

A Working Step 4 Guide

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Step 4 Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Please turn in your Big Book to page 64. The authors start by comparing a personal inventory to a business inventory. In the first full paragraph of page 64, they write:

"Therefore, we started upon a personal inventory. This was Step Four. A business which takes no regular inventory usually goes broke. Taking a commercial inventory is a fact-finding and a fact-facing process. It is an effort to discover the truth about the stock-in-trade. One object is to disclose damaged or unsalable goods, to get rid of them promptly and without regret. If the owner of the business is to be successful, he CANNOT fool himself about values."

So, we are going to conduct the equivalent of a commercial inventory on our lives. We are going to discover what had blocked us off from the Sunlight of the Spirit.

In the next paragraph, the authors tell us exactly what we have to do to conduct a Fourth Step inventory:

"We did exactly the same thing with our lives. We took stock honestly. First, we searched out the flaws in our make-up which caused our failure. Being convinced that self (not alcohol but self), manifested in various ways, was what had defeated us, we considered its common manifestations."

If you remember, this is a reference back to what was discussed in Step Three that self-will (or "my life run on my will") is the root of our troubles. We are now going to inventory or, "take stock" if you will, of three manifestations of self-will: our resentments, our fears, and our sex conduct and harms toward others. The Fourth Step commentary in the 12 & 12 goes into much greater detail about this, but we humans have three basic instincts of life which create self: the social instinct, the security instinct, and the sex instinct. These are needed in order for the human race to survive. All humans have them and they are God-given so they are good, but when we use them selfishly or incorrectly, they cause problems for others and ourselves. When the social instinct is used incorrectly, it brings about resentments. When the security instinct is used incorrectly, it brings about fears. And when the sex instinct is used incorrectly, it brings about harms to others. Left to our own resources, we will invariably overdo in these areas. In our selfish attempt to fulfill these desires, we are in constant conflict with others. That is why, coincidentally, the Big Book's Fourth Step process focuses directly on resentments, fears, and harms; so it gets down to our misdirected instincts and the root of our problems. Nearly every serious emotional problem can be seen as a case of misdirected instinct. All self-centered people have difficulties in these three areas whether they are alcoholics or not. For some helpful tips on doing a 4th Step please go back to the Step 4 files and read "Mile L.'s 4th Step Tips."

We have provided inventory sheets for you to do this, and we will read the "clear-cut", simple directions that the "Big Book" authors have documented for us. Let us reassure you, the Fourth Step is not difficult nor should it be a tedious process. Within seven pages of text, the "Big Book" authors give us precise instructions on how to make a good beginning on facing and getting rid of the obstacles in our path to the Power greater than ourselves. For the 4th Step sheets that I use please go back to the Step 4 files and see "Step 4 Inventory Handouts." I recommend that you copy these inventory forms so that you have 10 pages for resentments, 5 pages for fears & 10 pages for sex & harms.

THE RESENTMENT INVENTORY

The first manifestation of "self" we're going to look at is our resentments.

Since Bill Wilson liked using different words that mean the same thing, the book uses a few different expressions when describing who and what to write down. People, institutions or principles with whom we have resentment, with whom we were angry, with whom we were hurt or threatened or interfered with, with whom we felt had wronged us, with whom we stayed sore at, with whom we felt "burned up" toward, and with whom we held a grudge. Also included in this list should be people, institutions or principles with whom we were annoyed with, agitated by, or let down by; and also include your regrets because regret is resentment toward yourself. Needless to say, this is usually a long list.

The word resentment comes from the Latin word "sentire" which means "to feel", and when you put "re" in front of any word, it means "again", so the word resent means "to feel again". After we experience what we perceive as being wronged by someone, the first response usually is anger or frustration. But then after a while, after we have reviewed in our mind what happened, and have felt

the anger or anxiety again and again, we move to the next stage, which is resentment. Over a short period of time, as I playback the suspected harm in my head, I become less and less involved in what happened and the other person becomes more and more to blame. Sometimes we are able to let the incident go without moving past anger, but if you are a self-centered alcoholic, that is usually a difficult thing to do since we tend to keep score of these things so we can at some point get back at them. I'm sure no one here can relate.

