

Spiritual Emergence Anonymous 12-Step Manual

This is a work in progress: It is compiled of notes taken by SEA participants over the past years and will continue to be added to and edited. We seek contributions by SEA members to refine and extend this manual.

Step 1

We found ourselves overwhelmed by the challenge of integrating our spiritual emergence and sought help to bring our lives into balance.

Step one is necessary before any of the other steps can be worked. We must come to terms with our own personal limitations to fix our situation. Spiritual emergence can be a particularly difficult situation in this respect, because it can bring simultaneously immense benefits as well as immense challenges. Only when we realize the challenges are too great for us to “take control of our situation” can we admit our own powerlessness, regardless of how much power has come to us through the spiritual emergence. We may sense an increase in our power to influence others, to manifest what we want, to expand our state of consciousness, to share experiences with mystics and spiritual teachers, to understand profound mysteries, to experience bliss, love, and ecstasy. But despite these benefits, if our lives have become unmanageable, we suffer greatly.

We may find our health deteriorating or find ourselves ungrounded and unable to find peace or to move forward in an effective manner. We may find ourselves making enemies and creating animosity despite identifying with pure love. We may find ourselves becoming highly sensitive to others’ feelings, to violence, to toxic air and food, or to electromagnetic fields, scents, light, or sound. We may find ourselves unable to be satisfied on the earthly realm, always seeking ways to “escape” to heavenly or spiritual realms. We may find we no longer recognize ourselves, become disinterested in our work, or want to avoid hanging out with our friends. This may involve sudden disinterest in money, stability, caring for our bodies, planning the future, or staying involved in society. Despite good intentions, new passion toward spiritual directions, and loving hearts, we may find that no matter how hard we try, we cannot fit comfortably into a steady, satisfying, stable, and productive identity and lifestyle.

We have found it is valuable to admit the limits of our personal power and acknowledge that we are powerless over our own spiritual emergence—that this is a bigger process than our single, individual selves.

The process of surrender for us is not about being captured and forced into submission, which is almost how the AA first step appears to newcomers. Instead we make the choice to lay down our willful egoistic attempts to control, making the choice to accept the help we need, and make the choice to take a more receptive role in this process. It is like actively developing the art of being instead of doing. Active rest. Active surrender.

SEA Step 1 Questions

We found ourselves overwhelmed by the challenge of integrating our spiritual emergence and sought help to bring our lives into balance.

1. Do I accept the transformative effects of my SE?
2. How do I recognize how this transformation is affecting my life?
3. Do I accept that my spiritual experience is valid?
4. How have I tried to avoid/resist accepting the transformative effects in my life and what were the consequences?
5. Am I looking for a quick fix to my situation? Is there one?
6. Have I found it difficult to admit that my life is unmanageable?
7. Do I find sometimes that I feel out of control or powerless?
8. Have I had difficulty admitting that I am out of control? That I am powerless?
9. Have I found that using the term 'spiritual emergence' has helped allow the process to unfold?
10. Do I have other labels besides 'spiritual emergence' that help me in understanding what I am going through? What are they?
11. Do I find a part of myself feels like resisting rather than admit that my life has become unmanageable?
12. Has my life been chaotic at times? When?
13. Have I felt at times like I have had no options? When?
14. Which obligations of daily living help and which ones hinder my spiritual emergence process unfolding?
15. Do I feel that I have what I need in my life to integrate what is going on inside of me? Enough time? . . .space? . . . tranquillity? . . . focus? . . . support?
16. How do I feel when my wants and my needs conflict? How do I respond?
17. Do I give into ways to escape my present experience? What happens to my ability to manage my life when I do this?
18. Do I find myself striving to live in an ethereal dimension and having difficulty living in the material realm?
19. How do I balance being in touch with my own inner process with relating to other people?
20. In what situations do I feel shame or embarrassment about who I am now?
21. Do I sometimes feel I had no choice about the pace of my experience?
22. Do I feel that the pace of change in the world or in my life is more than I can handle gracefully?
23. Do I feel more affected by the outside world than I can handle gracefully?
24. Do I feel more affected by others' emotions than I can handle gracefully?
25. How well do I take care of myself? My body?
26. Do I trust my own feelings? Do I know what they are?

Step 2

Came to believe that a Power of Goodness greater than ourselves could bring us to stability and clarity.

When we come to accept that there is a Power greater than ourselves, whether we call it our Higher Power, our Creator, God, The Universe, Goddess, Buddha, Allah, Yahweh, etc., then we can trust and have faith that this Power has our best interest at heart and wants only good for us. Surrender to this can offer such relief! When we are ready and able to give up control, instability, worry, rumination, fear, madness, dread and hopelessness, then we open ourselves to be comforted and healed, with the possibility of being restored to wholeness in body, mind, and soul. We practice coming to a place where we can trust and let the divine power take the wheel. We begin to sense that we were only pretending that we knew the way and put our focus less on our own meager strength and more upon the divine guide of our journey. Gradually we learn to let go and shift into glide. The feeling can be very natural, like aligning ourselves to gravity—only in a spiritual sense, rather than the physical sense of the electromagnetic pull of the earth.

When we connect with our Higher Power, we become more aligned and guided back to center. We more clearly see synchronicities and people coming into our lives when needed, confirming we are on the spiritual path that is our birthright. We experience the comfort of being “in the flow.” In contrast, when our inner compass is off course, we lose our stability. Without that inner compass, we are set back into spinning and striving for control of that which is not ours to control. Regaining our compass allows us to slow down and enjoy the Journey, substituting self-care for self-sacrifice.

Our natural inclination in spiritual emergence is to serve others, and through centering and submitting to divine guidance, we learn to serve without expectation of anything in return. We are only shepherds, assisting others who are also asking for guidance. As we share our experience of surrender, our madness can be put to rest.

SEA Step 2 Questions

Came to believe that a Power of Goodness greater than ourselves could bring us to stability and clarity.

