

Step Four

*“Made a searching and fearless
moral inventory of ourselves”*

“Our liquor was but a symptom. So we had to get down to causes and conditions.”

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- Big Book 2nd Ed. - p. 64*

We’ve made our decision, said our prayer (third step prayer) and surrendered. We’ve agreed to accept a new manager in our life, a Power greater than ourselves. Up to now we’ve been helpless and ineffectual at managing ourselves.

With the taking of Step Three many of us noticed a change in our lives. Power began to flow in where we none existed before. Our book tells us the results of our Step Three decision at the top of page 63.

“When we sincerely took such a position, all sorts of remarkable things followed. We had a new Employer. Being all powerful, He provided what we needed, if we kept close to Him and performed His work well.”

“Established on such a footing we became less and less interested in ourselves, our little plans and designs. More and more we became interested in seeing what we could contribute to life.”

“As we felt new power flow in, as we enjoyed peace of mind, as we discovered we could face life successfully, as we became conscious of His presence, we began to lose our fear of today, tomorrow or the hereafter.” – BB 2nd Ed. p.63

“We were reborn.”

Now here is the point in the recovery process where many A.A.s get into trouble. We start to feel better after taking Step Three and take pause. Maybe we begin to procrastinate knowing the more difficult spiritual work lies ahead and we don’t feel the need for it or maybe we are confused as to how we are supposed to complete Step Four. Many an A.A. has relapsed because they couldn’t continue the work they started. Remember, we said we were willing to go to any length; or does that only apply when we are feeling low, sad and depressed? Step Three will have little permanent effect unless at once followed by Step Four.

“Though our decision was vital and crucial step, it could have little permanent effect unless at once followed by a strenuous effort to face and to be rid of, the things in ourselves which had been blocking us.” – BB 2nd Ed. p. 64

In Steps two and three we learned that the solution to “powerlessness” lies in finding the needed power. Once again from page 44 of the Big Book:

“Lack of power that was our dilemma. We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be a Power greater than ourselves.” – BB 2nd Ed. p.44

We've now come to believe and have begun to seek that Power, (Steps Two & Three) but we are effectively "blocked" from that Power. All alcoholics can identify with the "noise in our heads." It comes from the resentments, the fear, the guilt shame and remorse that all alcoholics are plagued with. Until we can be rid of these things blocking us we can not bask in the sunlight of the spirit. Step Four is the means by which we can uncover that which blocks us. From page 64 of the Big Book:

"Therefore, we started upon a personal inventory. THIS WAS STEP FOUR."

"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. – BB 2nd Ed. p.64

When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically."

Alcoholism is first and foremost a spiritual illness. Most of us drank to overcome that terrible feeling of isolation, that feeling of not fitting in, not being comfortable in our own skin; the deep rooted feeling that there is something fundamentally wrong with us. Alcohol temporarily fixes that problem. So bottles are but a symptom of our greater spiritual illness. The book is now telling us that alcohol is not our problem but a lack of spirituality has caused our problems with alcohol. A spiritual problem will require a spiritual solution.

**If you are as seriously alcoholic as we were,
we believe there is no middle of the road solution. – BB 2nd Ed. p.25**

William James, in his book "The Varieties of Religious Experience" described the spiritual illness and its solution so accurately. He tells us that the solution to our spiritual problem is a "spiritual experience".

"To be converted, to be regenerated, to receive grace, to experience religion, to gain an assurance, are so many phrases which denote the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong, inferior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right superior and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities. This at least is what conversion signifies in general terms, whether or not we believe that a direct divine operation is needed to bring such a moral change about." – VRE p. 189

We've made our beginning in Step Three. Now we take paper in hand to identify the resentments, fears, and the harms that are blocking us. We are going to prepare a number of lists similar to an inventory of items. Simplicity is the key.

We will go back through our lives and uncover the grosser handicaps which have contributed to the flaws in our make-up. Our first list will deal with resentments. Let's check the definition so we understand what is meant by "resentment."

re·sent·ment

n. Indignation or ill will felt as a result of a real or imagined grievance.

Resentment is a feeling of ill will, hurt or anger on our part, directed at another person, institution, or a principle as the result of a real or imagined injury to us. Resentment is always the result of something done to us. By the nature of the word "re-resentment", we "re-feel" this hurt or injury over and over again in our minds. Each time we feel the pain just a little more. Left unchecked, we become angry with ourselves for having been in a position to have been hurt and resentments turn into self-resentment. Still unchecked, self-resentment turns into self-pity. Resentment is the chief manifestation of "self."