In the third paragraph on page 64, the authors write:

"Resentment is the "number one" offender. It destroys more alcoholics than ANYTHING else. From it stem ALL forms of spiritual disease, for we have been not only mentally and physically ill, we have been spiritually sick. When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically."

Please notice the equation in that last sentence, "When the SPIRITUAL malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically." It describes the Program and the ONLY three relationships we all have - our relationship with God, our relationship with ourselves, and our relationship with others (which includes the physical world around us). In the first three Steps, we get headed in the right direction with our relationship with God. In Steps Four through Seven, we get headed in the right direction with our relationship with ourselves. And in Steps Eight and Nine, we get headed in the right direction with our relationship with others. Then in Step 10, we deepen and broaden our relationship with ourselves. In Step 11, we deepen and broaden our relationship with God. And in Step 12, we deepen and broaden our relationship with others. So the Steps are not some random, fluke process. They are a specific, focused and deeply effective set of tools that bring about a transformation or personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism.

Please turn to the sheet entitled "Resentment Inventory" in the packet provided for you. You can clearly see that the first three columns of this sheet resemble the example found on page 65, with the exception of an added fourth column. Don't worry! The directions for the fourth column are found on page 67 and we'll be getting to that in a few minutes.

There is a prayer that I like to use when doing a Fourth Step that I would like to pass along. I suggest that this prayer be said each time you begin writing, & that you write it at the top of each blank inventory page as you come to them. This brings our Higher Power into the process. It's not out of the Big Book, but goes like this: "God, please help me with this, show me what I need to know. Please protect me, Your will not mine be done."

Let's first look at the simple step-by-step, column-by-column procedure the "Big Book" authors give us for writing the resentment inventory. Six lines from the bottom of page 64, the authors tell us:

"In dealing with resentments, we set them on paper."

So in the first column, "I'm resentful at", it says to put the following:

"We listed people, institutions or principle with whom we were angry."

We continue writing the names in the first column until we are finished. How do you know when you are finished? Well, when you think you are finished and no more names come to mind, stop. Ask God for Guidance. If more names come, write them down. If not, you are finished with the first column unless you think of something later. Please note that there is a Resentment Inventory Prompt Sheet just before the Resentment Inventory in the above attachment that will give you some other ideas as well. Also, it's a good idea to keep a pen & some paper with you at all times (while you are writing all the inventories) so that you can write down any names or thoughts that pop into your head as you are going through the day, & then you won't have to worry about forgetting or missing anything.

Second column, second instruction - 3 lines up from the bottom of page 64:

"We asked ourselves why we were angry."

In our example on page 65 and on our sheets, the second column is entitled, "The cause".

Why am I resentful, "burned up" or sore at whatever is written in each of the boxes in the first column? What did they do to make me angry? List all the resentments you have for each name. Keep in mind that you may have more than one resentment toward any one person, place or thing. Continue writing all the reasons in the second column, top to bottom, before going on to the third column.

In the third column, third instruction - page 64, last three lines and page 65, first two lines:

"In most cases it was found that our self-esteem, our pocketbooks, our ambitions, our personal relationships, (including sex) were hurt or threatened."

In the first paragraph on page 65, the "Big Book" authors repeat themselves and add a few more ways self can be affected:

"On our grudge list we set opposite each name our injuries. Was it our self-esteem, our security, our ambitions, our personal, or sex relations, which had been interfered with?"

Remember: our self-esteem is how we view ourselves. Our pocketbook is money or material possessions. Our ambitions are our plans for the future or what we want. And our security is our general sense of personal well being, and has two possible viewpoints - financial security or emotional security. (See "Definitions of Words Used in Step 4" in the above attachment. These definitions should be handy as you are writing this.)

Then, at the bottom right of the example given on page 65, the "Big Book" includes the word "pride". Pride can be defined as an exaggerated opinion of ourselves. That makes up the seven ways that self can be affected in column three.

