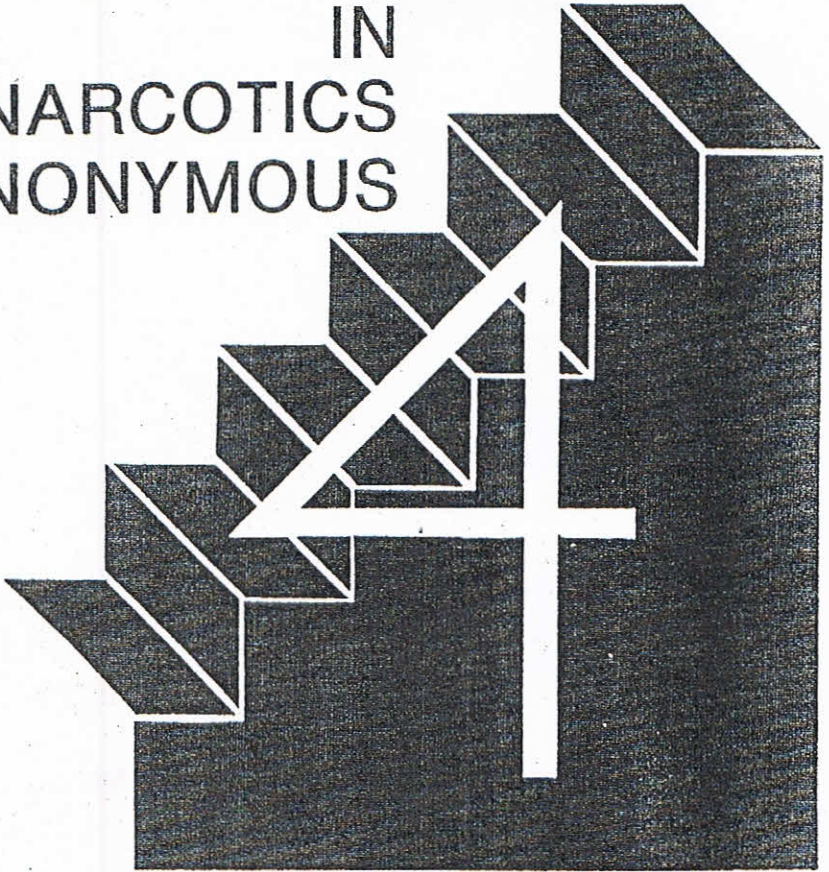




WORKING
STEP FOUR
IN
NARCOTICS
ANONYMOUS



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Approval literature
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This is a model of what a thorough Fourth Step inventory might be. While we strive towards thoroughness, we may find, especially in our first attempt, that we are not able to answer all of these questions. In fact, many of us may feel overwhelmed, but we do not let this deter us from being as thorough as we can possibly be.

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WORKING STEP FOUR IN NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

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

This guide is intended to be used as an aid to writing a Fourth Step inventory. It is extremely important that we work with an N.A. sponsor. If you don't have one yet, this is a good time to find one who can help guide you through these steps. After reading through this guide on your own, we suggest you read it again with your sponsor before beginning the Fourth Step. It is also very helpful to use other N.A. literature and step meetings to gain more information about the Fourth Step. There are many methods of writing inventories, and no one way is right for everyone. This guide represents the experiences, strengths, and hopes of many addicts who have found recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. Regardless of the method, our Fourth Step will be successful if we are searching and fearless.

Searching and Fearless. . .

Step Four calls on us to be searching and fearless. We are asked to look carefully at ourselves and to get beneath the self-deceptions we have used up to now to hide the truth from ourselves. We search within, as if entering a dark house with a single candle to guide us. We move ahead, despite our fear or resistance to the unknown. We need to be willing to illuminate every corner of every room of our minds as if our lives depend on it, because they do.

What we are searching for here is a complete and total picture of ourselves. We have found that this requires honesty—honesty to examine our behaviors, feelings, thoughts, and motives, regardless of how unimportant they may appear. Our self-honesty is most important since it will lead us to discover how our disease has affected our lives. We have operated with a distorted self-image, never fully looking at the whole picture all at once. Now, possibly for the first time in our lives, we will begin to see ourselves as we really are, rather than as we imagined or fantasized. The more accurate and complete this picture is, the more freedom we will gain.

At this point we need to emphasize that being thorough is not the same as being perfect. There aren't any *perfect* Fourth Steps. We do the best we can to be as thorough as possible. With diligence and perseverance, we write as honestly as we can. Expecting perfection from ourselves can sometimes be a way of putting off writing our Fourth Step. We may also have heard people say "If you don't do a thorough inventory, you'll use again." But here we have to go back to our Third Step and trust God without any reservations. If we focus on our fear that our inventory won't be good enough, or worry about what our sponsor will say when we share it, we may never get going. This won't be the last inventory we write. It's not necessary to write a best-selling novel; it's only necessary to make an honest beginning and be as thorough as we can be. One of the things we learned in the Third Step was to trust God. Now we can be fearless and write the truth. This Fourth Step is a freeing process as well as a healing one. We put our faith in a loving God and trust that whatever we write will be exactly what we're supposed to write if we are truly searching and fearless.

... *Moral Inventory* ...

In Step Four we are asked to take a *moral inventory*. When we first heard the word moral, some of us had misconceptions of what that meant, while others had no understanding at all. Morals are simply values, the principles that we choose to live by today in our recovery. It is not the purpose of this guide to define morality nor to define a set of morals that others should live by. We recognize that each of us possesses our own internal values. We may choose to define *good* as that which has the power to bring out the best in us and affirm our recovery and *bad* as that which has the power to bring out the worst in us and works against our recovery.

Looking at our feelings can be very helpful here too. In writing our Fourth Step, we will need to take a look, not only at what we did, but also at how we felt. Our morals may have been vague or undefined, but even in our active addiction we had them. In situations where we felt bad, or felt that something was wrong, it was most likely because we compromised our morals or were unable to uphold them.

When we came to that understanding, we saw how the steps fit together. We began to see *the exact nature* of our wrongs. That meant more than just the wrong things we did. It meant looking beneath the wrong thing we did, to the *nature* of that wrong. For example, if we stole money from our parents to buy drugs, that was a wrong. What was the nature of that wrong? The nature of that wrong was our self-centeredness, our fear, our dishonesty and unkindness. We were self-centered in that we wanted what we wanted at another person's expense. We were fearful that we wouldn't get what we wanted. We were dishonest in that we took money without the other person's knowledge or permission. We were unkind in that we did something that hurt another human being.

