



## The Seventh Step – “The Final Submission”

Reposted from [Recoverytoday.net](http://Recoverytoday.net) | July 2012 Edition | by: Tim Cheney

### The Seventh Step – The Final Submission

#### *Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings*

*“Conversion is not implanting eyes, for they exist already; but giving them a right direction, which they have not.”*

Plato (428 BC)

“We stood at the turning point.” This, for me, was the grand finale for [Steps](#) One through Six. This step was my final submission and, once taken, became the portal to a new way of life. Until this point, I had been asked to admit, believe, take and share an inventory and become willing. Each of these steps required submission. But Step 7 demanded that I convert my newly found faith into action. It is said that faith without action is dead. Each of the six preceding steps was preparation for taking step 7. The question was did I have enough faith to give my Higher Power carte blanche to remove what S/He deemed as my shortcomings. After all, my entire adolescent and adult life had been built upon personality attributes and behaviors that enabled me to survive in the streets and feed my addiction. The prospect of being stripped of these without a preview of what would remain was definitely pushing the envelope. My propensity was to substitute ‘Tim’ for ‘Him’.

This was the true turning point where I did a 180 [degree](#) reversal. It essentially was turning from (my past thinking and behavior) to turning to (sobriety and a higher power). Up to this point, I had diligently followed the time-tested suggestions for working the first six steps. At each juncture, I paused and reevaluated the necessity of pushing onwards. Each time I grappled with how a program so simple in its essence could work while all other types of treatment had failed me. It sometimes felt as though I had been retrieved from a roadside ditch by a group of big book thumping evangelists and railroaded into a church basement. My cynical mind, grasping for rational and so called informed reasons not to believe, waited for the Grape Kool- Aid to be served. I patiently listened and prayed for the humility to endure, the willingness to listen and the ability to learn. Ever since I escaped from my first psychiatric institution at the age of ten, I had been a runner. I had broken out of locked wards of eight state and private psychiatric hospitals in three states and had signed out against medical advice countless times. Intellectually I got it and was fluent in ‘treatmentese.’ Emotionally and spiritually, I was numb and empty. It was as though I had disassociated myself from my inner world and thrown the breaker that powered the light for my soul. My disease told me to run. Darkness.

I was told to take the cotton out of my ears and put it in my mouth. I would chuckle to myself with the thought that at least they weren’t asking me to take the cotton out of the cooker. I had initially thought that most of those coffee guzzling, self-flagellating hope fiends glorifying and celebrating their pitiful childhoods were rationalizing their powerlessness. And then, I am told that to avoid jails, institutions and death, I would have to sit in these meetings in basements for

the rest of my life, living and conforming to the AA dogma, the steps, traditions and spiritual practices, lest I be cast out. This can't be. The rebellious, self-sufficient me screamed – this is a cult! We have secluded ourselves from society by enforcing anonymity, ensuring the perpetuation of our collective image as different, damaged and deviant. We were the equivalent of the 20th century leper colony. We had voluntarily given our power and our voice away.

As you may have deduced by this point, I had a very difficult time with each of the steps as they involved submission, I was recovery challenged and like many in early recovery, I was plagued with defiance. It has been my experience in sobriety that there are several processes that precede transformation or conversion. For me, recovery required total submission to reach the conversion runway. For to fail to become willing, to submit and to change was akin to writing my own death warrant. As is said, “half measures availed us nothing.”

The first process in my submission stage was regeneration. When we crawl in to the rooms, we are battered and beaten physically, emotionally, spiritually and mentally. We are helpless, hopeless and in many cases homeless. We are told don't drink, don't think and go to meetings. We make the painful and liberating admission of powerlessness and own that our lives are unmanageable. We then connect the dots between powerlessness and unmanageability. Slowly, we start to eat, sleep and eventually stop shaking. After ninety days or so we feel better physically and less mentally impaired. We can string two maybe three sentences together. Our brains and our bodies are beginning to heal. We have started to replace the behavioral habits of the drinking and drugging lifestyle with going to meetings and, hopefully, have started to form new, healthier relationships. We are slowly, gradually rewiring our brains to learn new behaviors and the obsession, for some, starts to loosen its grip. For others, it takes longer but it will happen. We are beginning to regenerate. Now the painful path of submission of continues and the resistance sets in. As we feel better the disease insidiously begins to minimize the damage and we start to take back control. Enter the conscious process of developing conviction for there can be no conversion without conviction. No mistake can be made here. For me I had to develop and reinforce the conviction that I wanted to live, that I would die if I used again and that my way did not work. Einstein astutely commented that no problem can be solved from the same consciousness that created it.

From the beginning in recovery, we hear talk of God and/or a Higher Power and the importance of adopting a faith and developing the capacity to believe in something greater than ourselves. This is a critical juncture for agnostics, atheists and the religiously disenfranchised. I had needed to construct my own understanding and used Pascal's and James' Wager in Step 2 and then in Step 3 had to focus on the message not the messenger.

Step 4 had me taking a fearless moral inventory. My behavior had resulted in repressed shame and guilt that I masked with anger which had alienated me from humanity and from God. Once I had assembled the garbage and taken it to the curb, I experienced some relief from self and forged on and took my fifth step. I no longer was alone nor, I was assured, unique. Now I was confronted with the final act of submission – becoming entirely ready to have God remove my shortcomings. I faltered. How could I become entirely ready for some transformative event of which I knew nothing? The answer I received was blind faith and that this was the step that separated the men from the boys. Yeah, right. So men jump off cliffs and boys don't, I thought. Ready, set...

So here is where the miracle really started to happen. I must admit that much of my conviction was born out of fear of dying as I was a spiritual neophyte having only several years of sobriety. Nevertheless, the same limbic area of my brain that had driven my addiction now had reversed and compelled me to take that last leap and pray with absolute honesty – I humbly asked God to

remove my shortcomings. I no longer was pretentiously asking Tim for I had crossed the bridge and realized I must humbly ask Him.

It is said, 'I can't, He can, I think I will let Him' ... and I did.

*Long my imprisoned spirit lay*

*Fast bound in sin and nature's night; Thine eye diffused a quickening ray, I woke, the dungeon flamed with light; My chains fell off, my heart was free;*

*I rose, went forth, and followed Thee*

-Charles Wesley

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## **About the Author**

Tim C. has been in long-term recovery for over 30 years. He is the co-founder and managing partner of [Choooper's Guide](#), a web-based treatment and information resource for addiction and owns and operates an apple orchard in Maine. He is active in the recovery movement in Florida and nationally and has been active for 28 years as a volunteer and advocate for substance abuse and child abuse.

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