**Resentment is the "number one" offender.
It destroys more alcoholics than anything else. – p. 64**

Here are the instructions for listing our resentments. We recommend using a regular single subject notebook. The format of our resentment inventory is shown on page 65 of the Big Book. The instructions begin on page 64:

In dealing with resentments, we set them on paper.

1. We listed people, institutions or principles with who we were angry.

We start with a single column on the left side of our paper.

Our first instruction deals with names. We go back through our lives and honestly, with all completeness, identify who has hurt us. We can start with childhood and progress to the present. Consider parents, brothers and sisters, uncles, aunts, grandparents and other relatives. Childhood friends, teachers, classmates. Later in life we have friends, employers, co-workers, relationships, spouse(s) and children. Nothing counts as much as thoroughness and honesty. Here is where we must be fearless and come to terms with past experiences that may be painful or embarrassing. Many of us have suffered some form of abuse in our life, often of a sexual nature. Perhaps we have witnessed serious harms to others. We must face and be rid of these things that block us. As needed, we pray for God's guidance, strength and courage as we fearlessly complete this task. The secrets that we had intended to take to the grave must be listed if we are to be free of our spiritual malady. Be heartened by the fact that we too have had to face our skeletons and as a result, we have been given a perfect release from our alcoholism and now walk hand in hand with our creator in the realm of the spirit.

We also list institutions as necessary such as the government, churches, schools, and employers. Perhaps the IRS has garnished our wages, the courts have ordered we pay child support, or our employer has mismanaged its assets and we are in danger of losing our job through their malfeasance. We list all these things.

Finally we list any principles that have harmed us. Perhaps certain laws or moral principles have affected us. Abortion, racism, equal rights, sexuality and systems of government are all hotly charged issues of the day. Established thinking or practices regarding these principles may have affected us. We list all these as well.

When finished with all names we continue on and look at the next instruction on p. 64:

2. We asked ourselves why we were angry.

In the next column, immediately to the right of the names, we list the reason or reasons why we angry or hurt. Perhaps there are multiple occurrences associated with a single name. That being the case we list each one as shown in the example below, taken from page 65 of the Big Book. In this example we see three different instances where we are resentful at Mr. Brown. Simplicity is the key in filling out the second column. Just a few words to describe each occurrence or reason will suffice.

I'm resentful at:

The Cause:

Mr. Brown	His attention to my wife.
	Told my wife of my mistress
	Brown may get my job at the office.

Here it may be beneficial to take a few minutes before proceeding to get a little more insight to what “makes us tick.” Some of the best information we’ve ever seen regarding what drives us alcoholics can be found in the Twelve and Twelve and it’s called the Basic Instincts that create “self.” We will need to understand this better before we can fill out the third column. From page 42 in the Twelve and Twelve:

“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. – 12 & 12 p.42

* The first of three basic instincts Bill talks about which create self is the “**Social Instinct**”. This is our desire for a place in society. He tells us all human beings are born with the desire to be liked, to be accepted, to be respected by other people. That all human beings are born with the desire to come together in groups with other people. If we didn't have those desires and cared nothing for each other the world would go into complete anarchy, dog eat dog situation would reign, and eventually under those conditions the human race would fail to survive.

Now he used several terms under the social instinct. He uses the term

companionship...that's nothing more than wanting to belong or to be accepted.

So many of us grew up on the outside of the crowd looking in, wanting to be and knew we could not be.

He uses the term

prestige...that's wanting to be recognized or to be accepted as the leader of the group.

And the world needs leaders. I guess somebody back in the old caveman days had to say “John, get behind that tree with your spear. Jack you get over there with your club. And Mary-Jo and I will run this sucker through here and we'll have something to eat”. Somebody's got to do that. Most people will take one of two directions. Either let me be a part of or let me be the leader of. And in either case it's based upon what other people think of us.

self-esteem...is what we think of ourselves.

And that's usually high or low based upon what other people think of us or what we think other people think of us. If they seem to like us and accept us we feel pretty good towards ourselves. If it feels like they reject us and they don't want us then we feel pretty lousy towards ourselves.

Pride. And I'm glad I got into the habit of going to the dictionary. I always thought pride was something you ought to have. All I ever wanted to be as a young boy growing up, I wanted to grow up to be a man who walked tall with pride and just a little bit sideways like John Wayne does. Until I looked it up in the dictionary and it says:

pride... is an excessive and unjustified opinion of oneself.

We either think too well of ourselves or too little of ourselves. In either case it's not the truth.

personal relationships... is our relations with other human beings and the world around us.

ambitions... are the plans for the future.

