Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity.

So says the second step of 12-step mutual support groups like Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), and Families Anonymous (FA). For many in our community addiction, or a substance use disorder (the medical term) makes our lives unmanageable. Though the unmanageability takes many forms (some lying, cheating, and stealing and for others omission, denial, and hiding) the result is the same—things are unmanageable.

The chaos that often comes with a substance use disorder takes its toll on our physical health, our mental health, our relationships, and our soul. The disease of addiction is also a disease of the soul. Quite literally, our soul is not at ease when we, or someone we love, is suffering from substance use disorder. Only a power greater than ourselves can restore ease to the soul. This is essential for recovering from a substance use disorder.

We know that it is not the fault of the person who has a substance use disorder that they have the disease. And we know that it is the patient’s responsibility to follow the treatment plan. And yet, without God’s loving grace the soul still waits for recovery. Many in recovery from substance use disorder sum up the first three of the 12 Steps as “We can’t, God can, let Him!”

If you, or someone you love, has or might have problems with opioids, alcohol, or any drugs please seek help. Call SAMHSA’s (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) National Helpline at 1-800-662-HELP (4357) or 1-800-487-4889 (TTY). SAMHSA offers free and confidential information in English and Spanish for individuals and family members facing substance abuse and mental health issues. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

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Offering Compassion to People with Substance Use Disorders

One of the most frightening and disorienting moments in battling a chronic illness is relapse. The relapse rates for those in recovery from the chronic illness of addiction are 40-60%. This sounds alarmingly high and yet, when we compare it to relapse rates of other chronic illnesses such as Type 1 Diabetes, Asthma, and Hypertension we see the rate of release is similar. The difference is that we don’t usually think of another trip to the hospital for the diabetes or asthma or the second hypertensive episode as a relapse.

We trust in God to heal when we and our loved ones follow the treatment plan. We show our love by supporting recovery behaviors like attending 12-step meetings, going to the doctor and therapist, and attending worship and study and by not supporting using behaviors like spending time with people, places, and things that get in the way of following the treatment plan. And we walk in God’s ways when we turn our anger away from those suffering from a substance use disorder and direct the anger towards the disease of addiction. A person with a substance use disorder is a person created in the image of God who now has a terrible disease. They need us to give our love freely, without reservation.

Prayer. May God bring ease to the souls of all in recovery.

We will heal their backsliding, we will love them freely. For My anger has turned away from him. (Hosea 14:4)