

## Imperfect and Worthwhile

Step into Action, 81-83

4

I presented my written Fourth Step inventory to my sponsor, and we reviewed it together. She saw patterns that had eluded me. She pointed out where I overlooked selfishness, dishonesty, self-seeking, or fear. She guided me to see motives that I hid from myself. She saw where I demonstrated love, courage, or other admirable traits. She reminded me that these inventories identified my assets as well as my liabilities.

I try to provide similarly useful feedback to my sponsees. While I am willing to confront denial, dishonesty, or manipulative behavior, I also want to affirm willingness, honesty, and courage. I believe that even in the depths of our disease, each of us tried to choose the least destructive options we saw at the time. As we learn better options, we improve. I need to let go of my shame for not knowing what I had never been taught or shown, and I need to support others as they learn to do the same. I frequently share an example of my own poor choices to let my sponsee know she is not unique. When my sponsee is finished, I generally ask if there is anything else that she has been too afraid or too ashamed to share. I remind her that we are as sick as our secrets. Once she has shared her Fourth Step inventory with me, withholding nothing, we review the Step Five promises (AA 75).

6

When I finally set up a time to do Step Five with my sponsor, I began to worry that I had not done a good enough job. When I shared this with my sponsor, she asked if I had listed perfectionism as part of my inventory. We laughed together at the obviousness of my defect. I was able to proceed without the critical voice in my head that was my usual companion.

As I shared the nature of my wrongs, my sponsor would challenge me to elaborate on what the positive side of each trait might look like. At first, I could see no redeeming features. With her help, I began to understand how my stubbornness could at times be perseverance; that my perfectionism helped me perform quality work on my job. Each examination gave me a fuller picture of what was truly stocked on my shelves. Contrary to my initial assessment, my inventory was not all damaged goods. As I continue to grow in this program, I am reminded to take inventory regularly to make sure that my view of my stock is accurate.