

Powerless

Principle 1: Realize I'm not God. I admit that I am powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong thing and that my life is unmanageable.

"Happy are those who know they are spiritually poor." (Matthew 5:3)

Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over our addictions and compulsive behaviors, that our lives had become unmanageable.

"For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out." (Romans 7:18)



Introduction

In Principle 1, we realize we're not God. We admit we are powerless to control our tendency to do the wrong thing and that our lives have become unmanageable. As soon as we take this step and admit that we are powerless, we start to change. We see that our old ways of trying to control our hurts, hang-ups, and habits didn't work. They were buried by our denial and held on to with our false power. Tonight we are going to focus on four actions: two things we have to stop doing and two things we need to start doing in our recoveries. We need to take these four actions to complete Principle 1.

Four Actions

In Lesson 1 we talked about the first action we need to take.

1. Stop denying the pain.

We said that our denial had at least six negative effects: It disables our feelings, wastes our energy, negates our growth, isolates us from God, alienates us from our relationships, and lengthens our pain.

You are ready to accept Principle 1 when your pain is greater than your fear. In *Psalm 6:2–3* (TLB) David talks about a time when he came to the end of his emotional and physical resources: *"Pity me, O Lord, for I am weak. Heal me, for my body is sick, and I am upset and disturbed. My mind is filled with apprehension and with gloom."* **When David's pain finally surpassed his fear, he was able to face his denial** and feel the reality of his pain. In the same way, if you want to be rid of your pain, you must face it and go through it.

The second action we need to take is to:

2. Stop playing God.

You are either going to serve God or self. You can't do both! *Matthew 6:24 (GNT) says, "You cannot be a slave of two masters; you will hate one and love the other; you will be loyal to one and despise the other."*

Another term for serving "ourselves" is serving the **"flesh."** Flesh is the Bible's word for our unperfected human nature, our sin nature.

I love this illustration: If you leave the h off the end of flesh and reverse the remaining letters, you spell the word self. Flesh is the self-life. It is what we are when we are left to our own devices.

When our "self" is out of control, all attempts at control —of self or others — fail. In fact, our attempt to control ourselves and others is what got us into trouble in the first place. God needs to be the one in control.

There are two jobs: God's and mine! We have been trying to do God's job, and we can't!

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On the flip side, He won't do our job. We need to do the footwork! We need to admit that we are not God and that our lives are unmanageable without Him. Then, when we have finally emptied ourselves, God will have room to come in and begin His healing work.

Let's go on now to the third action we need to take:

3. Start admitting our powerlessness.

The lust of power is not rooted in our strengths but our weaknesses. We need to realize our human weaknesses and quit trying to do it by ourselves. We need to admit that we are powerless and turn our lives over to God. Jesus knew how difficult this is. He said, *"With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible"* (Matthew 19:26).

When we keep doing things that we don't want to do and when we fail to do the things we've decided we need to do, we begin to see that we do not, in fact, have the power to change that we thought we had. Life is coming into focus more clearly than ever before.

The last action we need to take is to:

4. Start admitting that our lives have become unmanageable.

The only reason we consider that there's something wrong, or that we need to talk to somebody, or that we need to take this step is because we finally are able to admit that some area — or all areas — of our lives have become unmanageable!

It is with this admission that you finally realize you are out of control and are powerless to do anything on your own. When I got to this part of my recovery I shared David's feelings that he expressed in *Psalms 40:12 (TLB): "Problems far too big for me to solve are piled higher than my head. Meanwhile my sins, too many to count, have all caught up with me and I am ashamed to look up."*

Does that sound familiar? Only when your pain is greater than your fear will you be ready to honestly take the first step, admitting that you are powerless and your life is unmanageable.

Tonight our acrostic will help us to focus in on the first half of Principle

1: powerless.

Powerless

Our acrostic tonight demonstrates what happens when we admit we are POWERLESS. We begin to give up the following "serenity robbers":

Pride Only ifs Worry Escape Resentment Loneliness Emptiness Selfishness Separation

The first letter in tonight's acrostic is P. We start to see that we no longer are trapped by our PRIDE: *"Pride ends in a fall, while humility brings honor"* (Proverbs 29:23, TLB).

Ignorance + power + pride = a deadly mixture

Our false pride undermines our faith and it cuts us off from God and others. When God's presence is welcome, there is no room for pride because He makes us aware of our true self.

Next we begin to lose the **ONLY ifs. That's the O in Powerless.**

Have you ever had a case of the "only ifs"?

Only if they hadn't walked out.

Only if I had stopped drinking.

Only if this. Only if that.

How reluctantly the mind consents to reality. But when we admit that we are powerless, we start walking in the truth, rather than living in the fantasy land of rationalization.

Luke 12:2-3 (GNT) tells us: "Whatever is covered up will be uncovered, and every secret will be made known. So then, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in broad daylight."

The next letter in powerless is the **W, which stands for WORRYING.** And don't tell me that worrying doesn't do any good; I know better. The things I worry about never happen!

All worrying is a form of not trusting God enough! Instead of worrying about things that we cannot possibly do, we need to focus on what God can do. Keep a copy of the Serenity Prayer in your pocket and your heart to remind you.

By working this program and completing the steps, you can find that trust, that relationship, with the one and only Higher Power, Jesus Christ, so that the worrying begins to go away.

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Matthew 6:34 (TLB) tells us, “Don’t be anxious about tomorrow. God will take care of your tomorrow too. Live one day at a time.”

