

## **STEP 4 GUIDE**

*This Guide has been passed from hand to hand at 12 Step meetings over the years and is offered here only as a tool you may find useful in your own 12 Step program. This Guide is not promoted or endorsed as an official program or curriculum of the Betty Ford Center.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Many readers find the instructions for Step 4 contained in the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous* (called Big Book in the rest of this Guide) confused and complex. This paper, passed from hand to hand at meetings over the years, is written to reflect the experience of certain members of the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous in analyzing these instructions and their experience in taking this step in accordance with the instructions given in the book. Those who have taken this step in the manner suggested in the Big Book, including the inventory, the analysis and the study and prayer suggested by the book, have found it to be an exciting and rewarding experience. This experience is available to anyone who will complete each of the following steps to the best of his or her ability in the order in which they are given. Perfection is not required, but a good effort involving honesty, open-mindedness and willingness is essential. Do not skip any instruction, and complete each instruction before proceeding to the next.

### **INSTRUCTION 1**

Read the following and understand what we are doing.

#### **I. The Time and Purpose of Step Four**

Perhaps the greatest promise made by the program of Alcoholics Anonymous is that God, as you understand Him will do for you what you cannot do for yourself. This promise carries with it the obvious condition that you must do what you can.

When we have made the decision required by Step 3, the Big Book warns us that if we want a permanent result, we have to start a personal inventory to get down to causes and conditions.

The specific instructions for taking this step are contained from Page 64 to page 71 of the Big Book. These instructions should be read carefully at this point.

#### **II. What Do We Seek?**

The inventory is described as a fact-finding and fact-facing process. We are said to be seeking the truth about ourselves and to honestly take stock of our lives. We are to search out the flaws in our make-up, which caused our failure. Throughout the Big Book, it is stated that self, selfishness and self-centeredness were the root of our troubles. Being convinced that self, manifested in various ways, was what had defeated us, we considered its common manifestations. These common manifestations are grouped in three categories - - resentment, fear and sex relationships. Each of these common manifestations is treated separately in the inventory.

### **III. Resentments - - The Number One Offender**

From these thoughts or mental attitudes come all types of spiritual disease. We are instructed to list all people, institutions or principles with whom we were angry or had resentments. What is resentment?

- a. Webster's Dictionary defines "resentment" as "indignation or ill-will felt as a result of a real or imagined offense." Webster's then refers the reader to the word "anger" and gives other examples of this thought or feeling, which include rage, fury, ire, wrath, resentment and indignation. These words denote varying degrees of displeasure from anger – strong, intense and explosive – to the longer lasting resentment – ill will and suppressed anger generated by a sense of being wronged or being wrong.
- b. In summary, and with resentment broadly defined, we are dealing with a negative or unpleasant thought or feeling caused or generated by the real or imagined act or failure to act of a person, institution, or principle.
- c. Persons, institutions or principle may need some explanation. Remember you are a person, and your action or failure to act may very well cause you to think or feel bad (generally, this resentment of ourselves is called "guilt"). Institutions are any group of people, authorities, companies, governmental agencies or other organizations.

A principle is a basic truth or law. Many of these basic truths or laws have and do offend us, for example:

1. Alcoholism is an incurable, progressive disease.
2. Honesty is the best policy.
3. As you give, you receive - - (each of us suffers the consequences of his own action - - there is no free lunch).
4. When you are disturbed, no matter what the cause, there is something wrong with you.
5. A life lived without self-examination is not worth living (Socrates).

#### **Preparing the Grudge List**

With the foregoing instructions in mind, a list should be prepared of the people, institutions or principles that have caused or do cause you to have resentment, as defined above. Certain points should be remembered:

1. If you can remember the resentment, you should list it, even though you think you are over it. Go back through your life. Being thorough and honest is what counts. A

review of family albums, school annuals and the like may help you be thorough. Some people write a short autobiography of their life to assist them in their memory.

2. Do not concern yourself with whether you should or should not have the feeling - - just make the list and nothing more at this point.
3. Throughout the taking of Step 4 and at times thereafter, you will recall other people, institutions and principles that have caused these negative thoughts and feelings. You can add to this list any time, but do not spend too much time worrying about how complete the list is. Simply do the best you can over a reasonable period of time (perhaps one week).

