Session #2 – Steps 4 & 5

My name is _____ and I'm an alcoholic. Before we begin, let's have a moment of "quiet time" to invite the God of our own understanding into our hearts and ask for an open mind and the willingness to have a new experience… followed by the "Serenity Prayer"…

As a group, we're taking the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous in four 1-hour classes as they were taken in the mid-1940's.

During this session we will begin Step 4 and provide you will guidelines for completing your inventory. During the next week, each person taking the Steps should discuss his or her inventory with a "sponsor", or spiritual advisor.

Last week we took Steps 1, 2, & 3 together in class. (Optional): Is there anyone here this morning who didn't have the opportunity to take the first three steps last week and would like to do so now? If so, would you please stand. [Ask the First Step question:] **Do you concede to your innermost self that you are alcoholic?** Please answer, yes or no. [Ask the Second Step question:] **Do you now believe, or are you even willing to believe, that there is a Power greater than yourself?** Please answer, yes or no. [Ask the Third Step question:] **Have you made a decision to turn your thinking and your actions over to the care of God *as you understand Him* – in other words: Have you decided to go through with the remaining steps in the Program of Recovery.** Please answer, yes or no. Thank you, please be seated. If you answered yes to these questions, you have completed Steps One, Two, and Three.

Let's say the Third Step Prayer TOGETHER, as we did last week, to reconfirm our Third Step decision:

> "**God, I offer myself to Thee -- to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!**"

Now we can move on to Step 4.

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

At the bottom of page 63, the "Big Book" tells us what we need to do now that we've made our decision to proceed:

> "Next 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 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. Our liquor was but a symptom. So we had to get down to causes and conditions."
> (page 63, ¶ 4, lines 1-2; page 64, lines 1-7)

Please note the book says <u>at once</u>. This means we take the Fourth Step immediately after Step Three. We have to get rid of those things which have been blocking us off from God or else our initial contact with our Creator won't last.

What are these “causes and conditions”? Well, the “Big Book” uses a lot of different words meaning the same thing: “damaged or unsalable goods”, “flaws in our make-up”, “defects of character”, shortcomings, and even wrongs. All these have the same effect: they block us off from God.

The book starts by comparing a personal inventory to a business inventory. In the first full paragraph of page 64, they write:

> “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.”
> (page 64, ¶ 1)

So, we are going to conduct the equivalent of a commercial inventory on our lives. We are going to discover what had blocked us off from the Sunlight of the Spirit.

Next, the authors tell us exactly what we have to do to conduct a Fourth Step inventory:

> “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."
> (page 64, ¶ 2)

We are going to inventory or, "take stock" if you will, of three manifestations of self-will: our **resentments**, our **fears**, and our **conduct** with emphasis on our sex lives. We have provided a "Guide Booklet" for you, which covers Steps 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, & 9. We're going to read the "clear-cut", simple directions that the "Big Book" documents for us and use the guide booklet in conjunction to help us start and complete our inventories. We're going to take the 4th Step exactly the way the Big Book prescribes. Let us reassure you, the Fourth Step is not difficult nor should it be a tedious process. Within seven pages of text, the "Big Book" gives us precise instructions on how to make a good beginning on facing and getting rid of the obstacles in our path.

The first manifestation of "self" we're going to look at is our **resentments**. In the third paragraph on page 64, the book says:

> "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."

Resentment basically means to re-feel or feel again. The "Little Big Book Dictionary" gives the following definition for resentment: "a persistent feeling of ill will and suppressed

anger caused by a sense of an injustice, injury, offense, or wrong done / to resent basically means to 'feel again' strongly or to 're-live again".

Let's first look at the simple step-by-step, column-by-column procedure the "Big Book" gives us for writing the resentment inventory. Six lines from the bottom of page 64, the book tells us:

> "In dealing with resentments, we set them on paper. We listed people, institutions or principles with whom we were angry."
> (page 64, ¶ 3, lines 6 – 9)

Page 2 of our guide booklet gives the same example of the resentment inventory found on page 65 of the Big Book. Let's look at page 3 of our guide, which lists examples of people, institutions, and principles that alcoholics are commonly resentful at. To help us get a start with the first column of our resentment inventory, we're going to go down the list of names on this checklist. Generally, alcoholics know who they are resentful towards. Unless you have a "deep-seated" resentment, the names on this list should help you to list the people, institutions, and principles that need to be listed in your first column. Once we've checked off the names on this list, we're going to transfer them over to the four-column inventory sheet that is on pages 4 and 5 of the guide. As I read through the list of names, check the ones with whom you are resentful toward, angry with, or feel any ill will toward. Let's begin with the names listed under the category "people" (then "institutions", then "principles"):