1. What is my concept of Higher Power at this time?
2. Have past experiences, including STEs, affected my concept of a Higher Power?
3. Do I sense spiritual guidance in my life? How?
4. What does it mean to me to align with God?
5. How do I experience aligning with a greater Power?
6. How is trusting in something greater than myself similar to trusting myself?
7. How is trusting in something greater than myself different from trusting myself?
8. When I do not let God lead, what happens?
9. What does “stability” mean to me?

10. What does “clarity” mean to me?
11. Am I afraid to admit I am not fully in charge of my life?
12. From where do I draw courage to delve into facing my own powerlessness?
13. Do I find myself praying when I am desperate?
14. What does “Let Go and Let God” mean to me?
15. What does Faith mean to me?
16. What does Belief mean to me?
17. When do I notice synchronicities that show me I’m on a divine path?
18. Do I trust this process?
19. Do I trust that things can improve?
20. Do I feel comfortable with the unknown?
21. How has my spiritual emergence affected stability in my life?
22. How has my spiritual emergence affected clarity in my life?
23. What would it take to allow my concept of my Higher Power to change?
24. What might I gain from believing I could be supported and loved by a Power greater than myself?

Step 3

Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of our Higher Power.

Step three refers to a process of surrender to a force greater than ourselves. This greater force may be conceptualized as ‘God’ in whatever manner we understand the concept. ‘God’ may refer to ‘Higher Power’, ‘divine oneness’, ‘source’, ‘life force’, ‘Gaia’, whatever helps us to conceptualize a force of greater good and knowledge than ourselves. This force may be within us but extends beyond our human mind. It is ecumenical, all-knowing, and the source of Love.

This step involves an active decision to surrender as we come to understand that our lives have become unmanageable in their current state. It may involve a conscious decision to follow a different path. Surrender may be necessary to break old patterns. Surrender leads us to directly face our own need to control. Often when we feel challenged, old patterns of behavior and deeply held feelings of fear emerge. Learning to surrender spiritually may facilitate the ability to surrender emotionally and physically and vice versa.

In this step, we are placing our trust in this greater force, to help guide us towards the right path, having acknowledged that we cannot do this alone. Our motivation may be out of fear and desperation or we may be motivated by the joy of healing. Some days it may seem easier or more difficult to surrender. Often it is a painful process and requires hard work. This step requires faith and trust as it involves facing our fears and drawing upon courage to overcome those fears.

It can be helpful to have a support network to remind us we are on the right path. Some days may feel chaotic, even impossible, with more to do than what we have time or capacity for. A process of spiritual emergence might involve a large shift in mindset in a very short timeframe. Some days it may actually feel helpful to surrender, particularly when we are feeling that we just don’t

know how to move forward. The act of surrendering forces us to tune into our heart and to try and put aside the chaos of our mind. This step helps us to conceptualize God *as we understand God*, as a process itself. The key concept here is trust. We learn to trust in a process that we cannot, and need not, try to control--a process that unfolds naturally for our greater good.

SEA Step 3 Questions

Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of our Higher Power.

1. What is bringing me to make this decision to turn my will and my life over to God as I understand God?
2. What do I understand my will to be?
3. How might turning over my will assist me in becoming more clear and stable?
4. What do I understand “turning my life over” to mean?
5. How might “turning my life over” to the care of a power greater than myself assist me in becoming more clear and stable?
6. How do I understand God?
7. How do I understand God to be a caring God—worthy of turning my will and my life over to care?
8. What other ways might I express “God” according to my understanding?
9. What part does God play in my spiritual emergence?
10. How do I feel about turning my will and my life over to God as I understand God?
11. What will it require to turn over my will and my life to God’s care?
12. What do I hope will change as the result of surrendering my will and life to God as I understand God’s care?
13. How might Step 3 help me when I feel overwhelmed in my spiritual emergence?
14. What challenges will I face in surrendering my will and life to God as I understand God?
15. How can I stop thinking, trying, and considering, and actually make the decision?
16. Is there anything holding me back from surrendering my will and life to God as I understand God?
17. Can I imagine being willing to surrender over and over again?
18. What will help me to remember to keep “Letting go and letting God”?

4. Made an *honest* inventory of our personal gifts and our weaknesses.

We begin to look closely at who we are and how we behave—both the parts we are uncomfortable with and the parts that we appreciate about ourselves. Some of the work in Step 4 can be uncomfortable and dark, and at other times, freeing and affirming. It involves mindfully re-living memories and emotions. Some of us come to this step agnostic and bitter after years of defending our own ego. We need to draw on the support of the groups and our sponsors and put our trust in the higher power of the God of our understanding to lead us to reconsider our lives.

In this step we take a searching and honest look at ourselves and our past. We list two inventories: the first is our strengths and personal gifts, then second is our shortcomings.

When we take the inventory of our personal gifts, that includes strengths, talents, skills, and positive passionate desires. These assets are important parts of who we are. In uncovering them, we may find that it takes effort to recognize them, to acknowledge them, and then to appreciate and trust them. Because they are part of us, the path to becoming whole involves embracing the good parts of ourselves and learning not to diminish ourselves. In filling out our inventory, we need to guard against the parts of ourselves that tend to diminish or ignore our strengths. Do we discount what is good, strong, and beautiful in us, or do we celebrate and develop the positive qualities within ourselves? Do we take care of our bodies? Do we honor our emotional selves? Do we give ourselves safe places, allow ourselves to rest, and nourish ourselves with good food for our bellies and good thoughts for our minds? All these parts come to the surface in our honest inventory of our personal gifts.

When we take the inventory of our weaknesses, that includes shortcomings, embarrassments, parts of ourselves we have trouble admitting, and negative characteristics. Step 4 helps us to recognize with more clarity times in our lives we regret.

We have found that in looking at our difficult times and who we resent or dismissed we can better see what occurred. Sometimes we felt defensive. Or we felt we had been betrayed by others that we were holding expectations that they could not fulfill. Or we may have blamed others for things that happened to us. Or we may have been overly concerned about taking care of ourselves to the detriment of others around us.

