1-2-3 WALTZ

Infidelity Survivors Anonymous

The ISA Literature Committee is excited to announce the release of the ISA **1-2-3 Waltz**.

Many members have found that repeating ISA Steps 1 through 3 can be helpful throughout the spiritual process of recovery. These steps can be worked at any time and during any stage of recovery.

Suggestions for Use

- ISA Meetings: Work through the Watlz worksheets with interested members in small groups across three weeks of meetings... meeting an hour outside of the regular scheduled ISA meeting.
- Recovery Partners: Meet weekly to work through each Waltz step together.
- Sponsor/Sponsee: Use the document as a tool to work through ISA Steps 1–3 together.
- Individual Use: Work through the Waltz on your own as often as they are helpful in your recovery.

At the end of each step, you will find a **QR code to submit feedback**. Your input will help the Literature Committee evaluate and improve this resource.

Deadline for feedback: October 31, 2027

We hope The ISA 1-2-3 Waltz becomes a helpful tool for continuing growth and spiritual recovery.

STEP ONE

We acknowledged our powerlessness over other people's sexual behavior - that our lives had become unmanageable.

STEP ONE provides an opportunity to admit that our life is out of control and what we have been doing is not working. We are powerless over other people's sexual behavior. We recognize our powerlessness over the betrayal, the trauma, and all the effects it has had on us. It is simply not possible to do the impossible no matter how hard we try. We must consider who and what we are powerless over. An honest assessment of powerlessness and unmanageability opens the way to acknowledge our needs and responsibilities.

NOTE: *The ISA TOOLS WORKSHOP describes "Betrayal Trauma" or "Infidelity-Induced Trauma" as the damage that is caused when someone experiences betrayal in a primary relationship that destroys the trust, safety, and security of the attachment. Sexual Betrayal creates intense psychological pain and overwhelms our ability to cope with or process the violations or emotions produced by trauma.*

So many betrayed partners begin recovery feeling hopeless and devastated from the trauma of betrayal. The pain, confusion and anger felt from discovery can feel isolating and lonely. The ISA 12 Steps offer not only temporary relief, but also recovery for those who are willing to work on this simple program.

Guided by our Higher Power; sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly, the illusion of control is unveiled, and reality takes its place. It is possible we sought to control the fallout from the discovery or disclosure of sexual betrayal in our primary intimate relationships. Our trauma may have resulted in behaviors or actions that are outside of our own value system. As we sought safety for ourselves in unsafe situations, the unmanageability increased as we struggled to achieve some stability. In this Step, we consider the honest reality of our lives.

If we are to move forward on this journey of healing, our awareness prepares us to accept our own reality. We did not ask for, cause, or deserve the betrayal, yet we are powerless over the resulting trauma and the unmanageability it has caused in our lives. We are also powerless over whether anyone else chooses recovery or desires to change.

The first step begins with the word WE because being part of a safe community is necessary to the healing process. Although our stories may seem different at first, similar experiences and feelings connect us at the heart and provide a supportive and safe fellowship in which to be heard and to heal. An essential element of ISA recovery is our shared journey through fellowship: We are not alone!

NOTE*: A CIRCLE OF THREE is a list of people to reach out to. When attending meetings, take the numbers of people you relate to. Texting is an acceptable way to reach out and schedule a time to talk.*

STEP ONE PRAYER

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change. Help me take this first step and honestly see where I am powerless. I feel scared, even terrified, to acknowledge my powerlessness when I want so much to feel safe. Help me acknowledge the trauma I've experienced from the betrayal of my partner and their sexual behavior. As I begin to take these steps towards healing, help me to see how unmanageable my life becomes when I try to control that which I cannot.

STEP ONE is the only Step that mentions the problem. The remaining eleven Steps focus on the solution. Once we acknowledge the problem, we become ready to accept the consequences of letting go.

POWERLESSNESS AND UNMANAGEABILITY CHECKLIST

STEP ONE - POWERLESSNESS AND UNMANAGEABLE CHECKLISTS

In this chart, check off the symptoms of betrayal trauma you've experienced, noting if they occurred in the past, are occurring currently or both. Add other symptoms of trauma that may not be listed here. At the bottom of the chart, list other things that you are powerless over, especially others' actions and circumstances.

