

Step Four

"We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves"

"The purpose of a searching and fearless moral inventory is to sort through the confusion and the contradiction of our lives so that we can find out who we really are."

Basic Text, Pg 78

1. Our fourth step will be successful, only if we are searching and fearless. We must look carefully at ourselves and honestly examine our behaviors, feelings, thoughts and motives. This will lead us to discover how our disease has affected our lives and the lives of others.
2. Now that you have completed the first three steps you have come to an understanding of a power greater than yourself. Make use of this power by asking for guidance and input from your support group, your sponsor and the God of your understanding. One of the things we learned in the third step is to trust God; with that trust in mind we can now be unafraid and write the truth.
3. It is important to remember that this is our inventory. It is not the time to list faults or wrong doings of others. We are concerned with the exact nature or ***our*** wrongs.

For Example: If we lied to someone in order to use drugs/alcohol, was wrong. The exact nature of the wrong was our selfishness, our self-centeredness, our dishonesty and lack of respect for the person we lied to.

4. Writing a thorough step four does not mean making it perfect. Write as honestly as you can. Expecting perfection from ourselves may be a way of putting off writing our fourth step. Remember, this is not a test, just do it to the best of your ability. *"Progress rather than perfection"*

Before we begin writing, we take a few moments of silence to ask the God of our understanding for the courage to be fearless and thorough.

Defects of Character

This is a process of discovery to learn how our character defects bring not only us, but also others, pain and discomfort. It is this discovery and identification that allows us to be free of our defects in the following steps. Although it may sometimes be embarrassing or painful to be honest with ourselves about our defects of character, simply writing them down cannot hurt us. The reason that we look at these defects of character is for the opportunity to put our lives in order.

1. Review the list of defects on the following pages and make a list of the character defects that have affected your life. Remember that there are more defects than those we have listed, so spend time reflecting and be thorough.
2. Take one defect and to the best of your ability look back and identify when it first started. How did it begin? What were the circumstances? What did you get out of it (e.g. I first lied because I feared the consequences, it seemed an easier way out than taking responsibility for my actions, I got a feeling of relief from it).
3. Continue to write on that particular defect. How did it progress? Did it become compulsive? What was the eventual outcome or consequences? Has it continued into your recovery?
4. After writing on one defect switch over to the asset section, alternate until you complete your list; your list should include at least 5 assets and 5 defects.

Defects of Character List

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 1. Self-Centered: | Tending to focus on my own needs while being thoughtless & selfish and inconsiderate of the needs wants or feelings of others |
| 2. Self-Justification: | A type of dishonest thinking where I defend my behavior by rationalizing or excusing these actions, using alibis or excuses justifying my irresponsible acts |
| 3. False Pride: | Excessive pride and trying to protect my image, often at the expense of someone else. Having trouble admitting any human fault or weakness. |

4. **Blaming:** Not accepting responsibility for my own feelings, actions, mistakes, drinking, drugging etc. The cause of our problems being other people, places and things.
5. **False Humility:** Excessive pride, protecting my image at the expense of others.
6. **Impulsiveness:** Acting or talking before thinking of the consequences.
7. **Envy or Jealousy:** Wanting something that someone else has, fear of losing something that I already have, discomfort at the good of others.
8. **Phoniness:** Pretending to be something that I'm not, hiding my feelings and putting on a false front. It often includes conning and manipulation. I have to look good to others and being myself just doesn't seem good enough sometimes
9. **People Pleasing:** Being wishy washy, compliant or passive. It is often a defense mechanism by passively manipulating others to protect myself.
10. **Conning & Neglecting:** Ignoring others. Using silence, absence or manipulative insults to get others to comply with my wishes. Consciously using warmth, praise, compliments etc. to get others to comply with my wishes (e.g. to gain money, booze, sex and freedom).
11. **Procrastination:** Avoiding taking responsibility by putting off important decisions and actions that should be dealt with in the present (laziness).
12. **Self Pity:** This is often hard to recognize or admit. It means feeling sorry for myself that people just don't understand me, respect me or love me enough. Sometimes a feeling of hopelessness and feeling like a victim of circumstance (poor me).
13. **Perfectionism:** Expecting more of myself or others than I have a right to expect. Unrealistic expectations of others or myself. Frustration when I or others do not meet those expectations. Fear of making mistakes. Fear of admitting mistakes.