## **INSTRUCTION 2**

Make a list of the people, institutions and principles you resent.

## **INSTRUCTION 3**

When you have completed your Grudge List, and not before, purchase and mark a spiral notebook as described below. At this time we will begin to analyze our resentments.

**Analysis of Resentments:** When you have completed your list, and not before, each resentment must be analyzed. Step 4 will mean very little unless you come to understand each resentment and learn from it. The following procedure has proven helpful in this understanding and analysis.

1. Purchase a spiral notebook and open it so that you have a blank page on either side of the wire spiral. With a ruler or straightedge, divide each of these pages vertically so that when both pages are divided, you have a total of four columns. Turn the page and repeat this process until have divided several pages in this manner. The columns on each page should be labeled as follows:

Column 1: "Name"

Column 2: "Cause"

Column 3: "Effect"

Column 4: (should be left blank for the time being)

## **INSTRUCTION 4**

One at a time you must take each resentment from your Grudge List and enter it into Column 1. Then complete 2 and 3 as described below. Complete the analysis of each resentment before taking the next one from the Grudge List. The following is a step-by-step description of this instruction:

- a. Take the first name from your Grudge List and write it in Column 1 on the first page.

- b. In Column 2, write a few words that describe each and every event or circumstance you can recall which causes you to resent the person named in Column 1. This is a very important part of the analysis - - we learn from specific events, not general complaints (for example, we learn little from the complaint that “he was always lying” but we learn much from a specific “he told me he wasn’t married”).
- c. Opposite each of the events you have listed in Column 2, write the reason the event or circumstance bothered you. Specifically ask yourself:
1. Did it affect my self-esteem (the way I think of myself or want others to think of me)?
  2. Did it affect my pocketbook?
  3. Did it affect my ambition (what I wanted or needed)?
  4. Was one of my personal relationships affected or threatened?
  5. If the effects described in paragraphs “a” through “d” above do not accurately describe the affect the event had upon you, write a few words to explain how you felt and how you were affected.
  6. COMPLETE THE ANALYSIS OF EACH OF YOUR RESENTMENTS ARISING OUT OF EACH OF THE EVENTS BEFORE GOING FURTHER WITH THE INVENTORY.

### **INSTRUCTION 5**

When Columns 1-3 have been completed for each resentment, take a little time to look back over them and then take the following action:

- a. **Study and Prayer.** Read and study the Big Book from the paragraph that begins at the bottom of page 65 through the second paragraph on page 67. Ask yourself these questions about each resentment and each event causing it and write a brief paragraph reflecting your answers:
1. Having determined who was at fault, did I go further in my study of this event?
  2. Did I try to retaliate, fight back or run? What was the result? Did it help?
  3. Is it clear to you that a life, which includes one of these resentments, leads only to futility and unhappiness? Has the resentment ever benefited you in any way, or have you squandered hours thinking about the resentment? Do you realize and understand that these thoughts separate you from God? Do you know that these thoughts will lead to you to the insanity of the first drink, and with us, to drink is to die?

4. Do you understand that through our thoughts and reactions to people, places and things, the world and its people dominate us? Do you understand that until we progress beyond the point of simply stop blaming others, or ourselves there can be no growth or solution?
  5. Can you forgive?
  6. Do you recognize that other people have the same problem with life that you have had and many of them are spiritually sick?
  7. Here, we pray for those on our lists, asking for the same tolerance and patience we would have for a newcomer. We ask for guidance in ways that we can become helpful; to be saved from our anger; and ask for God's will to be done!
- b. **The Beginning of Growth**. As noted earlier, it is a spiritual axiom that when I am disturbed, no matter what the cause, there is something the matter with me. Note that you have listed and understood the resentment and how it affected you. Having stopped blaming, you can now look for your own actions or reactions. In the past we went no further than to declare that someone was wrong. Isn't it true that we acted or reacted during each event or circumstance? Didn't we become angry? Depressed? Filled with self-pity, envy, jealousy, etc.? Didn't this affect our lives and the lives of those close to us?