Many of us have witnessed a lot of judgement in our lives and have reasons to be fearful. We learned in youth how to adapt and survive, how to please, and how to manipulate, and some of these strategies are no longer serving us. For those of us in spiritual emergence, there may have been stigma and judgment around mental health issues and behaviors that resulted from non-ordinary states of consciousness. On the other hand, we may have considered ourselves superior to others based on our spiritual experiences and we might need to examine more closely subtle arrogance or profiting at others' expense.

We may find that this step helps us to re-examine situations that were demanding more from us than we could manage with the resources we had. Some of our greatest embarrassments may have come from things done when we were in these distressed non-ordinary states. For example, in conditions where people or institutions were operating with a worldview or value system that clashed with our own, we may have felt pushed from a healthier spiritual emergence process into a desperate spiritual emergency. We may also have felt betrayed when those we turned to for help were unable to provide us with the answers or safety we were searching for.

Of particular importance are honest examinations of situations where we may have turned our negativity inward: We might have blamed ourselves, resented ourselves, punished ourselves, expected too much of ourselves, or not fully appreciated ourselves. Step 4 gives us the opportunity to realize that we are only human and make mistakes. We know we can learn from these mistakes if we are honest and take the time to find clarity about what happened.

Step 4 is our opportunity to have a safe and constructive space to explore and re-examine those times. We may find we have a tendency to judge ourselves harshly, and must be on guard to not turn our fear or disappointment against ourselves. This process demands self-compassion.

SEA Step 4

Made an honest inventory of our personal gifts and our weaknesses.

Questions:

1. What does *honesty* mean in making this inventory? How will I be honest?
2. This inventory includes my strengths and my weaknesses. How do I feel about that?
3. Do I have a safe external and internal environment to enter into Step 4? Do I have support from others while I do this step?
4. This step reveals secrets and takes things from the darkness into the light. How is that challenging for me? How will it be helpful for me?
5. How can I give dignity to myself and others while I create this inventory?
6. Do I regard strengths and weaknesses as God-given? Or as my own responsibility/to my own credit?
7. Can I include prayer while doing this Step? How?
8. How will I organize this inventory to work for me? Are there other lists of moral/ethical characteristics that I can use for this Step?

Here are some sample characteristics for both the personal gifts and weaknesses lists:

Balance of Patience and Forthrightness
Balance of Trustworthiness and Discernment
Balance of Generosity and Practicality
Balance of Light-heartedness and seriousness
Balance of openness and wisdom
Balance of drive to progress and timing of letting go
Balance of courage to act and timing of surrendering
Balance of confidence and humility
Balance of standing firm and giving in
Balance of alertness and relaxation
Ability to forgive and to ask for forgiveness
Ability to help others and to ask for help
Ability to express gratitude and receive gratitude from others

Responsibility in exercising my attention
Allotting time to important things, including rest and renewal
Realistic expectations of myself and others
Sufficient time and energy devoted to finding spiritual clarity
Clarity regarding sexuality
Willingness to seek wise guidance

Responsibly acknowledging and managing emotions
Knowing when to press on and when to retreat

Step 5

Admitted to our Higher Power, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our weaknesses. We humbly asked our Higher Power to remove those shortcomings.

Step 5 involves being willing to look more closely at our own weaknesses, sometimes referred to as defects of character. On one extreme, we never want to feel that we have any defects of character—maybe we make mistakes, or we haven’t learned something yet, or we temporarily ignored our conscience, or were victims of difficult circumstances, but defect of character suggests that it is a part of ourselves that we have no control over, whether we know about it or not. It doesn’t seem fair if we are willing to be perfect, that we should be blemished with a character we cannot change that prevents us from being perfect. For example, we do not want to hurt others. We do not like to think that we have a defect of character that might make us hurt others without realizing it, or despite all our best efforts. “If I do my best, that should be good enough.” On the other extreme, we can also blame anything on our own defect of character, using it as a shield to protect us from responsibility. If our defect of character is at fault we reason, then we are innocent, right? Defect of character suggests that we have had it forever, or at least was given it without our own permission, so perhaps it follows that we are not to blame for anything our defect of character causes—in our life or in regard to other people. “Sorry, there is nothing I can do about it—that’s just who I am.” Step 5 makes us face this uncomfortable truth about ourselves, that we are both responsible for our defects of character, and simultaneously powerless to change ourselves. This is agonizing from the perspective of our own ego, which wants to be in control of as much as possible, but at the least all of ourselves.

If God as we understand God created us (which makes sense because we know we didn’t create ourselves), then it logically follows that if a change in our character can be made, it can likely be made by its creator—God as we understand God. There may be a tendency to fool ourselves while in the process of spiritual emergence because so much is changing. Some of that change is in our character, and hopefully the change is for the good. Some of the greatest challenge of spiritual emergence is our own resistance to the change. Character transformation involves letting go on a deep level, and we may find ourselves wrestling with this—part of us wants to change, part of us doesn’t. Step 5 helps this process of transformation to be easier. If our part of the responsibility is to be willing for this change to occur, then that is something that is within our power. We may not be able to change our own defects of character, but we do have our own individual will that we can assert to be open to our character being changed.