POWERLESSNESS

EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS

	Past	Now		Past	Now
Shock / Denial / Disbelief	☐	☐	Avoidance	☐	☐
Fear / Paranoia	☐	☐	Confusion / Frustration	☐	☐
Anger / Rage	☐	☐	Intrusive Thoughts	☐	☐
Withdrawing / Isolating	☐	☐	Irritability	☐	☐
Sad / Hopeless / Feeling Unworthy	☐	☐	Desperate Thoughts	☐	☐
Feeling Numb	☐	☐	Grief	☐	☐
Guilt / Self-blame	☐	☐	Feeling Unsafe	☐	☐
Depression	☐	☐	Loss of Trust	☐	☐
Shame	☐	☐	Hypervigilance	☐	☐
	☐	☐		☐	☐
	☐	☐		☐	☐

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

	Past	Now		Past	Now
Agitation / Anxiety / Panic Attacks	☐	☐	Racing Heartbeat / High Blood Pressure	☐	☐
Aches, Pain, Fatigue, Muscle Tension	☐	☐	Overeating / Undereating	☐	☐
Shaking	☐	☐	Migraines / Headaches	☐	☐
Insomnia / Nightmares	☐	☐	Foggy Brain / Inability to Concentrate	☐	☐
Sweating	☐	☐	Hypo or Hypersexuality	☐	☐
Easily Startled	☐	☐		☐	☐
Constipation / Diarrhea	☐	☐		☐	☐
	☐	☐		☐	☐
	☐	☐		☐	☐

SPIRITUAL SYMPTOMS

	Past	Now		Past	Now
Anger with God / Higher Power	☐	☐	Resentment toward God / Higher Power	☐	☐
Feeling Abandoned by God / Higher Power	☐	☐	Feelings of Guilt	☐	☐
Loss of Interest in Prayer / Meditation	☐	☐	Doubt in God / Higher Power	☐	☐
Fear of Judgment by God / Higher Power	☐	☐	Feeling Betrayed by God / Higher Power	☐	☐
Separation from Spiritual Practices	☐	☐	Feeling Punished	☐	☐
Feeling Spiritually Unworthy	☐	☐	Loss of Spiritual Connection	☐	☐
Isolation from Spiritual Support	☐	☐	Loss of Faith	☐	☐
	☐	☐		☐	☐

OPTHER THINGS I'M POWERLESS OVER

	Past	Now		Past	Now
	☐	☐		☐	☐
	☐	☐		☐	☐
	☐	☐		☐	☐

1-2-3 WALTZ

In this chart, check off behaviors you have engaged in that may have made your life **UNMANAGEABLE** It may be helpful to note if you engaged in the behaviors in the past or are currently engaging in them.

Some of these behaviors have served as safety-seeking behaviors for many of us. However, some safety-seeking behaviors can become destructive and self-defeating if we allow them to continue. For example, checking phone records to confirm evidence of acting out could be considered safety-seeking, while obsessing over phone records could be considered self-destructive and self-defeating when we do it to the point of neglecting our own self-care or children that we are responsible for.

UNMANAGEABLE BEHAVIOR RESPONSES

	Past	Now			Past	Now
Disassociating	☐	☐		Vengeful Silence	☐	☐
Gossiping / Oversharing	☐	☐		Not Allowing Partner to Sleep	☐	☐
Obsessive Thinking	☐	☐		Interrogating	☐	☐
Engaging in Risky Behavior	☐	☐		Name Calling	☐	☐
Deceptive Behaviors or Practices	☐	☐		Overspending / Financial Retaliation	☐	☐
Caretaking Others	☐	☐		Controlling / Manipulating	☐	☐
Attacking from a Victim Stance	☐	☐		Numbing with Substances / Activities	☐	☐
Mimicking / Mocking	☐	☐		Overreacting to Everyday Stressors	☐	☐
Following or Stalking Partner	☐	☐		Passive-Aggressive Anger	☐	☐
Making Threats / Ultimatums	☐	☐		Spying / Detective Work	☐	☐
Checking Text / Phone Messages Obsessively	☐	☐		Physical Violence	☐	☐
Toxic Communication (Text/Email /Voicemail)	☐	☐		Thoughts of Suicide / Homicide	☐	☐
Blaming / Shaming	☐	☐		Ruminating Thoughts	☐	☐
Cheating / Sexual Retaliation	☐	☐		Sarcasm	☐	☐
Yelling / Raging	☐	☐		Inability to Work / Concentrate	☐	☐
Unhealthy Use of Sex	☐	☐		Overly Suspicious	☐	☐
Eye Rolling / Non-Verbal Disrespect	☐	☐			☐	☐

