

Session #2 – Steps 2, 3, & 4

We are about to take our second journey back to the early days of Alcoholics Anonymous—back to the four one-hour Beginners' Meetings of the mid-1940's. During this session we will complete the surrender process we started in the previous session. In addition, we will learn how to eliminate those parts of our character that have prevented us from establishing an intimate, two-way communication with the God of our understanding.

WELCOME to session number two of the Sex Addicts Anonymous Beginners' Meetings. Together, we are taking the Twelve Steps based on the directions found in the "Big Book" of Alcoholics Anonymous and the personal experiences of the A.A. pioneers.

Our names are _____ and _____ and we are members of Sex Addicts Anonymous. We are grateful our S.A.A. Group allowed us to lead these sessions. This is one way we can be of service to others and, at the same time, grow in the "fellowship of the Spirit."

Our goal is to recover from the seemingly hopeless state of mind and body known as sex addiction. And recover we will. The August 1946 A.A. Grapevine contains an article titled, "Minneapolis Record Indicates that 75% are successful in A.A." The article demonstrates what can happen when newcomers attend Beginners' Meetings and then return to help others through the Steps. If you attend the Beginners' Meetings long enough, you will experience the miracle and recover from sex addiction.

During this session, we will take Steps Two and Three and we will provide you with guidelines for taking the Fourth Step. This afternoon, each newcomer will share his or her inventory with another human being.

Several older members have told us the only way to understand the "Big Book" is to try to explain it to someone else. They were right. We didn't realize how little we knew about this textbook for recovery until we started leading these meetings.

So, we want to thank you for providing us the opportunity to learn more about our spiritual program or recovery by once again taking the Steps of Sex Addicts Anonymous along with you. As we have learned right here in these Beginners' Meetings, each time we take the Steps, we grow spiritually.

Before we begin, we need to make sure each newcomer has someone here to "sponsor" them through the Steps. In order for this process to work, it is essential that "sponsors" and newcomers attend the sessions together.

Are there any newcomers here for this second session without their "sponsor?" If so, please stand. [Ask for volunteers to "sponsor" those who are standing.] Thank you. Please be seated.

*(Optional): Is there anyone here tonight who didn't have the opportunity to take the First Step 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 you are a sex addict?** Please answer, yes or no.] Thank you, please be seated. If you answered yes to this question, you have completed Step One.*

As we explained, the "Big Book" of Alcoholics Anonymous contains step-by-step directions on how to recover from alcoholism, or in our case, sex addiction, by finding a Power greater than ourselves. This Power will eliminate our obsession to act out sexually, and lead us to a "new freedom and a new

happiness.”

Let’s start with a brief review of what we have learned so far. In the last paragraph on page 64 of the “Big Book,” we find an excellent overview of the recovery process. Starting in the middle of the third line, the “Big Book” authors write:

“...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.”

This is our goal—to correct the spiritual malady that has separated us from God and has doomed us, until now, to the living Hell of sex addiction.

If we are spiritually sick, how do we overcome this malady? The authors tell us we need to experience a psychic change—a spiritual awakening. Doctor Silkworth describes the effect of this change on the alcoholic, or sex addict if you will, in the first paragraph on Roman numeral page 27 (xxvii). There, Dr. Silkworth writes:

“On the other hand—and strange as this may seem to those who do not understand—once a psychic change has occurred, the very same person who seemed doomed, who had so many problems he despaired of ever solving them, suddenly finds himself easily able to control his desire for alcohol, the only effort necessary being that required to follow a few simple rules.”

What are these simple rules? They are “trust in God and clean house” plus “help others.” If we follow these guidelines, we will receive the ultimate reward—a spiritual awakening.

Earlier today we started our journey to this spiritual awakening by taking Step One. We conceded to our innermost selves we were powerless over our addictive sexual behavior, that is, we are sex addicts.

Those of you who completed Step One please stand. These are the members who took the First Step with us.

We commend you for admitting you have a problem. As the “Big Book” says, “This is the first step in recovery.” Your admission is a major achievement, since most sex addicts live in total denial they have an addictive sexual problem.

Thank you. Please be seated. We are now ready to proceed.

Step 2

Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Now that we have admitted we are sex addicts, let’s look at what we have to do in order to recover. At the bottom of page 44, paragraph four, we learn:

“If a mere code of morals or a better philosophy of life were sufficient to overcome alcoholism, many of us would have recovered long ago. But we found that such codes and philosophies did not save us, no matter how hard we tried. We could wish to be moral, we could wish to be philosophically comforted, in fact, we could wish these things with all our might, but the needed power wasn’t there. Our human resources, as marshaled by the will, were not sufficient; they failed utterly.”