PEOPLE

- ☐ Father (Step)
- ☐ Mother (Step)
- ☐ Sisters (Step)
- ☐ Brothers (Step)
- ☐ Grandmother
- ☐ Grandfather
- ☐ In-Laws
- ☐ Husbands
- ☐ Wives
- ☐ Aunts
- ☐ Uncles
- ☐ Cousins
- ☐ Clergy
- ☐ Police
- ☐ Lawyers
- ☐ Judges
- ☐ Doctors
- ☐ Employer's
- ☐ Employee's
- ☐ Co-Workers
- ☐ Creditors
- ☐ Childhood Friends
- ☐ School Friends
- ☐ Teachers
- ☐ Life Long Friends
- ☐ Best Friends
- ☐ Acquaintances
- ☐ Girl Friends
- ☐ Boy Friends
- ☐ Parole Officers
- ☐ Probation Officers
- ☐ AA Friends
- ☐ U.S. Service Friends
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

INSTITUTIONS

- ☐ Marriage
- ☐ Bible
- ☐ Church
- ☐ Religion
- ☐ Races
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Authority
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Education System
- ☐ Correctional System
- ☐ Mental Health System
- ☐ Philosophy
- ☐ Nationality
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

also added to the list could be:

- ☐ Rehabs
- ☐ Hospitals

PRINCIPLES

- ☐ God-Deity
- ☐ Retribution
- ☐ Ten Commandments
- ☐ Jesus Christ
- ☐ Satan
- ☐ Death
- ☐ Life After Death
- ☐ Heaven
- ☐ Hell
- ☐ Sin
- ☐ Adultery
- ☐ Golden Rule
- ☐ Seven Deadly Sins
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Great! The first column of our resentment inventory is complete. We're going to transfer a couple names we just checked to the first column of the inventory sheet on pages 4 and 5 of the guide booklet. This sheet is a sample for us

to use in class. Please use the sheet on pages 6 and 7 to make additional copies for yourselves during the next week.

Let's take a couple moments to jot down the two biggest resentments we have. Transfer the names from your "Resentment Inventory Prompt Sheet" on page 3 of the guide to the first column ("I'm resentful at") of our resentment sheets on page 4.

[PAUSE]

[Do examples on black board. But first over directions for columns 2, 3, & 4.]

Follow along on pages 64 and 65 of the Big Book and at the same time follow along with pages 4 and 5 of the guide booklet.

Second column: ***"The cause"***, second instruction – 3 lines up from the bottom of page 64:

> "We asked ourselves why we were angry."

Why am I resentful, "burned up" or sore at _____? What did they do to make me angry? List all the resentments you have for each name. You could have more than one resentment toward a person.

In the **Third column: *"Affects My"***, third instruction – page 64, last three lines and page 65, first two lines: [We're going to be looking at **7 areas of "self"**…]

> "In most cases it was found that our self-esteem **(1)**, our pocketbooks **(2)**, our ambitions **(3)**, our personal relationships **(4)**, (including sex) **(5)** were hurt or threatened."

In the first paragraph on page 65, the "Big Book" repeats itself:

> "On our grudge list we set opposite each name our injuries. Was it our self-esteem, our security **(6)**, our ambitions, our personal, or sex relations, which had been interfered with?"

And from the lower right-hand corner of page 65 in Bill's resentment inventory example we get pride **(7)**. That's the **7 areas of "self"** that are affected by resentments according to the Big Book.

Remember: our **self-esteem** is how we view ourselves. Our **pride** is how we think others view us. Our **ambitions** are our plans for the future. And our [emotional] **security** is our general sense of personal well being.

When the first three columns are complete, the "Big Book" authors tell us to pray for the people we resent. Why? We need to rid ourselves of these resentments. Well why on earth would we want to be free of resentments? Shouldn't we justifiably be angry with these people? Don't we have a right to be "burned up"? Well, let's see what the book says on the middle of page 66 the "Big Book" says:

> "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." (page 66, ¶ 1, lines 1-10)

Well, that's very simple, isn't it? The book says very clearly, if we continue to hold on to resentments we will drink again.

