

# Carbonaholics Anonymous

## *12 Steps to Kicking the Carbon Habit*

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### **Foreword**

This is a 12-step program, but not quite in the mode of its respected and effective conventional namesakes such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous. For starters we don't really need the "Anonymous" part, since we in the industrialized world are *all* carbonaholics. So we all know who each other are. Next, what we are doing is not only a personal habit affecting people close to us, it is affecting the entire planet and future generations as far as we can project, not to mention thousands of other species and the general state of the natural world.

On the other hand, we carbonaholics need to go through similar steps of personal insight and acceptance of responsibility for our behaviors that endanger the entire biosphere and all who depend upon it. And most importantly, we need to act. Act now. Personally, politically, near and far. We cannot continue the way of life that we have become addicted to, and it will require far more than switching a few light bulbs or buying a hybrid car (for the relative few who can afford it). We have to take a good, hard look at how we make our way in the world, ask penetrating and sometimes agonizing questions, and make the sometimes painful changes necessary to continue to have a world.

The adjustments may be difficult at times, but the potential rewards are also great. We are not a happy people, resorting to anesthesia on a daily basis in the form of drugs (legal or not), television, relentlessly hectic schedules, only to end the day in restless sleep. Our wars of the past century surpass the deadliness and destruction of all prior wars in human history. If the climate crisis were miraculously to end tomorrow, we would still have to deal with the myriad ways we have invented for destroying life on earth.

We can change all of this. Addressing global warming gives us a place to start, and a process to help us discover what we need to do, and then to implement it. In the process, I believe that we will discover fuller, happier, more peaceful lives. With less stuff but far more joy. Sounds like a good deal to me.

This is a work in progress, and it will change as we go along. Please join our forum at [www.carbonaholics.org](http://www.carbonaholics.org) and contribute your thoughts and writings.

*Carbonaholics Anonymous gratefully acknowledges the "Narcotics Anonymous Basic Text" and Will Keepin and the Satyana Institute's "Principles of Spiritual Activism," whose material has contributed much to this document. Any errors or misunderstandings, however, are entirely the responsibility of Carbonaholics Anonymous.*

## **Introduction**

*Carbonaholic (n.): (1) person who is addicted to overconsumption and unrestrained use of fossil fuels, for pleasure and convenience disguised as necessity, regardless of cost and consequence; (2) any resident of the United States of America living above the poverty level; (3) user of private motor vehicles, snowmobiles, power mowers, air travel, cruise ships, and other such devices, regardless of geographical location*

The problem that threatens our collective existence on Earth and that dwarfs all other problems that humanity faces, as difficult as they may be, is global warming. We have come to Carbonaholics Anonymous believing that our common denominator is the failure to come to terms with our addiction to overconsumption, to fossil fuels and to the great convenience and luxury they afford us.

C.A. service is motivated by the desire to carry the message of recovery to the carbon addict who still suffers from the lethal illusion of wealth and well-being that our addiction inspires, for this is one of the key paths to averting destruction of our shared biosphere. **We recognize that we cannot stop global warming solely by our individual and even group efforts, but neither can we stop global warming without our individual and group efforts.** It is only by reaching a critical mass of understanding among all of us that we will drive the serious and sometimes difficult personal and political measures we must take.

To achieve a sustainable, livable Earth we must all do our part.

## **Chapter 1:**

### **WHO IS AN ADDICT?**

Who is an addict? We know! Virtually every person in the developed world. We Americans are the most addicted of all, generating over twenty times the carbon dioxide permissible in an environment that sustains the lives of thousands of species, including human beings.

Most of us did not consider ourselves addicted to fossil fuels before coming to the Carbonaholics Anonymous program. We did not choose to become addicts. We were born into a culture that thrives on waste and excess, and mistakenly defines economic development as endless growth in a mythical world of endless resources. Our addiction expresses itself in ways that are anti-social and make understanding, acceptance and

solutions difficult. Our disease has isolated us from people around the world, except for the getting, using and finding ways and means to get more from them to feed our addiction. We use economic exploitation, disinformation and war at home and abroad to get what we crave. Our relationship with our life support systems becomes increasingly tenuous. Myth and interminable shopping are our life. It is the only way of life we know.

There is nothing shameful about being a carbon addict, provided we accept our dilemma honestly and take positive action. We are willing to admit without reservation that we are terrified of changing our way of life. Yet common sense tells us that it is insane to continue our self- and Earth-destroying habits. Our experience indicates that, although technology can be a useful tool, there is no quick technological fix to "cure" our illness - indeed, it would be folly to expect the same technological mindset to remedy the very harms it has caused - and that we must rely instead on community and mutual support. We must remain free from the influence of those powerful economic and political forces who would keep us addicted for reasons of their own.

Many of us did not think we had a problem until the Earth's increasing man-made heat began to strike at our doorstep. Even when scientists told us we had a problem, we were convinced that we were right and they were wrong. We used our belief in our "way of life" to justify our self-destructive behavior. We developed a point of view that enabled us to pursue our addiction without concern for our own well-being or that of others. We lost control over our carbon addiction and had no power to stop. The social pressures to keep burning fossil fuels, buying without limit and going into debt are so powerful that we feel that we could never break free.

