



### STEP FOUR

*Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*

Step Four is an action Step. This Step grates on the alcoholic nature. We begin the process of reversing many of the survival behaviors necessary to sustain an active alcoholic. We do not enjoy these self-destructive behaviors, but we have become accustomed to using them.

*Made...* This Step demands positive action. It is not accomplished all at once, but gradually. There are two theories about taking this Step:

1. Don't take it until you are absolutely ready.
2. Take it right away.

Possibly the combination of these two ideas holds more value. Ease into it, but remember to be gentle on yourself.

*Searching and fearless* means being as honest as you can be at the moment. We are used to rationalizing, so sincerity is mandatory.

In doing a *moral inventory* we want to take advantage of our assets in order to work on our liabilities. Our behavior indicates attitudes and personalities, but don't get stuck in details. Try to see through the phony behavior.

This is not an examination of conscience. We are not only looking for sins and evil deeds we might have done in the past. We are looking for personality traits and conflicts that cause us distress.

*Inventory* is from a Latin word that means *to find*. We are looking for character defects and shortcomings that cause us problems.

We are all endowed by nature with certain wonderful and powerful instincts; otherwise, we would not have survived. Our problem is that in

our disease we have exercised some of these instincts to the extreme, and it has become a way of life that we now see as destructive. The Steps address these misdirected instincts.

Step Four is a vigorous and painstaking effort to discover what these liabilities in each of us have been and are now. By discovering what our emotional conflicts are, we can move toward their correction. We cannot do this without taking a good look at ourselves.

The alcoholic cannot live with discomfort for great periods of time without eventually seeking relief in alcohol.

There are many ways to take Step Four. Do it in whatever way appeals to you. Make sure it is written down, however. You *must* believe no one will ever read it—not even when you do the Fifth Step. It is the only way we can be completely honest with ourselves.

## **STEP FOUR**

### **MAKE A SEARCHING AND FEARLESS MORAL INVENTORY FOR OURSELVES**

The following pages can guide you as you start on Step Four. On pages 31–32, check what is applicable to yourself. On pages 33–40, you can write specific examples of how some of these positive and negative qualities apply to you. This exercise will help you to continue with your own insights into your feelings and behaviors.

**ASSETS**

- ☐ Thoughtful of others
- ☐ Not holding grudges (forgiving)
- ☐ Charitable
- ☐ Trusting
- ☐ Patient
- ☐ Relaxed
- ☐ Calm
- ☐ Outgoing
- ☐ Loving in attitude
- ☐ Confident
- ☐ Generous
- ☐ Yielding
- ☐ Kind
- ☐ Positive in outlook
- ☐ Uncritical
- ☐ Agreeable
- ☐ Forgiving
- ☐ Truthful
- ☐ Cheerful, optimistic

**LIABILITIES**

- ☐ Self-pitying
- ☐ Resentful
- ☐ Critical
- ☐ Suspicious
- ☐ Impatient
- ☐ Tense and apprehensive
- ☐ Emotionally uncontrolled
- ☐ Withdrawn
- ☐ Jealous
- ☐ Fearful
- ☐ Self-indulgent
- ☐ Domineering
- ☐ Angry, hateful
- ☐ Obsessed with own problems
- ☐ Self-righteous
- ☐ Stubborn
- ☐ Intolerant
- ☐ Dishonest
- ☐ Gloomy, depressed

*Continued on next page*

**ASSETS**

- ☐ Gracious, open-minded
- ☐ Humble
- ☐ Realistic
- ☐ Willing to admit faults
- ☐ Hopeful
- ☐ Having a sense of humor
- ☐ Content
- ☐ Being prompt
- ☐ Purposeful
- ☐ Serene
- ☐ Confidential
- ☐ Helpful
- ☐ Unselfishness
- ☐ Modesty
- ☐ Moral, ethical
- ☐ Grateful
- ☐ Using sex for bonding

**LIABILITIES**

- ☐ Smug, narrow-minded
- ☐ Prideful (feeling superior)
- ☐ Unrealistic
- ☐ Hypersensitive
- ☐ Despondent
- ☐ Sullen (silent treatment)
- ☐ Apprehensive
- ☐ Procrastinating
- ☐ Indifferent
- ☐ Worrisome
- ☐ Gossiping
- ☐ Self-absorbed
- ☐ Self-pitying
- ☐ Self-importance
- ☐ Vulgar, immoral in act and thought
- ☐ Feeling entitled
- ☐ Using sex for validation



**STEP FOUR****POSITIVE QUALITIES GUIDE**

The following is a partial list of the virtues one might have. It should be used as a guide only. The Steps ask you to examine your exact nature. Give an example of each quality that applies to you.