Please spend some time with someone who is familiar with doing a 4th Step Inventory out of the Big Book to help guide you as you go along. For now, ONLY do the first three columns of your Resentment Inventory. Column 3 requires checks only, where applicable. Stay with each of the sections in the third column, going top to bottom before going on to the next one, until all seven are done. Columns 1, 2 & 4 do not require long explanations - they should be brief, bullet statements to jog your memory about the facts for when you do your 5th Step, at which time you can go into greater detail.

When the first three columns are complete, the "Big Book" takes a very important, two-page break from the Resentment Inventory so we can soften our heart toward these people, institutions and principles. The authors tell us to pray for OURSELVES (that we may have a better attitude toward them), & to pray for THEM as well. Why? Because we need to rid ourselves of these resentments. Well why on earth would we want to be free of resentments? Shouldn't we justifiably be angry with these people? Don't we have a right to be "burned up"?

Well, let's see what the Big Book has to say about resentment:

Page 64 says - "Resentment is the "NUMBER ONE" offender. It destroys more alcoholics than ANYTHING else, from it stem ALL forms of spiritual disease. Page 66 - it leads ONLY to futility and unhappiness; to the precise extent that we permit resentment do we squander the hours that might have been worth while; this business of resentment is INFINITELY grave; it is FATAL; when harboring such feelings we shut ourselves off from the sunlight of the Spirit; the insanity of alcohol returns and we drink again; these things are poison; because of it the world and its people really dominated us; the wrong-doing of others FANCIED OR REAL had power to actually kill. Page 70 - we begin to comprehend the futility and fatality of our resentments; we commence to see its terrible destructiveness. Page 117 - never forget that it is a deadly hazard to an alcoholic. Page 145 - the GREATEST enemies of us alcoholics include resentment. Page 325 - I can't afford resentments against ANYONE because they are the build-up of another drunk. Page 552 - I realized I had to get rid of my last resentment for my reprieve was running out and if I didn't get rid of it I was going to get drunk."

Most of us usually think resentments are kinda fun and acceptable. We have a problem with most people so resentment becomes a way of life for us. Now it was saying that even if I felt that a resentment was JUSTIFIED (which I ALWAYS did), it was the BIGGEST CAUSE for leading an alcoholic back to a drink, and I desperately do NOT want to move in that direction.

Well, that's very simple, isn't it? The book says very clearly, if we continue to hold on to resentments we WILL drink again.

How do we get free of ongoing anger & frustration, as the book suggests we do? The top of page 67 deals with prayer.

Before we go there, the "Big Book" authors ask us to turn back to our list because it holds the key to our future. They tell us to look at it from an ENTIRELY different angle (which will become column four in our inventory).

On the bottom of page 66 in paragraph 4, the book states:

"This was our course: We realized that the people who wronged us (column 1) were perhaps spiritually sick (also called spiritually unconscious or spiritually blocked off). Though we did not like their symptoms (column 2) and the way these disturbed us (column 3), they, LIKE OURSELVES, were sick too."

The next few lines are prayers for getting rid of our resentments.

“We asked God to help us show them the same tolerance, pity, and patience that we would cheerfully grant a sick friend. When a person offended we said to ourselves, ‘This is a sick man. How can I be helpful to him? God save me from being angry. Thy will be done.’”

Please turn to page 552. The Big Book gives us another powerful example of how to use prayer to soften our heart toward the people we resent. In the middle of page 552, this is what it says:

“He said, in effect: ‘If you have a resentment you want to be free of, if you will pray for the person or the thing that you resent, you will be free. If you will ask in prayer for everything you want for yourself to be given to them, you will be free. Ask for their health, their prosperity, their happiness, and you will be free. Even when you don’t really want it for them, and your prayers are only words and you don’t mean it, go ahead and do it anyway. Do it every day for two weeks (or more) and you will find you have come to mean it and to want it for them, and you will realize that where you used to feel bitterness and resentment and hatred, you now feel compassionate understanding and love.’”

So the Big Book tells us that the way to get over a resentment is by seeing that the person we resent was spiritually blocked off, just like WE are when WE harm others; and to pray that we show them tolerance, pity, and patience, so that we can get a better attitude toward them. It also suggests that we pray for the person we resent that they get the good things in life that we want for ourselves. This softens our heart toward them and allows us to look at the situation around the resentment more realistically.