But we have begun the road to recovery: we begin to treat our carbon addiction by admitting our disease and actively striving for withdrawal from fossil fuels *until our individual net carbon dioxide contribution to the atmosphere is zero ("net carbon zero"), and collectively we have reduced total atmospheric carbon dioxide to pre-industrial levels.*

The only alternatives to recovery are planetary devastation, collapse of civil society, death of millions or billions of people by violent natural disasters, wars over scarce resources, mass species extinction, and quite possibly, as unthinkable as it may seem, the end of human life on Earth. Unfortunately, our disease makes us deny our addiction. But you too can find a new way of life through the C.A. program that would not otherwise be possible.

There is still hope.

## Chapter 2:

### WHAT IS THE CARBONAHOLICS ANONYMOUS PROGRAM?

*Carbonaholics Anonymous is a project of the Center for Democracy and the Constitution, a non-profit dedicated to educating and organizing for democracy in our communities, a sustainable way of life on Earth, justice and world peace.*

*Our focus has turned to global warming: as a phenomenon that has the potential to end human life on earth, it is without question the most egregious violation of basic human rights - and the rights of nature - in our history.*

*Who brought us global warming? Why? By what authority? For whose benefit? How do we stop it in a way that not only addresses climate catastrophe, but numerous other dangerous enterprises that are profitable - temporarily - for a tiny minority of human beings at the expense of the rest of us for generations to come?*

*In short, how do we declare democracy of, by and for the People?*

*We are a society in the industrialized world for whom carbon addiction has become a major problem. We in C.A. are recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other become responsible citizens of the Earth.*

*We are interested only in what you want to do about our collective problem of catastrophic climate change - and how we can help. By coming to our meetings regularly, you too will find the strength to move beyond our destructive way of life.*

We in C.A. are learning to live in accordance with the laws of nature. When we discover the damage caused by our fossil fuel addiction, we seek help through C.A. rather than cause untold suffering to our children and future generations. The program works a miracle in our lives. We become different people. The steps and abstinence give us a daily reprieve from our frenetic and often senseless lives of endless growth, acquisition and shopping. We become free to live.

In accordance with the principles of recovery, we try not to judge, stereotype or moralize with each other. At the beginning of the meeting, we read C.A. literature which is available to anyone. Some meetings have speakers, topic discussions or both. Meetings provide us with a place to be with fellow carbon addicts. All we need are two of us, caring and sharing, to make a meeting.

We let new ideas flow into us. We ask questions. We share what we have learned about living sustainable and fulfilling lives without fossil fuels and endless acquisition of material wealth. Our program is, in fact, a way of life. We learn the value of spiritual principles as such as honesty, humility and service from reading the C.A. literature, going

to meetings, and working the Twelve Steps. We find that our lives steadily improve if we maintain abstinence from mind-altering, mood-changing mythologies and chemicals and work the Twelve Steps to sustain our recovery. Living this program enhances our relationship with a natural power greater than ourselves, leads us to help others and to heal our planet Earth.

## **Chapter 3**

### **WHY ARE WE HERE?**

*Most of us realize that in our addiction we are slowly committing suicide and geocide, but addiction is such a cunning enemy of life that we had lost the power to do anything about it. Most of us sought solace through extravagant indulgence, drugs and alcohol, or pretending that everything is fine. When sufficiently pressed by reality, we tried recycling, hybrid cars, conventional activism, or imagining that the technological mindset that got us into so much trouble in the first place would suddenly change its nature and rescue us. We grew to understand that none of these methods would work to save our Earth, until in desperation we sought help from each other in Carbonaholics Anonymous.*

A new lifestyle and our understanding of the destructive elements of our culture and its myths are what we really needed. And although our minds told us we would never make it, the people in C.A. give us hope by insisting that we can take the profound steps necessary to achieve net carbon zero. We find that no matter what our past thoughts or actions were, others had felt and done the same. Surrounded by fellow carbonaholics, we realize that we are not alone. Recovery is what happens in our meetings; all of our lives are at stake.

## **Chapter 4**

### **HOW IT WORKS**

*If you want what we have to offer, and are willing to make the effort to get it, then you are ready to take certain steps. These are the 12 Steps that make our recovery possible.*

1. We admit that we need help from family, friends and community to cure our addiction to fossil fuels, and that millions if not billions of lives across the world have become difficult or unbearable because of our addiction.
2. We rely on faith and a power greater than ourselves to restore us to sanity and compassion, whatever we may call that power - God, Nature, Sun or any of a thousand names for spiritual unfolding and fulfilling lives.
3. We take a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

4. We admit to the higher power, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
5. We do not insulate ourselves from the pain of the world with our hyperactivity, drugs and alcohol, or compulsive overconsumption, and we begin to let go.
6. We acknowledge that our work is for the world, in the world, affecting the world - it is our choice whether it is for good or for ill.
7. We serve others of this and future generations, and in so doing we serve our true selves.
8. We list all of the harms we have caused by our indulgence in excess, overconsumption and fossil fuel addiction, and become willing to make amends for them all.
9. We make direct amends by our actions wherever possible.
10. We continue to take personal inventory, and when we are wrong promptly admit it.
11. Through prayer or meditation we seek to improve our conscious contact with benign and compassionate forces of the universe, and the strength to carry out our mission of living in harmony with the Earth and its creatures.
12. We share our awakening with carbon addicts everywhere, and practice these principles in all of our affairs, including transformation of the political and economic arenas of which we are a part.

