**Biodynamic Cranial Sacral Therapy and the 12 Steps.**

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Both the 12 steps and BCST offer disciplines of growth, self knowledge and liberation and share a lot of common ground which can be lost in translation, sometimes resulting in misunderstanding and a stalemate between two modalities that could deeply enrich each other. This misunderstanding means that clinicians fail to support their clients through this additional and important piece of their lives, or set themselves at odds against it unnecessarily. It also means that the wisdom from the two goes unshared, a great loss, in my opinion.

This is a non-academic paper, with lots of holes in it.  It is a beginning of a bridge which calls for (and would be bettered by) contributions from others. Though it can also serve as a resource for 12 step participants working with BCST, it is written more specifically for cranial practitioners and trauma/somatic therapists to explain the process of the steps, with the hope that they:

* Can understand how the process works and therefore better support any of their clients who participate in 12 step community and disciplines.
* Encourage thought within our discipline (BCST) as to how to bring somatic and trauma informed resources and education to clients, the recovery community and the 12 step process.

A brief overview of the 12 Step Program.

For those who are unfamiliar with the 12 step program, it grew as an off shoot of the Oxford Group (a Christian group that was dedicated to the re-enlivening of faith through service and action[[1]](#footnote-1)). The original 12 step program was Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). There are now groups that address many process and substance addictions. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using whatever substance or behaviour has become a problem. Anonymous groups are free: there are no dues or fees for membership. Program does not require a certain belief system, is non-denominational and unaffiliated with any other organisations.

An individual’s program is balanced between the three aspects of unity (fellowship, attendance at meetings), service (carrying the message, working with others) and recovery (step work and living by guiding principles). Individuals work through a living and continuous process of 12 steps. These are worked through and repeated in order to clear out the mental and emotional debris (emotional fulcrums) that block one from health and the Great Mystery[[2]](#footnote-2) and keeps one stuck in self (and for addicts, stuck in addiction). On-going faith is felt and demonstrated through action and service for others and a continued reliance on the Great Mystery, which will guide and direct their lives and can keep them sober.

The Twelve steps as laid out in AA are as follows:

1.     We admitted we were powerless over alcohol - that our lives had become unmanageable.

2.     Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

3.     Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

4.     Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

5.     Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

6.     Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

7.     Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

8.     Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

9.     Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

10.  Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

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.

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

For me this process is very similar to BCST. The process of learning BCST, it’s on- going practice and the process I witness in clients is guided by the same principles of surrender, trust in the Inner Physician/Great mystery/Breath of Life. We approach life and the self with respect and appreciation. We do not get caught up in managing, fixing, rather we orient to the Health/Great Mystery and let that guide and orient our lives. In the following footnote you can find a 12 step version that has more BCST wording in it, to attempt to make the similarities more apparent[[3]](#footnote-3).

My own understanding and application of the steps is obviously limited and biased by my own spiritual experiences and convictions, as is trying to convey the experience of the application of the steps through mere explanation. I would recommend many blogs, the big book itself, recovery books and healthy meetings (Big Book Awakening for instance) for a broader and more comprehensive understanding, and different perspectives. I will attempt to give a summary of each step. I encourage you to look for similarities and overlap between the program and your work as a BCST and consider if you have tools or understanding that can help deepen the application of this step for your clients and/or the wider recovery community.

Step One.

1.    We admitted we were powerless over addiction—that our lives had become unmanageable.

Step one requires an acknowledgement of the individual’s powerlessness over (and hereto inability to fix/change/control) the threefold illness: the physical addiction, the mental obsession or blind spot that will always convince one that it’s ok to pick up again, and the spiritual malady or un-ease that seeks ease and comfort through the addiction.

Meriam Webster defines powerless as:

Having no power : unable to do something or to stop something

Full Definition of powerless

1.  *1*:  devoid of strength or resources

2.  *2*:  lacking the authority or capacity to act

Powerless is not a permanent state of being or a life sentence. But to find Power, we have to admit Powerlessness, if indeed we have become devoid of connection, power and choice/ability. Powerlessness does not inhibit the possibility of Power...by its own existence it acknowledges Power.

We are both powerless and powerful, when connected to a Higher Power. The 12 steps does not propose a plan of action that keeps people in a state of powerlessness/ disempowerment[[4]](#footnote-4)–**rather stressing the importance of letting go of any denial of possible power from a disconnected, disempowered place** - in order to heal and find **real power** flowing within ourselves and our lives. The 12 steps is a model of Power through surrender to a Power greater than the "disconnected us", surrendering essentially our smaller selves –our blueprint –in order to heal.  This directly ties in to cranial work where we orient to the health rather than to the blueprint and trust the infinite intelligence and health of life to just do its job.