Let’s turn back to page 67 and look at the fourth column on our resentment inventory sheets. In the second paragraph on page 67, the directions read:

“Referring to our list again. Putting OUT of our minds the wrongs OTHERS had done, we resolutely looked for OUR OWN mistakes. Where had WE been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened? Though a situation had not been entirely our fault, we tried to disregard the other person involved ENTIRELY. Where were WE to blame? The inventory was OURS, not the other man’s. When we saw OUR faults we listed them. We placed them before us in black and white. We admitted OUR wrongs honestly and were willing to set these matters straight.”

What’s the EXACT NATURE of OUR wrongs that the Fifth Step talks about? You may want to take a second to study the paragraph just mentioned. It’s important that we see OUR mistakes in the resentment. Let’s see how WE got the proverbial ball rolling in the first place.

Now it’s time to finish the Resentment Inventory by writing out all of the fourth column. Remember: let’s look at the resentment from an ENTIRELY different angle. What did WE do? What are OUR mistakes - disregarding the other person ENTIRELY. Please finish this before going on to the next inventory.

By completing a searching, fearless, honest, and thorough Resentment Inventory we are examining the four dimensions of our existence: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. (BUT only the fourth dimension, the "spiritual", is rooted in Truth.) Column 1 of this inventory deals with the physical - Who or what we’re mad at. Column 2 deals with the mental - What we THINK they did to us. Column 3 deals with the emotional - What we FELT when they supposedly wronged us. And finally, Column 4 rockets us into the spiritual dimension, revealing the “exact nature of our wrongs” - the truth about what really happened. It usually reveals to me how my faulty thinking caused me to take actions which got the "ball rolling" in the first place. With 99% percent of the resentments I’ve heard about (both in myself and in those I’ve work with) the first 3 columns can be transformed when the truth of the fourth column is revealed. Truth is always present at the core of our Being even when we are unconscious to it or when it’s blocked off by a lie.

THE FEAR INVENTORY

Let’s look at the next inventory mentioned in Step 4 beginning on page 67 and please turn in your packet to the Fear Inventory. In the Big Book, this inventory starts with the last paragraph on page 67 where it says:

“Notice that the word "fear" is bracketed alongside the difficulties with Mr. Brown, Mrs. Jones, the employer, and the wife. This short word somehow touches about every aspect of our lives. It was an evil and corroding thread; the fabric of our existence was shot through with it. It set in motion trains of circumstances which brought us misfortune we felt we didn’t deserve.” (In the Fear Inventory, this next line is part of column 3. The book continues) “But did not we, ourselves, set the ball rolling? Sometimes we think fear ought to be classed with stealing. It seems to cause more trouble.”

So fear is a thief! It robs us of our relationship with God and others, and prevents us from reaching our full potential. Fears can usually be classified into three categories - afraid of losing what I have, afraid of not getting what I want, and afraid of being found out. Fear in and of itself is NOT necessarily a bad thing. When right-sized and not controlling, fear brings about caution and prevents us from being hurt. In other words, if I am by the ledge on the roof of a tall building and I experience some fear, it is a good thing

because it is letting me know that I am in a dangerous position. The fear around this situation will bring about caution and will prevent me from being hurt. However, if going near a sealed window on the twenty-ninth floor of an office building freezes me in panic and fear, this is NOT right-sized and IS controlling, and I need to analyze and seek truth about this fear so I can move toward being free of it.

A really great acronym for the word fear is “false evidence appearing real”. Another acronym, perhaps on the humorous side, is “frantic efforts to appear recovered”. Just like with the Resentment Inventory, we have provided in your packet a Fear Inventory Prompt Sheet to help you with identifying your fears.

The book continues with the first paragraph on page 68:

“We reviewed our fears thoroughly (column 1). We put them on paper, even though we had no resentment in connection with them. (It says this because we have ALREADY identified the fears associated with resentment when we did the fourth column in the Resentment Inventory, so now we are just looking for OTHER fears not associated with our resentments. Remember to also put the fears found in the Resentment Inventory onto the Fears Inventory. The book continues.) We asked ourselves why we had them (column 2). Wasn't it because self-reliance failed us? (Also column 3.) Self-reliance was good as far as it went, but it didn't go far enough. Some of us once had great self-confidence, but it didn't fully solve the fear problem, or any other. When it made us cocky, it was worse.

