

4th Step

(By the Book of "Alcoholics Anonymous")

Complete and thorough directions for a 4th step inventory can be found in the basic text of Alcoholics Anonymous. This, I feel, is the best method of completing it. Keep in mind that it is only a suggestion by me.

If you are under the care of a professional, please consult them before attempting the 4th step inventory. Please confide in your sponsor before working this step.

It is suggested that you commit to a specific start and completion time and date. Write it down, and sign it like a legal contract. Do not make incoming or outgoing phone calls during the specified time frame you have contracted to. If you work, go to work, come home, and get back to the task at hand. A "recovery" meeting in between is OK. Focus mainly on completing this step.

Get your "BIG BOOK" - plenty of blank white lined paper, and something with black ink to write with. (That's what it says..."We placed them before us in black and white.")

Start

Open your "Big Book" to page 64. Start reading at the second paragraph "Therefore, we started..." Read only one sentence at a time. Stop after reading each sentence. Ask yourself this question:

- Did the sentence ask anything of me? If it does, do it! Don't add to it. No extra points for creativity here!
- For example: Do I honestly agree with or accept what has just been said? Did it suggest a prayer? Write something down? Make a list? Think? Consider? Seek out something within myself? There are sentences where nothing is really "asked" of you, though the vast majority do ask or infer some mental and, or written activity. Even if only for you to accept an idea or ideal.

Continue this process of reading one sentence at a time, doing what it says, and not doing what it doesn't say. Do this through to the end of the chapter. If you've done all that the sentences ask or infer, that's it, you're finished, congratulations! "Nothing counted but thoroughness and honesty. When we were finished we considered it carefully."

You should have 4 lists made:

1. Resentments - pg. 64
2. Faults - (see note below) pg. 67
3. Fears - pg. 68
4. Sex conduct ("Whom had we hurt?" see note below) - pg. 69

Notes:

You should call your sponsor's attention to the line on page 76, 3rd paragraph, "Eight and Nine. We have a list of all persons we have harmed and to whom we are willing to make amends. We made it when we took inventory. "

Refer back to page 67, 3rd paragraph, last line "We admitted our wrongs honestly and were willing to set these matters straight."

Refer back to page 69, 2nd paragraph "Whom had we hurt?" We got this all down on paper and looked at it.

Often people get to this place on page 76 and wonder when they made this list. There is in the line further down the page "We must be willing to make amends where we have done harm, provided that we do not bring about still more harm in so doing."

Helpful Hints

Keep a Dictionary at hand and use it. Begin by looking up the word “definite” as used on page 65 in the sentence above the 3 columns. At the bottom of page 65 it reads, “We went back through our lives.” So start at today, and go “back through [your life]”.

Don't let the 3-column thing scare you. It's simply identifying whom, why, and how or what it affected in your life. Stay away from thinking it more complicated. Keep it simple, because it really is! You can even use the “multiple choice” like examples above and beside the columns for the “Affects my:”

It's best if you have come to some true understanding and appreciation of these examples. Don't write something just for the sake of putting something down. Be prepared, if it were to be called upon, to talk to someone in more detail about whatever you write down in your “Affects my:” column.

Consider: “When we saw our faults we listed them.” If you don't see them up till now perhaps they're not there. Don't get inventive. No need to make things any worse for influence and endorsement points. Just stick to the facts.