

# **STEP 4 GUIDE**

## **Introduction**

Many readers find the instructions for Step 4 contained in the book “Alcoholics Anonymous” confusing and complex. This paper is written to reflect the experience of certain members of the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous in analyzing these instructions, and their experience in taking this step in accordance with the instructions given in this book. Those who have taken this step in accordance with the instructions given in the Big Book, including the inventory, the analysis, the study, and the prayer suggested by the book, have found it to be an exciting and rewarding experience. This experience is available to anyone who will complete each of the following steps to the best of his or her ability in the order in which they are given. Perfection is not required, but a good effort involving honesty, open-mindedness and willingness is essential

## **I. The Time and Purpose of Step 4**

Perhaps the greatest promise of the program of Alcoholics Anonymous is that God, as you understand him, will do for you what you cannot do for yourself. This promise carries with it the obvious condition that you must do what you can.

When you have made the decision required by Step 3, the Big Book warns us “though our decision was a vital and crucial step, it could have little permanent effect unless at once followed by a tenuous effort to face, and be rid of, the things in ourselves which have been blocking us (from God).....so we had to get down to causes and conditions. Therefore, we started upon a personal inventory.”

The specific instructions for taking this step are contained from pages 64 – 71 of the book “Alcoholics Anonymous.” These instructions should be read carefully at this point.

## **II. What Do We Seek?**

The inventory it describes as a “fact-finding and fact-facing process.” We are said to be seeking the truth about ourselves and to honestly take stock of our lives. We are to search out the flaws in our makeup which caused our failure. Throughout the book “Alcoholics Anonymous” it is stated that self, selfishness, and self-centeredness were the root of our troubles. Being convinced that self, manifested in various ways, was what had defeated us, we considered its common manifestations. These common manifestations are grouped in three categories –

RESENTMENT, FEAR, and SEX/RELATIONSHIPS. Each of these common manifestations is treated separately in the inventory.

### **III. Resentments – “The Number One Offender”**

From these thoughts or mental attitudes “stems all forms of spiritual disease.” We are instructed to list all people, institutions, or principles with whom we were angry or had resentments. What is a resentment??

- A. Webster’s Dictionary defines “resentment” as “indignation or ill-will felt as a result of a real or imagine offense.” Webster then refers the reader to the word “anger” and gives other examples of this thought or feeling which include; rage, fury, ire, wrath, resentment and indignation. These words denote varying degrees of displeasure from anger – strong, intense, and explosive – to the longer lasting resentment – ill-will and suppressed anger generated by a sense of being wronged or being wrong.
- B. In summary and broadly defined we are dealing with negative or unpleasant thought or feeling caused or generated by the real or imagined act or failure to act of a person, institution, or principle.
- C. Persons, institutions, or principles may need some explanation. Remember you are a “person” and your actions or failure to act may very well cause you to think or feel badly (generally, this is called “guilt”). Institutions are any group of people, authorities, companies, governmental agencies or other organizations.

A principal is a basic truth or law. Many of these basic truths and laws have and do offend us, for example:

- 1. Alcohol is an incurable, progressive disease.
- 2. Honesty is the best policy.
- 3. As you give, you shall receive – (each of us suffers the consequences of his own actions – there is no free lunch).

4. When you are disturbed, no matter what the cause, there is something wrong with you.
5. A life lived without self-examination is not worth living (Socrates).

### Preparing the Grudge List

With foregoing instructions in mind, and before proceeding any further with this inventory, a list should be prepared of the people, institutions or principles which have or do cause you to have a resentment, as defined above. Certain points should be remembered;

1. If you can remember the resentment, you should list it, even though you think you “are over it.” Go back through your life – “nothing counts but thoroughness and honesty.”
2. A review of family albums, school annuals and the like may help you be thorough. Some people write a short autobiography of their life to assist them in their memory.
3. Do not concern yourself whether you should or should not have the feeling – just make the list and nothing more at this point.
4. Throughout the taking of Step 5 and at times thereafter, you will recall other people, institutions and principles which have caused these negative feelings. You can add to this list at any time, but do not spend too much time worrying about how complete the list is, simply do the best you can over a reasonable period of time (perhaps a week).

## (D.) Analysis of Resentments

When you have completed your list and not before, each resentment must be analyzed. Step 4 will mean very little unless you come to understand each resentment and learn from it. The following procedure has proven helpful in this understanding and analysis:

1. Purchase a spiral notebook and open it so that you have a blank page on either side of the wire spiral. With a ruler or straight-edge divide each of these pages vertically so that when both pages are divided – you have a total of four columns. Turn the page and repeat this process until you have divided several pages in this manner. The drawing attached here to as Exhibit A may help you understand this instruction.
2. The column on each page should be labeled as follows;
  - a) Column 1: “Name”
  - b) Column 2: “Cause”
  - c) Column 3: “Affects My”
  - d) Column 4: should be left blank for the time being
3. Take the first name from your “Grudge List” and write it in Column 1 on the first page.
4. In Column 2, write a few words which describe each and every event or circumstance you can recall which causes you to resent the person named in Column 1. This is a very important part of the analysis – we learn from specific events, not general complaints (for example, we learn little from the complaint “he was always lying” but we learn much from a specific “he told me he wasn’t married”).
5. Opposite each of the events you have listed in Column 2 write down why this event or circumstance bothered you. Specifically ask yourself;
  - a) Did it affect my self-esteem (the way I think of myself or ant others to think of me)?
  - b) Did it affect my pocketbook, security, cause fear?
  - c) Did it affect my ambition (what I wanted or needed)?
  - d) Was one of my personal or sexual relationships affected or threatened?
  - e) If the effects described in Paragraph “a” through “d” above do not accurately describe the effect the event had upon you, write a few words to explain how you felt and how you were affected.
  - f) COMPLETE THE ANALYSIS OF EACH OF YOUR RESENTMENTS ARISING OUT OF EACH OF THE EVENTS BEFORE GOING FURTHER WITH THE INVENTORY.

