesses, but He allows for it, knowing it is the way of growth toward adulthood, in eternity as well as in mortality. A child must

toddle before walking—fall down a lot, then fall a lot less, eventually ceasing to fall at all. God has patience with our imperfect journey of recovery, because He knows we can't do better until we're willing to

Patience with imperfection gives me the ability to...slip, forgive it, and go on to accumulate days of consistent, though imperfect, abstinence.

do poorly. He is like a parent who knows that even though His child is sincerely dedicated to piano lessons, there will still be a period of transition in which the child's mind and muscles must learn to enact the right motions to play 'perfectly.'

Patience With Imperfection Drains the Power Out of My Addiction

All the fighting and hating, resenting and resisting of my addiction, has only fueled my addiction. Getting all worked up into a fit of

shame and blame, reacting with impatience at myself for having a slip, for not having a *perfect* performance record, is exactly what drives me to turn a slip into a binge.

Patience with imperfection gives me the ability to have a temptation, maybe even a slip, and forgive it, accept that it's part of the growing process, and go on to accumulate days and days of consistent, though imperfect, abstinence. Patience leads me to continue in a humble attitude, until the day comes, even as the scriptures promise, that I have taken possession of my soul, and find that my longed for ability to be perfect has distilled into my heart and mind like the dews of heaven.

I'm so grateful for His patience with me. "Yea, and as often as my people repent will I forgive them their trespasses against me" (Mosiah 26:30). As we often hear in recovery circles: "You gotta love the process." In other words, remember, It's a tug-of-love, not war. He knows that and hopes we come to know it, too.

—Colleen H. □

A Personal Witness of Humility

At a meeting this evening, I was overwhelmed to tears with feelings of gratitude and joy that knowing these true principle brings. Overwhelmed to tears, also, with the longing that "my family might partake;" sorrowful that so many of them are too busy with the things/fears/pleasures/worries/distractions of this world that they don't have the time or energy or consciousness to use in coming to these truths—and letting these truths lead them back into the presence of God.

I see that I must be willing to

receive the degree of humility that is characteristic of God. In other words, the humility to accept people where they are and let the course of natural consequences teach them *by their own experience* what works and what doesn't work.

I have to be at peace as I watch them back away from these principles, ignore God, excuse themselves in a million ways, resort to the million half-measures—including all the ones I resorted to. I must let them try self-will and self-reliance, as well as self-pity and self-impor-

tance. And I have to allow them to do it as long as they choose.

I have to get on with applying these same truths to the only life I can apply them to effectively—*my own*. I, like Jesus Christ, must be humble enough to focus on my own "duty" (measure of creation), to listen to God's will and tap into God's power to fulfill that measure those good works He would accomplish through me.

I see that humility is one of the most core characteristics of Godhood. □

Stuffing More Than Stockings

This past Christmas I went about as usual like a crazy robot woman running around shopping, cleaning, cooking, wrapping, hanging, and stuffing. You see, I have a problem with compulsive spending—spending money, time, energy, talents, even service to others—and I started to lose my program.

All month, I spent my time and energy preparing for the holidays. On Christmas day, my house was filled with loved ones—my daughter and her brand new baby, my daughter-in-law who is pregnant, and my sick mother—so I had the kitchen nearly all to myself. My daughter helped with the dressing, my husband peeled the potatoes, my grandchildren set the table and made place cards, but the rest was up to me.

I wanted everything to be perfect, so in addition to the “kosher” turkey, we had to have everyone’s favorite foods—candies, side dishes, desserts, appetizers, condiments, and sparkling cider. I included several items that were special requests because “it just wouldn’t be Christmas without them.” As I cleared away the meal, I realized many of these dishes had not been eaten, at least not by the ones who requested them.

By the 30th, I was exhausted—physically, emotionally, spiritually and financially as well. I had spent myself, as well as all my money and time. As soon as the last family member left, I took down the tree and decorations. I couldn’t wait to be done with it. After everything was put away, I put myself to bed.

As I lay there, I wondered what had happened? Was that Christmas? Had I missed it? I was here the whole time, at least in body. Where were all the emotions, my passions? After all, I love Christmas!

