

Step 4 **Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.**

Tradition 4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or Sexaholics Anonymous as a whole.

Promise 4. We will know peace.

Reward 4 Peace of mind instead of confusion.

Readings:

White Book:	97 - 104, 105 - 110
AA Big Book:	63 - 71
12 and 12:	42 - 54
Step into Action:	57 - 65

Fourth Step Prayer

Dear God,

It is I who has made my life a mess.

I have done it, but I cannot undo it.

My mistakes are mine & I will begin a searching & fearless moral inventory.

I will write down my wrongs, but I will also include that which is good.

I pray for the strength to complete the task.

Something inside us always knew we'd have to face ourselves but we kept running away, refusing to take that long deep look in the mirror of our soul (WB 106). Blindness and denial. It is as though we will go to any lengths to avoid doing what is required for our own healing (WB 97). There is one sure way to get more than mere physical sobriety, and that is by coming out of denial, seeing our wrongs, and righting them under God - making Steps Four through Ten a way of life. The result is a new life. And with us sexaholics it is doubtful that we can even maintain sexual sobriety without this, although many of us try (WB 98).

Having now come to the end of self and surrendered in the first three Steps, we are ready to begin taking the stairs upward toward recovery, healing and growth from Step Four onward. These actions bring us face to face with the dreaded monster we've been running from - ourselves. They encourage and enable us to see the uglies within so we can become willing to change. Every liability will turn out to be an avenue of grace.

So we launched out on a course of vigorous action, the first step of which is a personal housecleaning, which many of us had never attempted. Though our decision (in Step 3) was a 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. Our acting out was but a symptom. So we had to get down to causes and conditions.

Step 4 **Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.**

Therefore, we started upon a personal inventory. **This was Step Four** (AA 63).

Now is when we start unloading that burden of wrongs and guilt we had been heaping on our backs. From out of great despair comes true surrender, which releases within us the desire to be good and make things right with our fellow man. If we cannot bring ourselves to do this, we have surely not yet passed through the gate of Step Three. Better to stop and go no further lest in pretending to work the other Steps, we seal over our wrongs like an infected cyst. No one seems able to make the Third Step commitment while knowingly holding onto his or her wrongs (WB 103).

Finding God, or finding spiritual union with another is not the result of a search at all, but of a moral housecleaning (WB 102). *This statement blew me away! What does it mean if this is true?*

Pages 62 through 70 of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* describe *precisely* how to do the 4th Step. There is an example of how we inventory our resentments on page 65. Add a 4th column on this list using a spiral notebook, with two face pages to allow adequate space to write. *First, make a list of the persons, institutions, and principles at whom you are angry.* Do this on a separate page so that as new resentments come to mind while you are writing the inventory, you can add them to the list without losing your train of thought.

One way to identify resentments is to break the word down into parts. “-sentment”, similar to the word “sentiment”, has the Latin root “sentiri”, which means “to feel”. And “re-” just means “again”. So “resentment” means “to feel again”. Let’s say someone does something that harms you or makes you angry. That’s not a resentment - it’s a wrong perpetrated by that individual against you. It doesn’t become a resentment until you take it home with you and replay it in your mind again later, and feel the pain a second time. Then maybe a few hours later you remember it again, and then the next morning you do it again. You’re doing it to yourself now - feeling the pain, anger, or other emotions over and over again.

Are there any past events from your life that you replay in your mind, whether frequently or every once in a while? Do you remember what your kids did to you yesterday? What your spouse did to you last week? What your sibling did to you last year? What your coworker or boss did to you 5 years ago? What your friend did to you 10 years ago? What your parents did to you 20 years ago?

List the persons at whom you are resentful and the cause on the left page, as shown on page 65 of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*. Draw a line down the center of the right page and label the 1st column “Affects my”. There should now be three columns labeled just like those in the book. Leave the 4th column (the 2nd column on the right page) empty at this point. The items that will be used in the 3rd column are listed on page 65. Here you identify how the cause affected:

- My self-esteem (how I feel about myself)
- My security (anything involved with my money, job, or financial system)

Step 4 **Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.**

- My ambitions (what I want for myself, my plans for the future)
- My personal relations (with friends, coworkers, family, or neighbors)
- My sex relations (people with whom I have been sexually involved)
- My security (what I think I need)
- My pride (ego, ego, ego!)

Follow the instructions with the example of pages 64 & 65 thoroughly to complete the 1st three columns.

After completing the first three columns, continue reading to the 3rd paragraph on page 67. "Referring to our list again, putting out of our minds the wrongs others had done, we resolutely looked for our own mistakes." This is what will be placed in the 4th column: "Where had we been:"

- selfish
- dishonest
- self-seeking
- frightened
- inconsiderate

For each example you have listed in the 1st three columns, you will now write in the 4th column which of the above five mistakes you made in connection with the resentment. List as many as apply for each resentment (elaborate as necessary). If you aren't sure, ask yourself these questions:

- What did you want?
- What was the real truth of the situation?
- Who/what did you use/manipulate to get what you wanted?
- What did you try to avoid or divert with your actions?
- Whose well-being were you concerned with, besides your own?

On pages 67 & 68 we are instructed how to address our fears. Using three columns for this part of the inventory, use the entire left sheet of paper for the 1st column in which you write a description of your fears. Draw a line down the center of the right page, creating the 2nd and 3rd columns. In the 2nd column write out what is being threatened from the list on page 65:

- self-esteem
- security
- ambitions
- personal relations

In the 3rd column write out the mistakes as we did for our resentments:

- selfish
- dishonest
- self-seeking
- inconsiderate

Step 4 **Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.**

You have now reviewed your fears thoroughly and put them on paper.

“Now about sex”. This paragraph at the bottom of page 68 invites us to look at this area of our life in a realistic, non-shaming fashion. “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 all this down on paper and looked at it.” (AA 69).

These questions are *not* rhetorical questions. Make a list of the persons with whom you have had relationships and write a paragraph for each one answering these questions. For those with whom you have acted out anonymously, it may be useful to write about “the prostitutes”, “the anonymous partners”, etc. collectively in a single paragraph, using these questions to identify recurring themes. If there are any particularly painful, disgusting, or arousing episodes, be sure to address them individually. Do not be afraid of seeming boastful; your sponsor can call you on this when you take the 5th Step. At this point be as thorough as you possibly can. It's the one you gloss over now that may take you back out next month or next year. Remember, if this work brings up overwhelming feelings, you can take a break and ask for support.

“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?” (AA 69). After taking the 5th Step, you may wish to talk with your sponsor about *writing down* a sane and sound ideal for your future sex life.

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, and an inventory of your grosser handicaps, you have made a good beginning. That being so you have swallowed and digested some big chunks of truth about yourself (AA 71).

We are the doctors in this soul surgery, and we perform the operation without any painkillers. Thank God we are not alone...(WB 104)

Thank you all for being here.