Step Two.

2.    Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Power can essentially be translated to so many different experiences, qualities, religious or spiritual beliefs. **It is the personal EXPERIENCE of this power and continued contact with it (rather than the Concept of it) that brings Healing and Recovery**. A lived, embodied experience of a Higher Power/ Great Mystery – which ties directly in embodied practices and BCST.

The Power might be any number of things[[5]](#footnote-5), and is a changeable and evolving relationship within each individual, just as our understanding of the Breath of Life continues to change, evolve and deepen.

“We found that as soon as we were able to lay aside prejudice and express even a willingness to believe in a Power greater than ourselves, we commenced to get results, even though it was impossible for us to fully define or comprehend that power[[6]](#footnote-6)… We discovered we did not need another’s conception…Our own conception, however inadequate, was sufficient to make the approach and to effect a contact…When therefore we speak to you of God, we mean your own conception of ..do not let any prejudice you may have against spiritual terms deter you from honestly asking yourself what they mean to you (Bog Book, p 47/56) "

We are basically asked to believe in a Power, and to understand that that Power is not the little me: essentially to stop trying to play God: where it comes to our addiction, but also where it comes to our lives – controlling people, places and things constantly in order to try and maintain a sense of ok-ness and self is not sane. Controlling our outer world with a limited small self in order to try and control our inner experience rather than surrender and let life be life is not sane.

"Were we not believe in our own reasoning? Did we not have confidence in our ability to think? What was that but a sort of faith? Yes, we had been faithful, abjectly faithful to the God of Reason. So, in one way or another, we discovered that faith had been involved all the time!...We found, too, that we had been worshippers. What a state of mental goose-flesh that used to bring on! Had we not variously worshipped people, sentiment, things, money, and ourselves? And then, with a better motive, had we not worshipfully beheld the sunset, the sea, or a flower? Who of us had not loved something or somebody? How much did these feelings, these loves, these worships, have to do with pure reason? Little or nothing, we saw at last. Were not these things the tissue out of which our lives were constructed? Did not these feelings, after all, determine the course of our existence? It was impossible to say we had no capacity for faith, or love, or worship. In one form or another we had been living by faith and little else."

Often we don’t get much exposure in our daily life to sanity- sane lifestyles, sane values, sane families, sane relationships, sane education systems, sane schedules, even sane religions! We have stepped away from embodied presence and our hearts, and we have stepped away from our kin, friends and community, our natural place in the world, and often the essential spiritual parts of our religions. We have stepped away from our feelings and our real selves. Sometimes we think that our life of insanity is the only normal one.

We can start to realise that needing to control everything and everyone, needing the details of our lives to be some very specific in order to feel ok is insanity. We need to learn how to surrender: not just our addiction, but the very root of our insanity: the expectation that someone, something, some place outside of us, some event, position, some amount of money can actually change our energetic experience inside. We need to relax into the sanity of allowing things to be as they are, ourselves to be as we are: to let our heart once more animate and guide our lives, our felt senses to wake up, and our minds to slow down and stop trying to micromanage the past the present and the future – ours and everyone else’s – all in one go.

Belief in others – including a HP will also be affected by our historical relational experiences. Your client might have had birth complications, early abandonment, abuse or other indigestible experiences that make believing and trusting in others, themselves and also a Higher Power challenging. Thankfully as therapists we have training to offer to our clients additional healing that might help them open up to trusting, relying, depending on something greater than themselves. However, even if this belief is hard, in Step 2 we at least come to terms with our **need and capacity** to believe, to trust in, to rely on, something greater than ourselves.

Step Three.

3.    Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of [God](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God) *as we understood Him*.

(Note: SLAA has changed the word Him to God) .

This step is essentially about Surrender to the ***care*** of this Power that we have come to know our need for in steps one and two. Power comes through Presence and Connection and the ability to feel safe enough – with others, with life, with our feelings and inner experience essentially -to be Present and therefore in alignment and connection with oneself and the world, rather than detached from it through processes of dissociation and control. In this space we can be open to reality: human and spiritual; a Greater Reality that can guide, inform and care for us.