To be liked, to be accepted, so on and so forth. All human beings have these things. Now if I want to be liked and accepted and respected by the world and the people in it the first thing I've got to do is decide, well what do they want from me?

Society teaches us those things as we grow up. It'll vary in different parts of the world. One part of the world perhaps it's a good education. Another part of the world it's to be large landowner. Another part of the world it's to have a large family. Any number of things based upon where we live in the world. And as we grow up and they teach us these things and we ourselves set goals for ourselves as to what we want to become in the future. And if we're going to reach the goals that we set for ourselves we're going to have to work at it. You can't just be a bum and sit on your duff and be successful and people like you and accept you. If it's a good education you're going to have to work at, whatever it might be.

By the same token we're going to have to make some sacrifices. There are some things that I would really like to do as a human being that are very pleasurable and very exciting that if you catch me at it you're not going to like me at all. And I don't think you and I would do the work necessary to reach the goal nor make the sacrifices necessary unless we get a reward for doing so. And the great reward, Bill said it in his story when he said

I had arrived!

God how many of us have done it. We set that goal and we just literally worked our tails off for years and the day we reach the goal and they pat us on the back and they say "Ah you're a fine fellow, you're a good man, you're doing great". There's a feeling that comes over us which is one of those indescribably wonderful feelings. Great, great feeling. The only thing wrong with it, it seems to be just a temporary feeling. No sooner do we reach the goal, we get the praise, we get the recognition, we get the prestige from it and we look around we say "Is this all there is to it?" And we set another goal. And we work and we work and we strive and we strive and we sacrifice and we reach the new goal and we get the praise and recognition, feels great, doesn't last long and we set another goal.

It seems to create within we human beings an insatiable desire for more and more power, more and more recognition and we're not getting it fast enough or they're not giving it to us the way we think they ought to, so what do we do about it?

Well we start taking shortcuts. We start doing a little lying, a little conning, a little manipulating, a little stepping on other peoples toes and climbing on their backs and the instant we do so we create pain and suffering for others. They in turn retaliate against us and create pain and suffering for us.

Plain that a life run on self-will could hardly ever be a success.

Under those conditions we will always be in collision with people, places and things.

Second basic instinct he talked about is the **security instinct**. Now, I know that in AA we try to live one day at a time. But I also know that just about everybody in this room has got an insurance policy. The purpose of the insurance policy is to protect ourselves in the future. Bill said all human beings are born with the desire to be secure in the future. He said if we didn't have that desire we wouldn't provide the food, the clothing, the shelter, the things that we need to survive. And next winter we would just simply freeze to death or the next drought season we would starve to death. So this desire that we have to be secure in the future is a God given thing and it is necessary for our survival. Now once again if you're going to be secure in the future you have to decide well what is it that I need in order to be secure?

Society usually teaches us those things as we grow up and it varies in different parts of the world. In one part of the world you only need \$4. In another part of the world you need \$4,000. In another part of the world maybe you need \$4,000,000. In another part of the world you need 198 coconuts. Whatever it is that they use to measure, trade and barter with. Based up what we're taught, we set goals for ourselves and we begin to work at it. Now if you're going to be secure in the future you can't just sit on your duff and be a bum. You're going to have to work, you're going to have to make some money, you're going to have to invest it.

At the same time you've got to sacrifice. Hell we can't blow it all today and be secure tomorrow. And I don't think you and I would do the work necessary to reach the goal or make the sacrifices necessary if we didn't get a reward for it.

Once again the great reward is that great feeling that comes at the moment of successful completion of the goal. How many of us have done it? We set the goal for the new dress, for the new shoes, for the new suit, for the new drapes, for the new couch, for the new home, for the new car, for the new piece of property, for the new business and we work and we work and we strive and we strive and the day that sucker is paid for and nobody can take it away from us. What a great, great feeling that is. Hell back when I was a kid hardly anybody owned their own homes. Once in a great while somebody would buy a home and they would sacrifice everything they had to pay that sucker off and the day they paid it off the feeling was so great they would call in the neighbors and we would have a great party and celebrate it by burning the mortgage. How great that was. The only thing wrong with it is that it's just a temporary feeling. No sooner got the sucker paid off that I looked around and his house is bigger than mine.

Yeah and he's got a Cadillac and I'm driving a Chevrolet. And he's got a Brooks Brothers suit and I bought mine at Kmart. And that causes us to set another goal. And we work and we work and we strive and we strive and we reach the new goal, feels good, doesn't last long, we set another....seems to create an insatiable desire for more and more and more and more. And we're not getting it fast enough. They're not giving it to us like we think they should. So what do we do? We take shortcuts. We lie, we cheat, we con, we manipulate, and the instant we do we hurt other people. They retaliate against us, creating pain and suffering for us.