Perhaps there is a better way (column 4) - we think so. For we are now on a different basis of trusting and relying upon God. We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves. We are in the world to play the role HE assigns (that's a reference back to the decision we made in the Third Step). Just to the extent that we do as we think HE would have us, AND humbly rely on Him, (then) does He enable us to match calamity with serenity.

We never apologize to anyone for depending upon our Creator. We can laugh at those who think spirituality the way of weakness. Paradoxically, it is the way of strength. The verdict of the ages is that faith means courage. ALL men of faith have courage. They trust their God. We never apologize for God. Instead we let HIM demonstrate, through us, what He can do. (Now here's a prayer) We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us BE (column 4). AT ONCE, we commence to outgrow fear.”

Please begin writing all four columns of the Fear Inventory before continuing to the next inventory, finishing each column (top to bottom) before going on to the next column. See the above attachment for the forms. All four columns do not require long explanations - they should be brief bullet statements to jog your memory about the facts for when you do your 5th Step, at which time you can go into greater detail. Continue spending some time with someone who is familiar with doing a 4th Step Inventory out of the Big Book to help guide you as you go along.

How do we get rid of fear? I'll bet you could guess. That's right - through prayer!

Page 68, paragraph three, sixth line:

“We never apologize for God. Instead we let HIM demonstrate, through us, what He can do. (Again, here's the prayer) We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us BE. (The results of doing this are in the next sentence.) At once, we commence to outgrow fear.”

Notice the book doesn't say fear goes away and never comes back again. It states that we OUTGROW fear. We outgrow fear because through prayer, we're asking God to direct us toward His Will - to do His Work - to do His bidding. And notice what the last part of the prayer says, “...what HE would have us BE.” Not what He would have us DO, but what He would have us BE. We must go deeper than just changing out actions, because like we've said before, who we are and what motivates us will drive our thoughts and actions.

It's that simple! And the miracle is it works! That's all the information for the Fear Inventory so let's go on to the Sex and Harms Inventory.

THE SEX & HARMS INVENTORY

The "Big Book" authors continue on the bottom of page 68.

"Now about sex. Many of needed an overhauling there (not just a simple tune-up but an OVERHAULING). But ABOVE ALL, we tried to be sensible on this question. It's so easy to get way off the track. Here we find human opinions running to extremes - absurd extremes, perhaps. One set of voices cry that sex is a lust of our lower nature, a base necessity of procreation. Then we have the voices who cry for sex and more sex; who bewail (which means express sorrow over) the institution of marriage; who think that most of the troubles of the race are traceable to sex causes. They think we do not have enough of it, or that it isn't the right kind. They see its

significance everywhere. One school would allow man no flavor for his fare and the other would have us all on a straight pepper diet. We want to stay out of this controversy. We do not want to be the arbiter (or judge) of anyone's sex conduct. We all have sex problems. We'd hardly be human if we didn't. What can we do about them?"

The "Big Book" authors go on to tell us to review our own conduct over the past years. Therefore, we will begin our third and final inventory. Your "sponsor" will help you with this as well as with the completion of the Resentment and Fear Inventories during the next week. The book continues.

"We reviewed OUR OWN conduct over the years past. Where had WE been selfish, dishonest, or inconsiderate? (Column 3) Whom had WE hurt? (Column 1) Did WE unjustifiably arouse jealousy, suspicion or bitterness? (Column 2) Where were WE at fault (also Column 3), what should WE have done instead? (Column 4) We got this all down on paper and looked at it.