What is it going to take for us to find this Higher Power? The answer is in the back of the “Big Book” within Appendix II. In the second paragraph on page 570, we find:

“Most emphatically we wish to say that any alcoholic capable of honestly facing his problems in the light of our experience can recover, provided he does not close his mind to all spiritual concepts. He can only be defeated by an attitude of intolerance or belligerent denial.”

“We find that no one need have difficulty with the spirituality of the program. *Willingness, honesty and open mindedness are the essentials of recovery. But these are indispensable.*”

The “Big Book” authors tell us it is our arrogance and our shortsightedness that keep us in the darkness and block us from the “sunlight of the Spirit.”

Bill W., the New York City co-founder, had a great deal of difficulty accepting this spiritual solution to alcoholism. In “Bill’s Story” he describes how he “came to believe.”

In late November 1934, Ebby T. visits Bill at his Brooklyn New York home. It is during this visit that Bill first learns about a God of his own understanding. Let’s pick up the story at the top of page 12.

As we mentioned, Ebby is one of Bill’s high school friends and a former drinking companion. Ebby has been sober in the Oxford Group for several months. He tells Bill his life has changed as a result of practicing the Oxford Group Four Spiritual Activities.

Bill becomes quite distressed when Ebby starts talking about God. However, he does listen because he realizes Ebby’s life has changed—he is sober for the first time in many years:

“Despite the living example of my friend there remained in me vestiges of my old prejudice. The word God still aroused a certain antipathy. When the thought was expressed that there might be a God personal to me this feeling was intensified. I didn’t like the idea. I could go for such conceptions as Creative Intelligence, Universal Mind or Spirit of Nature but I resisted the thought of a Czar of the Heavens, however loving His sway might be. I have since talked with scores of men who felt the same way.”

Then, Ebby presents Bill with a revolutionary concept:

“My friend suggested what then seemed a novel idea. He said, *Why don’t you choose your own conception of God?*”

“That statement hit me hard. It melted the icy intellectual mountain in whose shadow I had lived and shivered many years. I stood in the sunlight at last.”

“It was only a matter of being willing to believe in a Power greater than myself. Nothing more was required of me to make my beginning. I saw that growth could start from that point. Upon a foundation of complete willingness I might build what I saw in my friend. Would I have it? Of course I would!”

This is how Bill started on his spiritual journey to a God of his own understanding and lasting sobriety. It all began with Bill’s willingness to believe.

Now, let's look at how the "Big Book" authors describe God. In the middle of page 46, paragraph one, they ask us to set aside our contempt for spiritual principles and consider our own concept of God. If we do, we will begin to realize there just might be some validity to the S.A.A. spiritual solution for the addictive sexual behavior. Starting with line three in the first paragraph, they write:

"...We found that as soon as we were able to lay aside prejudice and express even a willingness to believe in a Power greater than ourselves, we commenced to get results, even though it was impossible for any of us to fully define or comprehend that Power, which is God."

Basically, the "Big Book" authors tell us it is impossible to define God. We have to stop trying to comprehend God with our mind and start accepting God with our heart. On the top of page 47, they write:

"When, therefore, we speak to you of God, we mean your own conception of God. This applies, too, to other spiritual expressions which you find in this book. Do not let any prejudice you may have against spiritual terms deter you from honestly asking yourself what they mean to you. At the start, this was all we needed to commence spiritual growth, to effect our first conscious relation with God as we understood Him. Afterward, we found ourselves accepting many things which then seemed entirely out of reach. That was growth, but if we wished to grow we had to begin somewhere. So, we used our own conception, however limited it was."

Sometimes we have to take our lives right to the brink of disaster and look death squarely in the eye before we are willing to acknowledge the presence of a Higher Power. But there is hope even for the most stubborn of us. Starting with the seventh line down from the top of page 48, the "Big Book" authors state that most of us eventually become "teachable":

"...Faced with alcoholic destruction, we soon become as open minded on spiritual matters as we had tried to be on other questions. In this respect alcohol was a great persuader. It finally beat us into a state of reasonableness. Sometimes this was a tedious process; we hope no one else will be prejudiced for as long as some of us were."

In the third paragraph on page 52, the authors make a powerful case for the existence of God:

"When we saw others solve their problems by a simple reliance upon the Spirit of the Universe, we had to stop doubting the power of God. Our ideas did not work. But the God idea did."