The first part of Step 5 is to us to choose which of these conversations we have, in what order, and in what location, when we admit the exact nature of our weaknesses. We know ourselves the best, so we choose. It may be easiest to start with admitting to ourselves, or to God, or we may need to start by admitting to someone we trust to carry us through this difficult step. Because this is half of our inventory for Step 4, and because it has already been written, our job in this step is

to set up these three meetings in environments that support the purpose. They best be private, un-interrupted, with plenty of time so that the conversations are allowed to run their course, rather than being cut short. We can listen for responses as we go and allow each conversation of admitting to broaden into a greater conversation of response, acknowledgment, and creative investigation if we are comfortable doing so. When we choose someone to admit to, it is wise to choose someone who can listen with unconditional acceptance. Best to find someone who can withhold reacting in judgmental ways and restrain from giving advice. Their job is only to listen, and to love unconditionally. Our job is to explain this clearly to them before we go through our list of admitting our shortcomings. It also helps to remember that we humans are often more tolerant and forgiving of a friend's behaviors than we are of our own. Step 5 helps us to practice trusting other people, and we need others to help us find insight. This can be particularly helpful if we have felt betrayed in the past. Sharing with another keeps us honest, and helps us to accept both our shadow side, as well as our brilliant inner light. Great healing can come from each of these three conversations, with ourselves, with God, and with another human being. We may be surprised at the power of sharing what we have for so long suppressed from ourselves or from telling another person. We find that this helps to erase our shame and also more fully embrace our gifts. We may learn that we are not the only ones with these types of secrets. When we allow someone else to hear our stories and not reject or punish us for them, self-acceptance may ensue, and freedom to be more whole can come simply from expressing these tightly-held secrets.

The second part of Step 5 is to ask our Higher Power to remove our shortcomings. This is a deeper, more committed act of humbling ourselves and of trusting in the God of our understanding. It is a conscious courageous acceptance of our reliance on a higher power, with the trust that our troubles and confusion, "madness" and "insanities," be they real or imagined, can be quelled by a power greater than ourselves. We become willing to release our grip on and let go of our self-centered and self-obsessed way of life.

Something to consider at this point is *spiritual bypass*. Some might consider spiritual bypass to be thinking of oneself as more spiritual than other people because of psychic or energetic gifts of understand or healing, yet bypassing the more mundane personal spiritual work of communicating, empathizing, forgiving, and serving others. As we humble ourselves to be honest in answering Step 5, this is important to consider, as it is very common for people who are undergoing spiritual emergence to go through a period of spiritual bypass. Often, we do not come to recognize spiritual bypass until we are able to reach a greater depth of humility, which may occur as we work Step 5.

Humility for some may be as simple and as difficult as admitting that we need help and then verbally asking for it from God as we understand God. Thankfully, we are no longer alone because we have developed a sense of God as we understand God, and we are no longer pretending to be self-sufficient. We can look at ourselves openly and honestly. We have examined the areas of ourselves where we need the most help and healing. We no longer "beat ourselves up" over them. We long to return to stability and clarity so that we can live in a space of inner peace, and we are willing to submit ourselves to our Higher Power for the sake of this desire.

SEA Step 5 Questions

5. Admitted to our Higher Power, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our weaknesses. We humbly asked our Higher Power to remove those shortcomings.

Questions, first part of Step 5:

1. Can I see the value of Step 5?
2. Do I sense the importance of revealing secrets rather than hiding them?
3. Do I understand the difference between who I am and how I behave?
4. Which of these is easier for me—admitting my wrongs to myself, another person, or to God?
5. Do I have any fears about admitting my wrongs? Is part of me afraid to be less than perfect?
6. Can I list my fears of admitting wrongs to myself? To another person? To God?
7. Do I feel I can trust myself to be honest with myself, or do I trust someone else more to be honest about me?
8. What does “exact nature” mean?
9. Is there someone in my life I can trust for Step 5 who will be compassionate and nonjudgmental, and be trusted to hold confidence?
10. Do I have an image of God that is judgmental or compassionate?
11. Do I understand the power of love, acceptance, and forgiveness in freeing myself?
12. Which would I like to start with—myself, another person, or God?

Questions second part of Step 5:

13. What does *humility* mean to me?
14. Who do I know who has the trait of humility?
15. Do I consider humility something I avoid or seek, or both?
16. Have I developed humility in my life as a spiritual practice?
17. What is the difference between resolving to overcome my own shortcomings and asking God as I understand God to remove them?

18. Do I sense that my Loving Creator wants me to ask for removal of some of these shortcomings, or prefers for me to do it on my own?
19. Do I have shortcomings in relationship to spiritual emergence, such as pride in comparison to others, impatience with people who do not understand me, resentment at how I have been treated when vulnerable?
20. Do I have an understanding of “spiritual bypass”? Can I be honest in recognizing it in myself?
21. Are there any shortcomings that I am not ready to let go of? What are my concerns for each of them?
22. Do I believe that God as I understand God has the ability to remove each of these shortcomings? Do I believe that my requests will be granted?
23. Do I know how to pray in this way? Who can help me?
24. As I work Step 7 what is changing in my relationship to my Higher Power?

Step 6

Practiced *compassion* to all those we had hurt by acknowledging any suffering caused, including to ourselves, by making a list of all we may have harmed.

This is a simple list-making exercise. We are free to simply list everyone, without jumping ahead to decide if we will take action or not. Choosing if and how we might take action will happen in Step 7.

Step 6 refers to increasing awareness, of discovering how our own actions have affected others. The active process of making a list creates a sense of tangibility which helps us take the list out of the part of our brains where we can ignore or gloss it over. The list makes it easier for us to look at it directly and bring it into the Light so that we can then do something about it. It may be possible to identify individuals whom we have offended or caused harm by thinking about relationships that stir up feelings of guilt or sadness.

The important element of this step is compassion. Compassion involves stepping into another person's shoes and viewing the world from their perspective, which is both similar and also different from our own perspective. Going through spiritual emergence usually expands our sense of compassion. For one thing, we often get more in touch our own feelings, which helps us

then imagine how other people feel in similar situations. For another thing, spiritual emergence usually involves shrinking our egotistical tendencies, which allows us to see other people more clearly.

Because of this, spiritual emergence sometimes brings into focus ways we might be currently hurting or have hurt others unintentionally. We may not have realized this earlier, but as our compassion increases, we may become more clearly aware of it, like bringing a fuzzy background into prominent focus. Another thing that helps us recognize when we may have caused others harm or offended them, is that we become more confident of the power of love to heal. Thus, we can overcome our fear of admitting our wrongs, and use new-found strength and clarity in love to be more honest with ourselves.