I must have stuffed Christmas as I was stuffing the turkey, right along with the negative emotions that I wouldn’t allow myself to feel.

Oh dear! I must have stuffed Christmas as I was stuffing the turkey, right along with the negative emotions that I wouldn’t allow myself to feel.

No wonder I felt so weary, so uncomfortable, so stuffed—just like Santa’s big bag, all tied up nice and tight so nothing will come tumbling out. I wondered if Santa’s back killed him dragging such a load from house to house. Mine was certainly more than I could bear. I realized the real work of the holiday had just begun. I drug my bag of stuffed emotions up on my bed and prepared to sort them out.

The first emotion I found was envy—wrapped up in a tight green bundle, and it was Big! How did it get so big? I realized it wasn’t just about this Christmas, but lots of Christmases past.

The next was a big red bundle of anger and resentment, also from the past and present. Then a blue one, maybe the biggest of all, filled with sadness and disappointment.

Tears spilled from my heart and down my cheeks, as I uncovered the greatest sadness of all—an exquisitely sharp sorrow, a longing for my very dearest family member and friend—the one the Christmas celebration was all about.

“Oh please, Jesus, forgive me for forgetting even You this year.”

As soon as this prayer rose in my heart, I felt as if the Savior was offering me a chance to see the equally exquisite gifts he still held out to me. Suddenly, it felt as if I were seeing a beautiful pink package, filled with gratitude and hope. Gratitude for our abundance which we shared with the food bank this year. Hope born from the scriptures we read and the sweet discussion we had Christmas Eve.

As I continued to think of His many gifts to me and my family, I realized that in all my desire to have the perfect Christmas, I had forgotten to be thankful for all that Heavenly Father has blessed me with—my son’s recovery from cancer five years ago; his first child, due in March—a baby the doctors said would never be conceived because of chemotherapy; my newest grandson, born on the same day as my little boy, who returned to Heavenly Father after only a day with me. How precious this new baby is to me! As I sat there on my bed, crying, my tears turned to joy and I finally felt the Christmas that I had almost missed.

Stuffiness is strange thing, isn’t it? The reason I avoid stuffing my turkey is I’ve heard it’s a breeding ground for disease. I’ve learned

Continued on page 5

Stuffing More Than Stockings

Continued from page 4

firsthand that stuffing your feelings is a breeding ground for “dis-ease”, too. As I’ve learned in program, if you stuff one set of feelings—the negative ones—you have to stuff the good ones, too.

I’m grateful, today, that the Savior was willing to help me open that bag I had tied up so tight and kept hidden from myself. It’s my prayer that I’ll remember this Christmas all year. I hope I can remember to go to the Lord every day—even every hour or minute of the day, if necessary—and open my

bag of unwanted emotions and let Him help me put them in perspective, let Him help me see how much more there is to be grateful for than there is to regret or resent.

Stuffing a turkey creates a breeding ground for disease. Stuffing your feelings creates a breeding ground for “dis-ease”, too.

This year, I’ve had the chance to see how graciously and kindly He

will exchange our burdens for such wonderful gifts as faith, hope, love, and gratitude. And isn’t that what the season is all about? Giving and receiving the real gifts of God—not just “stuff.” I think next year, we’ll go to someone else’s house for the holidays, and you can be sure I’m going to assign the stockings and the stuffing (I mean, the dressing) to someone else. I think I’ll give up not only stuffing turkeys at Christmas time, but also stuffing my feelings. I promise I won’t miss another Christmas!

—Cheryl D. □

A Reflective Moment on a February Evening

This kitchen/dining area is such a warm, homey room. Even the laundry humming along behind the louver doors is comforting.

Outside, beyond the windows, the February evening and the world it envelopes have all become a dozen shades of blue. The snow is light blue—ice blue—and the trees are darker, a greyed blue. The pavement of the road, only visible as a tiny ribbon from this angle, is midnight blue.

A car passes quickly with its red tail lights ripping through the blue. Then, across the street, the neighbor pulls into his driveway. The garage door automatically goes up, the light inside goes on. The car pulls in and the brake lights glow. The garage light is dim, pale, but definitely emitting a yellow glow.