Plain that a life run on self will can hardly ever be a success.

Third basic instinct he talks about is the **sex instinct**. He said all human beings are born with the desire to have sex. Now, it may get turned off by bad teachings or bad happenings but he said all human beings are born with the desire to have sex because if we don't have sex we can't reproduce ourselves. And if we don't reproduce ourselves, sooner or later the human race is going to fail to survive.

So just like the other two, if you're going to reproduce yourself through the sexual act you're going to have to work at it. Hell you can do more work in three minutes of sex, if you can last that long, than you'll do all day digging a ditch. Don't you older fellows remember how it used to be when we got through with it? My God you'd just fall over sideways, the sweat is just pouring off of you, and you can hardly get your breath. You feel like you've died, gone to heaven and come back two or three times. And I don't think you and I would do that kind of work if we didn't get a reward for doing so. And the great reward is that great feeling we get both physically and emotionally at the moment of the successful completion of the sex act. One of the greatest rewards that a human being can experience. But also just like the other two it seems to be just a temporary feeling. Hell you no sooner get through doing it that you get to thinking about doing it again. And it's such a pleasurable and exciting thing that the next thing you know you get to thinking about doing it in different ways. Then you get to thinking about doing it in different positions. Then you get to thinking about doing it with different people. And the next thing you know we're doing it at the wrong time in the wrong way with the wrong people and the instant we do so we create pain and suffering for others. They in turn retaliate against us, which creates pain and suffering for us.

It's plain that a life run on self will can hardly ever be a success.

**The fulfillment of these things are so pleasurable
that all human beings from time to time will overdo in one or more of these areas
and create pain and suffering for others.***

* The discussion of the Basic Instincts of Life that create self was taken from the Joe & Charlie Big Book Study conducted in 1988, Laughlin, Nevada. We gratefully acknowledge their insight and contribution to this work.

Now comes one of the most important facts that we alcoholics have to recognize. Unless we can place at the center of our lives the attainment of something which is perpetually fulfilling we will continue to pursue these basic instincts of life which we have found offer us but a temporary fulfillment or solution, at best.

We never could find enough alcohol, drugs, money, power or sex to satisfy us. No matter how hard we tried, and didn't we roll over anyone and everyone who stood in our way as we pursued these gratifications. The Oxford Group called these sought after gratifications, the 5 Ps.

Power, possessions, position, pleasure and applause.

We pursue these false Gods endlessly in the quest to feel good. All the while, the solution is to find the Power greater than human power. Only then will we find an endless supply of that which can fill the God shaped hole in our souls.

So understanding these basic instincts better, we can return to our list and look for the next instruction. We will start a third column directly to the right of column two (The Cause). From page 64 and 65 of the Big Book:

“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.”

<i>I'm resentful at:</i>	<i>The Cause:</i>
Mr. Brown	His attention to my wife. Told my wife of my mistress Brown may get my job at the office.

3. 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>I'm resentful at:</i>	<i>The Cause:</i>	<i>Affects My:</i>
Mr. Brown	His attention to my wife. Told my wife of my mistress Brown may get my job at the office.	Sex Relations, Self Esteem (fear) Sex Relations, Self Esteem (fear) Security, Self-esteem (fear)

Much of what follows will be reviewed in more detail with your sponsor in Step Five. It is important to understand at this point that we are going to look at what has previously occurred in our lives from an entirely different perspective. One thing that we begin to focus on as we look at our grudge list is, who did it to us becomes less important, compared to what was done to us that injured us most. Referring back to my list I can see that I would be just as angry if Mr. Green paid attention to my wife instead of Mr. Brown. This starts to get “names and personalities” out of the way and we start to focus on what was our injury and what part of “self” was affected rather than “who did it.”

From the Big Book on the bottom of page 65:

“When we were finished we considered it carefully. The first thing apparent was that this world and its people were often quite wrong. 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. It is plain that a life which includes deep resentment leads only to futility and unhappiness. To the precise extent that we permit these, do we squander the hours that might have been worth while. But with the alcoholic, whose hope is the maintenance and growth of a spiritual experience, this business of resentment is infinitely grave. We found that it is fatal. For when harboring such feeling we shut ourselves off from the sunlight of the Spirit. The insanity of alcohol returns and we drink again. And with us, to drink is to die. If we were to live, we had to be free of anger. The grouch and the brainstorm were not for us. They maybe the dubious luxury of normal men, but for alcoholics these things are poison.

