

*Trauma and the 12 Steps:
Daily Meditations and Reflections*

Jamie Marich

Stephen Danisger



CREATIVE
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INTRODUCTION

Jamie's Reflections

Using a daily recovery reader is a practice, and this practice saved my life. When I made a commitment to finally get sober in the summer of 2002, my sponsor Janet suggested that I pray first thing every morning. I had no problem with God at that point and connecting with a Higher Power to ask for help in staying sober was not the issue.

“Janet,” I protested, “I am not a morning person! I’m lucky if I can get up, roll out of bed, go to the bathroom, and get to work.”

“Oh, you use the bathroom,” she said, “Interesting. Why don’t you put your *Twenty-Four Hours* book on the toilet seat? That way if you’re going to use the toilet, you will need to pick it up. And while you’re doing your business, read the page for the day. It will remind you to pray.”

She was right.

I heard somewhere in my studies that if you can do something for 21-30 days in a row it becomes a habit. Do it for 45-60 days and it becomes a lifestyle.

Sixteen years later I am still sober and I cannot begin my day without praying and reading something spiritual or inspirational.

My heart is bursting with gratitude to birth this specific recovery meditation book into existence in concert with one of my dearest friends and professional collaborators. The classic *Twenty-Four Hours a Day* from Hazelden that is well-known to many people in 12-step fellowships, the book that Janet gave me, got the ball rolling. The practice of reading, meditating, and praying the suggestions in that book each day taught me the importance of daily practice. In the years that have passed, I’ve worked through other daily readers of all kinds—some very general, others more spiritual and inspirational, and other very recovery specific. For many years

I've wanted to offer the teachings and ideas of my well-known book *Trauma and the Twelve Steps: A Complete Guide to Recovery Enhancement* (first published in 2012) in the format of a daily reader.

And here we are!

Daily readers or meditation books (use whatever terminology fits best for you) offer us the opportunity to build consistent practice. Recovery and healing are only possible through the consistent discipline of daily practice.

I long ago learned that if I do nothing to work on myself for six days in a row and then spend only one day on retreat—going to a meeting, attending church, taking a yoga class, or meditating for hours—my internal health will suffer. What happens if a plant that needs a good amount of water to thrive only gets watered once a week? It will likely wilt and die, or at very least, require a lot of specialty care to be revived. The same is true with the practices we need to stay sober, well, or healthy—five minutes of consistent practice each day will serve you better than practicing an hour once a week or all day once a month.

Wellness and recovery practices can take a variety of shapes and forms. Daily practices can include silent meditation, moving meditations like dance or yoga, writing, journaling, making visual art, playing or listening to music, going to meetings, and conversing with others on a path of recovery or wellness.

Steve's Reflections

I have received many gifts in my life. Now over thirty years into my sober journey, I find myself looking at them individually and collectively. Individually, I see them lined up over time, one by one, affecting me in myriad ways. Collectively, I see who I am today, not just informed

by all these gifts, but made whole . . . as if the gifts have become one. Of all the gifts I have been given, the meditation and prayer practice of my early 12-step work continues as a daily non-negotiable act, and the collective wisdom that I've gained from these practices probably defines me more than anything else.

So this opportunity to collaborate with my friend, colleague and collaborator on these meditations is a gift of value beyond words. My work with Jamie began because I found and read the original *Trauma and the Twelve Steps* in 2012 and knew that there was a kindred soul in the Midwest who had been thinking about the same things personally and professionally. She had already taken a whole host of actions toward bringing trauma healing into the 12-step experience. Now that we have taken several steps on this path together, we take this opportunity to provide a meditation book experience not available to us when we first entered recovery. The *24-Hours a Day* book and the men's meditation book *Touchstones* were indispensable to me at the beginning of my path. Our hope is that this book will offer trauma-informed spiritual healing and sustenance for the 21st century person in recovery.

Like Jamie, my first sponsor told me about prayer and meditation, but only after I asked him if there was some alternative program he was working.

“Whaddya talking about?” Randy said. “I pray every day.”