*This sounds like a big order, and we can't do it all at once. We didn't become addicted in one day, so remember - EASY DOES IT.*

*There is one thing more than anything else that will defeat us in our recovery: this is an attitude of indifference or intolerance toward spiritual principles. Three of these that are indispensable are honesty, open-mindedness and willingness. With these we are well on our way.*

Here are some of the questions we have asked ourselves: Are we sure we want to stop overconsumption and using fossil fuels? Do we understand that by ourselves, in isolation, we have no real control over our addiction? Do we recognize that in the long run, we don't use fossil fuels - they, and the corporations and governments that profit so mightily from them - use us? Do we know that our addiction changed us into something we didn't want to be: dishonest, deceitful, self-willed people at odds with ourselves and our natural world, including most people on Earth? Have we arrived at the point where we fully grasp that, as carbonaholics, we have failed to live just and sustainable lives, and have caused severe and undo suffering to other human beings and many other creatures with whom we share this unique and precious planet? Do we understand that future generations will despise and curse us, and with good reason?

As a result of attending meetings we begin to feel that there is hope for our world. It is in these meetings that we are introduced to the Twelve Steps of Carbonaholics Anonymous. We learn to work them in the order they are written and to use them on a daily basis. The

steps are our solution. They are our survival kit. They are our defense, for carbon addiction is a deadly disease. Our steps are the principles that make our recovery possible.

## **STEP ONE**

***We admit that by ourselves we are powerless over our addiction to fossil fuels, and that millions if not billions of lives across the world have become difficult or unbearable because of our addiction.***

In Carbonaholics Anonymous reducing our carbon emissions has to come first. We realize that we cannot use fossil fuels and have a planet which will sustain our lives. When we admit our powerlessness and the inability to manage our own lives without abuse of carbon, we open the door to recovery. Although the evidence is all around us and overwhelming, no one can convince us that we are addicts. It is an admission that we have to make for ourselves.

The physical aspect of our disease is the compulsive use of fossil fuels: the inability to stop using once we have started. The mental aspect of our disease is the obsession or overpowering desire for the deceptive ease and luxury fossil fuels bring us, which seduce us to continue using even when it threatens life on Earth. The spiritual part of our disease is our total self-centeredness.

We are not responsible for our disease, with which we were inoculated at birth by our culture, but we are responsible for our recovery. We have to see that we rationalize the most outrageous nonsense in order to justify the mess overconsumption and fossil fuels have made of our lives and our planet. Although our cultural mythologizing would have us believe otherwise, many human beings lived creative, full and satisfying lives for hundreds of thousands of years without fossil fuels. With our current knowledge and resources, a fossil-free world can sustain rich and vibrant communities worldwide. Until we let go of all our reservations about recovery, many of which are based on imaginary fears fed by vested interests and a woefully distorted recital of human history, the foundation on which our recovery is based is in danger.

We have found that we have no choice except to completely change our old ways of thinking unless we are to go back to our polluting and destructive habits. When we give our best, it works. When we can no longer stand our old ways, we begin to change - at that point we have then completed Step One. Working this step, we are released from our chains. However, none of the steps work by magic. We do not just say the words of this step: we learn to live them.

## **STEP TWO**

*We rely on faith and a power greater than ourselves to restore us to sanity and compassion, whatever we may call that power - God, Nature, Sun or any of a thousand names for spiritual unfolding and fulfilling lives.*

The Second Step is necessary if we expect to achieve any sort of ongoing recovery. The First Step leaves us with the need to believe in something that can help us with our powerlessness and helplessness, but it leaves a vacuum in our lives. We need to find something to fill that void. This is the purpose of the Second Step.

Some of us don't take this step seriously at first, we pass over it with a minimum of concern, only to find the next steps will not work until we embrace this one. Even when we admit we need help with our addiction problem, many of us do not admit to the need for faith and sanity.

We must acknowledge that we are but a small part of life on Earth. When we imagine we are more powerful and wise than we are, we pay the price of the myriad unintended consequences of our actions. Since our rapid technological advancements over the last two hundred years, we have multiplied the disastrous consequences of our development by many orders of magnitude. Only through spiritual awareness - which includes the understanding of the limitations of our knowledge, and our ultimate powerlessness before the forces of Nature - can we attain the humility and wisdom necessary to change our addicted way of life.

The first thing we do in C.A. is work towards net carbon zero. At this point we begin to feel the pain of living without the luxury of fossil fuels. This is the pain that forces us to seek spiritual awareness. We don't have to be religious to accept this idea. The point is that we open our minds to believe that the realities of the universe don't begin and end with our own thoughts and physical being. We may have difficulty with this, but by keeping an open mind sooner or later we find the help we need.

We talk and listen to others. We can use this power before we begin to understand it. As we learn to trust this power, we begin to overcome our fears of life. The process of coming to believe is a restoration to sanity. The strength to move into action comes from this belief. We need to accept this step to start us on the road to recovery. When our belief has grown, we are ready for Step Three.

## **STEP THREE**

*We take a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*

The purpose of a searching and fearless moral inventory is to sort through the confusion and the contradiction of our lives so that we can find out who we really are and what we

are doing in and to the world. We are starting a new way of life and need to be rid of the burdens and traps which have controlled us and prevented our growth.

As we approach this step, most of us are afraid that there is a monster inside us that, if released, will destroy us. This fear can cause us to put off our inventory or may even prevent us from taking this crucial step at all. We have found that fear is lack of faith, and we have found a loving, personal spiritual power to whom we can turn. We no longer need to be afraid.

