

still needs--
 typing errors in some quotes!
 profanity ???
 I/we/you 's - consistency???
 6th column - BB pg 76 char defects, stand in way useful to you

Things from our literature will be in BLACK, things from my alcoholic mind will be in RED, things in BLUE are hyper links to other sections in this text. I'll also warn you that I have a habit of quoting whole paragraphs, rather than risk taking phrases and twisting the context to suit my own agenda. I will sometimes underline the parts I am trying to point to though.

17 Oct 02 version

[First 3 columns](#) ... [Fear](#) ... [Sex](#) ... [The Forth Column](#) ... [The Fifth Column](#) ... [The Sixth Column](#)

Those Damn Columns in the **Big Book**

How did did Bill W do his inventory? Let's look at the brief description on page 13 of the [Big Book](#):
 My schoolmate visited me, and I fully acquainted him with my problems and deficiencies. We made a list of people I had hurt or toward whom I felt resentment.

This process is put down in more detail later on pages 64-5 of the [Big Book](#):

Therefore, we started upon a personal inventory. This was Step Four. A business which takes no regular inventory usually goes broke. Taking 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.

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, manifested in various ways, was what had defeated us, we considered its common manifestations.

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. In dealing with resentments, we set them on paper. We listed people, institutions or principle with whom we were angry. We asked ourselves why we were angry. 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." 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? We were usually as definite as this example:

I'm resentful at:	The Cause	Affects My:
Mr. Brown	His attention to my wife	Sex relations Self-esteem (fear)
	Told my wife of my mistress	Sex relations Self-esteem (fear)
	Brown may get my job at the office.	Security Self-esteem (fear)
Mrs. Jones	She's a nut -- she snubbed me. She committed her husband for drinking. He's my friend.	Personal relationships.

	She's a gossip.	Self-esteem (fear)
My employer	unreasonable -- Unjust -- Overbearing -- Threatens to fire me for drinking and padding my expense account	Self-esteem (fear) Security.
My wife	Misunderstands and nags. Likes Brown. Wants house put in her name.	Pride -- Personal sex relations -- Security (fear)

These first three columns, our 'grudge list', are filled out as part of Step 4, just like the Big Book shows. The directions (with my translations) say:

1. We listed people, institutions or principle with whom we were angry. Who were the "unforgettable people" in our lives. Those that we tended to remember, more often when we were angry or frustrated. Funny how hard it is to notice our resentments when things are going well in our lives, but let things go bad and we suddenly remember lots of things from our past.

The book examples are only of *People*. Examples of *Institutions* might include the police, IRS, or the church.

Examples of *Principles* might include honesty, treating people respectfully or any other thing that we might agree with, *if* we can make qualifications or exceptions to. "Little white lies". "Cash Register Honest" = never stole money, as long as it was locked up! "Do unto others, before they do unto you".

2. We asked ourselves why we were angry. What did they do that we kept remembering?

3. 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." 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. Did they do things that caused us to feel bad about ourselves, worry about our safety or sanity (or question theirs!), keep us from achieving our goals and dreams, effect our relations with others, or our sex lives.

Some of the possibilities not mentioned in the book that are quite common include:

1. God - have we blamed Him for things that have happened in our lives?

2. Alcohol - it has made us *the men we are today*.

3. *My Sponsor* - a good sponsor has probably made us do a lot of thing we really didn't want to ... has told us a few things we really didn't want to hear ... there may have even been a time of two we tried pouring our heart out to them and they *just didn't understand*.. We may even resent the fact that they seem to be having such an easy time of it staying sober!

One quick suggestion - try to keep the descriptions in column 2 down to 20 words or less. Some people find that when they fall into writing too much on particular incidents, they sink deeper and deeper into self pity, righteous indignation, and other forms of emotionalism. Sometimes to the point that they find themselves justifying not finishing this Step *because it makes them feel too bad*. Remember this is meant to be an objective look at our past, made promptly and without regret.

Fears

From the Big Book page 68:

"We reviewed our fears thoroughly. We put them on paper, even though we had no resentment in connection with them. We asked ourselves why we had them. Wasn't it because self reliance failed us? Self reliance was good as far as it went, but it didn't go far enough. Some of us had great self confidence, but it didn't fully solve the fear problem, or any other. When it made us cocky, it was worse."

