

# MATTMCWILLIAMS

Live with Passion. Lead with Purpose. Leave a Legacy.

## 10 Lessons I Learned from Being in a Recovery Program

One of the rules of the group time is that when one person is talking, no one else is. There is no “fixing.” We all just listen. There is no interrupting to offer a suggestion. The person speaking has the floor. It is his time, not time to play therapist. This is so hard for me, but I have learned how to do it and it is spilling over into all areas of my life. *What would your life look like if you didn't always try to have the answers but just listened?*

### **Lesson 1: I learned to listen really well.**

In a recovery group, you need two people at least: your sponsor and your accountability partner(s). You must be available to them at all times. That means answering the phone when I don't want to. It means reaching out to others proactively. It means getting out of my self-centeredness. *What would it mean as a leader if you were truly available and took a genuine interest in your team members?*

### **Lesson 2: I learned to be available.**

In a recovery group, if you don't open up your life to the group, you go nowhere. I admit that I have lived most of my life behind a mask, in a fake “perfect little world” bubble. By doing this, I stunted my personal growth, limited my learning, and failed to get help when I couldn't do something myself. But, as I have learned to open up, I started receiving help from unexpected places. I began to understand my own weaknesses and find solutions in the strangest ways. And I was free. *What would it look like if you were more open and vulnerable? Would you have more time? More joy? Deeper relationships?*

### **Lesson 3: I learned to open up and be real.**

Those are the first three lessons I learned just from my experience in the program.

I learned seven more lessons directly from the 12 steps themselves. Here they are:

Here are the steps along with the lessons:

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

This step is applicable to *every* area of life.

This is, by far, the hardest step for leaders to admit. You got this far on your own. You are strong and in control. People look up, and often fear, you.

But you have a compulsive habit of snapping at people with bad ideas, or reacting harshly to criticism, or over-working. If you have dealt with anything like this for more than five years, ***it is out of control***. *It is* unmanageable. The first step is to admit that.

**Lesson 4:** You must first admit your problems and acknowledge that you cannot fix them alone.

**Step 2:** *We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.*

**Step 3:** *We made a decision to turn our lives and our wills over to the care of God.*

Leaders can gain strength from admitting they are not God and need Him to help them fix their problems. If you have a bad habit at work, pray daily for guidance and commit to doing what God says every day. Over time, your habits will subside and you will find more joy in work.

**Lesson 5:** No problem is too big or too small for God. Ask for help.

**Step 4:** *We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*

**Step 5:** *We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.*

Scripture says,

“Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord.” ([Lamentations 3:40](#))

Leaders can gain clarity and vision by taking an inventory and admitting their wrongs. You have to take a lot of time to do this though. You may need to think back on hundreds of instances when you wronged others with your negative comments or the many times that you habitually told an off-color joke in a leadership meeting. Or all of the times you backed down from holding people accountable or lied to cover yourself in a meeting.

Spend time searching.

Be fearless.

Go where you don't want to go.

It will be painful, I promise.

And it will be worth it.

A great place to start is by [asking your team for feedback](#).

Lesson 6: Admit your problems to God, to yourself, and to someone you trust. **I can assure you that while you are not done yet, this step will bring a feeling of freedom and hope.**

**Step 6:** *We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.*

**Step 7:** *We humbly asked Him to remove all our shortcomings.*

Leaders can improve in every area by asking God to remove defects and believing that He can. *Asking without belief is useless.*

Lesson 7: Believe that God can fix your problems and ask Him to do so.

**Step 8:** *We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.*

**Step 9:** *We made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.*

***Do you want loyal followers?*** Make a list of people you have hurt, and then apologize to them if practical.

Leaders can improve relationships and gain immense loyalty by constantly listing people they have harmed and making amends. ***Your bad habits always hurt others.*** Rather it's sarcasm, negativity, or a tendency to not pay attention to others, your problems become others' problems.

Lesson 8: Take the time to list the people and times you have hurt others and let them know that you are sorry and are working to not do that again. Go as far back as you have to.

**Step 10:** *We continue to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.*

**Step 11:** *We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, praying only for knowledge of His will for us, and power to carry that out.*

Repeat steps 1-9. You are not going to be better tomorrow. You can apologize to everyone on your list in one day, pray harder than you have ever prayed, and grit your teeth...and tomorrow you are going to slip up. You are going to fail. You are going to make more mistakes in life. So you keep doing it.

But do not give up! Keep at it. *The steps are a lifelong commitment.*

Lesson 9: Improvement is ongoing. Take an inventory every day and make things right immediately.

**Step 12:** *Having had a spiritual experience as the result of these steps, we try to carry this message to others and practice these principles in all our affairs.*

Leaders can build a culture of great leadership by sharing these principles.

The leaders under you, the leaders alongside you, and the leaders above you can all learn from these things. They will see your improvement and they *will* ask how you did it.

**Lesson 10: Share your experience with others. Build up other leaders around you.**