## **INSTRUCTION 6**

Complete Column 4 as follows:

1. At the top of the fourth column on each page, insert the words my faults or mistakes.
2. For each person, institution or principle and for each event, ask yourself:
  - a. Where have I been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking, and frightened?
  - b. Where was I to blame?
  - c. How did I act or react? How did this affect me and those close to me?
  - d. Write down your faults as revealed by the above questions in the fourth column opposite each person, institution or principle and each event.
  - e. When you have concluded all of the instructions with respect to resentments, and not before, proceed to fear.

## **IV. Fear – - Touches every aspect of our lives**

Read from the third paragraph appearing on page 67 of the Big Book through the first three full paragraphs on page 68. Then take the following action:

- a. **“Fear” Defined.** Webster’s Dictionary defines “fear” as “a feeling of alarm or disquiet caused by the expectation of danger, pain, disaster” or the like (being found out, being known for what you know or think you are). It is said that the driving force in the life of most alcoholics is the self-centered fear that we will lose something we have or that we will not get something we think we need or want.
- b. **Listing of Fears.** On a page following the section on resentments, write a short description of each fear that you have experienced. Remember, under the topic “Resentments” (paragraph III. (f) 2 a, above) you have already asked yourself about the impact of fear on your resentments. We now complete the list of times, places and circumstances that evoke this feeling (i.e., snakes, bugs, heights, women, men, etc.).

### **INSTRUCTION 8**

Write a short analysis of each fear.

- a. **Analysis of Fear.** Having listed each of the fears, we should write a short analysis of these fears in our effort to understand them. It is said that each of these fears sets in motion chains of circumstances, which brought about or caused us misfortunes. Can you cite examples where this occurred? Why do you have each fear? Was it because self-reliance failed? Were you about to be harmed in some way by something you could not control or avoid? Can you run away from fear? How did I act or react to fear? Did my fear affect others? What should we now rely upon, if not ourselves?

### **INSTRUCTION 9**

- a. **Study and Prayer.** When our fears have been listed and the above questions answered, the Big Book gives us the solution to fear in the second and third paragraphs appearing on page 68. We are also given a short prayer on page 68 that helps us deal with our fears. This solution and prayer should be directed toward each of your fears.

## **V. Sex-Relationships**

### **INSTRUCTION 10**

This section of the inventory is covered in the Big Book from the last paragraph commencing on page 68 through the end of Chapter 5. This material should be read at this point.

- a. **Scope of Inventory.** This portion of the inventory begins by clearly discussing sexual relationships. On page 70 of the Big Book, a broader view of our relationships is important, and it is therefore suggested that we review our relationship with each of the important people in our lives, as well as all sexual relationships.

## **INSTRUCTION 11**

List those persons who are important in your life and any other person affected by your drinking or self-centeredness.

- a. **Preparing a List of Relationships.** Following fears in your inventory book, you should list the names of the persons to be studied. These should include both sexual and other relationships, including family, business, friends, etc.

## **INSTRUCTION 12**

Write a brief paragraph about each relationship.

- a. With respect to each person named on your list of relationships, write a short paragraph which answers the following questions - - remember to deal with specific events:
  1. Was I selfish in this relationship?
  2. Was I dishonest in this relationship?
  3. Was I inconsiderate in this relationship?
  4. Whom did I hurt?
  5. Did I arouse jealousy?
  6. Did I arouse suspicion?
  7. Did I arouse bitterness?
  8. Was I at fault?
  9. What should I have done?
- b. **Study and Prayer.** Through study and prayer, we seek to shape sane and sound ideals for our future sex life and our relationships. Whatever our ideals turn out to be, we must be willing to make amends for past wrongs, providing we do not bring about still more harm in so doing. In prayer and meditation we ask God what we should do about each specific matter, and we are told the right answer will come if we want it. On page 70 in the first paragraph in the Big Book, we are given instructions on how to proceed toward our new ideal.

Refer to paragraph 2 on page 70 of the Big Book for the summary. In these troublesome areas we are told to throw ourselves into helping others.

## **V. SUMMARY**

Read the last two paragraphs of Chapter 5. It is also helpful to read Chapter 4 of the "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions" at this point. Have you left anything out of your inventory? Have you failed to list any event or subject the memory of which causes you to be uncomfortable? If, so, you should write it down.

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**CONGRATULATIONS! YOU HAVE COMPLETED STEP FOUR!!**

**VI. STEP FIVE**

Read pages 72 through the first full paragraph on page 75 in the Big Book - - Take Step 5.