14. **Intolerance:** Being unable to accept others as they are. Being narrow-minded, opinionated prejudiced. Refusing to accept others mistakes. By focusing my attention on others I avoid looking at my own faults. Often, if I look closely the faults I find in others may be similar to the faults that I choose not to see or accept in myself.
15. **Taking Things For Granted:** Forgetting to be grateful for the blessings I have, such for granted as my health, family, job, possessions and clean time. Failing to appreciate, take notice of or compliment others when they deserve it.
16. **Impatience:** Wanting right now that which may take time to achieve or acquire. Expecting others or myself to perform flawlessly without allowing room for mistakes. The results are often frustration, anger or discontent.
17. **Withdrawn:** Keeping my problems to myself. Refusing to share my thoughts and feelings with others by isolating myself through TV, fantasy, hobbies etc. or hiding in groups of people.
18. **Violence:** Acting out my anger, either physically or verbally e.g. yelling, threatening or swearing. Hostile or defiant behavior.
19. **Gossiping:** Running down others while not in their presence. Often done as a way to build up one's own esteem at someone else's expense.
20. **Lying:** Consciously deceiving others in order to escape consequences, obtain something I desire or to appear more competent than I am

Assets

While looking at our behaviors it is important to see how we can act differently. Our assets provide us with principles to strive towards. Many of them may start simply as potential and with practice become an integral part of our character. If we cannot find any good points about ourselves, we simply need to look harder, be searching, make use of your sponsor, your support group and the fellowship.

1. Review the List of assets on the following pages, (consider any that may not be included). Make a list of the assets that you had in your addiction as well as the ones you are starting to practice in recovery. It is important to list even those assets that are just beginning so we can work on improving them.
2. Take one asset and write about what affect it has had in your life. Write about how you feel as a result of having this asset in your life.
3. Go back and write about another defect, alternate this way until you complete your list

Asset List

1. **Honesty:** Free from deception, not deceiving ourselves or others. Being truthful.
2. **Courage:** Ability to conquer fear or despair.
3. **Considerate:** Observing the rights and feelings of others
4. **Humility:** Having a clear recognition of who and what we are. The ability to realize we are not our own higher power and to see God's will.
5. **Sharing:** To give or enjoy with others.
6. **Grateful:** Thankful, appreciative, expressing gratitude.
7. **Acceptance:** The act of willingly receiving the circumstances or outcomes.
8. **Forgiveness:** Allowing room for error or weakness, to give up resentment.
9. **Understanding:** The ability to comprehend an opinion or feeling

10. **Tolerance:** The act or practice of tolerating. Allowing for beliefs or practices, which differ from one's own.
11. **Patience:** Bearing the pain or the trials of life without complaint.
12. **Willingness:** Ready to do what it takes without reluctance.
13. **Kindness:** To practice a pleasant nature.
14. **Trust:** To place confidence, to permit something to happen without fear or misgivings.
15. **Faith:** Belief and trust in a higher power.
16. **Open-Minded:** Free from rigidly fixed perceptions.
17. **Modesty:** Having a moderate estimate of one's self.
18. **Empathy:** The capacity for experiencing, as one's own, the feelings of another

Fears

For many of us our defects were a way to cope with our fears, doubts and insecurities. Our fears kept us from doing the things we wanted to do and from becoming the people we wanted to be. Today, realizing and identifying our fears is the start of changing our self-destructive patterns.

1. Make a list of all **your** fears:

- Fear of rejection
- Fear of abandonment
- Fear of responsibility
- Fear of commitment
- Fear of success
- Fear of failure
- Fear of intimacy
- Fear of the unknown
- Fear of hurt and pain
- Fear of anger
- Fear of sex

2. Write in detail about three of your fears:

- How do you react?
- What defects of character come into play because of it?
- How does it affect your life?
- How are you left feeling?
- Are there consequences?

Resentments

Those resentments, which directly affect our recovery, are the point of this section. Harboring such resentments can keep us in the past, directly affecting our ability to recover.

1. Make a list of the people, concepts, beliefs, organizations and institutions.
2. List the cause or causes of your major resentment. Examine your part in these resentment.
 - What defects or fears were in place?
 - How does it affect your life?

Relationships

Writing our inventory helps us to look at the effect our addiction had on the people closest to us. As addicts/alcoholics we became convinced that we were right and the world was wrong. We pursued our addiction without concern with our well-being or the well being of those around us. Our fears and character defects have and still can prevent us from having healthy, happy relationships. In this section it is important to avoid spending time on the wrongs of others. We are concerned with the exact nature of **our wrongs**.

