

Alternative Inventory Using the Four Absolutes:

When you took step 3, we made a decision to turn our will and our life over to the care of God, as we understand Him.

In the past, we probably justified our bad behavior and blamed other people, places, or things for the problems we had created. Now we will begin to take responsibility for our past and current actions-- even if it requires needing to acknowledge painful, embarrassing, or difficult events, thoughts, emotions, or actions.

Addiction crippled our ability to reflect honestly about our lives. It limited our ability to understand the damage and havoc—the liabilities—it caused in all our relationships.

Before we could confidently rely on the God of our understanding, we need a framework through which He could help us sort out our past honestly. Step 4 provides that framework. This step is the “vigorous and painstaking effort to discover what these liabilities in each of us have been, and are” (Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, 42).

The inventory is also a step in helping us align our lives with the will of God. Through this inventory, we begin to identify negative thoughts, emotions, and actions that ruled our lives. By discovering those destructive elements in our lives, we can now take the first step toward correcting them. Doing an inventory does not need to be difficult. And, this step opens the door to the additional faith and hope we need to continue our recovery and overcome our addiction.

1. Resentments: the driving force of a fourth step

“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.”

Hence, in dealing with resentments “we set them on paper. We list the people, institutions or principles with whom we are angry. (pp 64-69, AABB)

What is the resentment?

What is the reason I have it?

What is my part in the resentment?

What is it that I am expecting from that person?

2. Fears

“This short word [fear] somehow touches about every aspect of our lives. It was an evil and corroding thread; the fabric of our existence was shot through with it. It set in motion trains of circumstances which brought us misfortune we felt we didn’t deserve. 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. We reviewed our fears thoroughly. We put them on paper, even though we had no resentment in connection with them.”

What is the underlying fear?

Do I have any other fears?

3. Harms done to others

“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.”

Liabilities using the 4 Absolutes:

HONESTY:

(Is it true or is it false?)

- How have I been dishonest with others and with myself?
- Have I lied, manipulated, cheated and stolen from others? List the big ones.
- Who was hurt by my dishonesty?
- How did this hurt my relationship with God, remembering that God is Truth?

UNSELFISHNESS:

(How will it affect others?)

- How has self-centeredness shown itself in my life and who has been hurt by it?
- Are there people, institutions or principles that still anger me? If so, is there a role I played – either bringing it about or holding on to my resentment?
- How have I put my own self-interest ahead of God’s plan for me to be of service to others?

PURITY:

(Is it right or is it wrong?)

- What past or present behaviors, thoughts or feelings make me feel guilty, isolated, or ashamed?
- What are the areas of my life that I don’t want others to see?
- Remembering that my sex powers are God given and good, where has my sex life strayed from what I believe God’s will is for me?

LOVE:

(Is it ugly or is it beautiful?)

- How has fear dominated my life?
- Has my life been isolated – a lonely life of “taking” rather than “giving”?
- Now, with God’s help, am I ready make “love and service” my code?

List: *What should I have done instead? How would God have me be? If this happens again, how might I respond differently?*

We already know that our resentments are overcome with forgiveness. We ask: *“Are you willing to forgive?”*

If there is anything that we are holding onto, we ask: *“Are you willing with prayer to ask God for the willingness to forgive?”*

Our fears are overcome with faith. Therefore, we ask: *Are you willing to ask God to remove your fears?*

Our harms are overcome by making our amends. We ask our sharing partner: *Do I owe an amends?* If I have an outstanding apology, it must be made as soon as practicable once the review has been completed.

We ask: *Are you willing to forgive those who have harmed you?*

We ask: *Are you willing to let God removed from you all the things you find objectionable? Are you willing to ask God to help you let go of them?*

Pray to have the character defect removed.

We ask God’s forgiveness and what corrective measures should be taken.

There are 2 types of corrective measures: thought and action.

Regarding thought: *How am I going to use the tools of the program to change my thinking and rid myself of my resentments and fears? What should the focus of my thoughts be?*

Regarding action: *what could I have done better? What actions can I take to improve the situation?*

4. List your assets.

5. Share: “what do you have to be grateful for?”

6. Think of someone who you can help. “Love and service is our code.”

Final Considerations: The Big Book concludes the inventory section by saying: *“If you have already made a decision, (Step 3) and an inventory of your grosser handicaps (Step 4), you have made a good beginning. That being so, you have swallowed and digested some big chunks of truth about yourself.”*

Now ask yourself the following question:

Have I knowingly omitted writing down anything I have done or left undone that makes me feel guilty, ashamed or separated from God, from people, or from myself?

If your answer is an honest "NO!" then we have completed Step 5 and the Big Book promises:

"Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are delighted. We can look the world in the eye. We can be alone at perfect peace and ease. Our fears fall from us. We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator. We may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but now we begin to have a spiritual experience. The feeling that the drink problem has disappeared will often come strongly. We feel we are on the Broad Highway, walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe."

References:

<https://addictionrecovery.lds.org/steps/4?lang=eng>

<http://www.recoverytoday.net/articles/454-a-simple-but-not-easy-fourth-step-guide>

<http://rumradio.org/step-four-courage-to-look-in-the-mirror-without-our-disguise/#sthash.4PfZUazj.dpuf>

<http://www.recoverytoday.net/>