

## STEP 4

Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

In the previous three Steps we have built for ourselves a beginning foundation in this Program of recovery. In Step One, we admitted we were powerless over lust and recognized that our lives have been, are now, and will remain unmanageable by us alone. Step Two made us aware that we could be restored to sanity by a Higher Power (God as we understood Him) if we rightly relate ourselves to that Higher Power. The Third Step convinced us that we have no choice but to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God.

At this point, we should be convinced that our handling of our past has led to frustration, broken relationships, anger toward ourselves and other people and resentments. Since lust is but a symptom, we now have to get down to the causes and condition of why self-centeredness, in all its various destructive forms, has been the root of our troubles. Thus, we are face-to-face with the Fourth Step.

The Fourth Step allows us to uncover and discover the acquired character defects which are a part of the false self. These defects are NOT a part of the real you (the True Inner Self). The false self (the phony you) has picked them up from other people, institutions and society in general. Usually it is not important that you become aware of the fact — that these defects of character are acquired. Only when you detach yourself from these acquired character defects can you start to uncover and discover, in a fearless manner, these acquired character defects that have controlled you in the past.

These acquired character defects are misdirected instincts. These instincts often far exceed their proper functions. Our excessive desires for sex, material and emotional security, and for an important place in society, desires which by their very nature can never be fulfilled, cause us practically all the trouble there is.

Nearly every serious emotional problem can be seen as a case of misdirected instincts. Whenever we become a battleground for the instincts, there can be no peace.

Every time we impose our instincts unreasonably upon other, unhappiness follows. These defects lock us into responding in a certain way, usually destructive, to those around us. So, in order for us to live happy lives, we must uncover and discover these acquired defects of character.

At this point, we should have arrived at the following conclusions: the acquired character defects have been the primary cause of our lusting and our failure at life; we must now be willing to work hard at the elimination of the worst of these defects or both sobriety and peace of mind will elude us; and that all the faulty foundation of our life will have to be torn out and built anew on bedrock.

Since the Fourth Step is but the beginning of a lifetime practice, we should first have a look at those personal flaws which are acutely troublesome and fairly obvious. Using our judgment, we make a rough survey of our conduct with respect to our primary instincts for sex, security, and society. With sex, we uncover how the selfish pursuit of sex damaged other people and ourselves. In the area of security, we question the financial and emotional insecurities that have led to financial instability, and the personal relationships which bring continuous or recurring trouble. In terms of society, we insisted upon either dominating the people we knew or depended upon them far too much.

Thoroughness ought to be the watchword when taking our inventory. The object is to search out the flaws in the false self which caused our failure. Being convinced that the false self, manifested in various ways, was what had defeated us, we will find some of the following acquired character defects in our inventory: self-centeredness, resentment, anger, prejudice, conceit, greed, lust, indifference, phoniness, fear, pride, financial insecurity, dependence, domination, emotional insecurity, dishonesty, procrastination, perfectionism, impatience and others that might apply.

These acquired character defects (misdirected instincts) will balk at our uncovering and discovering them. The minute we make a serious attempt to prove them, we are liable to suffer severe reactions. The thinking mind may come up with some of the following false thoughts: any serious defects have been caused chiefly by our lusting, our problems have been caused by the behavior of other people, the defects are us, justifying the need for defects in order to continue living; and a

half-hearted inventory is OK. In order for us to combat these false thoughts, we must know that the character defects are indeed acquired and are NOT a part of the True Self.

In summary, the Fourth Step asks us to make a

searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

We are seeking to uncover the hidden acquired defects

of character that are part of the false self. After we have

found them, then we discover how, when, and in just

what instances these defects controlled our lives. This

inventory is of ourselves, not other people. We uncover

and discover our faults by listing them. We place them

before us in black and white. We must have courage to

honestly do this. Faith can do for us what we cannot do

for ourselves.

The purpose of writing the Fourth Step is to make us

aware of the acquired character defects. As we list and

analyze these defects, we will begin to comprehend

their faculty. The written inventory will be used as a

basis in Steps Five through Nine.

Go through the following examples and be honest and

specific as you are able to at this time. This is your

inventory. You are about to uncover and discover the

acquired character defects, so do it in a thorough and

fearless manner. Your very life may depend on the

thoroughness of this Step.

## QUESTIONS FOR WRITING

### Step four — a fearless and searching moral

#### inventory

Under each question, attempt to start with the specific

things you have done or said. List as many things

under each question as will help you to convince

yourself that you have acquired this defect. The

answers to these questions are to be brief. For example-

With whom am I angry?

My wife--she doesn't do the things I want her to do.

My boss--he is not paying me enough

Joe -- a friend to whom I loaned money, and he didn't

pay me back.