My bubble burst, and he alerted me to the Third and Seventh Step prayers, along with the *24 hours* book. I have never stopped. My primary meditation practice may be silent seated mindfulness meditation, but daily morning readings still help to launch my day. Our hope is that this book can be a catalyst, a guide, a foundation for your days.

How to Use This Reader

Engaging in a daily reading may already be a part of your everyday practice, or this practice may be completely new to you. We have prepared a reading for each day—for you. Please avoid the temptation to read ahead and devour the entire book in one sitting, or read it like you would a standard book. The teachings in the reader are designed to be absorbed in small portions on a day-by-day basis. Although we recommend reading the page for the day in the morning to help you set a positive intention for the day, you are free to choose when you do the page for each day.

Daily consistency is most important. You can read in the morning one day and before you go to sleep on another day if that's how your day transpires. If you should miss or skip a day, that doesn't mean you have failed the process. Be kind to yourself. Just pick up on the day when you remember to return to the book again. Don't stress about missing pages—you can always come back to them another year or on a day where you feel you may need some extra help.

Because this reader corresponds with the revised and expanded edition of *Trauma and the 12 Steps: An Inclusive Guide to Enhancing Recovery*, the reflections are made in a voice that is fundamentally pro-12 step. However, as in the main book, we recognize that a purist study of the 12-steps, especially as taught by many rigid followers, is not optimally trauma responsive. We endeavor to blend a spirit of respect for the wisdom of 12-step programs and our knowledge as trauma specialists to this daily approach to recovery and practice. As a result, we've chosen to organize the twelve months of the book to correspond with the core recovery principles often associated with each step. You can consult the following page for an overview before you begin your daily practice and study.

We bring our collective love for both the 12-step path and other contemplative practices to each page. We are both meditation teachers in varied traditions and we are both expressive artists, blending a variety of practices into our daily wellness routine. It's our deep intention to share the fruits of what we have gained individually and collectively over the years with you!

How you approach each page is also completely up to you, although if you have a sponsor or therapist of any kind, you may consider consulting with them about how using this book may best serve you. Of course, you have a right to just read the page. This is a great start. At very least we suggest that you read the page, which generally starts with a quote from one of our teachers or influences, or a snippet from one of our own previously published teachings.

Spend at least a minute or two in silent reflection, or following some of the suggestions for practice. Some days these invitations are more specific than others. If you have more time available, especially if you are attempting to deepen your meditation practice, spend more time in reflection after the reading. You may elect to sit silently for a length of time that feels appropriate to your practice today, connecting with a suggested prayer or intention that we offer for each page. The word you use is largely up to you, depending on where you are spirituality today. You can set an intention without believing in a Higher Power of any kind. Think of intention as the seed you are planting for the day.

If you are engaged in other expressive arts practices as part of your recovery, using one or several of these practices to respond to the reading is also an option. You may decide to do the reading in the morning to start your day and then deepen your connection to the reading with one of these other practices later in the day. The fusions and possibilities are endless. Healthy recovery requires a combination of consistency and structure along with creativity and adaptability. Consider embracing an approach to this daily reader in the same spirit. Let the daily

readings offer you a structure, and then decide how it may be of value to expand your connection to the reading through other practices on a day-by-day basis.

The Original Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous

1. *We admitted we were powerless over alcohol*—that our lives had become unmanageable.*
Principles: honesty, openness
2. *Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.*
Principles: hope, resilience
3. *Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.***
Principles: faith, surrender
4. *Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*
Principles: courage, introspection
5. *Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.*
Principles: integrity, responsibility
6. *Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.*
Principles: willingness, acceptance
7. *Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.*
Principles: humility, grace
8. *Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.*
Principles: love, accountability
9. *Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.*
Principles: justice, righteousness
10. *Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.*
Principles: perseverance, daily practice
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.*
Principles: spiritual connection, trust
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.*
Principles: service, leading by example

*Feel free to replace this word with whatever feels appropriate to your recovery journey. We are flexible and invite you to be as well!

****Make any adjustments you need to make for gender. We embrace an inclusive approach to how you use pronouns and identifiers around Higher Power. “She,” “them,” or any other proper name is welcome.**

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To visit a collection of online videos prepared by Jamie and her team that can support you in this work and its invitations, please visit:

www.traumamdesimple.com

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Our books represent the experiences and opinions of their authors only. Every effort has been made to ensure that events, institutions, and statistics presented in our books are accurate and up-to-date. To protect their privacy, the names of some of the people, places, and institutions in this book may have been changed.

