

A Guide to the Fourth Step

The decision we make in Step Three "to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him" is a momentous decision, perhaps the most important and far-reaching we shall ever make in our lives. But having made this decision, what next?

N.A. experience has shown that if we truly want a Higher Power to take over in the management of our lives, to remove the obsession to use and to restore us to health, then the time for a face to face confrontation with ourselves, with our own innermost faults and defects, is RIGHT NOW. We have to clean house so that the Higher Power has room to enter, and we begin the house-cleaning process with Step Four.

This pamphlet has been designed to act as an auxiliary guide or outline to help the newcomer take his or her first personal inventory. It is not in any way meant to be used as a substitute for the wealth of literature available on the inventory process. Anyone who does not take advantage of that great supply of information and experience is cheating himself. This pamphlet is meant only for easy reference and understanding.

Inventory Topics:

- I. Resentments: Write about all People, Places, Things, Institutions, Ideas, or Principles that you resent, or feel threatened or hurt by - past and present. Make a list of all these first, then write about each, telling:
 - A) What happened? (Be specific!)
 - B) How did it make me feel? (Examples: Was my pride or self-respect hurt, were my ambitions or security threatened in any way, was my livelihood endangered, was a personal or sexual relationship hurt or threatened?)

Do this for each item, leaving some space after each. After you've done this with everything on your list, then go back over each and answer:

 - C) Where was I at fault? Where was I selfish, dishonest, self-seeking or frightened? Though I may not have been all wrong, in what way was I to blame for the situation?

Answer these questions for each item - be honest and be thorough!
- II. Fear: Write about your fears, even though they might not have any relation to your resentments. Answer these questions about each:

Why do I have this fear? Am I afraid because I cannot depend upon myself?
- III. Sex: Write about your experiences or problems with sex, whether deep relationships, short affairs, or individual problems that seemed to have nothing to do with others. (Be specific!)

Then answer these questions about each item:

Where have I been selfish? Where have I been dishonest? Where have I been inconsiderate? Whom did I hurt? Did I create jealousy or suspicion, or cause bitterness? Was the relationship A selfish one? Where was I at fault? What might I have done instead?
- IV. Miscellaneous: Basically, any negative thoughts or feelings you have should appear somewhere in your inventory. If you have anything left over after writing about resentments, fears, and sex, here is the place to put it. Any guilt shame, regret, embarrassment, etc. etc., that you've not already written about.

Helpful Hints:

- 1) The way to write an inventory is to write it! Thinking about inventory, talking about it (one-on-one or at meetings), theorizing about it, will not get it written. Sit down with a notebook, pray, pick up your pen and start writing!
- 2) Remember that you don't have to do this alone. Your will and your life are now in the hands of the Source of all strength - tap into this Source! Writing a thorough and honest inventory looks impossible to most of us. This may be because it is - if we're operating on our own "power". Take a few quiet moments each time before you write and pray for "the power to carry it out."
- 3) Write every day! Remember that what you have is only a daily reprieve from a killer disease, a reprieve that is dependent directly on your spiritual condition today. Ask yourself, What have I done today to cooperate in my own recovery?
- 4) Don't write your inventory with a particular person in mind to read it to. If you do that you may wind up "slanting" what you write in order to please them. Besides, life is unmanageable, and you can't know for sure to whom you'll read it anyway. Only time will tell, and the Fifth Step will take care of itself. You're not there yet and you don't have to worry about it. Stay here in the Now - you're on Step Four, and that's all.
- 5) A basic rule of thumb is that you can write too little, but you can never write too much. Just write and write, until your brain is empty. Those things that you think about while not sleeping are usually inventory material.
- 6) Most important: Just for today, NO MATTER WHAT, don't take that first chemical!

GOOD LUCK AND MAY IT GET REALER FOR YOU!



(Subject to approval by
World Service Conference)