*You may wish to choose one of these categories to begin a fourth step inventory*

#### ANGER, RESENTMENT, PREJUDICE

With whom am I angry? Do I blame others for the

trouble I made for myself? Whom do I wish to hurt

because I feel they have hurt me?

Have I contempt for anyone? Whom?

#### SELF-CENTREDNESS

Do I act as though the world revolved around my

welfare and desires? How? If I am a parent, do I use

my family to suit my needs and desires? How?

Do I insist on doing things I like to do, or am I willing

to do the things others enjoy?

Do I do anything with my family or others to keep

myself in the limelight? If others don't give me special

attention in a group, do I feel snubbed?

#### CONCEIT

Do I insist on things being done my way?

Do I think I am an "expert"? In what areas?

Do I think I can manage most things better than those

in charge?

Am I consistently critical of the boss? The police?

Other authorities? Am I impatient with others who do

not meet my standards?

#### GREED

Am I really content with the things I have?

Am I constantly running after more and better things?

Does the good life mean having more things, more

money?

Am I honestly concerned with doing something to help

those who are less fortunate than I? Do I give gladly or

grudgingly to the work of God and SA?

#### FOURTH STEP PRAYER

paraphrased from Alcoholics Anonymous pp. 66, 67

"I realize that those who wronged me were spiritually

sick. Though I did not like their symptoms and the way

these disturbed me, they, like me, were sick too. I ask

God to help me show them the same tolerance, pity,

and patience that I would cheerfully grant a sick friend.

This is a person. How can I be helpful them? God save

me from being angry. Thy will be done. Amen"

# STEP 4 WORKSHEET

Person or Incident	Action or Cause	It affected my...	How was I involved?	Step 4 Prayer Y/N



## **EXAMPLES OF DEFECTS**

**Pride**

**Envy**

**Greed**

**Sloth**

**Lust**

**Anger**

**Gluttony**

**Defiance**

**Feeling inadequate**

**Low self-esteem**

**Self-loathing**

**Self-blame**

**Judgment**

**Bigotry**

**People-pleasing**

**Controlling others**

**Selfish**

**Dishonest**

**Self-seeking**

**Frightened**

**Inconsiderate**

**Self-pitying**

**Perfectionism**

**Indifference**

**Intolerance**

**Needing to be special**

**Arrogance**

**Grandiosity**

**Obsession**

**Boredom**

**Independence**

**Self-reliance**

**Snobbery**

**Suspicion**

**Stealing**

**Co-dependence**

# RESENTMENT INVENTORY PROMPT SHEET



Here is a list of people, institutions and principles that may be helpful in your resentment inventory. Feel free to add to the lists if you need to.

## PEOPLE

## INSTITUTIONS

## PRINCIPLES

Father (Step)  
Mother (Step)  
Sisters (Step)  
Brothers (Step)

Marriage  
Bible  
Church  
Religion

God-Deity  
Retribution  
Ten Commandments  
Jesus Christ

Aunts  
Uncles

Races  
Law

Satan  
Death

Cousins

Authority

Life After Death

Clergy

Government

Heaven

Police

Education System

Hell

Lawyers

Correctional System

Sin

Judges

Mental Health System

Adultery

Doctors

Philosophy

Golden Rule

Employer's

Nationality

Original Sin

Employee's

Seven Deadly Sins

Co-Workers

In-Laws

Husbands

Wives

Creditors

Childhood Friends

School Friends

Teachers

Life Long Friends

Best Friends

Acquaintances

Girl Friends

Boy Friends

Parole Officers

Probation Officers

A.A. Friends

C.A. Friends

N.A. Friends

U.S. Service Friends

## **FEAR INVENTORY PROMPT SHEET**



*Here is a list of fears that may be helpful in your fear inventory.  
Feel free to add to the lists if you need to.*

- |                                |                           |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Fear Of God                    | Fear Of Drowning          |
| Fear Of Dying                  | Fear Of Men               |
| Fear Of Insanity               | Fear Of Women             |
| Fear Of Insecurity             | Fear Of Being Alone       |
| Fear Of Rejection              | Fear Of People            |
| Fear Of Loneliness             | Fear Of Crying            |
| Fear Of Disease's              | Fear Of Poverty           |
| Fear Of Alcohol                | Fear Of Races             |
| Fear Of Drugs                  | Fear Of The Unknown       |
| Fear Of Relapse                | Fear Of Abandonment       |
| Fear Of Sex                    | Fear Of Intimacy          |
| Fear Of Sin                    | Fear Of Disapproval       |
| Fear Of Self-Expression        | Fear Of Rejection         |
| Fear Of Authority              | Fear Of Confrontation     |
| Fear Of Heights                | Fear Of Sobriety          |
| Fear Of Unemployment           | Fear Of Hospitals         |
| Fear Of Employment             | Fear Of Responsibility    |
| Fear Of Parents                | Fear Of Feelings          |
| Fear Of Losing A Wife          | Fear Of Getting Old       |
| Fear Of Losing A Husband       | Fear Of Hurting Others    |
| Fear Of Losing A Child         | Fear Of Violence          |
| Fear Of Animals                | Fear Of Writing Inventory |
| Fear Of Insects                | Fear Of Being Alive       |
| Fear Of Police                 | Fear Of Government        |
| Fear Of Jail                   | Fear Of Gangs             |
| Fear Of Doctor's               | Fear Of Gossip            |
| Fear Of Stealing               | Fear Of Wealthy People    |
| Fear Of Creditors              | Fear Of Guns              |
| Fear Of Being Found Out        | Fear Of Change            |
| Fear Of Homosexuals & Lesbians |                           |
| Fear Of Failure                |                           |
| Fear Of Success                |                           |
| Fear Of Responsibility         |                           |
| Fear Of Physical Pain          |                           |
| Fear Of Fear                   |                           |