Dedication

Dedicated with gratitude to our recovery sponsors and guides throughout our collective years trudging the road of happy destiny...

Day 1

“Give me a word . . . ”

In the 5th century when the earliest Christian monks, often referred to as desert mothers and desert fathers, traveled about, it was a common practice for them to approach a wise elder with the request: *give me a word*. This practice existed when the oral tradition was still the primary way to pass along knowledge. The elder would give the seeker the word and the seeker would meditate on the word for a period of time. In modern times, the *one word practice* has become very popular as a way to set intention and direction for the new year. Particularly if we have difficulty formulating an exact intention, focusing on one word can help us keep it simple.

Some people choose their one word as a representation of what they’d like to bring more of into their life during any given year. Many classic words and constructs from recovery can apply here—acceptance, gratitude, serenity, etc. However, you can be as creative as possible in selecting your word. Or maybe you can let the word select you? Perhaps a word seems to be popping up a lot for you lately, maybe at meetings or in your daily life. Or you can draw on the wisdom of the ancients and how they practiced. If you are not sure of a solid *one word* for you to use as intention for the year, consider asking your sponsor, helping professional, or other teacher for a word that they may want to gift to you!

Invitation: Spend 3-5 minutes in a practice of your choice—sitting meditation, walking meditation, or any expressive practice can all work for this purpose. You may even decide to engage in a combination of the practices. If you already have a *one word* intention for the new year, spend some time reflecting on it with these practices and notice what happens in your body.

If a word has not yet revealed itself to you, notice what the time in suggested reflection may bring you.

Prayer or Intention: May the one word that I receive or choose empower me and guide the way, today and on the path ahead.

Day 2

Sankalpa: the Sanskrit word for “intention”

Literally translated: *San* = one with; *Kalpa* = time + the subconscious mind

Intention is about planting seeds, not forcing outcomes. Setting an intention can be a much kinder and ultimately more powerful practice than setting resolutions, as many cultures can pressure us into at the beginning of a year. When we set a resolution and fall short, we are much more likely to beat ourselves up about not fulfilling that commitment. Resolutions also have a “black or white” quality—they don’t take into account that life can happen, causing us to grow in a different direction.

Planting a seed still requires serious commitment. Knowing what you want to grow is important. For instance, you wouldn’t plant seeds for cucumbers if you wanted to grow squash. Seeds need water, air, soil, and sunlight in order to grow. Nothing will happen if you leave the seeds in the packet. You may choose to open the packet, although these other elements are required to bring about growth. The same applies to the intentions we set for our wellness and recovery. You can’t force them to grow as all growth takes time. You can, however, tend to them and notice what will happen. You may be surprised by the results. And even if you take a wrong turn in caring for the growing plants, you may learn important lessons about the type of care that may be required when trying again.

Invitation: Spend 3-5 minutes sitting with the word *intention*. This may be especially challenging if you’ve only approached the start of a new year with resolutions or goals previously. How might the word *intention* feel different to you as you contemplate it. After

noticing the word for a while, what feels like an organic intention may emerge that you would like to set for the year ahead. Knowing that, simply start with today.

Prayer or Intention: Help me to plant the seed of my intention today. Show me how I will need to tend this seed in order for it to grow.

Day 3

“Always we begin again.” ~St. Benedict of Nursia

Many faith traditions as well as approaches to meditation work with this idea of beginning again. One way to describe mindfulness is as the process of beginning again—of returning to focus, even when our attention seems to wander and drift. In recovery, beginning again can mean coming back home to yourself and to the things you know will work to get you well. The practice of beginning again is especially important if we have relapsed or have otherwise experienced a rough patch in our recovery journey. If you find that you’re judging yourself too harshly for veering off course, please know that you are in good company. Anybody on a path of growth and wellness has needed to practice beginning again and will likely need to continue cultivating this skill on the road ahead.