The next thing that happens when we admit we are powerless is that we quit trying to **ESCAPE. That’s the E.** Before we admitted we were powerless, we tried to escape and hide from our hurts, habits, and hang-ups by getting involved in unhealthy relationships, by abusing drugs such as alcohol, by eating or not eating, and so forth. Trying to escape pain drains us of precious energy. When we take this first step, however, God opens true escape routes to show His power and grace. *“For light is capable of ‘showing up’ everything for what it really is. It is even possible (after all, it happened to you!) for light to turn the thing it shines upon into light also” (Ephesians 5:13 –14, PH).*

The R in powerless stands for RESENTMENTS.

If they are suppressed and allowed to fester, resentments can act like emotional cancer.

Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:26 –27: *“In your anger do not sin’: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.”*

As you continue to work the principles, you will come to understand that in letting go of your resentments, by offering your forgiveness to those who have hurt you, you are not just freeing the person who harmed you, you are freeing you!

But if we try to maintain our false power, we become isolated and alone. That’s the **L in powerless: LONELINESS.**

When you admit that you are powerless and start to face reality, you will find that you do not have to be alone.

Do you know that loneliness is a choice? In recovery and in Christ, you never have to walk alone again.

Do you know that caring for the lonely can cure loneliness? Get involved! **Get involved in the church or in your neighborhood or here at Celebrate Recovery!** If you become a regular here, I guarantee that you won’t be lonely.

“Continue to love each other with true brotherly love. Don’t forget to be kind to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it!” (Hebrews 13:1 –2, TLB).

When you admit you are powerless you also give up another **E, the EMPTINESS.**

When you finally admit that you are truly powerless by yourself, that empty feeling deep inside —that cold wind that blows through you —will go away.

Jesus said, *“My purpose is to give life in all its fullness” (John 10:10, TLB).* So let Him fill the emptiness inside.

Tell Him how you feel. He cares! Pray

Next you will notice that you are becoming less self-centered.

The first S stands for SELFISHNESS.

I have known people who have come into recovery thinking that the Lord’s Prayer was *“Our Father who art in heaven ... Give me ... give me ... give me!” Luke 17:33 (TLB) tells us, “Whoever clings to his life shall lose it, and whoever loses his life shall save it.”* Simply said, selfishness is at the heart of most problems between people.

The last thing that we give up when we admit that we are powerless is **SEPARATION.**

Some people talk about “finding” God —as if He could ever be lost.

Separation from God can feel real, but it is never permanent. Remember, He seeks the lost. When we can’t find God, we need to ask ourselves, “Who moved?” I’ll give you a hint. It wasn’t God!

“For I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from his love. Death can’t, and life can’t. The angels won’t, and all the powers of hell itself cannot keep God’s love away.... Nothing will ever be able to separate us from the love of God demonstrated by our Lord Jesus Christ when he died for us (Romans 8:38 –39, TLB).

Wrap-Up

The power to change only comes from God’s grace. Are you ready to truly begin your journey of recovery? Are you ready to stop denying the pain? Are you ready to stop playing God? Are you ready to start admitting your powerlessness? To start admitting that your life has become unmanageable? If you are, share it with your group tonight.

I encourage you to start working and living this program in earnest. If we admit we are powerless, we need a power greater than ourselves to restore us. That power is your Higher Power —Jesus Christ!

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Let's close in prayer.

Dear God, Your Word tells me that I can't heal my hurts, hang-ups, and habits by just saying that they are not there. Help me! Parts of my life, or all of my life, are out of control. I now know that I cannot "fix" myself. It seems the harder that I try to do the right thing the more I struggle. Lord, I want to step out of my denial into the truth. I pray for You to show me the way. In Your Son's name, Amen.

Think•write•discuss

1. List some of the ways that your pride has stopped you from asking for and getting the help you need to overcome your hurts, hang-ups, and habits.

2. What in your past has caused you to have the "if onlys"?

"If only" I had stopped _____ years ago.

"If only" _____ hadn't left me.

3. Instead of worrying about things that we cannot control, we need to focus on what God can do in our lives. What are you worrying about? Why?

4. In what ways have you tried to escape your past pain? Be specific.

5. How has holding on to your anger and your resentments affected you?

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6. Do you believe loneliness is a choice? Why or why not? How has your denial isolated you from your important relationships?

7. Describe the emptiness you feel and some new ways you are finding to fill it?

8. Selfishness is at the heart of most problems between people. In what areas of your life have you been selfish?

9. Separation from God can feel very real, but it is never permanent. What can you do to get closer to God?

Principle 1 Verses

“You can’t heal laws I am breaking. But I can’t help myself, because I’m no longer doing it. It is the sin inside me that is stronger than I am that makes me do these evil things” (Romans 7:15-17, TLB).

“Before every man there lies a wide and pleasant road that seems right but ends in death” (Proverbs 14:12, TLB).

“My good days are in the past. My hopes have disappeared. My heart’s desires are broken” (Job 17:11, TLB).

“I am worn out with pain; every night my pillow is wet with tears. My eyes are growing old and dim with grief because of all my enemies” (Psalm 6:6-7, TLB).

“We felt we were doomed to die and saw how powerless we were to help ourselves” (2 Corinthians 1:9, TLB).

Prayer

“Dear God, Your Word tells me that I can’t heal my hurts, hang-ups and habits by just saying that they are not there. Help me! Parts of my life, or all of my life, are out of control. I now know that I cannot “fix” myself. It seems the harder that I try to do the right thing, the more I struggle. Lord, I want to step out of my denial, into truth. I pray for You to show me the way. In Your Son’s name, Amen.”