So we need to include on this inventory both a harms review around our sex conduct over the years, and also look for ways we harmed others in the past NOT associated with our sex life. Needless to say, this is ALSO sometimes a long list. As you start writing this harms list, you may want to read Step 8 in the 12 & 12, which gives us OTHER ideas on how we can harm people in ways that we may not have thought of. Please begin writing all four columns of the Sex & Harms Inventory before continuing on, finishing each column (top to bottom) before going on to the next column. See the above attachment for the forms. Column 2 requires checks only, where applicable. Columns 1, 3 & 4 do not require long explanations - they should be brief bullet statements to jog your memory about the facts for when you do your 5th Step, at which time you can go into greater detail. Continue spending some time with someone who is familiar with doing a 4th Step Inventory out of the Big Book to help guide you as you go along.

THE FUTURE SEX/RELATIONSHIP IDEAL

The book continues in the middle of page 69 by mentioning that we need to develop an ideal for our future sex life and even gives us a way of testing future relations. Middle of page 69.

"In this way we tried to shape a sane and sound ideal for our future sex life. We subjected each relation to this test - was it selfish or not? (Now here's a prayer.) We asked God to mold our ideals and help us to live up to them. We remembered always that our sex powers were God-given and therefore good, neither to be used lightly or selfishly nor to be despised and loathed. Whatever our ideal turns out to be, we MUST be willing to grow toward it. 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. In other words, we treat sex as we would ANY OTHER PROBLEM (so the book is going to tell us how to deal with EVERY problem, and here's another prayer). In meditation, we ask God what we should do about each specific matter. The right answer WILL come, IF we want it. (That's another promise.)

God alone can judge our sex situation. Counsel with persons is often desirable, but we let God be the final judge. We realize that some people are as fanatical about sex as others are loose. We avoid hysterical thinking or advice.

Suppose we fall short of the chosen ideal and stumble? Does this mean we are going to get drunk? Some people tell us so. But this is only a half-truth. It depends on us and on our motives. IF we are sorry for what we have done, and have the HONEST desire to let God take us to better things, we believe we will be forgiven and will have learned our lesson. (Now here's a warning.) IF we are NOT sorry, and our conduct CONTINUES to harm others, we are quite SURE to drink. We are not theorizing. These are FACTS out of our experience.

To sum up about sex: 1- We earnestly pray for the right ideal, 2- we pray for guidance in each questionable situation, 3- we pray for sanity (which is seeing the truth), and 4- we pray for the strength to do the right thing. If sex is very troublesome, we 5- throw ourselves the harder into helping others. We think of THEIR needs and work for them. This takes us out of ourselves. It quiets the hornyness, when to yield would mean heartache."

So the last part of the Fourth Step out of the Big Book is to come up with a future sex ideal and praying that we move toward it. In your packet, right after the Sex and Harms Inventory guide, is a sheet that can be used to develop your ideal. This form opens with all the references the Big Book gives for coming up with a future sex ideal, and then has blank space for writing your ideal.

This ideal usually includes three aspects of a relationship:

- 1) Ideal attributes and behaviors in OURSELVES that we would like to bring to a relationship.
- 2) If you are NOT currently in a relationship, include ideal attributes and behaviors that we would look for in SOMEONE ELSE that we might consider having a relationship with. But if you ARE currently in a relationship, include positive attributes and behaviors that your partner already has that you can appreciate and notice more.
- 3) Attributes and behaviors that would describe what an ideal relationship would generally look like.

We'll conclude Step Four with the last two paragraphs of the chapter, which has a little bit of a review and contain some more promises associated with doing the work up to this point. Last full paragraph on page 70:

“If we have been thorough about our personal inventory, we have written down a lot. We have listed and analyzed our resentments. We have begun to comprehend their futility and their fatality. We have commenced to see their terrible destructiveness. We have begun to learn tolerance, patience and good will toward all men, even our enemies, for we look on them as sick people. (If we have begun to learn tolerance, patience and good will toward our enemies, and we did this through prayer and forgiveness during the Resentment Inventory, we certainly ARE beginning to experience that psychic change that Dr. Silkworth mentioned in the Doctor’s Opinion. The book continues.) We have listed the people we have hurt by our conduct, and are willing to straighten out the past if we can.

In this book you read again and again that faith did for us what we could NOT do for ourselves. We hope you are convinced now that God can remove whatever self-will has blocked you off from Him (Step 2). If you have already made a decision (Step 3), and an inventory of your grosser handicaps (Step 4), you have made a good beginning. That being so you have swallowed and digested some big chunks of truth about yourself.”