We have been experts at self-deception and rationalization; by writing our inventory, we can overcome these obstacles. A written inventory will unlock parts of our subconscious which remain hidden when we simply think about or talk about who we are. Once it is all down on paper, it is much easier to see, and much harder to deny our cultural and personal imperatives.

Honest self-assessment is one of the keys to our new way of life. Let's face it: when we are using, constrained by the veil of consumption addiction, we are not honest with ourselves. It takes a long time to admit that our way of life is unsustainable, unjust and destructive. We find that we do not recover physically, mentally or spiritually overnight. Step Three will help us toward our recovery more than we imagine.

Most of us find that we were neither as terrible, nor as wonderful, as we supposed. We are surprised to find that we have good points in our inventory. You will find that this Step is a turning point in your life. Some of us make the mistake of approaching the Third Step as if it were a confession of how horrible we are.

In the Third Step we are trying to free ourselves of living in old, useless and destructive patterns. We take the Third Step to gain the necessary strength and insight that enables us to grow. We may approach the this Step in a number of ways.

It is advisable that before we start, we go over the first two Steps with a friend in C.A. This is the preparation necessary to have the faith and courage to write a fearless inventory. We get comfortable with our understanding of these steps. Now we can start this step, not letting it frighten us. We simply put it on paper to the best of our present ability. We must be done with the past, not cling to it but face it, see it for what it really was and release it so we can live today.

Writing a thorough and honest inventory may seem impossible, but with spiritual support we can do it. We take a few quiet moments before writing and seek the strength to be fearless and thorough. In Step Three, we begin to get in touch with ourselves. We write about our liabilities, whatever they may be: guilt, shame, remorse, self pity, resentment, anger, depression, frustration, confusion, loneliness, anxiety, betrayal, hopelessness, failure, fear or denial. We write on paper what is bothering us here and now. We have a

tendency to think negatively, so putting it on paper gives us a chance to look more positively at what is happening.

Our strengths must also be considered if we are to get an accurate and complete picture of ourselves and our carbon addiction. We all have strengths: open-mindedness, spiritual awareness, honesty with others, acceptance, positive action, sharing, willingness, courage, faith, caring, gratitude, kindness or generosity.

Our inventories usually include material on relationships. We review our past and present behavior to see what we want to keep and what we want to be rid of in order to move towards a sustainable world. This Step has the reputation of being difficult - in reality, it is quite simple.

We write our inventory for ourselves without considering with whom we might share it. We work Step Three as if there were no Step Four. We can write alone or near other people; whatever is more comfortable to the writer is fine. We can write as long or as short as needed. Someone with experience can help with this. The important thing is to write a moral inventory. If the word "moral" bothers us, we may call it a positive/negative inventory.

The way to write an inventory is to write it! Thinking about an inventory, talking about it, theorizing about the inventory will not get it written. We sit down with a notebook, ask for guidance, pick up our pen and start writing. Anything we think about is inventory material. When we realize how little we have to lose, and how much we have to gain, we begin this Step.

A basic rule of thumb is that we can write too little, yet we can never write too much. The inventory will fit the individual. Perhaps this seems difficult or painful. It may appear impossible. We may fear that being in touch with our feelings will trigger an overwhelming chain reaction of pain and panic. We may feel like avoiding an inventory because of a fear of failure. When we ignore our feelings the tension becomes too much for us. Yet the fear of impending doom is so great it overrides our fear of failure.

An inventory becomes a relief to do because the pain of doing it is less than the pain of not doing it. We learn that pain can be a motivating factor in our recovery. Thus, facing it becomes unavoidable. The more we live our program, the more spiritual development seems to position us to have things surface so we can write about them. We begin enjoying our recovery because we have a way to resolve the shame, guilt and fear.

We are not going to be perfect. If we were perfect, we would not be human. The important thing is that we do our best. Yet no matter how searching and thorough, no inventory is of any lasting effect unless it is promptly followed by an equally thorough Fourth Step.

## STEP FOUR

*We admit to our higher power, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.*

The Fourth Step is the key to freedom. It allows us to live without indulgence in overconsumption and fossil fuels in the here and now. Sharing the exact nature of our wrongs sets us free to live. After taking a thorough Third Step, we have to deal with what we have found in our inventory, for if we keep these defects inside us they will ruin our recovery. Holding on to our past would eventually sicken us and keep us from taking part in our new way of life.

Step Four suggests that we admit to the higher power, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs. We have looked at our wrongs, have seen patterns on paper, and have begun to see deeper aspects of our disease. Now we sit down with another person and share our inventory out loud.

Our spiritual awareness will be with us when we do this, and will help to free us from the fear of facing ourselves and another human being. Admitting the exact nature of our wrongs to our higher power is an essential element of our recovery.

Step Four is not simply a reading of our inventory. For years, we avoided seeing ourselves as we really were. We were ashamed of ourselves and were isolated from the realities that the world faces. Now that we have the shameful part of our past trapped, we can sweep it out of our lives if we face and admit it. It would be tragic to have it all written down and then shove it in a drawer. Our tragic flaws grow in the dark and die in the light.

We must carefully choose the person who is to hear our Fourth Step. We must make sure they know what we are doing and why we are doing it. Although there is no hard rule about whom we should choose, it is important that we trust the person. Only complete confidence in the person's integrity and discretion can make us willing to be thorough in this step.