This part of the inventory, along with the next - sex, don't seem to show up in the example of the columns, or do they? Look over that third column again Looking at that third column, we seem to

have actually done a lot of this already. Lets spell out what each FEAR is:

I'm resentful at:	The Cause:	I'm afraid:
Mr. Brown	His attention to my wife	I might lose my wife
	Told my wife of my mistress	I might lose my mistress Wife <i>just won't understand</i> why it's OK to have a mistress.
	Brown may get my job at the office.	I might lose my job / income / pride I get from my job.
Mrs. Jones	She's a gossip.	She will ruin my <i>good name</i> .
My employer	Threatens to fire me for drinking and padding my expense account	I might lose my job / income / pride I get from my job.
My wife	Wants house put in her name.	I might be losing her. She might take everything if she leaves me.

The easiest way I know to fill in this column is to ask myself - "What am I afraid might happen if I were to just *go along with* what is in the previous column?" You may note that many of the fears listed involve a potential loss of something.

But that doesn't cover all our fears.

Now we need to list the fears we have "no resentment in connection with them." Generally resentments come after we have been caught at something, or it didn't turn out the way we wanted it to. What things haven't come to others attention or are still hanging around haunting me do I also need to add? You may even start out this list with:

"I'm afraid (someone) will find out about ____."

Two possibilities, common to most people in sobriety, you might include in the second column are:

-- I'm afraid when the police pull me over.

-- I'm afraid I might not get sober.

Sex

The Big Book (pages 68-70) also mentions inventorying Sex, here's part:

"Now about sex. Many of needed an overhauling there. 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 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 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?"

Your sponsor might want you to do this one too. Fortunately again, we have part of it already done ... look at that third column again ... Sex shows up pretty frequently! Some sponsors forget to point that out.

Page 69 has a lot of examples / questions to ask yourself when you do this inventory:

"We reviewed our own conduct over the years past. Where had we been selfish, dishonest, or

inconsiderate? Whom had we hurt? Did we unjustifiably arouse jealousy, suspicion or bitterness? Where were we at fault, what should we have done instead? We got this all down on paper and looked at it.

"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?"

The only additional thing you may want to address are the feelings many have concerning masturbation. Sometimes referred to by men in the program as "dead chicken stories". This usually leads to the whole question of how much is too much or too little sex. Likely your sponsor may refer you back to page 69-70 of the Big Book.

Feel free to add other things under these last two areas (fear and sex). After you have those above, everything else tends to be a bit easier to get down on paper.

The Forth Column

From the [Big Book page 66](#):

To conclude that others were wrong was as far as most of us ever got. The usual outcome was that people continued to wrong us and we stayed sore. Sometimes it was remorse and then we were sore at ourselves. But the more we fought and tried to have our own way, the worse matters got. As in war, the victor only seemed to win. Our moments of triumph were short-lived.

...

We turned back to the list, for it held the key to the future. We were prepared to look for it from an entirely different angle. We began to see that the world and its people really dominated us. In that state, the wrong-doing of others, fancied or real, had power to actually kill. How could we escape? We saw that these resentments must be mastered, but how? We could not wish them away any more than alcohol.

From the [Big Book page 67](#):

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.

I'm resentful at:	The Cause:	Affects My:	My part
Mr. Brown	His attention to my wife	Sex relations Self-esteem (fear)	I'm out drinking or I'm home too drunk to pay attention to her. I take her for granted.
	Told my wife of my mistress	Sex relations Self-esteem (fear)	I bragged to him about my mistress.
	Brown may get my job at the office.	Security Self-esteem (fear)	My drinking is effecting my job performance.
Mrs. Jones	She's a nut -- she snubbed me. She committed her husband for drinking. He's my friend.	Personal relationships.	I was drunk and rude to her. He's my drinking buddy.

	She's a gossip.	Self-esteem (fear)	I've done some really embarrassing things drunk that she talks about.
My employer	unreasonable -- Unjust -- Overbearing -- Threatens to fire me for drinking and padding my expense account	Self-esteem (fear) Security.	
My wife	Misunderstands and nags. Likes Brown. Wants house put in her name.	Pride -- Personal sex relations -- Security (fear)	

This fourth column, "**My Part**", gets filled out during the Fourth Step the best we can (When we saw our faults we listed them.), and then the gaps are filled when we do the Fifth Step with that *other, objective, person*. For me, this column is meant to focus on my actions ... things I've done that other people could see ... things that contributed to the situation in that second column, "**The Cause**".

I've had to make my best guess at the last three columns for the man in the book, basing my guesses partly on my own personal experience. My apologies if you have a better idea of what should go in these columns. I've left the last two rows blank so you can do just that.

