

The 12 & 12's Fourth Step Inventory

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The inventory starts on page 48 where it says:

"But all who are in the least reasonable will agree upon one point: that there is PLENTY wrong with us alcoholics about which PLENTY will HAVE to be done IF we are to expect sobriety, progress, and any REAL ability to cope with life.

"To avoid falling into confusion over the names these defects should be called, let's take a universally recognized list of major human failings - the Seven Deadly Sins":

Pride – Also included here is self-righteousness, grandiosity, ego, conceit, gossip, vanity, and arrogance. An excessive and unjustified opinion of oneself: both positive (excessive self-love) or negative (self-hate); high or overbearing opinion of one's looks, worth or importance; pride of self usually unconsciously blinds us to our liabilities and leads us into making demands upon ourselves or upon others which cannot be met without twisting or misusing our God-given instincts, then the satisfaction of our instincts for sex, security, and society becomes the sole object of our lives and pride steps in to justify our excesses; leads to bragging about our own achievements or temporary good fortune and leads to fantasies of still greater victories over people and circumstances; blinded by "big-shot-ism" and prideful self-confidence, people turned away from us bored or hurt; putting self in the place of God as the center and objective of our life; it is the refusal to recognize our status as creatures dependent on God for our existence and placed by Him in a specific relationship to the rest of his creation, neither greater than nor less than anyone else; opposite of humility. Where is pride manifested itself in your life in thought, word or deed? Please be specific.

Greed – Also included here is being materialistic, money-hungry, possessiveness, and selfish. Having an excessive desire, ambition or eagerness to obtain anything beyond our needs; the refusal to respect the integrity of other people, creatures or the Earth, expressed in the inordinate accumulation of material things, in the use of other persons for our personal advantage, or in the quest for status, power or security at their expense; not paying ALL your bills EVERY month. Where is greed manifested itself in your life in thought, word or deed? Please be specific.

Lust – Also included here is horniness and carnal hunger. Inappropriate sexual desire, pursuit, fantasies or activity; disrespectful sexual thoughts; we sometimes speak of love while practicing lust, and even while staying within conventional bounds, many people have to admit that their imaginary sex excursions are apt to be all dressed up as dreams of romance; excessive masturbation or pornography. Where is lust manifested itself in your life in thought, word or deed? Please be specific.

Anger – Also included here is rage, irritation, wrath, and resentment. A strong mental irritation at something that offends, excited by a real or imagined attack or injury, often accompanied by a desire to attack back or seek “justice” or to obtain satisfaction from the offending person, place or thing; we sometimes think that self-righteous anger can be very enjoyable, in a perverse way we can actually take satisfaction from the fact that many people annoy us, for it brings a comfortable feeling of superiority, gossip barbed with our anger, a polite form of murder by character assassination, we are not trying here to help those we criticize, we are trying to proclaim our own righteousness. Where is anger manifested itself in your life in thought, word or deed? Please be specific.

Gluttony – Also included here is overeating. Greed or excess in eating; indulging in something excessively or inordinately. Where is gluttony manifested itself in your life in thought, word or deed? Please be specific.

Envy – Also included here is covetousness, jealousy and begrudge. Uneasiness, discontent or resentment aroused by another's superiority, advantages or success, usually accompanied with some degree of ill-will; to be discontented at seeing a person have something. Where is envy manifested itself in your life in thought, word or deed? Please be specific.

Sloth – Also included here is procrastination, laziness, sluggishness, and indifference. To delay action or labor; habitual laziness and idleness; the habit of often showing up late; spending significant amounts of time wishing for what we have not, rather than working for it, or angrily looking for attributes we shall never have, instead of adjusting to the fact, and accepting it. Where is sloth manifested itself in your life in thought, word or deed? Please be specific.

Then on page 50 it says:

By now the newcomer has probably arrived at the following conclusions: that his character defects, representing instincts gone astray, have been the PRIMARY CAUSE of his drinking AND his failure at life; that unless he is NOW willing to WORK HARD at the ELIMINATION of the WORST of these defects, BOTH sobriety and peace of mind will still ELUDE him; that ALL the faulty foundation of his life WILL HAVE TO BE TORN OUT and built ANEW on bedrock.

Then the inventories begin:

1 - Looking back over your life, you can readily get under way by consideration of questions such as these:

a) When, and how, and in just what instances did my selfish pursuit of the sex relation damage other people and me? What people were hurt, and how badly? Did I spoil my relationships/marriage and injure my children? Did I jeopardize my standing in the community?

b) Just how did I react to these situations (question 1a) at the time? Did I burn with a guilt that nothing could extinguish? Or did I insist that I was the pursued and not the pursuer, and thus absolve myself?

c) How have I reacted to frustration in sexual matters? When denied, did I become vengeful or depressed? Did I take it out on other people? If there was rejection or coldness at home, did I use this as a reason for promiscuity?

2 - Surveying his business or employment record, almost any alcoholic can ask questions like these:

a) In addition to my drinking problem, what character defects contributed to financial instability? Did fear and inferiority about my fitness for my job destroy my confidence and fill me with conflict? (See also question 4a)

b) In what ways did I try to cover up those feelings of inadequacy by bluffing, cheating, lying, or evading responsibility, or by griping that others failed to recognize my TRULY EXCEPTIONAL abilities?

c) How did I overvalue myself and play the big shot?

d) In what ways did I have unprincipled ambition by double-crossing and undercutting my associates?

e) Was I extravagant? Did I recklessly borrow money, caring little whether it was repaid or not? Was I a pinchpenny, refusing to support my family properly? Did I cut corners financially? What about the "quick money" deals, the stock market, and the races?

3 - The most common symptoms of emotional insecurity are worry, anger, self-pity, and depression. These stem from causes which sometimes seem to be within us, and at other times to come from without. To take inventory in this respect we ought to consider carefully ALL personal relationships which bring CONTINUOUS OR RECURRING trouble. It should be remembered that this kind of insecurity may arise in any area where instincts are threatened. Questioning directed to this end might run like this:

a) Looking at both past and present, what sex situations have caused me anxiety, bitterness, frustration, or depression?

b) Appraising each situation fairly, can I see where I have been at fault? Where were you at fault? Did these perplexities beset me because of selfishness or unreasonable demands? Or, if my disturbance was seemingly caused by the behavior of others, why do I lack the ability to accept conditions I cannot change?

These are the sort of fundamental inquiries that can disclose the source of my discomfort and indicate whether I may be able to (with God's help) alter my own conduct and so adjust myself serenely to self-discipline.

4 - Suppose that financial insecurity constantly arouses these same feelings. I can ask myself:

a) To what extent have my own mistakes fed my gnawing anxieties? (see also question 2a)

b) If the actions of others are part of the cause, what can I do about that? If I am unable to change the present state of affairs, am I willing to take the measures necessary to shape my life to conditions as they are?

Questions like these, more of which will come to mind easily in each individual case, will help turn up the root cause. In other words, what activities do you do that can be better spent doing something else, what other areas of your life are out of balance, are lacking integrity, or are behaviors or thoughts that fall short of an ideal you have?

Then it closes with:

Therefore, THOROUGHNESS ought to be the watchword when taking inventory. In this connection, it is wise to WRITE out our questions and answers. It will be an aid to clear thinking

and honest appraisal. It will be the first TANGIBLE evidence of our COMPLETE willingness to move forward (Steps Five through Twelve).