Once again we need to make a decision. We have to decide whether or not we believe in a Creator—a Spirit of the Universe—a God of our understanding. In the second paragraph on page 53, the "Big Book" authors write:

"When we became alcoholics, crushed by self-imposed crisis we could not postpone or evade, we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or else He is nothing. God either is, or He isn't. What was our choice to be?"

Now, it's time to choose. Are we willing to concede that there is a Higher Power? If we are, we're ready to take Step Two.

In the middle of page 47, paragraph two, we find the directions:

"We needed to ask ourselves but one short question. 'Do I now believe, or am I even willing to

believe, that there is a Power greater than myself?’ As soon as a man can say that he does believe, or is willing to believe, we emphatically assure him that he is on his way. It has been repeatedly proven among us that upon this simple cornerstone a wonderfully effective spiritual structure can be built.”

Let’s see who is ready to proceed? Will those who have completed Step One please stand. This is the Second Step question:

“Do I now believe, or am I even willing to believe, that there is a Power greater than myself?”

Please answer, one at a time, yes or no.

[Have each newcomer answer the question.]

Thank you. Please be seated.

Those of you who answered yes to this question have completed Step Two.

Now for those who are ready, let’s look at Step Three.

Step 3

Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.

This Step begins just below the middle of page 60, paragraph three. How do we know that? Well, in this case, the “Big Book” authors tell us:

“Being convinced, *we were at Step Three,...*”

What are we convinced of? If we’ve taken Step Two, we are convinced that a Power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity. Now, we need to make a decision to put this Power to work. In other words, we have to get out of the way and let God direct our lives.

On pages 60 through 63, the “Big Book” authors discuss self-will and God’s will in great detail. At the bottom of page 60, paragraph four, they explain we are like actors trying to control every detail of a play:

“The first requirement is that we be convinced that any life run on self-will can hardly be a success. On that basis we are almost always in collision with something or somebody, even though our motives are good. Most people try to live by self-propulsion. Each person is like an actor who wants to run the whole show; is forever trying to arrange the lights, the ballet, the scenery and the rest of the players in his own way.”

Doesn’t that sound just like us? We seem to be always trying to prove to everyone else that they would be better off if they did things our way. That’s a bit of self-centeredness wouldn’t you say?

In the first paragraph on page 62, the authors declare that it is this selfish, self-centeredness that has gotten us into trouble. We need to take responsibility for our selfishness and ask God to remove this shortcoming from our lives:

“Selfishness—self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles. Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking and self-pity, we step on the toes of our fellows and they retaliate. Sometimes they hurt us, seemingly without provocation, but we invariably find that at some time in the past we have made decisions based on self which later placed us in a position to be hurt.”

“So our troubles, we think, are basically of our own making. They arise out of ourselves, and the alcoholic is an extreme example of self-will run riot, though he usually doesn’t think so. Above everything, we alcoholics must be rid of this selfishness. We must, or it kills us! God makes that possible. And there often seems no way of entirely getting rid of self without His aid.”

Then at the bottom of page 62, paragraph three, the authors tell us what we have to do in order to rid ourselves of selfishness:

“This is the how and why of it. First of all, we had to quit playing God. It didn’t work. Next, we decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was going to be our Director. He is the Principal; we are His agents. He is the Father, and we are His children. Most good ideas are simple, and this concept was the keystone of the new and triumphant arch through which we passed to freedom.”

“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.”

So, now we know our place in God’s Universe. Contrary to what we may have thought in the past, the whole world does not revolve around us. Once we step aside and put God in the center, we are amazed at how much better our lives become.

By now, we have become aware of the presence of God. Starting with line five on page 63, the authors explain this awareness:

“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. We are reborn.”

We have been delivered from the gate of Hell, and we have come back to tell what it was like. It isn’t a pretty picture. But, now we realize we never have to go back there again, as long as we don’t forget who’s in charge.

It is decision time once again. The “Big Book” authors tell us we are now ready to take Step Three. Toward the bottom of page 63, paragraph three, they provide us with the directions:

“We found it very desirable to take this spiritual step with an understanding person, such as our wife, best friend, or spiritual adviser. But it is better to meet God alone than with one who might misunderstand. The wording was, of course, quite optional so long as we expressed the idea, voicing it without reservation. This was only a beginning, though if honestly and humbly made, an effect, sometimes a very great one, was felt at once.”

We are so fortunate that, in the years since the “Big Book” was written, the fellowship has grown to where very few, if any, newcomers have to take the Third Step alone. We’re here today to take this monumental Step with you.