Some of us take our Fourth Step with a total stranger, although some of us feel more comfortable choosing a member of Carbonaholics Anonymous. We know that another recovering addict would be less likely to judge us with malice or misunderstanding. Once we make up our minds and are actually alone with the person we have chosen to accept our confidence, we proceed, with their encouragement. We want to be definite, honest and thorough, realizing that this is a life and death matter.

We may think that we have done enough by writing everything down, and this is a mistake we cannot afford. This step will expose our motives and our actions for what they really are. We cannot expect these things to reveal themselves. Our embarrassment is eventually overcome and we can avoid future guilt.

We do not procrastinate. We must be exact. We want to tell the simple truth, straightforwardly, as quickly as possible. There is always a danger that we will exaggerate our wrongs, and an equal danger that we will minimize or rationalize away our part in the climate crisis. If we are anything like we were when we first entered C.A., we still want to "sound good."

The masks have to go. We share our inventory as it is written, skipping nothing. We continue to approach this step with honesty and thoroughness until we finish. Usually, as we share this step, the listener will share some of his or her story too, and we will find out that the things about ourselves that we thought were so awful or different were not all that unique. We see, by the acceptance of our confidant, that even though our behavior must change, we can be accepted just for who we are.

We may never be able to remember all of our past mistakes. We do, however, give it our best and most complete effort. We begin to experience real personal feelings of a spiritual nature. Where once we had spiritual theories, we now begin to awaken to spiritual reality. And what greater spiritual reward than the knowledge that we are preserving the Earth - life itself - for future generations?

## **STEP FIVE**

***We do not insulate ourselves from the pain of the world with our hyperactivity, drugs and alcohol, or compulsive overconsumption, and we begin to let go. (satyana 10)***

Shielding ourselves from heartbreak prevents the transformation we so deeply desire. Acknowledging our role, individually and as a society, in the devastation caused by the climate crisis is terribly painful. Let our hearts break open, and let us learn to move in the world with a broken heart. When we open ourselves to the pain of the world, we become the medicine that heals the world. This is what Gandhi understood so deeply: a broken heart becomes an open heart, and genuine transformation begins.

From the strength we derived in the previous Steps, we are now ready to start letting go of the superficial and hyperactive pleasures of a consumer- and property-oriented society and reap the deeper and long-lasting pleasures of new relationships and community. Our willingness to embrace our painful past motivates us to build a promising future.

We work together, starting with easy steps - we list carbon costs we can no longer afford and commit to eliminating them from our own lives day by day. We won't always be perfect, but with the support of our C.A. friends who are struggling to do the same we will make steady progress towards net zero carbon.

## **STEP SIX**

***We acknowledge that our work is for the world, in the world, affecting the world - it is our choice whether it is for good or for ill (satyana 8)***

In Step Six we acknowledge that we are not working only for ourselves. In taking on responsible world citizenship, we are doing service work and working for others as well. The full harvest of our work may not take place in our lifetime, yet our efforts now are making possible a better life for future generations.

Our fulfillment and determination must come in gratitude for being called to do this work, and from doing it with as much compassion, authenticity, fortitude, and forgiveness as we can muster.

In our C.A. discussions we discuss the effects of our history and our actions on the future of the world. We learn how our impacts as carbon addicts have created a global climate crisis, and how changing our ways as quickly as possible can start to turn things around for people the world over for a long time to come.

To do this, we take a good, hard look at the harm we have done to people, animals, plants and the Earth itself. We look at the pictures from around the world of deforestation, pollution, war, and starvation that have resulted from our addiction. We read stories of and by people who have suffered from our overconsumption and despoliation. We determine to look behind the curtain of our sugar-coated history to learn the truth about our participation in planetary destruction, for only then do we have the insight to cure the problem at its source.

Then we are ready for Step Seven.

## **STEP SEVEN**

***We serve others of this and future generations, and in so doing we serve our true selves***

Acknowledging in Step Six that our work is for the world, we next come to realize that selfless service is a myth. In serving others, we serve our true selves. "It is in giving that we receive." We are sustained by those we serve, just as we are blessed when we forgive others. Service work is enlightened self-interest, because it cultivates an expanded sense of self that includes all others.

When we examine our addiction and search for our true selves in C.A., we realize that what until now we considered to be in our own interests is not. Under the mesmerizing effects of our hyper-acquisitive culture that leads to fossil fuel consumption and all that it entails (including our other addictions to the likes of medications, alcohol and television), we were unable to understand our own unhappiness resulting from the frenzy, discontent

and ill health that we suffered. By serving others and the planet, we shine a light on our lives that inspires responsible action and greater inner peace, love, and fulfillment.

The most important service we in C.A. can give to others is to help them learn how to do their part in reversing global warming and the exploitation it represents. We may do this by passing out educational literature, holding informational meetings, writing articles and letters to the editor, joining community action groups, and by inviting people to participate in Carbonaholics Anonymous. We can participate in political action, starting at the local level. We can challenge state and federal law that is often driven by wealthy vested interests, and blocks progress in reversing the climate crisis.

## **STEP EIGHT**

*We list all of the harms we have caused by our indulgence in excess, overconsumption and fossil fuel addiction, and become willing to make amends for them all.*

The Eighth Step is not easy - it demands a new kind of honesty about our relations with other people, those close to us and those we've never met, but who are critically affected by our addiction. By the time we reach this step, we have become ready to understand what we have done.