## **Reading 1 – Taking Inventory** **(Adapted From AA Big Book, pages 63 – 64)**

“Next we launched out on a course of vigorous action, the first step of which is a personal housecleaning, which many of us had never attempted. Though our decision was vital and crucial step, it could have little permanent effect unless at once followed by a strenuous effort to face, and to be rid of, the things in ourselves which had been blocking us. Our <lust> was but a symptom. So we had to get down to causes and conditions.

Therefore, we started upon a personal inventory. This was Step Four. A business which takes no regular inventory usually goes broke. Taking commercial inventory is a fact-finding and a fact-facing process. It is an effort to discover the truth about the stock-in-trade. One object is to disclose damaged or unsalable goods, to get rid of them promptly and without regret. If the owner of the business is to be successful, he cannot fool himself about values.

We did exactly the same thing with our lives. We took stock honestly. First, we searched out the flaws in our make-up which caused our failure. Being convinced that self, manifested in various ways, was what had defeated us, we considered its common manifestations.



## Reading 2 – Review of Resentments

(Adapted From AA Big Book, pages 64 – 67)

Resentment is the "number one" offender. It destroys more alcoholics than anything else. From it stem all forms of spiritual disease, for we have been not only mentally and physically ill, we have been spiritually sick. When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically. In dealing with resentments, we set them on paper. We listed people, institutions or principle with who we were angry. We asked ourselves why we were angry. In most cases it was found that our self-esteem, our pocketbooks, our ambitions, our personal relationships, (including sex) were hurt or threatened. So we were sore. We were "burned up." On our grudge list we set opposite each name our injuries. Was it our self-esteem, our security, our ambitions, our personal, or sex relations, which had been interfered with?

We went back through our lives. Nothing counted but thoroughness and honesty. When we were finished we considered it carefully. The first thing apparent was that this world and its people were often quite wrong. To conclude that others were wrong was as far as most of us ever got. The usual outcome was that people continued to wrong us and we stayed sore. Sometimes it was remorse and then we were sore at ourselves. But the more we fought and tried to have our own way, the worse matters got. As in war, the victor only seemed to win. Our moments of triumph were short-lived.

It is plain that a life which includes deep resentment leads only to futility and unhappiness. To the precise extent that we permit these, do we squander the hours that might have been worthwhile. But with the alcoholic, whose hope is the maintenance and growth of a spiritual experience, this business of resentment is infinitely grave. We found that it is fatal. For when harboring such feeling we shut ourselves off from the sunlight of the Spirit. The insanity of alcohol returns and we drink again. And with us, to drink is to die. If we were to live, we had to be free of anger. The grouch and the brainstorm were not for us. They may be the dubious luxury of normal men, but for alcoholics these things are poison.

We turned back to the list, for it held the key to the future. We were prepared to look for it from an entirely different angle. We began to see that the world and its people really dominated us. In that state, the wrong-doing of others, fancied or real, had power to actually kill. How could we escape? We saw that these resentments must be mastered, but how? We could not wish them away any more than alcohol.

This was our course: We realized that the people who wronged us were perhaps spiritually sick. Though we did not like their symptoms and the way these disturbed us, they, like ourselves, were sick too. We asked God to help us show them the same tolerance, pity, and patience that we would cheerfully grant a sick friend. When a person offended we said to ourselves, "This is a sick man. How can I be helpful to him? God save me from being angry. Thy will be done."

We avoid retaliation or argument. We wouldn't treat sick people that way. If we do, we destroy our chance of being helpful. We cannot be helpful to all people, but at least God will show us how to take a kindly and tolerant view of each and every one."





### **Reading 3 – Review of Fears** **(From AA Big Book, pages 67 – 68)**

“Referring to our list again. Putting out of our minds the wrongs others had done, we resolutely looked for our own mistakes. Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened? Though a situation had not been entirely our fault, we tried to disregard the other person involved entirely. Where were we to blame? The inventory was ours, not the other man's. When we saw our faults we listed them. We placed them before us in black and white. We admitted our wrongs honestly and were willing to set these matters straight.