Although they say the wording is optional, the authors do provide us with a prayer we can use to complete Step Three. The prayer is in the middle of page 63. Starting with the second line in the second paragraph, it reads:

“...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!”

We would like each of you who is ready to take the Third Step to read the prayer along with us a second time.

Let’s read the Third Step Prayer together.

[Read the prayer a second time.]

According to the “Big Book” authors, we have completed Step Three.

Even though we have taken a considerable amount of time on the first three Steps, we have only made a series of decisions. Now we are going to take some specific actions that will carry us the rest of the way to God.”

Step 4

Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

At the bottom of page 63, paragraph four, the “Big Book” authors tell 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 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.”

Please note the authors say at once. They tell us we need to take the Fourth Step immediately after we complete the Third Step. 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.

So, now we are going to establish a direct line of communicating with God by eliminating those aspects of our personalities which have kept us in the dark. The “Big Book” authors say that liquor, in our case sex addiction, is but a symptom. Sure, sex addiction has cut us off from God, but once we stop acting out our sexual addiction, we’re still separated from our Creator because of our character liabilities. Now, it’s time to look at these shortcomings by making an inventory.

The “Big Book” authors start by comparing a personal inventory to a business inventory. Toward the top of page 64, paragraph one, they write:

“Therefore we started upon a personal inventory. *This was Step Four.* A business which takes no regular inventory usually goes broke. Taking a commercial inventory is a fact-finding and 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.”

So, we are going to conduct the equivalent of a commercial inventory on our lives. This implies we are going to look at our assets and liabilities. That’s what a commercial inventory is all about—to examine our achievements and our disappointments—to accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative.

Then on page 64, paragraph 2, the authors tell us exactly what we have to do in order 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.”

Before we get into the details on how to complete this Step, we want to emphasize a few things. It is very important you realize that there is no right or wrong way to do this inventory. Page 65 contains an example, but it is just that—an example. We will use another example—the assets and liabilities checklist described on page 64.

This type of inventory has been used for years by Dr. Bob, Alcoholics Anonymous’ Akron, Ohio co-founder, and by many of A.A.’s older members. Dr. Bob believes that initially, newcomers should be taken through a simplified version of the Steps. Later on, they can work the program in more detail. With this “Keep it simple” approach, the newcomer can easily grasp our life saving message, experience the miracle of recovery, and grow into the “Fellowship of the Spirit” as he or she works with others.

Dr. Bob takes newcomers from the problem of living on self-will into the solution of living by God’s will as quickly as possible. In many instances, he has done this during the newcomer’s three to five day stay at St. Thomas hospital in Akron, Ohio. Thousands of people have recovered from alcoholism with his highly successful “Keep it Simple” approach. And we hope to provide the same for sex addiction.

The “Big Book” authors confirm what Dr. Bob has been telling us—take the Steps quickly. We must discover “the truth about the stock-in-trade” in order to abolish the behaviors that have cut us off from the Spirit of the Universe. At the bottom of page 65, paragraph 3, they write:

“We went back through our lives. Nothing counted but thoroughness and honesty. When we were finished we considered it carefully.”

Please note that the authors ask us to be thorough and in the very next sentence tell us what to do when we are finished. Since this is all in one paragraph, we assume they are asking us to complete this inventory in one sitting.

Keep in mind this is only a suggestion. You can spend as much time on this inventory as you wish, just as long as you complete it and share it with your “sponsor” or spiritual advisor before our next

session.

Now, let's look at what we put on paper. From pages 64 to 71, the authors provide us with a list of shortcomings we need to eliminate and a list of assets we need to accentuate. On page 64, paragraph 3, they ask us to examine our resentments:

"Resentment is the "number one" offender. It destroys more alcoholics than anything else. From it stem all forms of spiritual disease,..."

"...In dealing with resentments, we set them on paper. We listed people, institutions or principles with whom we were angry."

In the first paragraph of page 66, the authors emphasize that our resentments keep us separated from our Creator. We must eliminate them if we are to have a spiritual awakening:

"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 feelings 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."

Then the authors on page 67, paragraph two, instruct us to look at our part in each situation to see if we need to make an amends:

"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 own 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."

Let's look at the third sentence again. It reads, "Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened?" These behaviors are based on self-will. In addition, they are the opposites of the Oxford Group principles of Honesty, Purity, Unselfishness, and Love. The Oxford Group uses these qualities to test a thought or action to determine if it is based on God's will.