Another part of growing compassion that spiritual emergents often feel is more self-compassion. This is particularly important in Step 6. It is good to have a whole separate category listing what we see when we view ourselves with self-compassion. As our awareness increases, we bring into focus the ways we may have sabotaged ourselves, and simultaneously this opens up the way we can go forward empowering ourselves and asking for forgiveness and forgiving ourselves.

Some subtle ways that people in spiritual emergence may hurt or offend others is by trespassing boundaries, often out of good intentions. Doing harm does not always mean doing wrong: sometimes invading peoples' boundaries when we think we are helping to heal and transform them may feel like harm to them. We may, for example, feel that we can help them and give advice even when it is not requested. Or we may speak as if we know more than they do, and thus come across as being arrogant or acting superior. Viewing our relationships through the lens of humility helps us as we draw up this list.

Another pitfall of spiritual emergence is that our sense of awareness increases and often with that, our personal power over others increases. We may overshadow others during conversations or find ourselves to be the center of attention, be getting our own needs met and not tending to others, be controlling situations because others look to us as leaders, or other subtle ways of disempowering others, even when that is not our intention. We may find ourselves sabotaging our own spiritual growth by taking advantage of situations and not recognizing it, hijacking our own humility as we gain confidence, or other forms of spiritual bypass. Spiritual bypass can be defined here as thinking we are more advanced spiritually than we are, mistaking our mental acuity for spiritual power, interpreting our psychospiritual process as advancing us on a scale of authority or higher consciousness, lacking sufficient humility, or relating to others as if we are superior.

SEA Step 6 Questions

6. Showed compassion to all those we had hurt by acknowledging any suffering caused, including to ourselves.

First List: compassion for others

1. Have I found that spiritual emergence has increased my compassion toward others?
2. Has spiritual emergence increased my awareness of other people's feelings?
3. If so, how?
4. Have I ever hurt people intentionally?
5. Do I want to make the first section of my list be those whom I purposefully hurt, if anyone?
6. Would it be helpful to divide the list of people I unintentionally hurt into sections for formerly and currently?
7. How do I discover, after hurting someone unintentionally, that what I did caused them harm?
8. Do I differentiate harm, hurt, offense, and disempowerment? If so, how will I organize my list around these degrees of harm?
9. Are there situations in which I do not know if I have hurt someone? Can I guess? Is this perhaps a different section of my list?
10. Am I on the alert for unintentionally overpowering others?
11. Can I complete the list now? Do I need help through prayer? Through another person's support?

Second List: compassion for self

1. Have I found that spiritual emergence has increased my compassion toward myself?
2. Has spiritual emergence increased my awareness of my own feelings and emotions?
3. If so, how?
4. Have I ever hurt myself intentionally?
5. Do I want to make the first section of my list be times I purposefully hurt myself, if that happened?
6. Would it be helpful to divide the list of times I unintentionally hurt myself into sections for formerly and currently?
7. How do I discover, after hurting myself unintentionally, that what I did caused me harm?
8. Do I differentiate harm, hurt, sabotage, and embarrassment? If so, how will I organize my list around these degrees of harm?

9. Are there situations in which I do not know if I have hurt myself? Can I guess? Is this perhaps a different section of my list?
10. Am I on the alert for evidence of spiritual bypass in my self-examination?
11. Can I complete the list now? Do I need help through prayer? Through another person's support?

Step 7

When it could be done in a loving, safe, and constructive way, we asked all who had been hurt, including ourselves, for forgiveness, and offered to make amends.

Step 7 is a deeper, more committed act of humbling ourselves and of trusting in the God of our understanding. It is a conscious courageous acceptance of our reliance on a higher power, with the trust that our troubles and confusion, "madness" and "insanities," be they real or imagined, can be quelled by a power greater than ourselves. We become willing to release our grip on and let go of our self-centered and self-obsessed way of life. It is as simple and as difficult as admitting that we need help and then verbally asking for it from God as we understand God.

Thankfully, we are no longer alone because we have developed a sense of God as we understand God, and we are no longer pretending to be self-sufficient. We can look at ourselves openly and honestly. We have examined the areas of ourselves where we need the most help and healing. We no longer "beat ourselves up" over them.

We long to return to stability and clarity so that we can live in a space of inner peace, and we are willing to submit ourselves to our Higher Power for the sake of this desire.

SEA Step 7 Questions

7. When it could be done in a loving, safe, and constructive way, we asked all who had been hurt, including ourselves, for forgiveness, and offered to make amends.

1. What does humility mean to me?
2. Who do I know who has the trait of humility?
3. Do I consider humility something I avoid or seek, or both?
4. Have I developed humility in my life as a spiritual practice?
5. Why is humility important for this 7th Step?
6. What is the difference between resolving to overcome my own shortcomings and asking God *as I understand God* to remove them?
7. Are there some shortcomings I seek to change myself, and others that I turn to Divine Intervention to remove?
8. Do I sense that my Loving Creator wants me to ask for removal of some of these shortcomings, or prefers for me to do it on my own?
9. What is the difference between asking for Divine Help in removing shortcomings, and asking for Divine Intervention to remove them for me?

10. What shortcomings will I ask to be removed? In what order will I list them?
11. Are some shortcomings also positive traits, and what is the difference between them?
12. Do I have shortcomings in relationship to spiritual emergence, such as pride in comparison to others, impatience with people who do not understand me, resentment at how I have been treated when vulnerable?
13. Do I have an understanding of “spiritual bypass”? Some might consider spiritual bypass to consider oneself more spiritual than other people because of psychic or energetic gifts of understand or healing, yet bypassing the more mundane work of empathizing, forgiving, and serving others.
14. Are there any that I am not ready to let go of? What are my concerns for each of them?
15. Do I believe that God *as I understand God* has the ability to remove each of these shortcomings? Why?
16. Do I believe that my requests will be granted?
17. Do I know how to pray in this way? Who can help me?
18. How will I recognize changes when these prayers are answered?
19. Can I ask my Higher Power to help me recognize these changes?
20. As I turn these negative traits over to my Loving Creator, what happens?
21. As I change, do I become aware of new positive traits?
22. As I change, do I become newly aware of more negative traits?
23. As I work Step 7 what is changing in my relationship to my Higher Power?