Notice that the word "fear" is bracketed alongside the difficulties with Mr. Brown, Mrs. Jones, the employer, and the wife. This short word somehow touches about every aspect of our lives. It was an evil and corroding thread; the fabric of our existence was shot through with it. It set in motion trains of circumstances that brought us misfortune we felt we didn't deserve. But did not we, ourselves, set the ball rolling? Sometimes we think fear ought to be classed with stealing. It seems to cause more trouble.

We reviewed our fears thoroughly. We put them on paper, even though we had no resentment in connection with them. We asked ourselves why we had them. Wasn't it because self-reliance failed us? Self-reliance was good as far as it went, but it didn't go far enough. Some of us once had great self-confidence, but it didn't fully solve the fear problem, or any other. When it made us cocky, it was worse.

Perhaps there is a better way, we think so. For we are now on a different basis of trusting and relying upon God. We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves. We are in the world to play the role He assigns. Just to the extent that we do as we think He would have us, and humbly rely on Him, does He enable us to match calamity with serenity.

We never apologize to anyone for depending upon our Creator. We can laugh at those who think spirituality the way of weakness. Paradoxically, it is the way of strength. The verdict of the ages is that faith means courage. All men of faith have courage. They trust their God. We never apologize for God. Instead we let Him demonstrate, through us, what He can do. We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be. At once, we commence to outgrow fear.



## Reading 4 – Review of SA Conduct (From AA Big Book, pages 68 – 70)

“Now about sex. Many of needed an overhauling there. But above all, we tried to be sensible on this question. It's so easy to get way off the track. Here we find human opinions running to extremes – absurd extremes, perhaps. One set of voices cry that sex is a lust of our lower nature, a base necessity of procreation. Then we have the voices who cry for sex and more sex; who bewail the institution of marriage; who think that most of the troubles of the race are traceable to sex causes. They think we do not have enough of it, or that it isn't the right kind. They see its significance everywhere. One school would allow man no flavor for his fare and the other would have us all on a straight pepper diet. We want to stay out of this controversy. We do not want to be the arbiter of anyone's sex conduct. We all have sex problems. We'd hardly be human if we didn't. What can we do about them?

We reviewed our own conduct over the years past. Where had we been selfish, dishonest, or inconsiderate? Whom had we hurt? Did we unjustifiably arouse jealousy, suspicion or bitterness? Where were we at fault, what should we have done instead? We got this all down on paper and looked at it.

In this way we tried to shape a sane and sound ideal for our future sex life. We subjected each relation to this test -was it selfish or not? We asked God to mold our ideals and help us to live up to them. We remembered always that our sex powers were God-given and therefore good, neither to be used lightly or selfishly nor to be despised and loathed.

Whatever our ideal turns out to be, we must be willing to grow toward it. We must be willing to make amends where we have done harm, provided that we do not bring about still more harm in so doing. In other words, we treat sex as we would any other problem. In meditation, we ask God what we should do about each specific matter. The right answer will come, if we want it.

God alone can judge our sex situation. Counsel with persons is often desirable, but we let God be the final judge. We realize that some people are as fanatical about sex as others are loose. We avoid hysterical thinking or advice.

Suppose we fall short of the chosen ideal and stumble? Does this mean we are going to get drunk. Some people tell us so. But this is only a half -truth. It depends on us and on our motives. If we are sorry for what we have done, and have the honest desire to let God take us to better things, we believe we will be forgiven and will have learned our lesson. If we are not sorry, and our conduct continues to harm others, we are quite sure to drink. We are not theorizing. These are facts out of our experience.

To sum up about sex: We earnestly pray for the right ideal, for guidance in each questionable situation, for sanity, and for the strength to do the right thing. If sex is very troublesome, we throw ourselves the harder into helping others. We think of their needs and work for them. This takes us out of ourselves. It quiets the imperious urge, when to yield would mean heartache.



**Reading 5 – Review of Other Conduct**  
**(From AA Big Book, pages 70 - 71)**

“If we have been thorough about our personal inventory, we have written down a lot. We have listed and analyzed our resentments. We have begun to comprehend their futility and their fatality. We have commenced to see their terrible destructiveness. We have begun to learn tolerance, patience and good will toward all men, even our enemies, for we look on them as sick people. We have listed the people we have hurt by our conduct, and are willing to straighten out the past if we can.

In this book you read again and again that faith did for us what we could not do for ourselves. We hope you are convinced now that God can remove whatever self-will has blocked you off from Him. If you have already made a decision, and an inventory of your grosser handicaps, you have made a good beginning. That being so you have swallowed and digested some big chunks of truth about yourself.”