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. 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."**

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.” – BB 2nd Ed. p.65

We find our last instruction for the resentment list in the middle of page 67:

4. 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. Selfish, dishonest, self-seeking or frightened. We placed them before us in black and white. We admitted our wrongs honestly and were willing to set these matters straight.

Here we add the fourth and final column to our list. In each instance, if we can see our part in what has occurred, we list it in this column. Selfish, dishonest, self-seeking or frightened.

<i>I'm resentful at:</i>	<i>The Cause:</i>	<i>Affects My:</i>	<i>My Part:</i>
Mr. Brown	His attention to my wife.	Sex Relations, Self Esteem (fear)	Selfish - Frightened
	Told my wife of my mistress	Sex Relations, Self Esteem (fear)	Dishonest
	Brown may get my job at the office	Security, Self-esteem (fear)	Self-seeking/Frightened

We've now finished the resentment inventory.

Next we look at our fears. This will be our second list of inventoried items. This can simply be a two-column list on a new page in our notebook.

Referring back to the example in the Big Book on page 65, page 67 asks us to examine our fears:

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 s hot through with it. It set in motion trains of circumstances which brought us misfortune we felt we didn't deserve. 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. – BB 2nd Ed. p. 67

The instructions for listing our fears can be found on page 68.

- 1. We reviewed our fears thoroughly. We put them on paper, even though we had no resentment in connection with them.**
- 2. 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 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.

The Twelve and Twelve also helps us to understand our fear. It tells us on page 76 that all fear boils down to one of two conditions:

“The chief activator of our defects has been self-centered fear--primarily fear that we would lose something we already possessed or would fail to get something we demanded.” – 12 & 12 p.76

Afraid that I'm not going to get what I want or that I will lose what I already have!

Self reliance is the cause of self-centered fear. When we examine each of our fears and ask ourselves “am I afraid I am not going to get what I want?” or “am I afraid I am going to lose what I already have?” we may begin to see each fear in a different light. Many of our fears are not “real.” The original and basic fear instinct seems to us to be one of “self-preservation.” For example, if you are staring down the headlights of an oncoming car we suggest the fear is real, if you are in water over your head and can't swim we suggest the fear is real, however fear of people and economic insecurity are but two examples self-centered fear that we suggest is “not real.”

So what is the solution to self centered fear? The big book tells us on page 68 that the antidote to fear is faith.

Perhaps there is a better way--we think so. For we are now on a different basis; the 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. – BB 2nd Ed. p.68

The book says we are in the world to play the role he assigns. Remember we read in Step Three that:

“He is the Principal; we are His agents. He is the Father, and we are His children.”

Just to the extent we get that simple relationship straight and do HIS work well, not my work but HIS work, will He match calamity with serenity in my life. So if you want to outgrow fear it seems like we will need to put His work first! Could this be the meaning of “First things First”?

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. – BB 2nd Ed. 68

So the last instruction related to fear is found on page 68.

3. We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be.

At once, we commence to outgrow fear.

We are now finished with our fear inventory.

Our last list will deal with harms that we have done to others. This list can be divided into two, sexual harms and other harms. The purpose of this list will be to see where we have been wrong and to whom we will need to make restitution. These will be our third and fourth lists of inventoried items. This can simply be a three column list on a new page in our notebook. We will list whom we hurt, what we did, and how we’ve been wrong.

From page 69 of the Big Book:

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.

So here is what we list, first column

1. Whom had we hurt?

Second column, what we did

2. Did we unjustifiably arouse jealousy, suspicion or bitterness?

Third column, which character defect was in play

3. Where had we been selfish, dishonest, or inconsiderate?

Our book has something to say about our sexual conduct that we should review, page 69.

Now about sex...we tried to be sensible on this question. It's so easy to get way off the track. We want to stay out of this controversy. We do not want to be the arbiter of anyone's sex conduct.

By reviewing where we had we been selfish, dishonest, or inconsiderate and with whom; where had we unjustifiably arouse jealousy, suspicion or bitterness; where were we at fault, and what we should have done instead,

...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. – BB 2nd Ed. p.69

You will often hear in the rooms of A.A. “no relationships in the first year.” We wish to emphasize this is not A.A. information. This is not a suggestion of Alcoholics Anonymous. Our text clearly states on pages 69 & 70:

“We do not want to be the arbiter of anyone's sex conduct.”

“God alone can judge our sex situation.

Counsel with persons is often desirable, but we let God be the final judge.”

We are now finished with our Harms Inventory and our Fourth Step work. We'll finish up reading on pages 70 and 71.

“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. 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.

If you have already made a decision (Step 3), and an inventory of your grosser handicaps (Step 4), you have made a good beginning.” – BB 2nd Ed. p.70