Step 8

Made a list of everything we were grateful for, including our own personal gifts and talents.

As we have done our best to navigate stresses in our lives, we do not always have the time or resources to reflect on what we have been given. This step asks us to reflect from a quieter, less pressured place, how much of what we took for granted was actually opportunities given to us by the work and love of others.

This step can be loosely divided into things that people have given us, and things that “came from God” including situations and events as well as our special talents and abilities.

The first section, things that people have given us, can begin with our parents. Then it could be siblings, institutions, family and friends. Eventually we may find that particular gifts have helped us in our path, inspired us in our growth, and carried us in our times of need.

The second section, things that “came from God” can be divided into situations and events on one hand and talents on the other. Situations and event might best be listed approximately in chronological order if that is helpful.

God-given talents, abilities, natural skills & inclinations can form a different kind of list. These might be listed according to physical, emotional, mental, social, practical, analytical, creative, and spiritual attunements.

SEA Step 8 Questions

8. Made a list of everything we were grateful for, including our own personal gifts and talents.

1. How can we break Step 8 down into manageable categories that work for this period of time in our lives?
2. What are the priorities for us during this specific time in our lives that can help us prioritize which gratitudes are the most relevant for us?
3. Would setting a time frame for these lists help?
4. Do we feel hurried, or do we feel that we are procrastinating?
5. Can we create a document/spreadsheet/piece of art to make this step be visually pleasing/inspiring for us while we work this Step?
6. Can we postpone “looking ahead” as we list gifts from others to not try to figure out exactly how we can express our gratitude to each of them?
7. Can we take time to slow down and feel the gratitude with each item we list?
8. Do we love ourselves?
9. How are we loving ourselves?
10. Can we resist our temptation to minimize our own character gifts out of trying to be humble, and truly own them?
11. Where might prayer be helpful in this step?

Step 9

Expressed gratitude to those to whom we were grateful, and asked our Higher Power for ways to utilize our gifts and talents.

Two kinds of assignments appear under Step 9. One assignment is expressing gratitude to actual people or institutions who gave us gifts. If some people have passed away or are unreachable, we can extend our gratitude to their parents, relatives, or children. We may want to divide this list into those we want to contact in person, send cards, give gifts, send emails, texts, etc. It is

important that we only express gratitude in ways that make the person feel better, do not cause harm, and do not leave them feeling obligated to give us anything in return.

The second assignment happens through communion with God. Prayer, inspired writing, discussion with a spiritual director or a prayer partner or fellow SEA member might be ways to look deeply into these gifts. If we think we are practicing humility by not admitting our gifts, then we perhaps are not doing justice to ourselves and to the God who created us. It is important to recognize our gifts, to examine them, and to develop them. These ways of honing our talents and skills are ways to thank God for them, and to honor God in readying ourselves to use them.

After thorough inspired self-examination, we turn to God to guide us in how to use them. This is a creative time of possibly putting aside our assumptions of what we may have heard or practiced throughout our lives, and ask again freshly “God, how do you want me to use these gifts . . . today?” As we mature in spirit, so the ways that we channel God’s love also changes and transforms. If we are in a habitual rut, we are not fully giving from our hearts, no matter how talented we are. If we are giving solely because of financial gain, then it is worthy of God’s grace to look deeper at ways to share ourselves that cause us to grow in spirit. If we feel we have reached some pinnacle of success or end of the road of growth, then God will give us new and fresh paths to revitalize our lives if we humbly and faithfully ask. If we have refrained from developing some of our talents, this is a good time to ask God more about whether to put attention towards how we might bring them more fully into our lives or into others’ lives.

SEA Step 9 Questions

9. Expressed gratitude to those to whom we were grateful, and asked our Higher Power for ways to utilize our gifts and talents.

1. How do we feel about expressing gratitude?
2. Do we express gratitude readily? Do we receive others’ gratitude readily?
3. Is gratitude something that we value developing? If so, how can this step help that?
4. How do we express love and gratitude for ourselves?
5. Which parts of this do we look forward to and which parts challenge us?
6. Do we feel overwhelmed as we approach this Step? How can we get perspective to make this step right for us at this time of our lives?
7. Do we feel ashamed that we haven’t expressed gratitude more before this? Can we admit this, forgive this and then move on?

8. How do we differentiate what is from God and what is from other people? This step suggests a practical separation. Does that work for us?
9. One way to approach gifts from God is that we are being stewards of the wealth of resources given us—all of which come from divine grace. Does this speak to us or help us with this step?
10. What kind of time frame makes sense to us for each parts of this step?
11. Can we organize our list of how to thank people/organization/ourselves in the order of what will be easiest to what will be most challenging?
12. Imagine a personal and appropriate way to thank each of these people. If they have passed on, how can we best honor their memory?
13. Where might prayer be helpful in this step?

Step 10

Continued to take personal reflection regarding honesty, humility, compassion, forgiveness, and gratitude.

Continuing to take personal inventory of our behaviors and character has to be motivated from inner desire, or it will not happen. Some of the motivations might be seeking greater clarity and stability, which are the two aspects mentioned in Step 2. We become clearer about who we are, who we interact with, what is going on in our relationships, and where God is leading us as we look closely at these spiritual characteristics and how we express them. Stability results as we become clear about these key elements in our lives—not the material surroundings, but the inner workings that relate us to the world and give us our identities.

After we find the motivation to take personal inventory regularly, how do we do this? Best is to pray about that—ask God how to do it now in our lives, and re-visit this throughout our lives as we change and grow. We might also discuss it with fellow SEA members, or other people whose spiritual lives inspire us.

For some people who think analytically, a spreadsheet filled in each night might work the best.