OTHER UNHEALTHY BEHAVIORS

	Past	Now			Past	Now
	☐	☐			☐	☐
	☐	☐			☐	☐
	☐	☐			☐	☐
	☐	☐			☐	☐

WORKING STEP ONE

1. Which Betrayal Trauma Symptoms are the most troublesome to you as you consider your powerlessness?

2. Which Behaviors/Responses have you engaged in or experienced that cause you to suffer with unmanageability (include behaviors that started as safety-seeking and became harmful/destructive)?

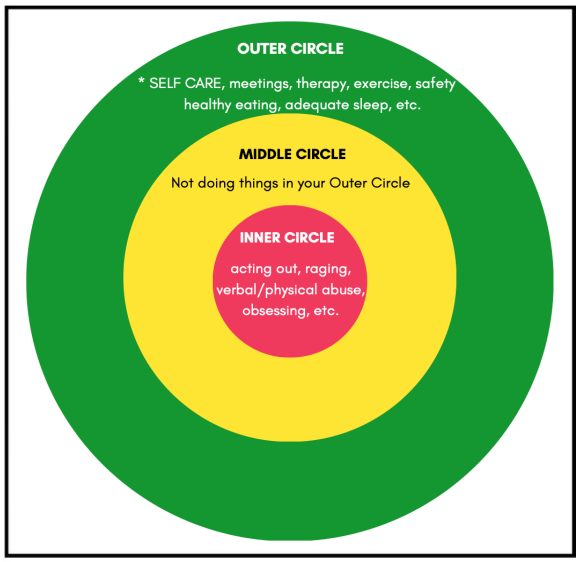
3. What people, places or circumstances do you experience the strongest fear and/or need to be in control?

4. As you consider the reality of your life, which part is the hardest to admit or accept?

5. Describe what safety or stability might look like for you.

THE CIRCLES OF ISA

We use THE CIRCLES OF ISA as a tool to visualize behaviors for which we can be accountable. Early recovery focuses on Green Light behavior. The goal is to become aware of behavior and manage trauma responses by doing things in our OUTER CIRCLE. As recovery progresses, more clarity often comes from what to place within the MIDDLE CIRCLE (Yellow) or INNER CIRCLE (Red).



Green-Light Behavior – OUTER CIRCLE

Healthy behaviors we identify as helpful to our recovery.

Ex. Healthy eating, adequate sleep, meetings, therapy, exercise, etc. * See ISA SELF-CARE CHECKLIST for more ideas.

Yellow-Light Behavior – MIDDLE CIRCLE

Cautionary behaviors we identify to warn us that we may be slipping back into old unhealthy thinking or action. "Am I in HALT (hungry, angry, lonely, tired)?" If so we might be at risk.

Ex. Cancelling appointments may lead to isolation, and binge-watching media or shopping may lead to denial.

Red-Light Behavior – INNER CIRCLE

Behaviors we identify as harmful or unacceptable. Conduct we want to avoid.

Ex. Detective work may be necessary in early recovery, but as time goes on this might become behavior that is harmful.

ISA SELF-CARE CHECKLIST

The PIES MODEL: Physical, Intellectual, Emotional, Spiritual – is a simple method to assess and restore our current health and well-being. Self-care is not a simple notion of pampering. Rather, it is an attitude and practice of prioritizing ourselves and meeting our own needs. For some of us, this may be the first time we begin choosing to be responsible for our own emotional well-being through self-care.