The Fifth Column

The next column, "**Character Defect**" are part of the Sixth Step, "Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character." Some sponsors might help you start this during your actual 5th Step.

The Big Book, on page 76, says:

If we can answer to our satisfaction, we then look at Step Six. We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable. Are we now ready to let God remove from us all the things which we have admitted are objectionable? Can He now take them all - everyone? If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing.

The basis for this column is taken from the 12 & 12 page 58:

"Another great dividend we may expect from confiding our defects to another human being is humility - a word often misunderstood. To those who have made progress in A.A., it amounts to a clear recognition of what and who we really are, followed by a sincere attempt to become what we could be. Therefore, our first practical move toward humility must consist of recognizing our deficiencies. No defect can be corrected unless we clearly see what it is. But we shall have to do more than see. The objective look at ourselves we achieved in Step Four was, after all, only a look. All of us saw, for example, that we lacked honesty and tolerance, that we were beset at times by attacks of self-pity or delusions of personal grandeur. But while this was a humiliating experience, it didn't necessarily mean that we had yet acquired much actual humility. Though now recognized, our defects were still there. Something had to be done about them. And we soon found that we could not wish or will them away by ourselves."

When we try to practice Step Three, "Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him", which consists of getting right sized with God, as we understand Him ... trying to align our will (and actions) with what He would have us do. Sometimes, something gets in the way and we confuse our will with His will. For me, it is these defects of character that get between me and God. These are those things that are underneath or behind the actions listed in the previous column. And until I come to recognize them and do something about them, they will be behind my actions listed in **future** inventory columns.

So, this column is devoted to identifying which specific character defects were involved in those things I

have put down in my inventory so far.

Now some say I can get by with just calling them all character defects, without listing them individually ... that I have listed them already in having done the previous four columns. That the Big Book quote above mentions "let God remove from us all the things which we have admitted are objectionable", **not** making another list. Why would that same quote go on to mention still clinging to something. Where do we come up with any particular defect of character that we find we are still clinging to? Surely it's some particular item or items from a list rather than that "all the things" or "all these defects of character". So, unfortunately, if I'm going to follow the directions, I'm going to have to make another list here.

If you need a bit of help with this, you can click on "**Character Defects**" at the top of the column for a list I started making of these from our literature.

I'm resentful at:	The Cause	Affects My:	My part	Character Defects
Mr. Brown	His attention to my wife	Sex relations Self-esteem (fear)	I'm out drinking or I'm home too drunk to pay attention to her / take her for granted.	self-centeredness
	Told my wife of my mistress	Sex relations Self-esteem (fear)	I bragged to him about my mistress.	Egoism / Big Shotism I'm Over sexed
	Brown may get my job at the office.	Security Self-esteem (fear)	My drinking is effecting my job performance.	cutting corners, evading responsibility
Mrs. Jones	She's a nut -- she snubbed me. She committed her husband for drinking. He's my friend. She's a gossip.	Personal relationships. Self-esteem (fear)	I was drunk and rude to her. He's my drinking buddy. I've done some really embarrassing things drunk that she talks about.	pride, retaliation, accuse others, self righteousness, sense of persecution
My employer	unreasonable -- Unjust -- Overbearing -- Threatens to fire me for drinking and padding my expense account	Self-esteem (fear) Security.		
My wife	Misunderstands and nags. Likes Brown. Wants house put in her name.	Pride -- Personal sex relations -- Security (fear)		

be sure to also review your lists from your FEAR and SEX inventory.

The Sixth Column

And the last column, "**God given Instinct**", comes during the Seventh Step as a means of noting where we have 'come up short' of God's will for us. The basis for this is from the 12 & 12 page 42:

"Creation gave us instincts for a purpose. Without them we wouldn't be complete human beings. If men and women didn't exert themselves to be secure in their persons, made no effort to harvest food or construct shelter, there would be no survival. If they didn't reproduce, the earth wouldn't be populated. If there were no social instinct, if men cared nothing for the society of one another, there would be no society. So these desires - for the sex relation, for material and emotional security, and for companionship - are perfectly necessary and right, and surely God-given.

Yet these instincts, so necessary for our existence, often far exceed their proper functions. Powerfully, blindly, many times subtly, they drive us, dominate us, and insist upon ruling our lives. Our desires for sex, for material and emotional security, and for an important place in society often tyrannize us. When thus out of joint, man's natural desires cause him great trouble, practically all the trouble there is. No human being, however good, is exempt from these troubles. Nearly every serious emotional problem can be seen as a case of misdirected instinct. When that happens, our great natural assets, the instincts, have turned into physical and mental liabilities."