For those who keep journals, we might have chapters for each of these 5 characteristics that we add to as we go or use special inks in our journal entries to highlight characteristics as they show up during the days.

For those who are artists, we may want to periodically create personal works of art centered around these themes as they surface in our lives and keep these special works of art available to view our inner growth through visual expression.

Personal inventory can be shared with others, or with another special person, but it is primarily personal—motivated, carried out, held responsible, viewed by, relished, and studied by each of us alone. It is one area in which we strengthen ourselves for ourselves and stay responsible to God just between ourselves and God. Developing these character traits is also about loving ourselves. We love ourselves because of these and other traits. We love ourselves by being compassionate with ourselves and being grateful, honest, humble, and forgiving.

If we are going through the throes of spiritual emergency, then we are living with a heightened situation of chaos. It may seem to be asking too much to do something regularly. But regular routine is one of the most powerful healing tools for integrating spiritual emergency. This simple exercise done daily or weekly can be something that grounds us and tethers us to a stabilizing sense of routine that in itself will assist in our healing. It can be a marker to help us own the transformation we are going through, give us a clearer sense of our identity shifting, and encourage our devotion towards surrender to God's guidance in varied aspects of our lives.

SEA Step 10 Questions

10. Continued to take personal reflection regarding honesty, humility, compassion, forgiveness, and gratitude.

1. Do we already have a daily practice of reflecting upon our day? Can this step become part of that reflection?
2. How does the practice of discipline play out in fulfilling this step?
3. How does loving ourselves play out in fulfilling this step?
4. How does receiving God's love for us play out in fulfilling this step?
5. Would it help to have a sponsor or prayer partner to be accountable for while we develop this habit?
6. Do we see this step as something that will change and morph over time? How do we imagine that?
7. How can we realistically find time in our day/week/month/year for this step?
8. Which parts of this step are we looking forward to?
9. Which parts of this step are we anxious about?
10. Will writing down our plan help?
11. Are we being honest about both our shortcomings and our successes as we reflect upon these characteristics?

12. Where might prayer be helpful in this step?

Step 11

Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with our Higher Power, praying only for knowledge of divine will for us and the power to carry that out.

After working the 10 steps, with so much focus on repairing harm we had done in the past, and working to discontinue the defects in our character to prevent harming others in the future, this step seemed at first like a breath of fresh air. *Oh, good! We get to focus on God and prayer and what is good about my future!* As we delve more into the commitment to pray and meditate, we found that setting aside this important and sacred time each day is not so easy. In, fact, we begin to discover that it is impossible to rely upon our own self-discipline to set aside this time. Somehow, each day has its own way of gobbling up that time, and the harder we try, the more elusive that time of solitude becomes. Then we find ourselves relying upon what we learned in the earlier 10 steps, that is, that we cannot do it ourselves, but we can turn it over to God in our willingness. This has worked . . . We begin to steadily consistently pray and meditate, but continually need to reach out to God to prevent this special daily time from slipping away into our daily busyness.

In this step, *conscious contact* poses a very specific challenge, which is to reach deeper than the simplistic, “I know God is always with me” answer that comes out so readily. This step is not about knowing, it is about practicing. To practice consciously contacting God takes not only self-discipline, but humbleness, because throughout the day as we experience self-confidence and success we quickly begin to operate without any sense of need of God, which soon leads to becoming unconscious of God. Thus, the beautiful result of prayer and meditation, which can often bring us to feeling better and happier, can have the effect of allowing us to drift away from the source of that happiness. If we do not consciously seek God’s presence, then we drift into autonomy from God, then eventually into trouble. Thus, setting aside regular times for practicing prayer and meditation have become very important to us.

Our prayers are changing gradually from prayers of asking for rescue and relief to asking for guidance and to become aware of God’s will. This seems like a natural continuum, ever since that low desperate point we had to reach to want to enroll in the 12 Steps. As we became rescued, we felt relief. As we recognized God’s divine presence in our life, we have sought guidance, and become more and more curious about learning God’s will for us and in this world.

This circles around to the 12-Step process of continuing to discover what God is and what *my understanding of God* is.

Lastly, in this step, we pray for the power to carry out God’s will. This is a new kind of power for us—not like our own individual power that we used to solely rely upon. This is not self-centered, self-aggrandizing, self-protective, or self-esteem building. This new power comes through us when we surrender ourselves to God, allowing Divine Will to direct our life. The more we let Divine Guidance determine our actions, the more relaxed and grateful and balanced and gracious

we become. We are learning to rely upon this Divine Power not only for large things like facing challenges or meeting intimidating requirements, but also in little things like choosing when to leave the house for an errand, how to answer someone's phone call, or how to prioritize a to-do list. When we feel the result of turning our will over to Divine Will, the results are so good that we resolve each time to do it in every detail of our life, yet, over and over again, we forget and return to our habitual way of hacking through the crowded clutter of our lives on our own. Daily meditation and prayer help us to change this deeply ingrained habit. What could be more important for in our lives than to change this habit—adjusting our minds and lives to seeking and doing God's will?

In practicing Step 11, we have come to notice another character defect that was not so obvious when doing the earlier Steps. We have come to notice that the same helping behavior that we are sometimes led by Divine Guidance to offer, can at other times, when it originates from our own thinking and will, do harm instead of good. This makes it very important to us to be listening carefully for discerning, including discerning whether and when to offer help to others.

Doing harm does not always mean doing wrong: sometimes just invading people boundaries when we think we are reaching in to help them...that can feel like harm to them, or at least disrespect. They may not be able to articulate their feelings of being respected/invaded. They may feel manipulated, or inferior, or otherwise uncomfortable.

It may be that when we tune into God's will in the moment, we are being led to be honest with our selves about our abilities, our gifts & our talents, and the right timing of when to share them with others. We can learn to recognize our gifts & abilities, yet it is also important to follow Divine Guidance regarding when they are useful to other people, rather than offensive, detrimental, or simply wasted.