PHYSICAL

- Physical exercise*
- Healthy eating*
- Adequate sleep*
- Annual doctor visits/STI testing*
- Identify and set physical boundaries*
- Take a relaxing bath
- Get a massage/spa treatment

EMOTIONAL

- See a psychiatrist if trauma symptoms persist*
- Reach out to ISA members for support*
- Have fun with friends
- Listen to or play music/dance
- Buy flowers for yourself

INTELLECTUAL

- Educate yourself about your situation*
- Learn to set appropriate boundaries*
- Participate in different types of therapy*
- Identify toxic thoughts
- Read something other than recovery material

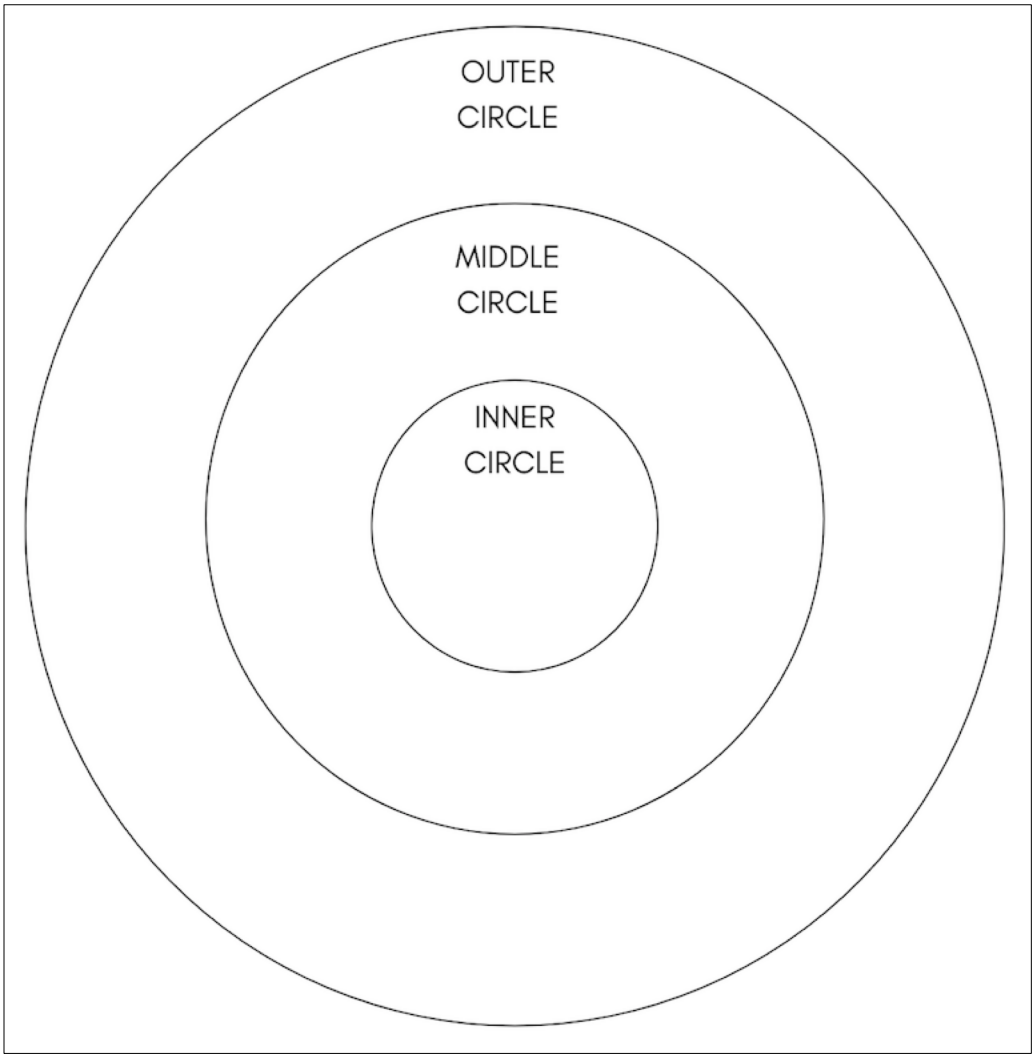
SPIRITUAL

- Attend and participate in 12-Step meetings*
- Work the The 12 Steps of ISA
- Pray, meditate and journal*
- Reach out (support and connection)
- Enjoy nature

*These are the most important self-care practices that can help us stabilize more quickly during the times when the effects of betrayal trauma are the strongest

WORKING THE CIRCLES

Refer to the Unmanageable Behavior Responses checklist to fill out the INNER CIRCLE. Then fill out the behaviors in the MIDDLE CIRCLE that might be warning signs (ex. HALT) of slipping back into unhealthy, harmful, or unacceptable behavior. Lastly, fill in the OUTER CIRCLE with healthy behaviors, referring to the SELF-CARE CHECKLIST.