We turn our will – our thoughts and locus of self – and our lives – our experience - over. We don’t even need to know what we are turning it over to, but we do know that running the show doesn’t work. The only way out of addiction is to let go of control.

We just make a beginning…we don’t have to have a perfect connection: we are learning how to develop an experiential relational with this Power. Just like most things in life, it often takes time, commitment, and practice.

Step Four.

4.    Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

The Big Book uses a fourth step evaluation which centres around Fear, Dishonesty, Selfishness and Self-seeking. It’s purpose is to reveal the unmanageability of self reliance: a mind and actions that are based in self control. It shines light on the hurts that drive the perceived need for self-reliance and most importantly the fact that we -not others- are at the root of our suffering. It paradoxically encourages self-responsibility through dependence on the Greater Mystery, as we come to understand that self-will is at the source of our suffering. In doing so it reveals what we are not –(but have become in self reliance) –so that the blue print, our true nature, can become liberated and expressed once again.

The fourth step inventory format can be found within the Big Book and there are some excellent commentaries on it online. I love the Big Book Awakening Approach to the Steps and 4th Step. Understanding the fourth step process means that you can support your client to undergo the process in a way that is really healthy and beneficial to them, for instance avoiding the potential swamp of self pity and hate that I ‘inventoried’ myself in for years!

Like any tool, it can be used wrongly as a sledge hammer to beat ourselves up, as well as a way to puff up the ego by saying, conversely, look at how bad and uniquely awful I am….. Therefore perpetuating an on-going experience of isolation through shame, judgement and disconnection from genuine self- care, acceptance and compassion and presence, that has become characteristic of the addict's life.  Far from being a real inventory, this instead is an unconstructive attack that only serves to shame and therefore paralyse us, stopping us from being able to take responsibility.

This is why it is important that the first three steps have been taken completely- we acknowledge our addiction, our need for healing and a caring power greater than us – greater than control, judgement, fear, hate, self will and control - and this is the power we need to be centred in and looking at ourselves from when we take this inventory.

Step Five.

5.    Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

This is the simple therapeutic process of being vulnerable to another trusted human being about how we react and respond to life, through sharing our inventory, and therefore our current character strategies. We reveal the ego, the imprint in as much entirety as we can in a field of acceptance and neutrality. In doing so we experience a field in which change and transformation can take place. We also realise other people are like us…we can all be a bit selfish, delusional, and so on. Normalising who we are -that we are not uniquely bad, messed up, complicated, etc - and our thought processes - can bring a strong feeling of belonging and acceptance back into the life of an addict.

In seeing the original fears and wounds underlying these “no longer effective” character structures with another, we come into a process of releasing shame through vulnerability; a deeper sense of forgiveness; creating connection and finding more Power as we get closer to our true selves and our Source. We can start to feel relief and forgiveness for ourselves and others, and can start letting ourselves and each other off the hook.

Step Six

6.    Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of [character](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moral_character).

In step one to three we faced the decision to cling to our addiction or to open to a power greater than ourselves. In steps four through six, we are offered the same choice when it comes to character: we can cling to self will and self reliance, and all the character strategies that ensue from this place of fear, or we can open ourselves deeper, let go and let god.

We might have to acknowledge what it is that our defects do for us and get honest if ultimately the short term gain of some of them is followed by long term pain that we are no longer willing to experience and that the general insidious underlying patter of self reliance which results in so many “defects” or defensives, ranging from control, abuse, selfishness, greed, etc – just does not feed us anymore.

We trust, that as with our addiction, Higher Power/Great Mystery : connection, presence, loving acceptance, health : can remove these character defects, rather than effort-ing, fixing, controlling, etc. It is another surrender - it does not abdicate one of responsibility or a task: our task is to constantly open to Power, to the inherent treatment plan directed by an Intelligence much greater than ours, to keep on working a program of recovery and walking within lines that are in this new found integrity, and the Power directs the healing. BCST and Twelve Steps run on the same principles of the Inner Physician.

Whatever we have come to experience as a Power greater than ourselves, we trust that in maintaining our focus on; and devotion to; this power, health and the principles of living that come through our devotion to this power, is a way for our character defects to be removed, rather than becoming engaged in attempting to wrestle each to the ground individually.

This is not a self help program, but a program of surrender of self to a larger Self. We do not fix, control. We just stop playing god and let the life force reoccupy its rightful place as the guiding intelligence of our lives. For the first time in our lives we are trusting in something greater than us, which means that most often healing comes through relaxing our grip on things and through relaxing and regaining connection once again to a felt sense of health, stability, presence and balance.