We are learning, through waiting on God's indications, to look to be sure we are invited by other people, in contrast to pushing our own healing, resolution, communication, or agendas on them, even if we think it is good for them. We can comprehend now that trying to heal & transform others can be a subtle form of abuse. We believe through prayer and meditation, we are becoming aware of pushing my "good" agendas on others. Thus, we cycle back into Step 7; we ask for God to remove the shortcoming of compulsive "giving" or "teaching" pushing our agenda on other people uninvited by them or by God.

In Step 11 we are pro-actively seeking conscious contact. Our life had become unmanageable – **because** we lost contact with God. Or, in the case of spiritual emergence, because we so suddenly became aware of God that we could not consistently keep conscious of the new awareness we had discovered. Conscious contact with God means the communication is consistent and it is going both ways—we are talking to God and we are also experiencing listening to/responding to God, such as being aware of synchronicities, recognizing divine grace such as peace, sudden resolution, prayers answered. Our trust is continuous, and our resulting calm brings our being into wholeness and balance. We find ourselves drawn to our own particular ways of working to find alignment with our own intuition, alignment and place within the greater system of the universe. If we can't sense conscious contact with God as we understand God, then we seek help to develop this in our lives. We look to good sources like

attending the 12 Step groups, asking people we respect, and setting aside sufficient time for meditation and prayer.

SEA Step 11 Questions

11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with our Higher Power, praying only for knowledge of divine will for us and the power to carry that out.

1. Have I been able to implement Step 10 in my life?
2. Do I first need help making Step 10 part of my life on a regular basis?
3. Am I ready to complete this spiritual transformation that began with my spiritual awakening—the one that brought me to SEA?
4. Am I ready to progress beyond the transition time . . . of being “stuck between two worlds?”
5. Am I ready to let go of the struggle that first brought me to SEA, and find more stability within myself?
6. Do I already have a regular prayer/meditation practice?
7. Do I want to start a practice, or alter it in some way at this point in my life?
8. Where and how can I seek help in discovering the right prayer/meditation practice for me at this point in my life? My sponsor? Other SEA members? Other sources?
9. How do I define “conscious contact” with God?
10. Do I both give and receive (talk and listen/express and fill up/align and relax) while consciously contacting my Loving Creator?
11. How can I improve this conscious contact?
12. How do I understand God at this point in my life? Will it help me if I substitute my own personal word for “God” throughout the following questions and answers (including Step 12)? What is that personal word for God at this point in my life?
13. What does “praying only for God’s will” mean for me? How will it bring greater clarity for me?
14. Is “praying only for God’s will” familiar for me?
15. How am I called to pray for divine will for me at this point in my life?
16. What does “the power to carry out God’s will” mean for me?
17. How do I sense this kind of power?
18. Have I explored with other people or through study how divine power moves through us as humans?
19. What can I do at this point in my life to get clearer on this process of praying for knowledge of God’s will and the power to carry that out?
20. How can I distinguish between divine will and my self-will?
21. How do I feel about the word “only” in Step 11?

22. If I am *only* praying for God's will & the power to carry that out, what will disappear in my life? Do I want that? Am I ready for that?
23. Is this a decision that happens at one point in my life, or over time? Or both?
24. How does my original spiritual awakening shift into spiritual emergence through Step 11? Do I sense a stabilizing process in this?

Step 12

Having had a spiritual transformation as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Conjure up the image of a lighthouse and its beacon, guiding ships through the darkness, safely to shore. We now become guides in assisting others finding their way back to stability and clarity. We are no better than they, but we are equal peers having also gotten lost and been fortunate to be able to find our way back to a stable life. We are here to accompany others on their journey and by doing so, set an example to live honestly in a grounded heart centered loving state on a daily basis.

We have accepted our survival of the spiritual storm that we have weathered and endured. We do not take this survival for granted. We embrace this state of Universal Love and recovered stability, and it is now our duty to continue to live in harmony and reside within it. We continue to work to differentiate when we do harm to others and to ourselves. We accept responsibility when we discover we have steered off course and we try our best to keep in mind the bigger picture of humanity and our place within it by continuing to work the 12 steps. We rejoice in our freedom and continue to devote our time and energy to remain free from self-centered madness. Each day we enjoy greater reprieve from our fears and need to control.

Our beacon is now shining brightly for the other "ships in the night" seeking guidance and we lovingly take them into the warm glow of our safe, loving light and assist in delivering them into a safe harbor and out of harm's way.

SEA Step 12 Questions

12. Having had a spiritual transformation as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

1. Have I been able to implement Step 11?
2. How do I feel about working on Step 12?
3. Do I understand that although this is the end of this round of working the Steps, that this is also a new beginning?
4. How would I summarize my story of spiritual awakening leading to SEA leading to spiritual transformation?

5. We use the word *grounding* in SEA. What is the relationship between *grounding* and *spiritual transformation*?
6. How has my participation in SEA resulted in my spiritual transformation?
7. How would I describe myself now as spiritually transformed? Have I become more clear and more stable?
8. How do Steps 10, 11, and 12 interact in sustaining and continuing my spiritual transformation?
9. How are spiritual emergence and spiritual transformation similar? Different?
10. How do I feel about “carrying this message to others”?
11. What, exactly is “this message”?
12. How best can I carry it to others?
13. What are the “principles” that Step 12 is talking about? Can I list them?
14. Do I see examples, inside SEA and also outside SEA, of people practicing these principles?
15. How best can I practice these principles?
16. What does “in all our affairs” mean to me?
17. Where in my life is it easier, and where is it more difficult, to practice these principles?
18. What can I do to bring my spiritual practice and practicing these principles to the parts of my life where it has been more difficult?
19. Why in Step 12 do we talk firstly about carrying the message to others, and secondly about practicing the principles in all our affairs?
20. What are concrete ways that I can carry this message? Where does service fit into this?
21. How can I give back to SEA what it has given to me?
22. How will I benefit by giving back? How will others benefit?
23. Am I being divinely called to specific ways to serve in SEA? How can I pray for the power to carry that out?