

# SAA of New York City



Workshop Handout

**Garment District**  
**Sunday April 26<sup>th</sup>, 3:00 pm**

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## MAKING AMENDS - A CHECKLIST FOR DIRECT AMENDS BY POLLY & EZEKIEL



*Kintsugi* ("golden joinery"), also known as *Kintsukuroi* ("golden repair"), is the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery by mending the areas of breakage with lacquer dusted or mixed with powdered gold, silver, or platinum. As a philosophy, it treats breakage and repair as part of the history of an object, rather than something to disguise.

### **QUARANTINE OPPORTUNITY:**

Making Direct (not necessarily in person) Amends is possible during Quarantine. We also need to remember that Making amends require not only the willingness that comes as a result of the 8<sup>th</sup> Step but also requires readiness and preparedness and this could be a good time to work on those too! Let's think of an amends as the entire process that starts from the moment we become willing and not as a single event.

## BE READY:

Amends are an important and sometimes challenging part of our recovery. They are a time when we begin to truly test out how well we can interact soberly with people in our lives who—in our addiction—we harmed.

For that reason, it's important to be *ready* to make an amends before we attempt it. We have already hurt this person in the past and so, more than anything, we experience a genuine desire to prevent making things worse.

For example, if we don't feel a sense of intuition about a particular amends (a sense that we understand why and how to make this amends) we may not be ready for this person yet. We could start instead with an easier amends.

Similarly, we consider carefully before doing any amends if it doesn't feel right in terms of the timing of our recovery or other timing factors going in. Doing an amends if we had a recent slip, for example, may feel uncomfortable. We listen to that feeling and reflect on the best next right action.

It's easier to do an amends if we are in a genuine (though perfectly imperfect) state of self-love. If we feel "less than" the person we are talking to, it's hard to make an effective amends. We may come from defensiveness or shame. We may feel abject and self-pitying. This might not help us or the other person.

Our sponsors generally have more recovery experience than we do. They know us well and can be great guides. They are also human beings. Besides their guidance, we can also consult with others whose recovery we trust, meditate to better understand our motives and capabilities, and most importantly, pray to our higher power for direction.

One last note on readiness: Be willing to look back to steps 6 and 7 while you are in your amends step. For me, for example, as soon as I started to make amends to certain emotionally charged people in my life I saw my character defects emerge, things like shame, self-pity, and wanting to blame others. It's ok to pause and reflect on the changes achieved in recovery and evaluate if more change is needed before proceeding.

## BE PREPARED - AT ALL TIMES

- Rely on God

## BE PREPARED - BEFORE

Before we start our 9<sup>th</sup> step:

- We work closely with our sponsor on each amends.
- We determine, with the guidance of our sponsor and Higher Power, if direct amends is the right action. If not, what might be more appropriate?
- We determine if it is the right time to make amends (We ask ourselves questions like: have I changed my ways, or will I continue to cause harm; is this a good time for this person to receive the amends?)
- We identify the best way to get in contact (finding the right medium helps with communication. Text, for example, might be too casual)
- We determine if the person wants to meet with us (this can be done through a third party)
- We find a time and place to meet (we accommodated the time and place to them)
- We ensure that there's enough time to prepare for the amends (we do not plan to make an amends, i.e. set up a specific date, if it means rushing the process)
- We write what we will say during the amends. We use guidelines for this process rather than "winging it" or "reinventing the wheel". See attached template for help coming up with a structure that's worked for others (then adapt as needed)
- We rehearse the amends with our sponsor or others in recovery (we become ready and prepared but also try to be ourselves and act naturally as much as possible)
- We ask ourselves if our intention is selfless, sincere and with no hidden agendas (we use rigorous honesty and prayer for this process)
- We ask ourselves if our intention is an attempt to re-engage for addictive reasons (and we feel confident that the answer is "no")
- We identify possible ways we can repair the harm (main objective of the amends)
- We define success (forgiveness is nice but it's not the objective)
- We have a way to speak about and contextualize "amends" and maybe even the "12 steps" (this may help if the person doesn't know what amends is, doesn't understand the purpose of the conversation, or if they express of their own accord that they want to know more about the recovery process).