A problem many of us have with the Eighth Step and the admission of the harm is the belief that we were victims, not victimizers, in our carbon addiction. Despite the role that culture plays in what we have grown to be, we are now able to decide to end our addiction. This step is doing the leg work to repair the wreckage that we have wrought.

By writing our list, we can no longer deny that we did harm. We admit that we hurt others, directly or indirectly, through some action or neglect, by lying to the world about our pollution of the planet's biosphere individually and collectively.

We make our list, or take it from our Third Step, and add any additional people, towns, tribes, states or nations we can think of. We face this list honestly, and openly examine our faults so that we can become willing to make amends. We likely do not know many whom we wronged, but that does not cure the harm. We may also place ourselves on the list because while practicing our addiction, we have slowly been killing ourselves.

As with each step, we must be thorough. Most of us fall short of our goals more often than we exceed them. At the same time, we cannot put off completion of this step just because we are not sure we are done. We are never done.

We do this step as if there were no Ninth Step. We do not even think about making the amends yet, but just concentrate on exactly what the Eighth Step says, which is to make a list and to become willing. The main thing this step does for us is to help build an

awareness that, little by little, we are gaining new attitudes about ourselves and how we deal with other people across the planet.

The Eighth Step is an action step. Like all the steps, it offers immediate benefits. We are now free to begin our amends in Step Nine.

## **STEP NINE**

*We make direct amends by our actions wherever possible.*

This step should not be avoided. If we do, we are inviting relapse. The important thing is to take action and make amends to the best of our ability.

The only way we can make amends to most people we have harmed is to contribute to society. We help ourselves and other fossil fuel addicts achieve net zero carbon, and support organizations working for such goals as local food production, small-scale manufacturing, renewable power, and other efforts to reach net zero carbon. This is a tremendous gift to the world community.

A lot of courage and faith goes into making amends, and a lot of spiritual growth results. We are achieving freedom from the wreckage of our profligate carbonaholic past. We will want to keep our "house in order" by practicing a continuous personal inventory in Step Ten.

## **STEP TEN**

*We continue to take personal inventory, and when we are wrong promptly admit it.*

The Tenth Step frees us from the shackles of the present. If we do not stay aware of our defects they can drive us into a corner where we get stuck in our old, polluting ways.

One of the first things we learn in Carbonaholics Anonymous is that the more we use, the more we lose. By the same token, we won't experience as much pain if we can avoid the things that cause us pain. Continuing to take a personal inventory means that we form a habit of looking at ourselves, our actions, our attitudes and our relationships on a regular basis.

We are creatures of habit and are vulnerable to contemporary cultural pressure to continue consuming fossil fuels as if there were no tomorrow (which, if we don't change our way of life, may be the case). At times it seems easier to continue in the old rut of self-destruction rather than to attempt a new and frightening route. We no longer have to be trapped by our old patterns. Today we have a choice.

The Tenth Step can do this for us - it can help us correct our living problems and prevent their recurrence. We examine our actions during the day. Some of us write about our feelings, explaining how we felt and what part we might have played in any problems which occurred. Did we cause someone harm, down the block or halfway around the world? Did we use more than our fair share of the world's resources? Do we need to admit that we were wrong?

If we find difficulties, we make an effort to take care of them, since when these things are left undone they have a way of spinning out of control. This step can be a defense against the old insanity. We can ask ourselves if we are being drawn into old patterns of waste and self- and planetary destruction.

We no longer have to live with the feeling of being helpless and lost. Many of our chief concerns and major difficulties come from our inexperience with living without the fossil drug. Often when we think carefully and confer with others in C.A., we are amazed at the simplicity of the answer. The Tenth Step can be a pressure relief valve. We work this step while the day's ups and downs are still fresh in our minds.

We list what we have done and try not to rationalize our actions. This may be done in writing at the end of the day. The first thing we do is stop! Then we take the time to allow ourselves the privilege of thinking. We examine our actions, our reactions, and our motives. We may find that we've actually been "doing" better than we've been "feeling". This allows us to find out where we have gone wrong and admit fault before things get any worse. We need to avoid rationalizing. We promptly admit our faults, not explain them.

We work this step continuously. This is prevention, and the more we do it, the less we will need the corrective part of this step. Step Ten is a great tool. It gives us a way of avoiding grief before we bring it on ourselves. We monitor our feelings, our emotions, our fantasies, and our actions. By constantly examination we are able to avoid repeating what we are working hard to change.

We need this step even when we're feeling good and things are going well. We need to keep in mind that everyone makes mistakes. We will never be perfect. However, we can accept this fact by using Step Ten. By continuing a personal inventory we are set free, in the here and now, from ourselves and the past. We no longer are forced to justify our existence. This step allows us to be ourselves.

## **STEP ELEVEN**

*Through prayer or meditation we seek to improve our conscious contact with benign and compassionate forces of the universe, and the strength to carry out our mission of living in harmony with the Earth and its creatures.*

The first ten steps have set the stage for us to improve our conscious contact with the higher power of our understanding. They give us the foundation to achieve our long-sought positive goals. Having entered into this phase of our spiritual awareness through practicing our previous ten steps, most of us find that we welcome the exercise of prayer and meditation. We find that our spiritual condition is the basis for a successful recovery that offers unlimited growth.

In the Eleventh Step, the life we've been practicing begins to take on a deeper meaning. By the surrender of our control, we gain a far greater power. The nature of our belief will determine the manner of our prayers and meditations. We need only to make sure we have a system of belief which works to provide for our needs.

