

## **How I was Led Through Step 4**

(If you don't have the time for this, or aren't on Step 4 yet, you might try the Resentment Bandaid document.)

Steps 4 and 5 are often considered the real breaking point in a person's recovery. Learning to get rid of my resentments really cleared up my head. I'm much less of a judgmental jerk. It's much easier to have a pleasant expression and mean it, and to let go of the little annoyances of life. When I have trouble staying sober, it's very often because I'm unhappy about how the world or people are treating me, and I have to medicate the mental pain. Step 5 makes me get explicit with another person about my actions and character flaws, and lets the sponsor or pastor/priest/rabbi/imam or mentor help me look for things I've missed. When I know my patterns, I can work on them.

NOTE: Please, please go DOWN the columns, not across the rows. Many people going across the rows get so mad at the people they're writing about that they can't continue. It's going to be difficult enough, don't make it harder. At least distract yourself from the last person by going on to the next person.

Put a check mark in each box that matches you. You can take notes if you think you need them to remember why you put them.

THIS IS JUST MY INTERPRETATION OF THIS PROCESS. THERE ARE OTHER VALID ONES.

		COLUMN 3						COLUMN 4							
		AFFECTS MY (Which part of self is affected?)						What is the exact nature of my wrongs faults, mistakes, defects, shortcomings:							
		Social Instinct		Security Instinct		Sex Instinct		Ambitions							
COLUMN 1 I'm resentful at	COLUMN 2 The cause	Self-Esteem	Personal Relationships	Material	Emotional	Acceptable Sex Relations	Hidden Sex Relations	Social	Security	Sexual	Selfish	Dishonest	Self-seeking & Frustrated	Inconsiderate	

This table is taken from the Joe and Charlie workbook that is somewhat famous in AA circles. It is not official AA or SA literature, like all member-produced material. It does follow the AA Big Book instructions for Step 4 very closely, though.

I'll give a couple examples of some of my resentments went when I did this worksheet.

### Resentment #1

1. My ex-boss/principal
2. She constantly harped at me, enforced rules on a whim, gave disorganized information, never apologized, almost never listened, dictated under the guise of reaching consensus, demanded unreasonable things of my students, acted like she was in charge of everyone at all times, even off school hours and off school grounds.

Column 3 (Why are you so mad, really?) What did this affect?

Self esteem: yes. I wanted to get apologies and be treated like my opinion mattered. I felt insulted.

Personal relationship: yes. I couldn't have a good relationship with her when I felt so abused and disrespected. I wanted to feel that I got along with people at work, and her behavior made that very hard.

Material: yes. She wasn't actually affecting my money or possessions at the time, but my reactions to her helped get me fired. I view her as the problem that made it so hard for me to work there and act nice.

Emotional: yes. I wanted to feel good about going to work and being with the people there, and having her do these things kind of ruined that.

Acceptable sex relations: no. I wasn't having any, so she couldn't affect them.

Hidden sex relations: no. I was just abusing the internet on my own, and she wasn't getting in the way of that.

Social ambitions: yes. I wanted to rise in the esteem of my co-workers, and she made it very hard because I wanted to put her down so much.

Security ambitions: yes. I knew my reactions to her were getting in the way of putting on a good display for the Director (her boss), and ultimately I got fired, which affects my social/financial security.

Sexual ambitions: no. She didn't affect anyone I would want to date.

Column 4 (What's YOUR part in all this, or THE KEY.) Were you...

Selfish (did you do something you knew was against someone or rude or possibly hurtful?) Yes. I gossiped like crazy and undermined her to the students. I almost encouraged a revolt among the students.

Dishonest (did you lie, steal, deceive, lie to yourself about your victimhood, or expect someone to read your mind and act like you wanted?) Yes. I told myself that I was so much better than she, and that I've never done things like that, when I probably have, even if not to that extent. I didn't even ask myself if that was true, I just assumed it.

Self-seeking and frightened (did you do something just not thinking of the other person at all, or did you lash out because some part of your mind was fearful or threatened?) Yes. I tried to undermine her in roundabout ways in addition to telling her boss what was going on, which he seemed open to hearing.

Inconsiderate (were you rude, did you have a bad idea, or a bad execution of an idea?) Yes. My gossiping with students got back to the administration and helped create more tension.