I see that even in the blue atmosphere that seems to color everything there is the potential for the warm tones of red and yellow to

be ignited. The warmth is there waiting to be noted, appreciated.

As the minutes pass, the details beyond my window are growing fainter, fading into a darker and darker atmosphere. Meanwhile, simultaneously, I see the reflected image of what is inside this room growing plainer. It is all I can see as the world beyond becomes lost to my vision, to my view.

I rise and go to the window and peering through my own mirrored image, try to see just one last time into the vast world beyond the glass, to capture that plain view I had only minutes before enjoyed. All “out there” is veiled to me now, though I know it still exists. And yet, now that the veil of darkness has dimmed my view, I must be content to see clearly only that which lies within. I smile at my reflection for a moment before closing the curtains on another day.

—C.H. □

**WHEN WE SEEK
FOR COMFORT
WE EXPERIENCE
MISERY AND
PAIN.
IF WE FIRST SEEK
FOR TRUTH AND
UNDERSTANDING,
WE WILL
EVENTUALLY FIND
COMFORT.**

—C.S. LEWIS,
MERE CHRISTIANITY

Program from the Prophets: Using the Tool of Inspired Literature

Years ago, when I first started doing my personal searching through the Book of Mormon for validation of the twelve “recovery principles” that were the foundation of the Twelve Steps, I bought a packet of the kind of crayons that you can mark scripture pages with. I had a different color for each of the principles (Steps), and one for “codependency” and one for “Zion.” Fourteen in all. And I began reading and marking. Eventually my entire large-print quad-combination began to look like a rainbow. One day my little girl (now a senior in high-school) took one of my blank “sticky-note” (another great device for annotating scriptures), and wrote on it, “Mom’s Book of Many Colors.” It’s been about ten years since then, but I still treasure that note.

My old quad reminds me of an old worn saddle. It has been the means of taking me through a great deal of adventure—change, growth,

life. This morning, I was reading a great talk by Elder Henry B. Eyring and found this hug from heaven:

Last December I learned again the power that comes from trying harder to have the scriptures opened to our hearts. It began when I noticed the scriptures of a man sitting next to me in a meeting. He opened them as the discussion progressed, and I could see that he had marked them, as I had done, but with a difference. He had placed colored tags on the edges of pages, keyed to the colors with which he had marked the scriptures. I asked him after the meeting to tell me about it. He showed me the front of his scriptures where he had placed a typed page. On that page were topics about the gospel, each with a colored

line under it. He had placed the corresponding colored markers on the edge of the scripture pages so that he could study all the scriptures that were helpful to him on a particular topic.... Within a day I had purchased an inexpensive set of scriptures....I began to read with purpose. (Henry B. Eyring, “Always,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1999, 7.)

I add my testimony to that of Elder Eyring’s:

The Savior gave us the scriptures, paid for by prophets at a price we cannot measure, so that we could know Him. Lose yourself in them. Decide now to read more, and more effectively than you have ever done before. (Eyring, *Ensign*, Oct. 1999, 7.)

□

Letting the Lord Guide My “To Do” List

My work day is so hectic and filled with things to do, that I can’t begin to figure out what to do first! Turning my “to do” list over to the Lord has been a real life-saver. This is how it works for me:

I review my list of things to do for the day. Then I pray and ask my Heavenly Father to tell me which of these things is most important right now. In a separate notebook, I write the one thing that comes into my mind. Then I do it. When I complete

that task, I “return and report”—I go back to my notebook and write how I accomplished the task, the results, and any other pertinent information. Then I review my to do list and pray again. I repeat this process throughout the day.

I find when I take this approach, I get more done, I feel better about what I’ve accomplished, and I usually have energy left over at the end of my work day.