The purpose of the Eleventh Step is to increase our awareness of the higher power and to improve our ability to use it as a source of strength in our new lives. We can ask for spiritual help when we need it and our lives get better. It is easy to slip back into our old ways. We have to learn to maintain our new lives on a spiritually sound basis to ensure our continued growth and recovery. When we finally get our own selfish motives out of the way, we begin to find a peace we never imagined. Enforced morality lacks the power that comes to us when we choose to live a spiritually-oriented life.

We take a fresh look each day with an open mind. We now know that if we pray to follow a higher purpose, we will receive what is really best for us, regardless of what we think. Sometimes through prayer or meditation a remarkable thing happens: we find the means, the ways and the energies to perform tasks far beyond our capacities. We grasp the limitless strength provided for us through our daily prayer and surrender so long as we keep faith and renew it.

Through prayer we seek conscious contact with our higher power. In meditation we achieve this contact and the Eleventh Step helps us to maintain it.

A basic premise of meditation is that it is difficult, if not impossible, to obtain conscious contact unless our mind is still. The usual, never-ending succession of thoughts has to cease for progress to be made. So our preliminary practice is aimed at stilling the mind, and letting the thoughts that arise die a natural death. We leave our thoughts behind, as the meditation part of the Eleventh Step becomes a reality for us.

Emotional balance is one of the first results of meditation, and our experience bears this out. It is said that for meditation to be of value, the results must show in our daily lives, and this is implicit in the Eleventh Step:

We find ourselves in meditation because it brings us peace and restores our confidence and courage. It helps us to live a life free of fear and distrust. When we remove our own selfish

motives and pray for guidance, we find feelings of peace and serenity that we never knew before. We begin to experience an awareness and an empathy with other people that was not possible before.

As we grow spiritually and discover power greater than ourselves, we begin to realize that as long as our spiritual needs are truly met, our living problems are reduced to a point of comfort. When we forget where our real strength lies, we quickly become subject to the same patterns of thinking and action that got us to C.A. in the first place. We eventually redefine our beliefs and understanding to the point where we see that our greatest need is for a peaceful and welcoming society and planet for ourselves and future generations.

We begin to see more and more clearly what is happening, and through constant contact with our higher power, the answers we are looking for come to us and we gain the ability to do what we once could not.

In an attitude of surrender and humility, we approach this step again and again to receive the gift of knowledge and strength from our higher power. The Tenth Step clears the errors of the present so we may work this step. Without this step, it is unlikely that we could ever experience a spiritual awakening, be able to practice spiritual principles in our lives, or carry a sufficient message to attract others to recovery.

There is a spiritual principle of giving away what we have been given in Carbonaholics Anonymous in order to keep it. By helping others to heal from carbon addiction, we enjoy the benefit of the spiritual wealth we have found. We must give freely and gratefully that which has been freely and gratefully given to us. This brings us to Step Twelve.

## **STEP TWELVE**

***We share our awakening with carbon addicts everywhere, and practice these principles in all of our affairs, including transformation of the political and economic arenas of which we are a part.***

We came to Carbonaholics Anonymous to end our careless polluting ways. The last thing we expected was an awakening of the spirit. This awakening within is evidenced by change in our lives and to carry our message of recovery and hope to other carbon addicts who are causing so destruction in the world. The message, however, is meaningless unless we live it. As we live it, our lives and actions give it more meaning than our words and literature ever could.

In the Twelfth Step, we practice the spiritual principles of giving the C.A. message of recovery in order to keep it. We try to make new people feel welcome and help them learn what the program has to offer. We share our experience, strength and hope and when possible accompany them to a meeting.

The selfless service of this work is the very principle of Step Twelve. We share from our own personal experience what it has been like for us. We give freely and gratefully of our time, service, and what we have found here. The service we speak of in Carbonaholics Anonymous is the primary purpose of our groups. Once we find the C.A. way, complacency has no place in our new life.

We find indescribable joy as we start to learn how to live by the principles of the Twelve Steps and net carbon zero. It is the joy of watching a person two days struggling to reduce overconsumption and fossil fuel addiction say to a person with one day's experience that "an addict alone is in bad company." It is the joy of watching a person who was really struggling to make stop polluting the world, suddenly, in the middle of helping another carbonaholic kick the habit, become able to find the words they need to say coming from within. We feel our lives have become worthwhile. Spiritually refreshed, making urgent positive contributions to the world, we are glad to be alive.

Going to meetings really works.

Practicing spiritual principles in our daily lives leads us to a new image of ourselves. Honesty, humility and openmindedness help us to treat our fellow inhabitants of the earth fairly. Our decisions become tempered with tolerance.

The lessons we learn in our recovery are sometimes bitter and painful. By helping others we find the reward of self-respect as we are able to share these lessons with other members of Carbonaholics Anonymous. We become spiritually refreshed and are glad to be alive. We can recover a bountiful and beautiful Earthly home among the stars.

Welcome to Carbonaholics Anonymous.

The steps do not end here. They are a new beginning.