Step Seven.

7.    Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

BCST is not a self-help or even practitioner-help therapy. It is a discipline which is rooted in both science and spirituality and probably leans towards the latter, in my personal experience. Just as with a client, it is not up to me to decide the treatment plan, in 12 steps, it is not up to me to decide the plan either! I don’t get what, how, or in what time frame. I turn to and trust the inherent treatment plan: in my 12 step program and in clinical practice. It is this way with step Seven. We ask for our defects to be removed from a deeply sincere place, having seen their impact on ourselves, those around us, and how they impact our connection to a Higher Power and our ability to be at ease in our lives and selves.

We ask and we get out of the way, so that we can respect the Inner Physician and Breath of Life, Greater Mystery in each of us, and let the inherent treatment plan unfold.

This is simple but not always easy: it requires constant practice and orientation towards health/life/god; patience and surrender.

Step Eight.

8.    Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make [amends](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/amends) to them all.

We have made a list of harms through taking our inventory in step four. Often those who we felt had harmed us, we come to see how we have harmed them. The big book is simple enough in its directions. We seek to right what we have done and to live without creating suffering to others, so that we can be of maximum service to the Breath of Life – The Great Force of life - as the common sense of our hearts and all of the world's religions guide us to do.

Amends are made not as an apology, but as a sincere desire to set right (in whatever way we can) any way in which we have harmed another being. They are made directly where possible.

Step Nine.

9.    Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

On the human plain, Healing and Power come through resolving our relationship with the whole, which is comprised by our relationship with Self, with immediate others, with our larger community and the natural world.

Through prayer and counsel with trusted guides and self reflection, we set about in the most respectful and considerate way we can, to approach others and to acknowledge the harms we have done, offer them the possibility of revealing additional harms, and offer to make amends –to heal the harm we have caused (repay money, set right an imbalance, etc).

Step Ten.

10. Continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

We continue to watch: watch for self will and fear manifest as dishonesty, self pity, selfishness, etc – and when it appears- we watch (aware of without judgement) and turn towards Great Mystery/Health/ The breath of Life- to recharge, reorient, reground. This sounds a lot like BCST! We ask to be freed, to be guided, that our minds can be reset. We turn our thought to those we can help.

When anxious, irritated, upset and so on we are encouraged to find its source in self reliance and once again turn to a higher power, asking for guidance, direction and forgiveness. This is traditionally done top-down[[7]](#footnote-7) by most people in program. It can become a more individual process: anything that is helpful to stay on beam.

This is a daily, constant process of mindfulness and awareness of ourselves and the impact of how we live on us and on others. In essence it becomes a working navigation system, that re-orients us again and again to Presence, healing, connection, health. It is noticing with acceptance and understanding and compassion. It is a way to grow and change and fit ourselves to be of more use to the world around us. If something sticks around and becomes more of a fixation then we can do a formal step 4: this step is also about developing the muscle for the desire for joy and freedom and presence , rather than the desire to be right!

Step Eleven.

11.                 Sought through [prayer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prayer) and [meditation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meditation) to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him[[8]](#footnote-8)*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

Step 11 us about an active daily application of faith through silent time and prioritizing our developing relationship with a The breath of Life, the Greater Mystery, upon which we depend. It is a process of acknowledging its place in our life, and our own humble place in the order of things, through contemplation and listening. It is an on-going practice of alignment and devotion. “Thy Will not mine be done”. It requires the discipline of giving time and space to this process; prioritizing it in the busy stream of ordinary affairs. The natural desire and ease around doing so will continue to grow as we develop this relationship and the ease and joy that we find through this discipline grows and informs our lives.

Whatever someone’s spiritual or religious belief and convictions, these can be consciously and actively nurtured and built on daily, and for an addict, whose hope of true recovery is a constant and on-going contact with this power, it is essential.

Meditation might be even just sitting calmly and recalling feelings of positive connection, love, and value – there is no formality – it is as simple as do what works to bring you into a deeper connection with the Greater Mystery.

Step Twelve.