NOTE: This is not an exercise to excuse other people. I still think this boss was incompetent, and her boss has since moved her sideways on the org chart and out of her previous responsibilities. But this isn't about her. I found out that I was part of the problem, and then I get to ask myself the final question: even if she was wrong, do I have to have the resentment? Is it affecting me enough and making me uncomfortable enough that I'm willing to give it over to God and forgive her? I've been told that forgiveness is not excusing someone, but saying that they don't owe me anything. When I feel that they owe me something, like an apology (which I've probably never told them), and I don't get it, I get mental stress and I want something to medicate it.

Column 5 (summary that some sponsors want you to write at the end): I acted like I had the inalienable right to be treated correctly at all times and that I couldn't deal with life unless it was going the way I wanted. I got snippy, gossipy, and backbiting. I helped create a situation with the super-boss that made him fix the situation by getting rid of me, and moving her, whom he couldn't fire for political reasons. She was not right, but I handled the situation badly.

## Resentment #2

1. The couple I lived with a couple years ago.
2. The house was filthy and I couldn't stand the idea of having anyone over. The kids were extremely whiny and the little boy was allowed to run around naked.

Column 3 (Why are you so mad, really?) What did this affect?

Self esteem: yes. I felt that they should care about me more and clean up, and have a more presentable house. It also made me feel trashy to think about having other people see the place.

Personal relationship: yes. It affected my interactions with them some. I was biting my tongue a lot. I finally said some things about the children, because they seemed to want to be strict parents, but seemed to expect little kids to have some epiphany about their behavior on their own.

Material: no. They didn't actually affect my possessions or money

Emotional: yes. I wanted to feel good about the people I lived with.

Acceptable sex relations: no. I wasn't having any, so they couldn't affect them.

Hidden sex relations: no. I wasn't having any.

Social ambitions: yes. I couldn't have people over to the house with that mess.

Security ambitions: no. They didn't affect work or my other relationships.

Sexual ambitions: no. They didn't affect anyone I would want to date.

Column 4 (What's YOUR part in all this, or THE KEY.) Were you...

Selfish (did you do something you knew was against someone or rude or possibly hurtful? No.

Dishonest (did you lie, steal, deceive, lie to yourself about your victimhood, or expect someone to read your mind and act like you wanted?) Yes. I didn't check what the place was like before I moved, because I knew them before, and just assumed what it would be like. I also ignored the fact that I've lived in self-created dumps before.

Self-seeking and frightened (did you do something just not thinking of the other person at all, act like you deserved to have things run your way, or lash out because some part of your mind was fearful or threatened?) I acted like I deserved better just because I'm me.

Inconsiderate (were you rude, did you have a bad idea, or a bad execution of an idea?) Yes. I had a bad idea to move somewhere while having almost no idea what it was like.

Column 5 (summary that some sponsors want you to write at the end): I did no research and blindly moved somewhere and then expected it to run like I wanted. I expected everyone to act like I wanted them to, like they owed me that.

Step 4 prayer:

"I realize that the person (people) who wronged me was (were) spiritually sick. Though I did not like his (her or their) symptoms and the way these disturbed me, he (she or they), like me, were sick too. I ask God to help me show him (her or them) the same tolerance,

pity, and patience that I would cheerfully grant a sick friend. This is a sick man (or woman). How can I be helpful to him (her or them)? God save me from being angry. Thy will be done. Amen”

**Short version: “God this is a sick person, just like me. Give me the same tolerance, pity, and patience I would give a sick friend. Help me be helpful to him/her. Save me from being angry.”**



## **Fear Example #1**

1. My grand-sponsor.
2. He gives me anxiety by being up in my face on things that aren't program related, and he doesn't seem to listen.

Column 3 (Why are you so mad, really?) What did this affect?

Self esteem: yes. I want to be listened to and treated like an adult, like my opinion mattered. I felt insulted.

Personal relationship: yes. I have trouble having a good relationship with him when I felt ignored and disrespected. I want to feel that I got along with people in the program, and his behavior made that very hard.

Material: no. This doesn't actually affect my possessions or money.

Emotional: yes. I wanted to feel good about going to meetings, being with the people there, and having him do these things affected that.

Acceptable sex relations: no. I wasn't having any, so he couldn't affect them.

Hidden sex relations: no. I was just having my own fantasies in my head, and he wasn't getting in the way of that.

Social ambitions: yes. I want to rise in the esteem of the other guys at meetings, and this made me feel small and that I wouldn't be seen as a grown up.

Security ambitions: yes. His decisions were going to affect where I lived and with whom. I had chosen these circumstances, and I didn't want them changed.

Sexual ambitions: no. He didn't affect anyone I would want to date.

Column 4 (What's YOUR part in all this, or THE KEY.) Were you...

Selfish (did you do something you knew was against someone or rude or possibly hurtful?) no.