Humility:

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Modesty:

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Honesty with oneself:

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Patience:

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Love:

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Forgiveness:

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Simplicity:

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Trust:

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Generosity:

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Productiveness:

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Creativity:

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Promptness:

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Straightforwardness:

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Positive thinking:

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Thoughtfulness:

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Optimistic:

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Open-mindedness:

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Sense of humor:

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Graciousness:

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Gratefulness:

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Helpfulness:

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**STEP FOUR****NEGATIVE QUALITIES GUIDE**

The following is a partial list of defects one might have. It should be used as a guide only. Write an example after each quality that applies to you.

Resentment:

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Dishonesty with oneself:

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Criticism:

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Self-pity:

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Jealousy:

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Intolerance:

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Fear:

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Temper:

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Impatience:

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Hate:

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Envy:

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False pride:

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Laziness:

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Procrastination:

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Negative thinking:

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Suspiciousness:

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Selfishness:

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Withdrawing:

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Self-righteousness:

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Despondency:

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Ungratefulness:

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Prone to gossip:

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**KEY IDEA 1**

We gauge AA personality by AA maturity.

**HARDCOVER**

PAGE 47, PARAGRAPH 3

**PAPERBACK**

PAGE 47, PARAGRAPH 3

**SUGGESTION FOR SELF-STUDY OR GROUP DISCUSSION**

What behaviors and attitudes do you believe indicate maturity? The rewards we receive from the program are equal to the effort we put into our recovery.

**KEY IDEA 2**

We wish to know why we have been at war with ourselves.

**HARDCOVER**

PAGE 47, PARAGRAPH 4

**PAPERBACK**

PAGE 48, PARAGRAPH 1

**SUGGESTION FOR SELF-STUDY OR GROUP DISCUSSION**

Alcoholism is a disease of denial. We had to deny and distort reality to justify our drinking. Our inventory reflects the negative character traits of the alcoholic personality.



**KEY IDEA 3**

Arresting our alcoholism is not possible until we have knowledge of our defects.

<b>HARDCOVER</b>	<b>PAPERBACK</b>
PAGE 48, PARAGRAPH 3	PAGE 48, PARAGRAPH 4

**SUGGESTION FOR SELF-STUDY OR GROUP DISCUSSION**

Alcoholism is threefold: physical, emotional, and spiritual. We cannot change things until we can assess where we stand in these areas and understand ways to correct them.

**KEY IDEA 4**

Our program is not in accord with halfway measures or efforts.

<b>HARDCOVER</b>	<b>PAPERBACK</b>
PAGE 49, PARAGRAPH 1	PAGE 49, PARAGRAPH 2

**SUGGESTION FOR SELF-STUDY OR GROUP DISCUSSION**

We have lived phony lives filled with deception, but the greatest con of all was lying to ourselves. We ended up believing our own lies.

**KEY IDEA 5**

To be effective, it must be a written inventory.

**HARDCOVER**

PAGE 49, PARAGRAPH 2

**PAPERBACK**

PAGE 49, PARAGRAPH 3

**SUGGESTION FOR SELF-STUDY OR GROUP DISCUSSION**

We need to have concrete evidence. We don't want to play mental games with ourselves. We cannot write honestly unless we first decide that no one is ever going to read this—not even in our Fifth Step.

Note: Read and discuss topics of resentment, dishonesty, criticism, self-pity, jealousy, intolerance, fear, anger, and blind spots.

**HARDCOVER**

PAGES 50–66

**PAPERBACK**

PAGES 50–66