How do we get "free of anger", as the book suggests we do? The next couple paragraphs deal with prayer.

First, the "Big Book" asks us to turn back to our list because it holds the key to our future. They tell us to look at it from an entirely different angle.

On the bottom of page 66, the book states:

> 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. (page 66, ¶ 4, lines 1 & 2; page 67, lines 1 & 2)

The next few lines are prayers to rid our resentments.

Prayer:

> "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."
> (page 67, lines 3-8)

[Now do a couple examples of the first three columns on the board.]

[When first three columns are complete on the board, cover the material for the fourth column in the Big Book.]

[REMIND them to pray for the people in their first column when they have completed their third column and before going on to the fourth column.]

Let's now look at the fourth column on our resentment inventory sheets and read the directions in the second 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. 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."
> (page 67, ¶ 2, lines 1-11)

What's the exact nature of our wrongs? It's important that we see our part in the resentment. Let's see how we got the proverbial ball rolling in the first place.

[Complete column four on black board.] Remember: let's look at it from an entirely different angle. What did we do? What's our part - disregarding the other person entirely.

Any questions about the resentment inventory?

OK, now let's look at our fears. The last paragraph on page 67 says:

> 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 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?
> (page 67, ¶ 3, lines 1-8)

On the top of page 68, the "Big Book" tells us that: "…fear ought to be classed with stealing. It seems to cause more trouble." Fear is a thief! It robs me from my relationship with God.

Here are the simple instructions for the fear inventory. First paragraph, 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 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.
> (page 68, ¶ 1, lines 1-8)

Let's look at our "Fear Inventory Prompt Sheets" on page 8 of our guide booklet. When you complete the fear inventory during the next week, take all the fears from the fourth column of your resentment inventory and transfer them to the first column of the Fear Inventory sheet on page 10 because it says in the paragraph we just read "we put [our fears] on paper, even though we had no resentment in connection with them". We'll be using page 9 of the guide to get us started in class. Now, let's take a moment to check off any fears we have that are listed on the "Fear Inventory Prompt Sheet" on page 8 of the guide. [**Depending on time**, either read list aloud or give the class a moment or two to go down the checklist themselves.] Remember, use the spaces provided to list any fears that you have that *aren't* on the prompt sheet.

Let's list a few fears in column 1 "I'm fearful of" on our sample fear inventory on page 9 of the guide.

[Time permitting, guide the class through the two-column fear inventory. Remind them to make additional copies of the “fear Inventory” sheet on page 10.]

How do we get rid of fear? Take a guess. That's right, through prayer!

Page 68, paragraph three, sixth line:

> We never apologize for God. Instead we let Him demonstrate, through us, what He can do.

Prayer:

> We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be.
> (page 68, ¶ 3, lines 6 -9)

The results are in the next sentence:

> At once, we commence to outgrow fear.
> (page 68, ¶ 3, lines 9 & 10)

Notice the book doesn't say fear goes away and never comes back again. It states that we outgrow fear. We outgrow fear because through prayer, we're asking God to direct us toward his will - to do his work - to do his bidding.

It's that simple! And the miracle is it works!

"Now about sex." The "Big Book" continues on the bottom of page 68. They suggest "many of us needed an

overhauling" in this area of our lives. They say on page 69 that "we all have sex problems and we'd hardly be human if we didn't." The question is "What can we do about them?"

Well, the "Big Book" tells us to review our own conduct over the past years. Therefore, we will begin our third and final inventory.

Turn to page 11 of our guide. Begin to list all the people you've had relations with over the years. Once you've listed all the names, then put a check mark in column two if you harmed these people through your sex conduct, in another way (excluding sex), or no harm at all.

Once this list is completed, you will transfer the names of the people you've harmed to the "Review of Conduct" Inventory on pages 12 & 13 of the guide. The "Review of Conduct" Inventory is a four-column inventory similar to the resentment inventory. In column 1 list the people you've hurt. In column 2 list what you did to hurt the person in column one. Also, list where you were at fault; where you had been selfish, dishonest, or inconsiderate. In column 3, list if you've unjustifiably aroused jealousy, suspicion, or bitterness. Then, in the forth column we get to list what we *should have done instead*. We're going to use this fourth column as part of our ideal for the future.