Please consider giving **feedback** to the ISA Literature Committee by **10/31/2027**

STEP TWO

Came to believe that a loving Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Having completed STEP ONE, acknowledging our powerlessness and our unmanageable lives, we may be feeling empty or hopeless. Feelings of anger and fear may still be overwhelming. We may be grieving our situation and possibly feeling abandoned by God and others. STEP TWO gives us the opportunity to define a power greater than ourselves, a Higher Power that will do for us that we cannot do for ourselves, and to consider our relationship with God.

STEP TWO is the beginning of a solution as we search for a better understanding of our Higher Power. The words “came to believe” indicate that we are opening our hearts and minds to a new way of thinking and doing things. The words “Came to believe” offer an opportunity to change through action - approaching life in a different way.

Believing in a “power greater than ourselves” indicates that we no longer have to do it alone and we don’t have to play the part of God. We consider that our help comes from a relationship with a source outside of ourselves. This Power will do for us what our greatest and most diligent efforts could not accomplish.

If we are hoping to be “restored,” we desire for what was broken or damaged inside of us to be made whole. It implies recovery from the chaos, unmanageability, and harm caused by the trauma of betrayal. It is a process of being brought back to a healthier, balanced, and peaceful state of mind. Making our own choices, setting our own boundaries, and gaining back our lives will return us to “sanity.”

STEP TWO requires us to examine our past beliefs and experiences with a Higher Power. For many of us, the idea of a “God” or a “Higher Power” has been troublesome. Lessons learned as children, combined with life experiences, contribute to our current beliefs and attitudes about our Higher Power. If we are to believe that a Higher Power can lead us on a pathway to peace and healing, we may need to consider new ideas.

Your Higher Power will be as individual to you as your recovery is. No one is asking that you accept any particular religion or faith. In fact, all the ideas offered in the Steps are but suggestions. Through your work, you will come to an understanding of your own Higher Power. For now, all you need to do is be open and willing to believe that a power greater than yourself is ready to help and guide you in your recovery journey.

STEP TWO PRAYER

God, in my pain and powerlessness, I turn to You.
My life feels broken, give me the courage to change the things I can.
Help me surrender control and find hope.
Guide me through this darkness, even when I cannot see the way forward.
I place my heart and future in Your hands;
heal my wounded spirit and restore in me a clear mind.
I am opening myself to new ideas and ways of doing things.
Please show me that you love me. Amen.

REFLECTION

Often, we are not aware if we are stuck in old definitions. It can be important to redefine words in light of our new reality. “Came” can refer to an *action* we take. “Came to” can refer to an *awakening* to our reality. “Came to believe” is a consideration of where we place our *faith*. Complete this exercise with the same open-mindedness about what each part of these words or phrases means to you.

Write the meaning of the following words/phrases in STEP TWO, with any insights you have:

Came:

Came to:

Came to believe:

Loving Power:

Greater than ourselves:

Could restore:

Sanity:

1-2-3 WALTZ - STEP TWO

What is your understanding of a loving Higher Power? Other ways we might think about addressing a loving Higher Power could be "God," "Universe," "Spirit," “Higher Self,” or "Creative Intelligence." Some have used their 12-Step group as a Higher Power by trusting the experience and wisdom of those walking the healing path before them.

> We can simply hold on to the words of our Second Tradition, “…there is but one authority---a loving Higher Power…”

WORKING STEP TWO

1. Have experiences or events in your life led you to consider the existence of a Higher Power?

2. What do you remember about the spiritual environment in your family of origin’s home? How do those memories affect your feelings today?

3. Do you have any fears or concerns about having a Higher Power?

4. In reviewing your results for the Step One list of spiritual trauma symptoms, how have these informed your concept of a loving Higher Power restoring you to sanity?

5. Have you been exposed to spiritual ideas or treatment from authority figures that cause you to question the goodness or validity of a Higher Power?

6. What attributes do you assign to a Higher Power from your childhood?

7. What are the characteristics you would assign to your primary caregiver?

8. How are the attributes of your Higher Power similar to or different from your primary caregiver(s)?

9. Was there someone in your life who was loving, gentle, gave wise counsel, comforting, or fun that you admired?

10. Now, list all the qualities you would like to have in your own Higher Power.

11. In what way are you comfortable referring to this loving higher power of your own understanding?

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STEP THREE

Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of a Higher Power of our own understanding.