Since Bill W., Dr. Bob and many of the "Big Book" authors were members of the Oxford Group, they are accustomed to testing what they have written. Now, they are asking us to do the same thing—test our actions. We need to know which path we're on. Are we moving toward the "Realm of the Spirit" or are we continuing to sink into "that bitter morass of self pity?" It is our selfishness and self-centeredness that keep us blocked from our Creator and prevent us from finding the spiritual solution to alcoholism.

We can use either the A.A. test for self-will or the Oxford Group test for God's will to determine if an amends needs to be made:

The Alcoholics Anonymous
Test for self-will

The Oxford Group
Test for God's will

Selfish(ness)
Dishonest(y)
Self-seeking
Frightened (or Fear)

Unselfishness
Honesty
Purity
Love

So, as part of our inventory, we use the attributes of Selfishness, Dishonesty, Self-seeking, and Frightened as a means for separating self-will from God's will. In Step Eleven, we'll learn how to use these same attributes to determine if what we have written during our morning meditation has originated with self or with God.

Next, the authors ask us to look at our fears. At the top of page 68, they write:

"We reviewed our fears thoroughly. We put them on paper,..."

Then in the second paragraph on page 68, they inform us that we will lose our fears if we trust our Creator. If we act according to God's will rather than according to self-will, "great events will come to pass:"

"Perhaps there is a better way—we think so. For we are now on a different basis; the basis of trusting and relying on 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."

In the middle of page 69, paragraph one, the authors mention some additional character liabilities we need to address. In addition, they ask us to make a list of those we have harmed. This will become our amends list—the people to whom we need to make restitution:

"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."

The "Big Book" authors have told us several times now that our inventory needs to be written. So far, so good. But, now we need to decide who does the writing.

In "Bill's Story," A.A.'s New York City co-founder, Bill W., describes how he completed his inventory. On page 13, starting with line five in the second paragraph, he states:

"...I ruthlessly faced my sins and became willing to have my new-found Friend take them away, root and branch."

Bill doesn't say, "I ruthlessly wrote down my sins." All he does is acknowledge that he has some faults.

In the third paragraph on page 13, Bill describes how he shared his inventory with his "sponsor":

"My schoolmate visited me, and I fully acquainted him with my problems and deficiencies. We made a list of people I had hurt or toward whom I felt resentment."

Here again, Bill doesn't say "My schoolmate visited me and I read him my inventory or resentments

and fears.” He also doesn’t say, “I made a list of people...” Rather, Bill writes, “we made a list of people...”

So, together Bill and Ebby made an amends list. Let’s think about this for a minute. Bill is in Towns Hospital in December 1934, being withdrawn from alcohol for the third time that year. He is suffering from delirium tremens—he is a very sick man. Ebby has been sober for several months. Whom do you think did the writing?

When making an inventory, we’ve found it helpful to use an assets and liabilities checklist. There are several lists in use today. One can be found in the Washington, D.C. Alcoholics Anonymous pamphlet. Another list has been published in the August 1946 A.A. Grapevine. A third list is in a book distributed by a Minneapolis, Minnesota group titled, An Interpretation of the Twelve Steps of the Alcoholics Anonymous Program. You can use any or all of these checklists. We’re going to discuss the one from the Washington, D.C. pamphlet in detail. Hopefully, our explanation of this checklist will make it easier for you to complete your inventory.

The Washington, D.C. pamphlet contains specific instructions for taking a Fourth Step inventory:

“...Some, in error, think the inventory is a lot of unpaid debts, plus a list of unmade apologies. Our trouble goes much deeper. We will find the root of our troubles lies in—Resentments—False Pride—Envy—Jealousy—Selfishness and many other things. Laziness is an important one. In other words we are making an inventory of our character—our attitude toward others—our very way of living.” (A.A. – Interpretation of our Twelve Steps, page 15.)

The character liabilities mentioned in the Washington, D.C. pamphlet are Resentments, False Pride, Envy, Jealousy, Selfishness and Laziness. To these we have added Dishonesty and Fear from the A.A. test for self-will found on page 67 of the “Big Book.”

So much for the liabilities side of the ledger. Now, what about the assets?

The authors list assets throughout Chapter 5. Starting with line three at the top of page 67, they describe how we should react to those who have wronged us:

“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

At the bottom of page 70, they provide us with several more assets while summarizing the inventory process. Starting with line two in the third paragraph, they write:

“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...”

Additional assets are also listed in the Washington, D.C. pamphlet and the A.A. Grapevine article. Some of these are Forgiveness, Humility, Contentment, Trust, Generosity, