

4th Step Tips

The following is a list of tips and tools that may be helpful when assisting your protégés (sponsees) with Step 4:

- 1) **Keep It Simple!**
- 2) During early sobriety, I heard **much negativity spoken about the 4th Step that scared me**. No wonder why people are scared to do this vital step. Shouldn't we try to encourage new people to do this step, which will put them on the path to freedom, rather than discourage them from doing it by making negative comments and instilling fear in them? Just a thought. ☺
- 3) **Emphasize the importance of writing the 4th Step inventory**. There are a total of 17 references in the Big Book that suggest our 4th Step should be written. The word "written" is used 2 times (pages 70 & 75). The word "paper" is mentioned 3 times (pages 64, 68, & 69). Some form of the word "list" is given 10 times (pages 13, 64, 65, 66, 67 twice, 70 twice, & 76 twice). Page 67 says we placed our faults before us in black and white. And finally, page 65 gives an example of a written inventory. Gee, I guess it's pretty important that we instruct our protégés to WRITE their inventory, huh? ☺
- 4) **Step 4 is the beginning of the treatment for our "spiritual malady"**, which is the root of our problem in Step 1. Other branches (symptoms) of Step 1 that stem from the root (spiritual malady) are the physical craving (which deals with the body) and the mental obsession (which deals with the mind). Page 64 says, "When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically." Upon completion of Step 4, we are well on our way to carrying out the solution (described to us in Steps 2 & 3) to our problem (in Step 1).
- 5) The Big Book instructs us to **inventory 3 "common manifestations" of self-will: resentments, fears, and harms done to others (with emphasis on our sexual misconduct)**. (Remember, page 68 says we need an "overhauling" in the area of sex – not a minor tune-up! Honesty and thoroughness are key - the \$19.95 Jiffy Lube Special won't fill the bill. ☺)
- 6) **Resentment inventory is most easily done in columns, as illustrated on page 65 of the Big Book**. The column format allows the protégé to see patterns more easily. Most people benefit from writing their columns vertically. We write inventory vertically, but read inventory (during Step 5) horizontally. (NOTE: I used to instruct my protégés to use the column format for all the inventories. Having done many 4th Steps over the years, my experience has been that the column format is best suited for resentment and fear inventory. I now prefer writing sex/harms inventory by just answering the 9 questions found on page 69 in paragraphs. It has been easier and less restricting for me to do this part of the inventory in a horizontal "mini-essay" type format.) But beware: don't get caught up in technique and formats. When it comes to writing inventory, as Nike™ says, "JUST DO IT!" If what you're doing is working for YOU, then that's what counts.
- 7) **Experience proves that a four-column inventory format is the best**. Even though page 65 gives an example of three columns, the instructions for writing the 4th column are found on page 67. I've heard some people dispute that the inventory should be done in four columns because the example on page 65 only shows three. That may work for them. But, in my experience, if I only write a three-column inventory which lists who I'm resentful towards, "the cause", and what it affects within me, then I'm going to continue to stay in the problem, I'll remain a "victim", and I will never see the TRUTH that column 4 so clearly reveals to me. Of course, this is just *my* experience. ☺
- 8) "**Should I put my name in column 1?**" is a question often asked by protégés when doing Step 4. There is much debated on this subject over what is the "right" or "wrong" answer. I don't debate this issue. Some people need to list themselves as part of their inventory, others don't. How do I know if a person needs to put his/her name on their resentment list? If I tell them "No, you can't!" or "You MUST put your name at the top of the list!" aren't I "playing God"? In the 3rd Step I made a decision to quit playing God. So, I don't tell protégés who they should or shouldn't list on their inventory. If I'm asked the question of "Should I list my name?" I ask the person, "Do you resent yourself?" If they say "yes" I then ask them "Why do you resent yourself?" Providing they can answer that question, I then tell them, "Well, I guess you should put yourself on the list because your first two columns are already complete. You're halfway finished. Why stop now!" ☺
- 9) **There are actually four inventories we should be writing as part of the 4th Step: "Resentments", "Fears", "Sex", and "Harms to Others"**. There are some people on my inventory that I harmed but I didn't resent them, fear them, nor have a sexual relationship with them. So if I hadn't done a "Harms to Others" inventory as page 70 suggests ("*We have listed the people we have hurt by our conduct, and are willing to straighten out the past if we can.*") then I would have missed important truths that needed to be on my inventory and shared in Step 5. And besides, when we get to Step 8 page 76 says, "*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.*"
- 10) **According to the Big Book, we do not write our "life story" in Step 4. It suggests we tell someone all our life story in Step 5 - NOT WRITE IT**. As we're reading our 4th Step inventories to someone in Step 5, what we're actually doing is telling them our "life story". Looking back, my "life story" was as simply as this: Because of my selfishness and self-centeredness (the spiritual malady) I caused **harms** to other people. This caused me great **fear**. Because the fear became too intense for me to handle, ego

caused me to "turn the tables" and become resentful toward those I had harmed, which made it look like others harmed me and I was innocent. This allowed me to block-out the harms I did to others and all I remembered were the **resentments** I had toward them. Most of my harms were caused within relationships. There's no wonder in my mind why this is true. What other "tools for living" do fearful and resentful people have? (No, suicide and homicide don't count! They're not "tools for living". They are "weapons of destruction"!) We do what we know best. So, I harmed others because of resentments, fears, and other defects stemming from selfishness and self-centeredness (spiritual malady). There! End of life story! Can I go home now? ☺

- 11) **Avoid inventorying your "assets" in Step 4.** Our assets never got us into trouble. Our defects block us from God's Power, not our assets. Many people over the years have confused the first sentence from the following quote on page 46 of the 12 & 12: *"The sponsor probably points out that the newcomer has some assets which can be noted along with his liabilities. This tends to clear away morbidity and encourage balance. As soon as he begins to be more objective, the newcomer can fearlessly, rather than fearfully, look at his own defects."* Somehow, we albies, who are experts at interpretation, have turned that statement around to justify an "assets and liabilities checklist" for the 4th Step inventory. That may be a handy tool for Steps 6 & 7, but many alcoholics are dying because they never come face-to-face with the truth in Step 4. My sponsor has always insisted that I remember it was never my "assets" which got me drunk.
- 12) **Don't forget: Praying is a part (a big part!) of Step 4. The prayers in the 4th Step are just as important as the actual writing of the inventory.** Chuck C. used to say that the Steps are about UNCOVERING, DISCOVERING, and DISCARDING. The writing of Step 4 helps us to uncover. The prayers help us to discover. Steps 5 through 9 enable us to discard.
- 13) **We write inventory to discover the TRUTH... about the LIE.** (NOTE: You may need to meditate on that statement for a while before you really understand it. I had to. Of course, getting lots of experience by writing inventory helped me understand as well. Experience is the name of the game when it comes to working with others. ☺) **Step 4 helps us to discover truth by working from the outside, moving inward.** In resentment inventory we discover that our troubles are not of someone else's making (columns 1, 2, 3); but instead, as mentioned on page 62, our troubles are of our own making (column 4). Quite often a protégé will discover that the first 3 columns of his/her inventory are based on a "lie" by the time they begin working on their 4th column. In inventory, I write about "who I am not" to discover "who I am".
- 14) **A thorough 4-column inventory will give your protégé all the information they need for completing the rest of the "housing-cleaning" steps:** He/she will use all four columns for Step 5. They'll use columns 3 & 4 for Steps 6 & 7. And column 1 will be used for Steps 8 & 9. So, if this is true, then you may not want to burn your inventory, as we are sometimes told to do by members of our fellowship. If you must discard your inventory (which is necessary for some people), then wait until you've completed Steps 5, 6, 7, and have made a separate and thorough list for Step 8. (NOTE: I am occasionally faced with the old "dog ate my homework" excuse from protégés who don't want to complete their 9th Step amends. So, be careful with the "burn your inventory" suggestion. Believe it or not, it's NOT in the Big Book. ☺)
- 15) Even though this is not mentioned specifically in the Big Book, **by completing a searching, fearless, honest, and thorough inventory we are examining the 4 dimensions of our life: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual.** (BUT only the fourth dimension, "spiritual", is rooted in Truth. But set that aside for a moment and read on...) Column 1 of resentment 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. (Clarence S. used to say that albies don't think, "THEY EMOTE!" which means we *feel* our way through life.) 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 see (both in myself and in those I work with) the first 3 columns can be turned into a lie when the truth of the fourth column is revealed. Consider this: Is it possible that the 4th column of inventory, which reveals to us the "truth", is the "fuel" that enables us to be rocketed into the "Fourth Dimension of Existence" that the Big Book describes on pages 8 & 25? This "Fourth Dimension" is later described on page 84 as the "World of the Spirit" as we begin to commence daily spiritual living with Steps 10 & 11. The "World of the Spirit" is a constant because Truth, which we first discover in the fourth column of Step 4, is a constant. Truth is always present at the core of our Being even when covered up (or blocked) by a lie.
- 16) **Show your prospects that inventory can be fun!** Don't treat inventory as if you're going to a funeral. Treat it like your witnessing the birth of a new child... because you are! Of course Step 4 is a serious life and death matter; but it will be encouraging if you can show your protégés to have fun with inventory. Over the years I've learned more and more how to laugh at myself and how absolutely hysterical some of the thoughts that go through my mind (which are ultimately the fodder for more inventories) can be. **And above all, "Keep It Simple!"** Don't complicate this thing to the point where you have to write a series of "Tips" for the 4th Step like I have. ☺

With Love & Service,
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DIRECTIONS FOR STEP 4

Resentments: Read pages 64 – 67

Divide paper into 4 columns

- **Column 1** – use page 64, ¶3, L:7-9: “We listed people, institutions or principles with whom we were angry.” (The example on page 65 titles Column 1 as “*I’m resentful at:*”)
- **Column 2** – use page 64, ¶3, L:9: “We asked ourselves why we were angry.” (Column 2 is “*The Cause*”)
- **Column 3** – use page 64, ¶3, L:9-11 & page 65, ¶0, L:1-2: “In most cases it was found that our **self-esteem, our pocketbooks, our ambitions, our personal relationships, (including sex) were hurt or threatened.** So we were sore. We were “burned up.” And page 65, ¶1: “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?**” Also use **Pride** from the example inventory on page 65. (Column 3 is “*Affects my:*”). (NOTE: The above words listed in **Bold Italics** are the “seven areas of self” to be inventoried in the third column.)

Examples of Columns 1, 2, & 3 (Examples #1 & 2 are adapted from page 65. #3 is my own example.)

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
<i>I’m resentful at:</i>	<i>The Cause</i>	<i>Affects my:</i>
1) Mr. Brown	a) His attention to my wife.	Sex relations, Self-esteem (fear)
	b) Told my wife of my mistress.	Sex relations, Self-esteem (fear)
	c) Brown may get my job...	Security, Self-esteem (fear)
2) My wife	Misunderstands and nags. Likes Brown. Wants house put in her name.	Pride – Personal Relations Sex Relations – Security (fear)
3) ‘Thomas’ the cat	a) Urinated on my tape duplicator	Self-esteem, pocketbook, ambitions, personal relationships, sex relations, (emotional) security, pride (fear)
	b) Continues to stalk, chase, and terrorize our female cat, Dorian.	Ambitions, personal relationships, sex relations (fear)

Definitions of the 7 Areas of Self in Third Column

Self Esteem - How I think of myself.

Pocketbook - Basic desire for money, property, possessions, etc. (Also be referred to as “financial security”).

Ambition - Our goals, plans and designs for the future.

Personal Relations - Our relations with other people.

Sex Relations - Basic drive for sexual intimacy.

(Emotional) **Security** - General sense of personal well being. (What I need to be ‘ok’.)

Pride - How I think others view me; or an excessive and unjustified opinion of oneself.

- When the first three columns are complete, read from page 65 (bottom ¶) through page 67, ¶1. Consider each statement. Most statements can be turned into questions that you can ask yourself.
- The following statements on pages 66 & 67 are prayer directives. Use them as prayers for each one of your resentments:
Page 66, ¶4: “This was our course: We realized that the people who wronged us were perhaps spiritually sick. Though we did not like their symptoms and the way these disturbed us, they, like ourselves, were sick too. **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.**”
Page 67, ¶1: “We avoid retaliation or argument. We wouldn’t treat sick people that way. If we do, we destroy our chance of being helpful. We cannot be helpful to all people, but at least God will show us how to take a kindly and tolerant view of each and every one.”
- **Column 4** – use page 67, ¶2: “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.”

Example of a completed 4-column Resentment Inventory for resentment #3a:

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
<i>I'm resentful at:</i>	<i>The Cause</i>	<i>Affects my:</i>	
3) 'Thomas' the cat	a) Urinated on my tape duplicator	Self-esteem, pocketbook, ambitions, personal relationships, sex relations, (emotional) security, pride (fear)	<p>Selfish – I'm being possessive of a material product / I have unreasonable expectations of a cat. / I'm "playing God" by expecting the cat to not do <i>that</i> (3a) and trying to control him.</p> <p>Dishonest – I don't want to admit that I probably contributed to the cat having a behavioral problem by adding a puppy to the household who chases and disturbs the cats. / I delude myself by thinking "I own the cat." (We don't own our cats, they own us! 😊)</p> <p>Self-seeking – I use the duplicator as a means of copying and giving tapes to friends... as a result I look good... It builds-up my self-esteem (also a delusion).</p> <p>Frightened – I'm afraid of not being able to duplicate tapes / Afraid of looking bad / Afraid of an animal having control over what I can and can't do / Afraid my wife will choose the cat over me.</p> <p><i>Additional wrongs / mistakes / faults / harms, etc:</i> I yelled at my wife and blamed her.</p>

Fears: Read pages 67 – 68

Use 2 columns for beginners or 4 columns for more advanced inventory writers (those doing Step 4 for their 2nd or 3rd time).

- **Column 1** – use page 68, ¶1, L:1-3: "We reviewed our fears thoroughly. We put them on paper, even though we had no resentment in connection with them." (Column 1 is titled "***I'm fearful of:***")
- **Column 2** – use page 68, ¶1, L:3-4: "We asked ourselves why we had them. Wasn't it because self-reliance failed us?" (Column 2 is "***The Cause***"). "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."

Column 1	Column 2
<i>I'm fearful of:</i>	<i>The Cause</i>
Losing job	No money / we'll lose house / wife will leave / I'll be alone / I'll drink / I'll die
Pain	It hurts / No God / I'll drink / I'll die (or I'll continue to live in pain)
Wife leaving	I'll be alone / I'll drink / I'll live in emotional pain
Looking bad	Friends and family will leave / I'll be alone / I'll be in emotional pain

- When the 2-column fear inventory is complete, read ¶s 2 & 3 on page 68. Consider each statement. Most statements can be turned into questions that you can ask yourself. (When doing a 4-column fear inventory, do the aforementioned after the first 3 columns. See the next page of this handout for more details on a 4-column fear inventory.)
Page 68, ¶2: "Perhaps there is a better way—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. Just to the extent that we do as we think He would have us, and humbly rely on Him, does He enable us to match calamity with serenity."
Page 68, ¶3, L: 1-7: "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."
- The following statement in ¶3 of page 68 is a prayer directive. Use it as a prayer for each one of your fears (similar to how you used the prayers for ridding resentments):
Page 68, ¶3, L: 7-10: "***We ask [God] to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be. At once, we commence to outgrow fear.***" Example: "God, please remove my fear of _____ and direct my attention to what You'd have me be." (Notice the prayer is asking what would God would have you *be*, not do.)

Example of a 4-column Fear Inventory:

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
<i>I'm fearful of:</i>	<i>Why do I have this fear (the cause):</i>	<i>But did not I, myself, set the ball rolling with this fear?</i> This includes considering if my own selfishness and self-centeredness was involved. (This is similar to the 4 th column of resentment inventory.)	<i>What, perhaps, is a better way?</i> "God, please remove my fear of _____ and direct my attention to what You'd have me be." <i>What God would have me be, instead of fearful:</i> _____
Losing job	Because household income will decrease / We could lose house / Wife could leave / I'll be alone / Drink / Die	Yes, I procrastinate on work items I don't like doing. I haven't increased my education in several years. I'm not even sure I want to be in this career anymore.	Ask for defect of <u>procrastination</u> to be removed. Ask God to give me the power to do my work in a timelier manner. Take a course or two. Meditate on if I am still interested in the career I'm currently employed in. Maybe my interests lay elsewhere. Is it possible to have my own business? What do my family and friends think?

Sex & Harms: Read pages 68 – 70 (¶ 1 & 2)

- Make a list of persons you've had relations with. Start with sexual / intimate relationships first; then pray, and ask God to reveal to you any additional names that need to be added – especially if they haven't previously appeared on your resentment or fear inventory.
- Answering the following "pre-inventory" questions has proved to be helpful *before* answering the questions on page 69:
 - How did we meet? (Was it love (or lust) at first sight?)
 - What were my motives for getting involved?
 - How did the relationship end; or where is the relationship at today?
- Answer the following questions from page 69, ¶1 in paragraph form:
 1. Where had I been selfish?
 2. Where had I been dishonest?
 3. Where had I been inconsiderate?
 4. Whom did I hurt? (Remember to look around the relationship.)
 5. Did I unjustifiably arouse jealousy?
 6. Did I unjustifiably arouse suspicion?
 7. Did I unjustifiably arouse bitterness?
 8. Where [else] was I at fault?
 9. What should I have done instead?

• **Chosen Sex / Relationship Ideal** - Read Page 69, ¶2, 3, & 4: (Note: Sentences in **bold font** are prayer directives.)
"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? 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. In meditation, we ask God what we should do about each specific matter. The right answer will come, if we want it."

"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."

- Read Page 70, ¶1 & 2: *"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. 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: We earnestly pray for the right ideal, for guidance in each questionable situation, for sanity, and for the strength to do the right thing. If sex is very troublesome, we 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 imperious urge, when to yield would mean heartache."

Inventory Wrap-up: Read pages 70 (¶3 & 4) - 71

- Turn statements on pages 70 - 71 in questions to answer for yourself.
- Thank God for the power that was given to you to finish your inventory.
- If you have not already done so, **make an appointment to do your 5th Step**. (Note: It usually helps to make an appointment for Step 5 while you're still working on your 4th Step. I usually advise protégés to do so after they've completed their resentment and fear inventories.)

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