If you have already done the three inventory, four column 4th Step out of the Big Book at some point in the past, you may want to consider the below alternate 4th Step Inventory. I do believe that the Steps should be worked & reworked every year or two (or when needed) starting again from Step One, but I also try to encourage people to do different types of 4th Steps each time they do one so that they get a different & deeper look at how their ego (self-will) reasserts itself. When giving someone the below Four Absolutes Inventory, I also ask them to fill out the above Fear Inventory (because it is different then all other Big Book Fear Inventories I've seen, & because fear is our root issue) and also come up with their updated Sex/Relationship Ideal. A great alternate Inventory to consider doing after you’ve done the Big Book Inventories for the first time is the Four Absolutes Inventory. Please go back to the Step 4 files and read about this Inventory called “Step 4 Four Absolutes.” Again, this Four Absolutes Inventory is ONLY suggested after you’ve gone through all 12 Steps out of the Big Book at least once.

So the Fourth Step is NOT about finding out who we ARE, it’s about finding out who we are NOT, so we can get rid of it and who we ARE will then shine through. That’s another reason why “self-knowledge avails us nothing”, we need to find out what GOD wants us to be.

Some people think that the Fourth Step is like cleaning your room by rearranging the same old stuff you’ve always been stuck with. This is absolutely not true. The Fourth Step is more like cleaning your room by throwing out all the things you do NOT want anymore, so that it can be replaced with the NEW things you DO want. In looking at it THAT way, we should be EXCITED about doing a Fourth Step.

In our Fourth Step inventories we will discover, for the most part, that our troubles were of our OWN making. We will see how we played a part in every resentment and fear we've ever had and how our conduct has harmed others. By taking stock of ourselves and sharing our inventories with another person, we will gather a list of things about ourselves that we view as objectionable. These are the very things that have blocked us from God, which is the ONLY Power that can remove the alcoholic obsession. The AA Program then goes on to ask that we become willing to have God relieve us of our defects of character in Steps Six and Seven and then asks you to make restitution to those whom you've harmed in Steps Eight and Nine. Also, after you complete your 4th Step Inventories, you will have all the information that you are going to share in your 5th Step, all of the defects/shortcomings you’ll be asking God to help you with in Steps 6 & 7, & a list of all the harms you’ll be making amends for in Steps 8 & 9; so your 4th Step will provide everything you need for Steps 4 through 9.

Those of you who have never done a Fourth or Fifth Step and were NOT intending to, may have read something here that will motivate you to complete Steps Four and Five in the near future. We want you to know that everything you've read here is ALSO for your benefit.

We are now entering the phase of the program where more and more actions are required. But these actions produce many positive results.

Many of these results are in the form of promises, which as our lives change, become an integral part of our spiritual being.

If our lives didn't get better, why would we want to stay sober? If all we had to look forward to was restlessness, irritability and discontentment, why do the work? A.A. offers so much more - a new way of living (not just a new way of not drinking) which is far more wonderful than ANYTHING we could EVER have imagined. THAT’S why we take the Steps.

Please finish writing all of your Fourth Step, as well as create your future sex/relationship ideal, before going on to Step Five. Writing your 4th Step should not take more than three or four weeks, & an appointment for your 5th Step should be made for about a month after you begin writing your Fourth Step. This will help in motivating you to complete the work. Please try to write some every day & make finishing it a priority. If you have done the first three Steps & have balked & procrastinated for months with writing only some or most of your 4th Step, please be advised that you are in a very vulnerable place. It's like being an open wound, psychologically & spiritually. You have raised old issues that clog your system & cause difficulties if not processed immediately by the healing power of Steps Five through Nine. It has also been my experience that when these wounds have been raised and left

undealt with, we begin to relive & participate in the behavior again because it is now back in our consciousness again. If you have delayed in finishing your 4th Step, ask yourself one simple, yet powerful question of truth about your position: Is it possible that your lack of willingness to move forward in the Steps has ANYTHING to do with whether you go back to drinking again or not? Oops, there it is! Sorry, but I had to go there!