

The Step Coach

Step-coaching is as old as the Bible and is beautifully illustrated by Philip's coaching the Ethiopian Eunuch.

Step-coaches are not perfect but have made good progress in recovery. Philip was not a recent convert but a Christian whose maturity in Christ had been confirmed by his fellow-believers (Acts 6:3-5). Some chapters ask those willing to be step-coaches to meet with senior members of the group. Those who show real progress (not perfection) in recovery are then listed as people newcomers can ask for help.

The importance of a step-coach and the list of those qualified are explained to newcomers in the meeting. Those who can step-coach reach out to newcomers but wait until someone asks for their step-coaching. God led Philip to make himself available to the Eunuch without pushing himself on him ("Acts 8:26,29). It was the Eunuch who asked for help (Acts 8:30).

YOU chose your same-sex step-coach from those recommended. Before you do so, attend HA meetings and listen to people share about how they face problems and work the steps. Order the HA workbook Lord, Set Me Free! and begin using it.

When you find someone with whom you feel you might work well, ASK them to be your step coach. If they cannot, please don't take that as a personal rejection. Many good step-coaches already have all the people they can handle without jeopardizing their own recovery. Ask someone else.

When you find a person who can be your step-coach, make an appointment to talk with him or her. Bring your workbook and discuss what you have learned and what you should do in future. To allay possible concern about a fall, arrange to meet in a public place or with a third person from the program. Continue this until both you and your step-coach feel safe.

A step-coach is a role model in working HA's program, a resource person to help you understand how to work a step or solve a problem, someone you can call when you are headed for trouble, a friend who can give you perspective or help you make a reality check, and a person who will encourage you when you are tempted to give up.

A step-coach will explain the New Member's Card and encourage you to attend meetings regularly and use HA's literature and tapes so you will learn to walk the road of freedom from homosexuality. He or she will go through the HA workbook with you and will urge you to ask questions when you have them and make a list of people in your chapter (including your step-coach) who you can call when afraid, angry, depressed, lonely, tempted, in trouble, or hurting. A step-coach will give you honest feedback concerning what you say and do and help you consider options when perplexed so that you can learn how to make healthy decisions. He or she will also confront you about anything in your life that might hinder your recovery.

A step-coach should not attempt to control you, nor will he or she make themselves responsible for your recovery, but will support you in your efforts to find freedom from homosexuality by sharing the experience, strength, and hope they have gained from this program. A step-coach will not try to rescue you from the consequences of your choices but will work to help you take responsibility for your own life and recovery.

Some have found it helpful to have more than one step-coach, but beware lest you find yourself playing one against the other as an excuse for not working your program.

Ask your step-coach to explain what he or she can and can't do. Some have special limitations you may need to be aware of. Ask what is expected of you. A good step-coach will want you to be serious about the steps. Recovery is literally a life-or-death proposition for us, and life is too short and crowded to waste time trying to help someone who is not sincere. A step-coach may, after patiently trying to help, discontinue working with someone who refuses to work!

HA is about growing up and taking responsibility for our own lives. It is your responsibility to call your step-coach on whatever schedule you both think best (daily, weekly, or as needed). It is not your step-coach's job to call you and check on how you're working your program. A step-coach may call if you are sick, in trouble, or experiencing tragedy, but, with regard to working your program, will give you the same freedom to walk away from God that Jesus gave everyone (see Mark 10:17-22). If you're not ready to grow spiritually, your step-coach can't make you do so.

Confidentiality is crucial to step-coaching so trust can develop. Neither you nor your step-coach should tell others anything shared about yourselves in your talks together, However, being asked to engage in improper behavior or being inappropriately touched MUST be discussed with senior members of your chapter so that you and your step-coach can get the support you both need.

You and your step-coach want to remember that he or she can profit from step-coaching as much or even more than you do! You are not being a pest when you sincerely seek help. One learns even more as one teaches others! As Dr. Alan Loy McGinnis says, "...Helping other people grow can become life's greatest joy." [Bringing Out the Best in People, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1985), p.173]

Please remember that your step-coach is also a recovering person and has not yet attained perfection. Try to give him or her the same understanding you want when you fall short, and do talk out any problems you have with each other, enlisting together the counsel of senior members of your group should all else fall.

Do not look to one person as a permanent step-coach lest an unhealthy dependency develop. When Philip had finished coaching the Eunuch, the Spirit of the Lord took him away (Acts 8:39). If you or your step-coach believe you have received as much as you can from him or her, end that part of your relationship. You may or may not wish to continue as friends. You may also wish to choose someone else to step-coach you in other areas or at deeper levels.

Always remember, you cannot recover alone. The good news is that you don't have to. There is a fellowship of men and women who have banded together to help each other find freedom from homosexuality. The hearts of the members of Homosexuals Anonymous Fellowship are open to you. These people understand your pain because they have felt it in their own lives. You can trust them to understand and to care.

If you struggle with unwanted homosexual feelings or behavior or are a parent, relative, or friend of someone with this struggle who needs help; if you are a minister, counselor, or therapist looking for a support group or a counselee wanting freedom from homosexuality, you need not face this problem alone any longer. Help is available!

Please be assured that we will try to help you in any way we can.

--John J., Reading, PA