I’m frequently surprised by

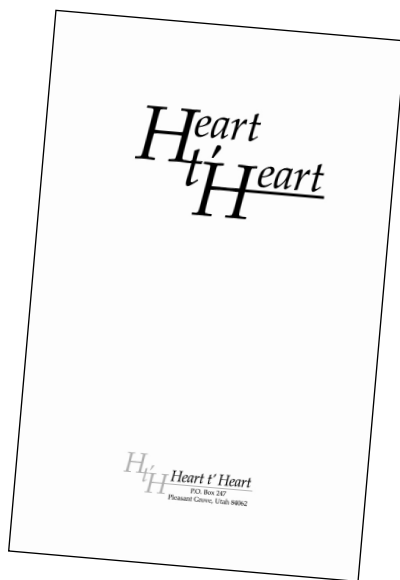
what I’m “told” to do next. Sometimes it’s something that’s not even on my list, like a reminder to eat lunch, drink some water, or even, go to the bathroom. I’m tempted to feel embarrassed that the Lord would have to tell me to use the bathroom, but I also feel very loved and blessed that He cares enough for me to help me take care of my personal needs, as well as the “more important” items on my “to do” list. —Name withheld □

SA Booklet Now Available

Heart t' Heart is very pleased to announce the completion of the booklet, *Speaking Heart t' Heart on Sexual Addiction*. It went to the press on February 18 and should be available by the time you read this newsletter.

This booklet takes an in-depth look at some of the problems and questions concerning sexual addiction and how Heart t' Heart assists those struggling with this problem. Divided into two sections, part one to the addict, and part two to the spouse, or loved ones, of the addict, it covers such topics as applying traditional twelve step terms, such as addiction, addict, abstinence and sobriety, to sexual addiction; appropriate sharing in meetings; telling your spouse; resources for recovery; and other topics. It also addresses concerns of the spouse, such as how to help your spouse recover; dealing with negative feelings toward your spouse; and working a program of your own.

As anyone who has visited the online forum on our website knows, this particular topic is one with



which many good men and women struggle. We are very pleased to offer this booklet in the hopes that it will help others find a path to recovery and peace through the power of Jesus Christ and His atonement.

The booklet is 24 pages and comes in a plain, buff colored cover with the Heart t' Heart logo on the front. The cost per booklet is \$1.75. You may order it over the website at www.heart-t-heart.org (item #0509) or by calling order fulfillment at 888.790.7040 (toll free).

New Meetings

Beaulieu Gardens, Trincity, Trinidad West Indies (TR-01) — Tuesday, 6:00 p.m.; Call for location. General Focus, Book Study of the Book of Mormon. David C. (868) 640-6441; david_clarkeo@lycos.com

January's GSB Contributions

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Editor's Note: We had some negative response to last month's thoughts on "the victim mentality," and were accused of teaching false doctrine. We suggest two articles by Elder Neal A. Maxwell: "Swallowed Up in the Will of the Father," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 22; "According to the Desire of [Our] Hearts," *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 21.

Also, please remember, the opinions shared in *Heartbeats* are of the person sharing. We hope and pray that you will read, ponder and pray for direct inspiration and counsel from the Lord. Take what you feel confirmed in your own heart concerning the sharing, and toss the rest.

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- In-depth study/analysis of principles found in Steps or Traditions
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- Capturing from the scriptures, Big Book, He Did Deliver Me
- Open Sharing with positive recovery messages
- Program from the Prophets – quotations from modern prophets with a “recovery” message
- Short quotes, thoughts or one-liners

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What’s inside this issue of Heartbeats...

- **Dearest Friends—A “Tug of Love”:** *What I’m Learning About Imperfection:* A look at the positive side of imperfection, and how an attitude of impatience with imperfection can fuel addiction.
- **A Personal Witness of Humility:** Looking at humility as a characteristic of God, and the ability to accept others where they are.
- **Stuffing More Than Stockings:** Learning the lessons of the holidays and accepting the true gifts of Christmas.
- **A Reflective Moment on a February Evening:** Understanding the limitations of our point of view.
- **Program from the Prophets—Using the Tool of Inspired Literature:** Using our scriptures meaningfully.
- **Letting the Lord Guide My “To Do” List:** One way to seek help from the Lord in managing a hectic schedule.
- **New Literature Available:** Speaking Heart t’ Heart on Sexual Addiction.

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