## BE PREPARED - BEFORE (DAY OF)

We commit to listening mindfully (what they say [10%], how they say it [90%] – tone of voice [10%] / body language [80%]). We might even use resources geared towards practicing this skill before coming to this point, i.e. Dharmapunx podcast about mindful communication during a conflict,

<https://dharmapunxnyc.podbean.com/e/mindful-communication-during-conflict-the-process-of-building-trust-and-mutuality-amidst-tension/>

- We pray to our Higher Power to help us find the right words
- We apply tools for readiness to get ourselves into a calm place (serenity prayer, grounding exercise, breathing exercises...)
- We bookend before (preferably with our sponsor or a sober fellow in the program) and/or we have a meeting or spiritual place we can go before the amends to get in the right emotional, spiritual and physical state of being.

## BE PREPARED - DURING

- We pray for calm and strength when we feel triggered, agitated or in our defects
- We make the amends (see template)
- We listen mindfully (what they say [10%], how they say it [90%]: tone of voice [10%] / body language [80%])
- We avoid defending past behaviors
- We avoid a detailed confession (which might do more harm or re-traumatize)
- We avoid disclosure (different from amends, this might require a professional)
- We avoid hurting ourselves or others (by hurting ourselves we can hurt others)
- We avoid focusing on our spiritual journey, the 12-Step process, our childhood wounds, our sex addiction (we want the person to understand what we are talking about, but the amends is not about us)
- We resist the desire to be liked or admired for having changed (again, it's not about us)

## BE PEPAED - AFTER

- We bookend after (preferably with our sponsor or another sober fellow in the program) and/or we have a meeting or spiritual place we can go after the amends.
- We write in our journal about what happened during the amends
- We are mindful and accepting of all the feelings that come up (disappointment, anger, self-hatred, guilt, embarrassment, or relief, self-esteem, love, compassion)
- We recognized that we are, like all others, flawed and imperfect human beings. We honor ourselves for doing our best with what we were given.

## TEMPLATE

- Be natural (Focus on being present, avoid using words that I would not use or sound scripted)
- Use language such as *I'm looking to (i.e. "make amends" / "apologize" / "take responsibility" / "set things right")*
- Talk about the defects of character that were present in the relationship with this person
- Give examples on how these defects of character caused harm without going into details (no need to re-traumatize). That said,
  - If they ask for details that I believe will not cause harm, I'll be forthright.
  - If they ask for details that I believe might cause harm, I'll suggest they think about it as they will not be able to un-hear what I say.
  - Reassure them that I'm willing, upon their reflection, to meet again and discuss further at that time.
- Acknowledge responsibility, express regret and apologize
- Ask if there are other ways I have fallen short or harmed them (LISTEN mindfully—this part may be triggering so try to stay calm—and AVOID defending past behaviors)
  - If confronted about harms about which I was unaware: I try, *to the best of my ability*, to identify the character defects and acknowledge responsibility, express regret and apologize.
  - If confronted about harms for which I do not feel responsible, I acknowledge *to the best of my ability* their reality and their pain.
- Suggest ways to "make reparations" / "set things right"
- Ask if there are other ways I can repair the harm / set things right (LISTEN & AVOID saying no)
  - If they have proposed reasonable ways to make amends, I can agree and plan accordingly
  - If they have proposed unreasonable ways to make amends, I can suggest getting back to them in the coming days when I've thought about their request more. (*"I see what you are asking and I'm going to get back to you this week or the next and see what I can do to address your concern."*)
- Finish the amends with *"If you can think of some other harm you might want to discuss or some other way I can set things right in the next week/month (avoid saying "in the future" so as not to leave it open ended), please let me know..."*