1. Make a list of the significant people in your life. Include relationships with friends, family, co-workers, etc.
2. Take one name and write about:
 - What character defects were active?
 - How did they affect your relationship?
 - What was the eventual outcome?
 - How were you left feeling?
3. Now write about your assets in that relationship. Do not overrate or underrate yourself. **Be honest**. Continue this way until you have completed your list.

Failures

All of us have experienced failures of one kind or another. Many of us have self-defeating behaviors and patterns that set us up for failure. There are many reasons for this; often it is a way to avoid responsibility. The reason can also be based in deep-rooted fears. Looking at how and why we failed gives us the choice to be successful.

1. Make a list of significant failures. These may be relationships, jobs, business ventures, lifestyle changes, etc.
2. Now take each failure and look at what really happened, without blaming anyone or anything else.
 - Write down what you did and how you were feeling before it ended.
 - Did you feel trapped or desperate?
 - Did you sabotage or set yourself up to fail?
3. Look at how you dealt with it after the failure. Did you blame, deny, drink or use more, run, etc. Write about how your character defects may have progressed and how you were left feeling.

Violence

As a result of our character defects and fears, many of us experienced some degree of violence in our personal relationships.

1. Consider the first time you got violent. Write about it:
 - What were the circumstances?
 - Why did it happen?
 - What did you get out of it?
 - How were you left feeling?
2. Write about:
 - How it progressed
 - Are there patterns to your violence?
 - Are they the result of specific fears or defects?
 - What were the consequences?
3. What is an alternative way to deal with feeling that have previously led to violence?

Suicide

1. Make a list of the times you have attempted suicide.
2. How do you feel about those attempts? Is there any guilt and shame attached to what you did?
3. Write about what led up to your attempt. Look for patterns.
 - Was it around a loss or failure?
 - Was a relationship involved?
 - What brought you to the point of suicide?
4. What is an alternative today?

Shame and Guilt

In dealing with shame and guilt we must remember that there are many things that occurred due to our disease. It is important to realize that although we are not responsible for many things that occurred in our addiction, we are responsible for our recovery. It is important to look carefully here so we can identify the feelings and see how they may still be affecting us today.

Make a list of any experiences that occurred which created feelings of shame, guilt or confusion. For example, attempted suicides, physical or sexual abuse, family, sexual or work related matters. This list can be used during your Step Five.

Grief and Loss

During our lives we will all encounter different types of losses. In our addiction our ability to grieve was directly affected by our drug and alcohol abuse. Because of the uncomfortable feelings associated with loss most of us tried to avoid the grieving process by using more. In recovery it is important to learn to experience the feelings associated with grieving such as denial, anger, bargaining, sadness and indifference or acceptance.

1. Make a list of significant people in your life that you have lost. Parents, grandparents, spouse, children, etc. Loss can be from death, divorce, desertion, etc.
2. Take your list and write down how you dealt with each person leaving you.
3. Having examined how you have dealt with grief and loss
 - Did you try to forget about them?
 - Did you get loaded and try not to feel loss?
 - Did you pretend you didn't care?

Write about the prominent feelings you were trying to deny or cover up.

Hopes, Dreams & Goals

In recovery, we all have hopes and dreams. Some of these can become a reality. To acquire these we must first start with short-term attainable goals.

1. Make a list of your hopes and dreams, starting with short term ones and then write about what you want from your recovery in the future.

Step Five

"We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs."

"These defects grow in the dark and die in the light of exposure."

Basic Text,
p.31

Find a person you are comfortable with and share the new truths you have discovered about yourself through writing your inventory. Keep in mind that you are admitting the exact nature of your wrongs to GOD, yourself and another human being.

In order to prepare for your oral Step Five answer the following questions:

1. What goes through your mind when you think about telling another person the truth about your strengths and weaknesses?
2. Do you have any reservations about working the Fifth Step? Any fears? What are they?
3. What are some of the ways you can find the courage you need to work this step?
4. How has working the first four steps helped to prepare you for Step Five?
5. List some qualities you will look for in the person you choose to do your step 5 with.

Examples:

- An understanding of the purpose of step 5
- Respect for confidentiality
- Ability to listen

List some people in your life who possess these qualities.

After completing your oral Step Five go on to answer the following questions.

1. How has working Step Five increased your humility and self-acceptance?
2. How has your relationship with a Higher Power changed as a result of working the Fifth Step?
3. How has sharing your inventory furthered your commitment to recovery?
4. What are the spiritual principles of Step Five?
5. How are you practicing these spiritual principles in your life today?