Please be sure to review the bottom of page 68 and pages 69 and 70 with your sponsor and complete this inventory as well as the rest of the resentment and fear inventories during the next week.

Let's point out a couple other things in the sex conduct inventory.

Prayer:

> "We asked God to mold our ideals and help us to live up to them."
> (page 69, ¶ 2, lines 3 & 4)

The last full paragraph on page 69 reads:

> 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. In other words, we treat sex as we would any other problem.

Prayer:

> In meditation, we ask God what we should do about each specific matter.
>
> The right answer will come, if we want it.
> (page 69, ¶ 3, lines 1-8)

In the middle of page 70 there's more prayer:

> To sum up about sex:

Prayer:

> "We earnestly pray for the right ideal, for guidance in each questionable situation, for sanity, and for the strength to do the right thing."
>
> "If sex is very troublesome, we throw ourselves the harder into helping others. We think of their needs and work for them. This takes us out of ourselves. It quiets the imperious urge, when to yield would mean heartache."

Use the spaces provided on page 14 of the guide to come up with a sex ideal that you believe is how God wants you to be. This page of the guide also lists prayers that we should be saying while completing our 4th step.

Let's briefly cover some instructions for taking our **5th Step** which we will be sharing with our sponsor or spiritual advisor during the next week.

First a warning: it says on the first page of Chapter 6, "Into Action":

> "If we skip this vital step, we may not overcome drinking. Time after time newcomers have tried to keep to themselves certain facts about their lives. Trying to avoid this humbling experience, they have turned to easier methods. Almost invariably they got drunk. Having persevered with the rest of the program, they wondered why they fell. We think the reason is that they never completed their housecleaning. They took inventory all right, but hung on to some of the worst items in stock. They only thought they had lost their egoism and fear; they only

thought they had humbled themselves. But they had not learned enough of humility, fearlessness and honesty, in the sense we find it necessary, until they told someone else all their life story."

A couple of important points the book points out in the 5th Step:

- "We must be entirely honest with somebody if we expect to live long or happily in this world."
- "Rightly and naturally, we think well before we choose the person or persons with whom to take this intimate and confidential step."
- "Though we have no religious conception, we may still do well to talk with someone ordained by an established religion."
- "…we search our acquaintance for a close-mouthed, understanding friend."
- "It is important that he be able to keep a confidence; that he fully understand and approve what we are driving at; that he will not try to change our plan."
- "When we decide who is to hear our story, we waste not time."
- "We have a written inventory and we are prepared for a long talk."
- "We explain to our partner what we are about to do and why we have to do it." He should realize that we are engaged upon a life-and-death errand. Most people approached in this way will be glad to help; they will be honored by our confidence."
- "We pocket our pride and go to it, illuminating every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past."

After the 5th Step is complete, your sponsor should direct you to page 75 of the Big Book which gives us directions for what to do when "returning home":

> "Returning home we find a place where we can be quiet for an hour, carefully reviewing what we have done. We thank God from the bottom of our heart that we know Him better. Taking this book down from our shelf we turn to the page which contains the twelve steps. Carefully reading the first five proposals we ask if we have omitted anything, for we are building an arch through which we shall walk a free man at last. Is our work solid so far? Are the stones properly in place? Have we skimped on the cement put into the foundation? Have we tried to make mortar without sand?"

You can use the space provided on pages 14 & 15 of your guide booklets to answer these review questions.

If you sponsor does not take you through the 6th & 7th Steps after you've completed your 5th and answered the questions on the bottom of page 75, don't worry, we'll be taking Steps 6 & 7 in class next week.

[If time permits, read the last two paragraph of Chapter 5. If short on time, skip it...]

We'll conclude this meeting with the last two paragraphs of the chapter 5:

> "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. That being so you have swallowed and digested some big chunks of truth about yourself."

We wish you the very best as you leave here to complete your inventory and share it with your "sponsor" during the next week.

May God bless you and keep you until then.

Prepared by Mike L. for the West Orange, New Jersey A.A. “Beginners’ Classes”. This format may be used and distributed provided that a fee, except for photocopying reimbursement, is NOT charged. Please do not change, modify, or alter without prior consent from the author. For additional copies of this guide call 973-731-1073 or email mjl221@att.net. May God bless you in your journey through taking and teaching the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.