STEP THREE requires action on our part based on what we discovered working STEP ONE and STEP TWO. We accepted our powerlessness. We discovered a source for our solution - a loving Higher Power greater than ourselves. It is now time for action. It is time to turn our will and our lives over to the care of our Higher Power.

We may have developed unhealthy behaviors and beliefs because we grew up with dysfunction or lived with addiction and betrayal trauma. We may have relied heavily on our own abilities to try and solve our problems. It might be difficult to imagine turning our will and our lives - our thoughts, behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes - over to something we cannot see.

Even if we have practiced faith before, the idea of "letting go and letting God" in areas of our lives in which we have been so wounded may seem daunting. We have already suffered immense pain and it may be difficult to fathom letting go of the outcome. If we are not in control, what might happen? For now, we are simply *making a decision*, one day at a time, one moment at a time, one situation at a time to surrender to the care of our Higher Power.

> ***NOTE:*** *There is peace and serenity in SURRENDER. It means we stop resisting those things which we cannot control. SURRENDER is not passive, it is not submissive, it is not another way of losing control of our lives. Surrendering enables us to stop doing all the things that never worked and makes room for new self-care habits and solutions that have worked for others who have come before us. ~The ISA TOOLS WORKSHOP*

The hope we found in STEP TWO can propel us to the *faith* we need in this Step. We explored our beliefs around our Higher Power and considered the care that our Higher Power has for us. Can we trust this power greater than ourselves to manage our lives and care for us?

Faith often means coming to the end of our own strength and still choosing to move toward our Higher Power —trusting that God will hold and guide us when we no longer know the way. With this type of faith, surrender gently begins to take root.

We can now decide to turn our will and our lives over to the care of this loving Higher Power. It may not be easy to surrender to our Higher Power, but we have at least made the decision. We can summarize the first three Steps as: "I can't, God can, I'll let God!"

STEP THREE PRAYER

God, I turn my will and my life over to Your loving care today. Hold my wounded heart with gentleness. As I find wholeness and healing from my trauma, teach me how to trust you with my life and show me the next right thing to do. Give me trustworthy people to guide me forward on my path. Restore my safety and steady my steps. Where fear grips me, breathe courage; where shame whispers, speak truth; where confusion swirls, grant clarity. Help me to live a meaningful life that honors my pain and healing.

REFLECTION

As we have done in previous steps, it can be important to redefine words in light of our new reality. Define your new understanding of the following words/phrases:

Made a decision:

Turn our will and our lives over:

Care:

To the <u>care</u> of a Higher Power:

STEP THREE says, "*Made a decision* to turn our will and our lives over…" This means exactly that…made a decision. It means that as things come up, your decision guides your action to turn over each moment or situation to the care of your Higher Power. You do not turn your whole life over at once, which can be frightening and too overwhelming. It is a process.

We begin the STEP THREE process by making small changes so that our old ways of dealing with people and things in our lives can be replaced with healthier responses. STEP THREE opens the door to turning over our problems to a Higher Power, but we may only surrender certain parts of our lives. We cling to our will and our lives in some ways because we think we can manage them, or that they are necessary for our survival. It is often unmanageability that motivates us to change…now we can consider how life could be different; even promising!

WORKING STEP THREE

1. What is your experience with trust from your past? How has sexual betrayal affected your ability to trust your Higher Power?

2. What things, people, or circumstances have you tried to control in the past and how has that turned out?

3. Describe your idea of “surrender or turning over.”

4. How could surrendering to the “care of a Higher Power” bring you serenity?

5. What are your greatest fears about giving up control to your Higher Power as you understand it?

6. Which parts of your life are you reluctant or most afraid to surrender to the care of a Higher Power?

7. What specific situations in your life can you currently entrust to your Higher Power?

8. Reflect on the THIRD STEP Prayer and consider writing your own prayer of surrender.

NOTE: *Many have found repeating STEPS ONE through THREE (1-2-3 Waltz) to be helpful during this spiritual process. They can be worked at any time during any stage of recovery.*

1-2-3 WALTZ - STEP THREE

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