

#### FOURTH STEP WRITING GUIDE

Why work the Fourth Step? After all, we've been able to stay clean so far. But some of us are still haunted by a driving obsession to use drugs. Others find that the feelings of discomfort are more subtle; a nagging feeling that something isn't quite right, a sense of impending doom, or feelings of fear and anger that have no apparent reason.

1. How comfortable am I with my life?
2. What are some of the benefits that could come from writing a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves?
3. What is the definition of "searching"?
4. What is the definition of "fearless"?

We may be very frightened at the prospect of examining ourselves so thoroughly. We don't know ourselves very well, and we may not be sure we want to. Our fear of the unknown may seem overwhelming at this point, but if we recall our faith and trust in our Higher Power, our fear can be overcome.

5. How can fear be a major obstacle in working the Fourth Step?
6. Why can I not afford to procrastinate on this step?
7. What can I do to have the courage needed to write a moral inventory?

If the word "moral" bothers us, we have found that talking with our sponsor about our reservations can ease our discomfort. A moral inventory doesn't mean that we will condemn ourselves. In reality, the inventory process is one of the most loving things we can do for ourselves.

8. What is the definition of moral?
9. What reservations do I have about taking this step?

We simply look at our instincts, our desires, our motives, our tendencies, and the compulsive routines that kept us trapped in our addiction. No matter how many days or how many years we have been clean, we are still human and subject to defects and failings. An inventory allows us to look at our basic nature with its flaws and its strengths. We look not only at our imperfections, but also at our hopes, our dreams, our aspirations, and where they may have gone astray.

10. How has my life been affected by the following?

- a. Resentments-
- b. Fear-
- c. Anger-
- d. Guilt-
- e. Remorse-
- f. Shame-
- g. Hopelessness-
- h. Depression-
- i. Self-pity-
- j. Loneliness-
- k. Betrayal-
- l. Denial-
- m. Self-centeredness-

11. Why is it important for me to look at the following?

- a. Personal Relationships-
- b. Work Relationships-
- c. Sexual Relationships-
- d. Past Behavior-

12. Why is it important for me to look at the following assets?

- a. Being Clean-
- b. God Awareness-
- c. Acceptance-
- d. Sharing-
- e. Courage-
- f. Caring-
- g. Kindness-

h. Open-mindedness-

i. Honesty-

j. Positive Action-

k. Willingness-

l. Faith-

m. Gratitude-

n. Generosity-

In the Fourth Step, it is important to take a good hard look at how fear has worked in our lives. Our experience tells us that fear is at the root of our disease.

13. How has fear driven me to act rashly in an effort to protect myself?
14. How has fear paralyzed me?
15. How have I schemed and manipulated because I feared the future?
16. To what extremes have I gone to while trying to protect myself from "potential" loss, disaster, etc.?
17. How have I attempted to control my life and everything around me?
18. How have I manipulated, lied, stole, plotted, cheated and used people?

In our inventories, we assess the emotional effects of our addiction. Some of us became so skilled at shutting down our feelings with drugs or other distractions that, by the time we came to our first meeting, we had lost touch with our own emotions. In recovery, we learn to identify what we are feeling. Naming our feelings is important, for once we do so, we can begin to deal with them.

19. How have I tried to shut off my feelings?
20. What can I do that will help me identify my feelings?

We make a list of our resentments, for they often play a large part in making our recovery uncomfortable.

21. How have I been obsessed with hostility towards others?

22. What institutions do I have resentments against?
23. What people, places, social values and situations do I have resentments against?

Writing about all of our relationships is very important, and we'll want to pay particular attention to our friendships. If we gloss over our platonic friendships in favor of focusing on romantic relationships, our inventories will be incomplete.

24. What patterns have produced desirable results in my life?
25. What patterns have produced undesirable results in my life?
26. What conflicts in my personality make it difficult to maintain relationships?
27. Have I ended friendships because I was afraid of being hurt?
28. How have I been afraid of intimacy?
29. Have I been jealous of the people in my friend's lives?
30. Have I ever used emotional blackmail to insure loyalty?
31. Have I sacrificed friendships in favor of romantic relationships?

We will probably find identical conflicts and behaviors in our romantic relationships. We'll see the same difficulties with trust, refusal to be vulnerable, and perhaps a lifelong pattern of inability to make commitments.

32. How has trust been a problem in my romantic relationships?
33. Have I refused to appear vulnerable?
34. Have I been reluctant to make commitments?
35. Have I been afraid of intimacy?

After years of compulsively acting on our fears and misguided beliefs about sex, we want to be at peace with our own sexuality. This is a very uncomfortable topic for most of us. However, if we want something different than what we've had, it's necessary that we begin the process of change by writing about it.