### (E.) Study and Prayer

Read and study the Big Book from the paragraph that begins at the bottom of Page 65 through the second paragraph on Page 67. Ask yourself these questions about each resentment and each event causing it and write a brief paragraph reflecting your answers.

1. Having determined who was at fault, did I go further in my study of the event?
2. Did I try to retaliate, fight back, or run? What was the result? Did it help?
3. It is clear to you that a life which includes one of these resentments leads only to futility and unhappiness? Has the resentment ever benefited you in any way, or have you squandered hours thinking about the resentment? Do you realize and understand that these thoughts separate you from the “sunlight of the Spirit” (God)? Do you know that these thoughts will lead you to the insanity of the first drink/drug, and with us, to drink/drug is to die?
4. Do you understand that through our thoughts and reactions to people, places, and things, the world and its people dominate us? Do you understand that until we stop blaming ourselves or others, there can be no growth or solution?
5. Can you forgive?
6. Do you recognize that other people have the same problem with life that you have had, and many of them are spiritually sick?
7. Honestly pray the 4<sup>th</sup> Step Prayer – “God, help me show \_\_\_\_\_ the same tolerance, pity, and patience that I cheerfully grant a sick friend. \_\_\_\_\_ is a sick person, how can I be helpful to \_\_\_\_\_? Save me from being angry. Thy will be done.” From this point forward we try to avoid retaliation or argument.

### (F.) The Beginning of Growth

As noted earlier, it is a spiritual axiom that when I am disturbed, no matter what the cause, there is something wrong with me. Now that you have listed and understand the resentment and how it affected you, having stopped blaming or “putting out of your mind the wrongs others have done”, you can now look for your own mistakes and learn from them. Take the following actions:

1. At the top of the Fourth column on each page, insert the words “my faults.”
2. For each person, institution or principle, and for each event, ask yourself;
  - a) Where have I been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking, inconsiderate or frightened?
  - b) Where was I to blame?
3. Write down your faults as revealed by the above questions in the fourth Column opposite each person, institution, or principle and event.

(G.) When you have concluded all of the instructions with respect to resentments, **and not before**, proceed to “fear”.

## **IV. Fear – “Touches every aspect of our lives”**

Read from the third paragraph appearing on Page 67 of the Big Book through the first three full paragraphs on Page 68. Then take the following actions:

### **(A.) “Fear” defined**

Webster’s Dictionary defines “fear” as the feeling of alarm or disquiet caused by the expectation of danger, pain, disaster or the like (being found out, being known for what you know or think you are). It is sad that the driving force in life of most alcoholics is the self-centered fear that we will lose something we have, or that we will not get something that we need or want.

### **(B.) Listing of Fears**

On a page following the section on resentments, write a short description of each fear that you have experienced. Remember under the topic “Resentments” (Paragraph III – Section (F.) 2a. above) you have already asked yourself about the impact of fear on your resentments. We now complete the list of times, places, and circumstances which evoke this feeling (i.e. snakes, bugs, heights, women, men, death of others or dying, loss of security, etc.).

### **(C.) Analysis of Fear**

Having listed each of the fears, we should write a short analysis of these fears in our efforts to understand them. It is said that each of these fears set in motion chains of circumstances which brought about or caused us misfortune. Can you cite examples where this occurred? Why do you have each fear? Was it because self-reliance failed? What should we rely upon, if not ourselves?

### **(D.) Study and Prayer**

When our fears have been listed and the above questions answered, the book “Alcoholics Anonymous” gives us the solution to fear in the second and third paragraphs appearing on Page 68. We are also given a short prayer in which we ask “Him to remove our fears and direct our attention to what He would have us to be.” This solution and prayer should be directed towards each of our fears.

## **V. Sex & Relationships**

This section of the inventory is covered in the book “Alcoholics Anonymous” from the last paragraph commencing on Page 68 through the end of Chapter 5. This material should be read at this point.

### **(A.) Scope of Inventory**

This portion of the inventory begins by clearly discussing sexual relationships. However, in the last sentence of the last paragraph ending on Page 70, it states “we have listed all the people we have hurt by our conduct and are willing to straighten the past if we can.”

### **(B.) Preparing a List of Relationships**

Following “Fears” in your inventory book, you should list the names of persons to be studied. These should include both sexual and other relationships including family, business, friends, etc.

### **(C.) Analysis**

With respect to each person named on your list of relationships, write a short paragraph which answers the following questions – remember to deal with specific events;

1. Was I selfish in this relationship?
2. Was I dishonest in this relationship?
3. Was I inconsiderate in this relationship?
4. Whom did I hurt?
5. Did I arouse jealousy?
6. Did I arouse suspicion?
7. Did I arouse bitterness?
8. Was I at fault?
9. What should I have done?
- 10.

### **(D.) Study and Prayer**

Through study and prayer we seek to shape sane and sound ideals for our future sex life and our relationships. Whatever our ideals turn out to be, we must be willing to grow toward them. We must be willing to make amends for past wrongs, providing we do not bring about still more harm in so doing. In prayer and meditation we ask God what we should do about each specific matter, and we are told the right answer will come if we want it.

On Page 70 in the first paragraph we are given instructions on how to proceed to our new ideal.

In summary, we are told to “pray for the right ideal, for guidance in each questionable situation, for sanity and for strength to do the right thing.” In these troublesome areas we are told to throw ourselves into helping others.