The new year is a particularly good time to look at this concept of beginning again. Although we can sometimes put too much pressure on concepts like New Year’s resolutions, consider how approaching the new year as a chance to begin again—however that might look for you—that offers you a unique opportunity.

Invitation: Take 3-5 minutes to engage in a seated mindfulness practice, setting a timer if possible. Sit in a position of attention and awareness although try not to obsess on the particulars of your posture. You can close your eyes or leave them open; whatever feels safer while also allowing you to fully focus. Make a deliberate intention to stay focused on your breath. If you notice that your attention wanders away from the breath, simply say (to yourself or aloud) the anchor phrase, “Always we begin again.” Use this phrase as an invitation back to your breath.

Prayer or Intention: Help me to know that no matter how far off a path I have stumbled, I can always begin again.

Day 4

“Eat some scrambled eggs and call me back.” ~Jim, one of Steve’s first sponsors

The connections we make at the beginning of our recovery are so important. From these new relationships in the program I can learn about how to stay sober for today, and I can also learn the basics of self-care. Sometimes I need to be listened to, to try and process my thoughts with another alcoholic. But sometimes we need to take care of the simple things first, to take care of the needs of our bodies. Ignoring those needs or simply not being able to see them often represents a big part of the concept of “unmanageability.”

In recovery we learn how to take care of our basic needs so that we can then reach out to others. Jim was not being mean during those phone calls, not at all. Nor was he abandoning me. He was nurturing me, encouraging me to feed my body, and then he would be there when I was ready to connect and work toward psychological health.

Invitation: Spend 3-5 minutes in a practice of your choice (e.g., sitting meditation, walking meditation, or an expressive practice). If you can, notice what you need for your body in this moment. If you need food or drink see if you might take them in mindfully, a little more slowly than usual.

Prayer or Intention: Today let me notice my self-care, and let me notice the support I have from others toward my self-care.

Day 5

“People often say that motivation doesn’t last. Well neither does bathing—that’s why we recommend it daily.” ~Zig Ziglar

Motivation is really just a fancy word for *push* or *drive*. It’s the force that allows you to work on the intentions and maybe even the goals that you set for yourself. Sometimes what motivates us is a combination of internal (e.g., my desire to be a better person) and external (e.g., my family, keeping my job) forces. As it relates to recovery, any form of motivation that keeps you moving and helps you to practice recovery with daily consistency is useful. Even if that means, to intone Zig Ziglar’s wisdom, taking a bath or a shower as a deliberate spiritual or recovery practice each day!

For many of us, practicing literal movement is the most direct way that we can stay motivated. This can come in the form of taking a walk, practicing yoga, dancing, or engaging in any other type of exercise. This reminds us that motivation is, after all, about what keeps us moving forward. Not too long ago I saw a hilarious joke on the Internet where the therapist asks, “What motivates you to get out of bed in the morning?” The patient responds, “My bladder mostly.” See, the body does not lie. Learn that vital lesson and make your body an ally in your recovery.

Invitation: Spend 3-5 minutes in a practice of your choice (e.g., sitting meditation, walking meditation, or an expressive practice) and contemplate the idea of motivation. What motivates you in recovery today? You may even consider making a column with two sides, doing an

inventory on both your internal and external sources of motivation. What can this mini-inventory teach you about motivation today?

Prayer or Intention: Today I recognize that motivation for recovery and healing comes in a variety of forms. To keep accessing it, I need to practice daily.

Day 6

“The fact is that most alcoholics, for reasons yet obscure, have lost the power of choice in drink. Our so-called will power becomes practically nonexistent.” ~*Alcoholics Anonymous* (The Big Book)

Why are we powerless? Why has life become unmanageable? Is it because of some terrible flaw we have? No, implicit in Step One is that trauma responses, including anything that has brought us into 12-step recovery, have been enacted and ingrained through maladaptive storage of memories. Indeed, we can become powerless over our limbic brain and our reptile brain. Yet, these parts of us are there to help us survive.

It is in admitting that we cannot think our way out of these responses that we begin to heal. We can heal these parts of us so that our thinking brain can start to have a say, start to make decisions on our behalf. The steps that follow Step One all help us in this journey. The First Step allows for the beginning of self-forgiveness and a place to start.