Dishonest (did you lie, steal, deceive, lie to yourself about your victimhood, or expect someone to read your mind and act like you wanted?) Yes. I told myself that I've never been a jerk like this, without stopping to ask if that were really true. I just justified myself automatically.

Self-seeking and frightened (did you do something just not thinking of the other person at all, or did you lash out because some part of your mind was fearful or threatened?) Yes. I reacted out of fear of not getting what I wanted. I didn't stop to ask if this was something I could live with, or why exactly I reacted like I did.

Inconsiderate (were you rude, did you have a bad idea, or a bad execution of an idea?) no.

Summary: Once I detailed why I was so fearful, I saw that I was afraid that this person acting like I was not worthy of consideration might spread to others, and might make me believe it. I also was acting superior and self-righteous. I was not asking if God could get me through this and praying for a correct resolution and the power to live with life as it came to me. I just acted like worrying angrily about it might change it. I decided that I would choose not to accept the message from this person that I wasn't worth considering, that he had his own problems that made him act like this, but I didn't have to internalize his perceptions.







## Fourth Step

Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of myself

“The Fourth Step allows us to uncover and discover the acquired character defects which are a part of the false self. These defects are NOT a part of the real you (the True Inner Self). The false self (the phony you) has picked them up from other people, institutions and society in general. Usually it is not important that you become aware of the fact—that these defects of character are acquired. Only when you detach yourself from these acquired defects can you start to uncover and discover, in a fearless manner, these acquired character defects that have controlled you in the past.

“These acquired character defects are misdirected instincts. These instincts often far exceed their proper functions. Our excessive desires for sex, material and emotional security, and for an important place in society, desires which by their very nature can never be fulfilled, cause us practically all the trouble there is.

“Nearly every serious emotional problem can be seen as a case of misdirected instincts. Whenever we become a battleground for the instincts, there can be no peace. Every time we impose our instincts unreasonably upon others, unhappiness follows. These defects lock us into responding in a certain way, usually destructive, to those around us. So, in order for us to live happy lives, we must uncover and discover these acquired defects of character.

“At this point, we should have arrived at the following conclusions: the acquired character defects have been the primary cause of our lusting and our failure at life; we must now be willing to work hard at the elimination of the worst of these defects or both sobriety and peace of mind will elude us; and that all the faulty foundation of our life will have to be torn out and built anew on bedrock.

“Since the Fourth Step is but the beginning of a lifetime practice, we should first have a look at those personal flaws which are acutely troublesome and fairly obvious. Using our judgment, we make a rough survey of our conduct with respect to our primary instincts for sex, security and society. With sex, we uncover how the selfish pursuit of sex damaged other people and ourselves. In the area of security, we question the financial and emotional insecurities that have led to financial instability, and the personal relationships, which bring continuous or recurring trouble. In terms of society, we insisted upon either dominating the people we knew or depended upon them far too much.

“...the object is to search out the flaws in the false self which caused our failure. Being convinced that the false self, manifested in various ways, was what had defeated us, we will find some of the following acquired character defects in our inventory: SELF-CENTEREDNESS, RESENTMENT, ANGER, PREJUDICE, CONCEIT, GREED, LUST, INDIFFERENCE, PHONINESS, FEAR, PRIDE, FINANCIAL INSECURITY, DEPENDENCE, DOMINATION, EMOTIONAL INSECURITY, DISHONESTY, PROCRASTINATION, PERFECTIONISM, IMPATIENCE, and others that might apply.

“These acquired character defects (misdirected instincts) will balk at our uncovering and discovering them. The minute we make a serious attempt to prove them, we are liable to suffer severe reactions. The thinking mind may come up with some of the following false thoughts: any serious defects have been caused chiefly by our lusting; our problems have been caused by the behavior of other people; the defects are us; justifying the need for defects in order to continue living; and a half-hearted inventory is OK. In order for us to combat these false thoughts, we must know that the character defects are indeed acquired and are NOT a part of the True Self.

“In summary, the Fourth Step asks us to make a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. We are seeking to uncover the hidden acquired defects of character that are part of the false self. After we have found them, then we discover how, when, and just what instances these defects controlled our lives. This inventory is of us, not other people. We uncover and discover our faults by listing them. We place them before us in black and white. We must have courage to honestly do this. Faith can do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

“The purpose of writing the Fourth Step is to make us aware of the acquired character defects. As we list and analyze these defects, we will begin to comprehend their futility. The written inventory will be used as a basis in Steps Five through Nine.”<sup>1</sup>