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

The joy of finding relief from a state of physical, emotional and spiritual suffering is great and naturally lends itself to a desire to share and help others find this freedom too. When I experienced BCST I also experienced a desire to be able to share and offer it with others, as its healing impact was so deep and profound. Likewise with the 12 steps…It is a miracle it is to have re-found a source of love and healing within that can guide, direct and heal our lives and provide resource for every situation we meet. To not only be free of the hell of living in active addiction, but to be free of a deeper state of misery and hell: the suffering created through not knowing who we really are and being disconnected from the light and love and power within, living in the pain of unhealed wounds, fear and self reliance. To be able to live in the world without dreading, fearing or seeking to control it is a huge gift, one that opens the heart and soul and engenders us to want to help others do the same.

This is how I feel about the 12 steps and it is how I feel about yoga, BCST and other practices that whilst different all open us to the one and same truth, whatever name we know it by, and whatever practice we find it through. The love of and from this power creates the desire for others to experience this too, in their own way, through their own journey, separate yet shared.

12 step programs are not a cult just because people keep coming back to share and deepen the peace in their lives and others. The 12 steps program provides a forum of connection, spiritual growth, service and a platform to really help ourselves and others recover from addiction **and stay recovered**. In that way it is a continually satisfying and rewarding aspect of life. For many, it is a relief to find a place in which you can grow, connect, learn, be honest about who you are, serve and find humour amidst the ups and downs of life. It simple precepts provide a spiritual centre from which deeper, perhaps more complex spiritual truths can be accessed.  Surrender, acceptance, spirituality, faith, connection, intimacy, vulnerability, honesty, courage, integrity are all principles of twelve step life.

I hope that you have a sense of the 12 step program and ways in which you can maybe help your client to reconnect to that power within that will solve all their problems. I would love to hear about practices, principles, books, information, etc that you would include to support someone’s journey. My intention is to make trauma and somatic healing tools more available to a wider range of people. Addiction is a social issue, that points to widespread trauma and unsupportive social structures. It is not an individual issue.

Therapy still seems to be a domain that is more accessible culturally and financially to a certain group of people and I would like to make these tools more widely available to those who do not have the means, or cultural approval for therapy.

The huge infrastructure of the 12 step network would mean that potentially trauma and somatically informed information and practices can be both widely *and* freely available to those who would not otherwise have the financial or personal means to access them, the potential of which is really exciting and encouraging.

I have made a start below, and would greatly appreciate additions.

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**Step 1:**

**Recommended reading:**

Intuitive Heart Intelligence: Heart Math

The Untethered Soul: Michael Singer.

**Recommended somatic resources/practices:**

* Building inner connection so that we can acknowledge and face our reality.

**Step 2:**

**Recommended reading:**

Hi my name is Chellis and I am in Recovery from western civilization: C Glendelling.

Books on eco-psychology.

Perfect Love, Imperfect Relationships. (John Wellwood).

Intuitive Heart Intelligence: Heart Math

The Untethered Soul: Michael Singer.

**Recommended somatic resources/practices:**

* Exploring in an embodied way what this power might be – if in need of inspiration, referring to which words for this Power (found in footnote above) resonate with your client. Feeling this power as an embodied presence in the body.
* Practicing titrating between insanity and this new resource of sanity, feeling how that goes.
* Heart math has a useful exercise of running a scenario through your mind, and then through your heart and noticing he different consequences/results.
* Encouraging a deep and thoughtful, embodied exploration into their current religious or spiritual practices, or to find one that they are interested on is also a topic here.
* Two chair work with a higher power might be a possibility for gestalt or polarity therapists.
* As we do in cranial, brining appreciation to the addiction, the contraction, the distrust helps it feel heard, seen, cared for and acknowledged, **it was a normal response to an abnormal situation**: it can be held gently with love and relaxed, caring witnessing. It is not something to be scared of, to run from, to crush, to judge. “God either is or... isn’t. God either is everything or nothing”. (Bog book, P 53):
* In the same way appreciating distrust, if the client is struggling with finding a higher power or the ability to trust within themselves. We can encourage our clients to be gentle, patient and mindful with this distrusting aspect. To not set out to create an inner split of violence: this does not work. Healing is only facilitated by real care, respect, deep listening. It is not facilitated by judgement and attack. . Together, with the client, appreciating and acknowledging this hurting, scared, collapsed aspect of the client that when given the resources will reopen, grow and flourish and transform their lives.
* In this way out clients can also be empowered to see themselves, in their recovery from addiction, as part of a wider solution: a healing force of peace and belonging on earth…where we do not separate, control, judge, attack, blame parts of ourselves internally, nor parts of society/the world externally. We work collaboratively and caringly, with respect, slowly bringing peace and healing and health back through our bodies into the wider world. For it is not just addicts who are sick, nor just individuals. We live in a sick culture, consumed and driven by out of control fear and over-identification with a panicked mind, with painful impacts on nature, other creatures and each other: from country to country, in our social systems, and within our communities and families and intimate relationships. We have come to accept this cultural insanity as normal, but again, it is doing no one any favours to gloss over the truth. In seeing both our own and the collective insanity, and the NEED for a POWER greater than us –than fear – to restore sanity –individually and socially –the addict can be empowered to feel more responsibility, belonging and connection with their world and see how their individual story interweaves and inextricably links them to the world, in sickness and in health: and their individual power and capacity to create change.