Personally, I've always felt like this looks somewhat like a repeat of that third column, but in *putting pen to paper* it always somehow turns out feeling different. I don't know why. Maybe it has something to do with getting back in perspective how much is "God's will for me", as opposed to how much is based on my "out of joint natural desires" for more than my share of what God has for me. For help in filling this in, click "**instincts**" at the top of the column for a partial list of these.

I'm resentful at:	The Cause	Affects My:	My part	Character Defects	God given Instincts
Mr. Brown	His attention to my wife	Sex relations Self-esteem (fear)	I'm out drinking or I'm home too drunk to pay attention to her / take her for granted.	self-centeredness	enjoy life, happiness, sex
	Told my wife of my mistress	Sex relations Self-esteem (fear)	I bragged to him about my mistress.	Egoism / Big Shotism I'm Over sexed	personal prestige, sex
	Brown may get my job at the office.	Security Self-esteem (fear)	My drinking is effecting my job performance.	cutting corners, evading responsibility	material security, personal prestige
Mrs. Jones	She's a nut -- she snubbed me. She committed her husband for drinking. He's my friend. She's a gossip.	Personal relationships. Self-esteem (fear)	I was drunk and rude to her. He's my drinking buddy. I've done some really embarrassing things drunk that she talks about.	pride, retaliation, accuse others, self righteousness, sense of persecution	emotional security, personal prestige
My employer	unreasonable -- Unjust -- Overbearing -- Threatens to fire me for drinking and padding my expense account	Self-esteem (fear) Security.			

My wife	Misunderstands and nags. Likes Brown. Wants house put in her name.	Pride -- Personal sex relations -- Security (fear)			
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be sure to review your lists from your FEAR and SEX inventory

Why Go to All This Trouble?

The book only shows **THREE** columns!

Yet after those three columns it says, "To conclude that others were wrong was as far as most of us ever got. The usual outcome was that people continued to wrong us and we stayed sore. Sometimes it was remorse and then we were sore at ourselves. But the more we fought and tried to have our own way, the worse matters got."

Those first three columns are mainly about other people. So, we need to put down this forth column to turn it into our inventory. In getting down our part of those situations, we can see what we can change.

Big Book pages 13-4

My friend promised when these things were done I would enter upon a new relationship with my Creator; that I would have the elements of a way of living which answered all my problems. Belief in the power of God, plus enough willingness, honesty and humility to establish and maintain the new order of things, were the essential requirements. Simple, but not easy; a price had to be paid. It meant destruction of self-centeredness. I must turn in all things to the Father of Light who presides over us all.

..."answered all my problems" ... "turn in all things"... . Strange how those two things get tied so closely together.

By the time you get that last column filled out it should start getting easier to distinguish which ideas seem to come from our God given instincts and will answer our problems, from those instincts we are twisting and germinating into items for future inventories.

Footnotes for the above:

<u>Partial List of Character Defects</u>		
accuse others	helplessness	power madness
anger	inability to accept conditions I	pride
anxiety	cannot change	promiscuity
bitterness	inadequacy	recklessness
bluffing	inferiority	rejection
cheating	insecurity	remorse
coldness	irresponsibility	retaliation
cutting corners	irritability	self destruction
delusions of personal grandeur	juggling accounts	self justification
depression	lacked honesty	self loathing
dishonest	laziness	self pity
disillusionment	lying	self righteousness

dominating others
doublecross
egomania
envy
evading responsibility
extravagance
fear
financial security
frightened
frustration
gluttony
grandiosity
greed
guilt
gripping

lust
lust for sex
lust for power
manipulate
miserly
oppose the grace of God
over reliance upon others
overvalue self
pinch penny
play the big shot
possessiveness
power driver

self seeking
selfishness
sense of persecution
sex desire
sloth
stubborn
twisty relations with others
unprincipled ambition
unreasonable demands
vengeful
wallowing in despair (pride in reverse)
waste
worry

This is only a partial list of character defects found in the Big Book and the 12 & 12. I'm sure you could find more.

Instincts mentioned in the 12&12

(pgs. 42-4, 48-9, 52, 64-6, 71-2, 114)

security - material & emotional
food
shelter
survival / self-preservation / personal safety
sex / reproduce / romance
social instinct / companionship
personal prestige / standing in community
family satisfactions
self-satisfaction / enjoyment of life

Like the list above, of Character Defects, there are more of these, but a complete list will depend upon ones own conception of their Higher Power. So I have limited this list only to those I found mentioned in the 12&12.