Invitation: For your practice this morning, choose whatever type of practice feels most settling to you and your body today. Notice where you experience a sense of lack of power, but also sense where you might already have power. Spend 5 minutes noticing the potential for powerlessness to become infused with healthy power.

Prayer or Intention: Today allow me to be in the First Step. Let me know that powerlessness and unmanageability are not all my fault, and that I can heal into power.

Day 7

“We’re all addicts in a sense. We’re all attached, if not addicted, to our possessions, careers, relationships, identities—to name a few.” ~Darren Littlejohn, *The 12-Step Buddhist*

I continue to identify as an alcoholic and an addict because *it keeps me in touch with reality*. The reality is that alcohol and drugs won every time. I believe that if I chose to put them back into my body, the chance of them engulfing me again is quite high. Sure, I now have an enhanced understanding about the traumatic and biochemical origins of my addiction. Yet the reality is, drugs and alcohol made a dangerous impression on my body, mind, and spirit. Why would I risk putting that again? Just to prove that enough counseling, specialty trauma therapies, and holistic modalities sufficiently healed my brain?

I choose to identify as an alcoholic and addict, to keep me in touch with the reality of where using these substances took me. Being reminded of this reality has special purpose for me because I drank, used, and engaged in other dangerous activities to *escape* reality. One of the primary objectives of my recovery and wellness today—just as it was on day one sober—is to learn how to *more effectively live in the reality of this waking state. Learning to embrace, instead of reject the reality that each day brings, is an empowering experience for me in recovery. And it results from first admitting that I am powerless over the drugs, alcohol, and other objects of addiction. Making this admission does not require me to say that I am weak, flawed, or lacking power as a person.*

Invitation: Practice sitting, walking, or journaling (written word or visuals) for the next 3-5 minutes on what it means to you to admit powerlessness over your addictions, compulsions, or

attachments. Are there any struggles that come up around making this admission? While you are never required to utter the words “I am an alcoholic, I am an addict, I am a co-dependent,” etc. to begin recovery (as there are many paths to getting well), consider what you might learn about yourself and the process by reflecting on any areas of struggle.

Prayer or Intention: Help me to accept the reality of the present moment and what I have learned about myself in the process of recovery. In practicing this daily, may I learn to live more effectively in my life as it is.

Meditations and Reflections to Enhance Your Daily Practice

In the tradition of the great recovery daily readers, Dr. Jamie Marich, author of *Trauma and the 12 Steps: An Inclusive Guide to Enhancing Recovery*, brings you a series of daily meditations to guide you on the path of recovery. Jamie is joined by her long-time collaborator Dr. Stephen Dansiger in this presentation of 366 daily meditations designed to assist you regardless of the recovery path you follow.

Unhealed trauma can feed addictive and compulsive responses, and these responses also run the risk of subjecting us to further trauma or emotional wounding. The recovery process from both trauma and addiction can be overwhelming, thus it is vital to take a small step, day-by-day approach to receiving and integrating the help that is available. Jamie and Steve take you on this day-by-day journey with an open heart to the individuality of your experience. Each step gets its own month of focus in this first book of its kind on the recovery market.

Jamie Marich, Ph.D., LPCC-S, LICDC-CS, LICDC-CS, REAT, RYT-500 is the author of the popular *Trauma and the 12 Steps: An Inclusive Guide to Enhancing Recovery*, originally published in 2012 and released as a revised and expanded edition with North Atlantic Books in 2020. She is the founder and director of The Institute for Creative Mindfulness. She travels internationally training on topics related to trauma, addiction, dissociation, mindfulness, yoga, the expressive arts, and EMDR therapy while maintaining a private practice in her home base of Warren, OH. She is an established author in the field of trauma recovery and a frequent guest contributor to compiled volumes and other media.

Stephen Dansiger, Psy.D., MFT is the founder and CEO of StartAgain Associates and a senior faculty member with The Institute for Creative Mindfulness. An author of several books in the field of trauma recovery, he is a highly-regarded consultant and educator on topics related to mindfulness, Buddhism, addiction, trauma, anger management, health care innovation and EMDR therapy. He is based in Los Angeles, CA.