**Step 3 :**

**Recommended reading:**

Hi my name is Chellis and I am in Recovery from western civilization: C Glendelling.

Books on eco-psychology.

Perfect Love, Imperfect Relationships. (John Wellwood).

Intuitive Heart Intelligence: Heart Math

The Untethered Soul: Michael Singer.

**Recommended somatic resources/practices:**

* This step is about trust, care, surrender, reliance, dependence and meaning. Somatic and cranial tools that foster these qualities such as tracking the body sensations; becoming a compassionate embodied witness to our insanity and disconnect; spending time somatically feeling into some of the terms above –creating space and an invitation for a felt experience of that power could be used.
* Heart math also offers some excellent techniques for developing a felt connection with the intelligence and healing compassion of the heart, anchoring one in the care of the heart.
* Religious traditions also offer many practices: centring prayer, meditation, anything that your client is affiliated with or drawn to that nurtures and strengthens a felt, embodied experience of a deep power and intelligence and health within.
* If someone is struggling with this step one possibility can be to work on early dependent childhood relationships, overhanging issues from which could be inhibiting one's ability to Trust or Believe in Care. You can help your client find an embodied experience of Presence - be an ally as they explore various paths to spirituality - and help the client really understand and see their own past capacity to depend on, trust and believe in things - even if it is only themselves and their addiction and pain.

**Step 4 :**

**Recommended reading:**

Hi my name is Chellis and I am in Recovery from western civilization: C Glendelling.

Books on eco-psychology.

Perfect Love, Imperfect Relationships. (John Wellwood).

The Untethered Soul: Michael Singer.

Byron Katie.

Women who love too much/books on codepnedncy by pia melodie, melanie beattie.

Gabor mate/peter Levine/Stephen porges/Bessel van der kolk

The dahlia lama, how to see yourself as you really are.

**Recommended somatic resources/practices:**

* The purpose of the inventory is not only to point out our limitations but to point out how self reliance has failed us. Inventory exposes the consequences of self reliance and the pain created by false self we have created in our attempts to –control and **avoid pain**. With a deeper understanding of trauma, attachment patterns and how the nervous system works we can perform a deeper and more open, compassionate inventory which helps us to connect with ourselves and others more deeply. Clients can be directed towards certain books that are relevant to their history and experience, that will help them identity their experience more clearly, but also in a detached, compassionate way.
* Coming to the body and performing inventory - seeing where are the blocks, the tight places, the sensation clusters and areas of numbness is a way of somatically inventorying.
* There are many processes like this: authentic movement, continuum, even embodied movement practices, which will help clients ground into the body and become more familiar with somatic and physical holding patterns.
* Somatic psychotherapy practices that literally inventory the tone and flexibility of ligaments and muscles such as bodynamics are highly interesting to me and relatively unexplored as an approach to inventory!

**Step 5 :**

**Recommended somatic resources/practices:**

* Bringing cranial principles again of appreciation to this step brings deeper freedom. We do not need to fight or control these defects. In the next step we see this is so. For the moment, we can appreciate them and ourselves for being (you made it!), and for doing the most effective strategies available at the time. This does not condone behaviour and thought processes that hurt ourselves, others or the environment, but rather facilitates a surrender of fear and control and a deep  
  acceptance of the totality of self and the human existence, which permits one to offer the same to others.

**Step 6 :**

**Recommended somatic resources/practices:**

* Helping a client turn to and trust this force, in an on-going way throughout the daily course of their lives, rather than simply in the session room ad their respective 12 step /spiritual communities can be an open ended objective: not to be pushed, be to be aware of. I think it is easy as therapists to not pay enough attention to how the client is living, and rather treat the effects of it in a weekly or monthly session.