## **Chapter Five**

### **WHAT CAN I DO?**

*Begin your own program by taking Step One and by reading literature on creating a sustainable planet (see Chapter Seven, Resources, below). Contact a member of C.A., or start a chapter if there isn't one near you. Come to a meeting, where you will find a few answers to some of the things that may be disturbing you now.*

*Stop using fossil fuels as much as possible today (see Sustainability Steps), below. Work in your town to start a net carbon zero group. Apply pressure on elected officials, from the local to state to national level, to move us all towards net carbon zero.*

## Chapter Six

### JOYS AND BENEFITS OF NET CARBON ZERO

It is hard to imagine a more crisis-ridden culture than western civilization. The battlefield destruction, chaos and death of the twentieth century likely exceed that of all of the wars in prior human history. Widespread wage and chattel slavery, global poverty and misery have followed in their wake. In exchange for less stuff, we could inherit peaceful and secure communities, local and self-sufficient but also functioning in a global village. It is worth noting that many indigenous cultures, which we label "primitive," were the original leisure cultures, doing what we call "work" for a couple of hours a day, with the rest of the time for being human: deepening relationships, and engaging in cultural and spiritual activities such as art, music, stories and dance.

We need not "go back to the stone age," which is often the reflex response to suggesting that we change our impact on nature and on one another. We have the advantage of perspective, should we care to use it. The perspectives of history, science and technology, psychology, and knowing about many cultures and how they lived. We have tools available to us that were inconceivable even a generation ago, and as we know ourselves better through Carbonaholics Anonymous and other activities that move us towards a humane and sustainable world, we will be able to use these tools wisely.

There are many potential joys and benefits of attaining net carbon zero. The greatest, of course, is knowing that we will leave a livable planet for our children and future generations. While we have to make significant changes in the way we live, and we will feel some sense of loss, the advantages of a sustainable and more local way of life are incalculable.

- Greater peace and quiet, and far fewer machines making our lives a constant racket, even in the countryside. Some examples are heavy construction equipment, lawnmowers and weed-eaters, motorcycles, jet and military planes, and tractor trailers.
- More time for friends, family, art, culture, spiritual pursuits, and low-carbon athletics and games.
- Far less environmental illness, including asthma, cancer, infectious diseases of crowding and factory farming, and northward migration of tropical illness due to global warming

## Chapter Seven

### SUSTAINABILITY STEPS

What does life look like without fossil fuel addiction, in a net-zero carbon world? Here are some ideas, part of our work at C.A. is to generate many, many more. Thousands of people around the world are coming up with new and great ideas every day. Add your own on our forum at [carbonaholics.org](http://carbonaholics.org). Some steps we might take:

- if we have land around our dwellings, grow food, not lawns
- use hand mowers, gather leaves with hand rakes
- minimize use of private cars - walk, bike, take public transportation
- play local, low carbon sports: yes to cross-country skiing, ping-pong, running, soccer, outdoor ice skating, skateboarding, wrestling, boxing, fencing, gymnastics, baseball, basketball, non-country-club tennis, bicycling; no to downhill skiing, golf, night games, bowling, roller-blading, indoor ice skating, recreational snowmobiling or motorcycling
- buy local food and products, help revive community-based agriculture and industry
- live in small, well-insulated and clustered houses and communities
- use fully cyclable products, plan a zero-waste society
- build decentralized wastewater treatment, install composting toilets
- create local water collection facilities
- substitute indoor clothes drying racks and outdoor clotheslines for power dryers
- replace all light bulbs with energy-saver compact fluorescents bulbs
- minimize private car use, extensive public transportation, ration your air travel
- patronize walking-distance or online shopping, avoid malls and car-only shopping centers
- use renewable and locally/globally non-polluting energy sources
- switch to non-meat diets, reduced amounts of local fish and poultry
- conservation first!

Here are some things we might admit to ourselves and examine about our consumption and carbon addiction:

- long-distance favorite foods - fish, fruit, chocolate, coffee, not to mention staples shipped from afar and luxuries such as cut flowers (a quarter of fuel per bunch)
- environmentally costly product use such as private cars, large-screen TVs, houses too warm, lights left on, eating factory-farmed meat
- other ideas - CA is awaiting your suggestions!

## Chapter Eight

### RESOURCES

There are thousands of books, movies, articles and websites to help us on our path to net zero carbon. Those listed below are just a very few to get you started. In particular, check out the websites for latest developments.

#### Books:

*Ishmael* by Daniel Quinn - a profound novel of how our culture is driving us off a cliff and how we got to be that way

*Boiling Point* by Ross Gelbspan - the tragic story of how we got to this point, by the first American journalist to tackle global warming full time back in the early 1990s

*Heat*, by George Monbiot - a careful analysis of how to get a 90% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions as soon as we decide to do it - and we have to do it very, very soon

#### Movies:

*An Inconvenient Truth* - Al Gore finally got the ball rolling, with a little help from Hollywood, and he did it in a big way, for which we are forever grateful

*Day After Tomorrow* - an entertaining fictional 2004 climate crisis movie, with stunning photography of Earth and far too much truth in it

*Kilowatt Ours* - an excellent indy film on one family's quest for net carbon zero, with lots of practical advice for the rest of us - <http://www.kilowattours.org/news-media-resources.php>

#### Articles/Websites:

There are new pieces every day, frequently about a disaster unfolding far faster than anyone expected, or about a newly discovered problematic unintended consequence.

[www.truthout.org](http://www.truthout.org) - an independent news archive with many excellent current and archived articles on climate and other environmental issues

[www.heatisonline.org](http://www.heatisonline.org) - Ross Gelbspan's up-to-date website with a selection of the best climate articles as they come out.

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