Helping the client consider and orient to grounding their life and daily structure in healthy and or spiritual principles gives them a solid foundation and constant resource which will mean they will need less external/professional help. As their life itself is oriented to care for and balance them, they will not need to reach out so much for care and balancing top ups. Creating a life structure that will yield the life experience that they want is a potential idea around this step.

**Step 7 :**

**Recommended somatic resources/practices:**

* On-going embodied exercises that facilitate the EXPERIENCE of this higher power are also useful . Mindfulness based practices including MBSR, and body scans can deepen this sense of relaxation and trusting of the inner healer.
* In the way that we can be directive in BCST, holding what is happening and also possibilities for a muscle, joint or fulcrum, it might also be helpful to learn about alternative options to belief systems and character strategies so that we can change and have possibilities. In this way, certain spiritual, therapy and self regulation books or practices might be of use. books and information that help with neural reprogramming, nervous system health, etc. for instance. As ever, a paradox containing inaction and action.
* There are also more directed ways of exploring and facilitating change; some of them include trauma work, two chair polarity work, inner family systems work, the creative arts.

**Step 8:**

**Recommended reading:**

**Recommended somatic resources/practices:**

* Creating a more socially and ecologically competent set of inventory questions: Twelve step literature provides guidance in the form of questions to consider of how we might have caused harm. With the inventory and amend process, I feel that social and environmental justice education and incentives are highly applicable. Easily over-looked, and not included in traditional 12 step literature, are our judgments of and treatment of animals, nature, community, women/men, and those who do not subscribe to norms of gender identity or heterosexuality, minorities, those of different races, different religions. The original literature was created by white men, with some blind spots which naturally would arise out of the era and attitudes from within which it originated. They frequently note that "we know but a little" and point to an evolution of this program, rather than it remaining a fixed dogma. These men were living in western industrialised society in a world that was (and remains) anthropocentric, materialist and biased towards white heterosexual men with a blind spot to the ensuing impacts of this normalised attitude. Whilst “we have no opinion on outside issues” (12 step statement), sometimes we can become unaware of what is opinion and what is fact, as opinions and biases get so normalised by dominant cultural paradigms that we fail to realise we are expressing/believing/supporting an opinion rather than the reality. Western, industrialized modern culture and its values and blind-spots will and do manifest themselves within the text. Considering privilege and oppression, social and environmental justice - there are opportunities to create a bit more guidance and awareness in the inventory process of how these factor in to our relationships and treatment and experience of other beings -human and non human.  
  We get to Pause, Slow Down. Consider. Choose. Create. Live, guided by Power and Connection; Power with rather than Power over.

**Step 9 :**

**Recommended somatic resources/practices:**

* Much information is available about atunement, relationships, non violent communication, etc. These are things we can offer to our clients to further their education and capacity to come into truly alive reciprocal rewarding relationships and be more and more present and engaged in their lives and relationships.
* We are also part of a global social and environmental crisis which requires both our near vision and our big picture thinking. addiction is both an individual and collective crisis. And therefore requires change both within the individual, but then empowered individuals working to change the system, and make it a healthier one, acknowledging their place socially and environmentally and working for social and environmental justice as part of their amends.

**Step 10 :**

**Recommended somatic resources/practices:**

* In a sense it is a prayerful devotional life and a navigation tool to maintain that conscious contact with Self, Health, Breath of Life, Health, God, Great Mystery. The possibilities for this on-going self awareness and mindfulness practice are endless.
* Tools that can be applied when disturbed to find balance are simple practices, such as coming back to sensation and tracking it, titrating sensation such as Peter Levine’s work or the Body Low Slow Loop practice, heart math practices, feeling the inner tides, and so on.
* Simple orienting techniques such as noticing objects in the room, etc can also be useful to have when deregulated.
* Essentially this step is about learning how to navigate and take responsibility for our inner experience, through reliance on the Blueprint, the health or god within.
* We learn how to work with our mind, emotions and sensations so that we once again move towards a position of Power – Power through connection, power through relationship and acceptance of what is, giving us control and self agency. This power comes only through burying our roots very deep into a different ground: presence with and in a spiritual foundation.

**Step 11 :**

**Recommended somatic resources/practices:**

* As we have found out, people with a lot of trauma tend to dissociate when meditating until they are more able to inhabit their body. Awareness of this can help the client negotiate their spiritual practice and be real about what works for them rather than what they think they should be doing.
* Processes like body tapping, embodiment and self kindness practices and resources might be someone’s meditation practice for a while: anything that moves us into the present.
* To be in contact with Thy will, it helps to have a clear and balanced nervous system. Practices like mindful exercise, yoga, chi-gong, tai chi, body-low slow loop can help facilitate this for someone who gets too triggered, activated or dissociates in meditation.
* This step is a huge area that can be supported by wisdom from indigenous, spiritual and somatic traditions globally, as well as neuroscience etc.

1. There is a lot of history online as to its origins so I will be brief here. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. From this point I will use Great Inner Mystery. This term could be interchanged with Power Greater than Ourselves, the Breath of Life Spiritual Power, Higher Power, God, Health, etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 1.     We admitted we (we: a small self disconnected from the Breath of Life) were powerless (in self will: we not connected to True source of Power and so power-less)over our imprint, that our lives had become unmanageable.

   2.     Came to believe that a Power (Breath of Life/Health/Spirit/God/ Nervous system Regulation/the heart/etc.) greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

   3.     Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over **to the care** of the Breath of Life, (the divine Inner Intelligence, Great Mystery, Indwelling God, etc).

   4.     Made a searching and fearless inventory of ourselves - (brought deliberate and careful neutral awareness to the imprint with the backdrop of the blueprint) – and so came to see and know more deeply both what we are, and what we are not - thereby coming to know the deeper Truth of Health, of the Indwelling creative force within.

   5.     Admitted to The Great Mystery, to ourselves and to another human being (a compassionate and accepting witness) the exact nature of our wrongs: holding ourselves and being held in wholeness and appreciation.

   6.     Were entirely ready to have That which is greater than us/ The Breath of Life remove all these character defences/strategies/fixations (were entirely ready to orient to health and sensation and the breath of life).

   7.     Humbly asked The Inner Physician/ the Great Mystery/ The Breath of Life to remove our shortcomings.

   8.     Made a list of all (beings, principles and elements of community and the natural world)we had harmed/ are out of integrity and alignment with, and became willing to make amends to them all - to come into harmony, coherence and integrity with them.

   9.     Made direct amends wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

   10.  Continued to take personal inventory and when we were disembodied/ out of alignment/ not in touch with Health/ Presence/ The Great Mystery/ our felt resources / out of alignment with our values promptly admitted and amended it.

   11.  Sought through embodiment practices, presence, prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with the Breath of Life, God, The Greater Mystery, Presence, praying only for knowledge of this Power's will for us and the power to carry that out.

   12.  Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others who are afflicted and to practice these principles in all our affairs. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Powerless is often misperceived as a destructive construct within the 12 steps that facilitates and enables lack of responsibility, disempowerment and further using. Powerlessness as a concept, especially in American culture is abhorrent and shameful. Our cultural biases that elevate individual success and “personal power” and “control” make us perceive powerlessness as a pejorative statement, rather than a fact that is subject to change, a bit like being unfit or sick, or even unplugged (electrical appliance!) . Once you acknowledge the state of affairs, you can open yourself to a solution. Powerless is only threatening or disturbing when we don’t know a power that can transform and heal. In cranial terms, the imprint is only threatening when we don’t believe or have connection with the blueprint.   [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. * Any number of things, for instance (many terms found in Big Book):
   * Health
   * The Heart
   * Breath of Life
   * Infinite Love
   * Something Inside me
   * The Miraculous
   * Creative intelligence
   * Universal mind
   * Spirit of nature
   * Sunlight of the spirit
   * Complete willingness to believe
   * Realm of spirit
   * Power
   * All powerful, guiding, creative intelligence
   * Creation
   * Presence
   * Spirit of the universe
   * Great reality
   * Presence of infinite power and love
   * The larger self/ the higher self/ the adult self
   * The meeting of the inner adult and child
   * Nature
   * God
   * Yoga and yogic principles
   * The four directions
   * Mother earth
   * The Great Mystery
   * Allah
   * Our somatic senses
   * The present moment
   * The energy and intelligence of our body, our physical body
   * A felt sense of safety or kindness
   * A group of people who we feel are safe and reliable
   * Truth

   [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Big Book, p. 46 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Somatic term: Top down: processing that originates from conscious thought. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Again, the wording does point to the 12 step program being a Christian one and could be reworded to more accurately reflect the Spiritual rather than religious nature of this program. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)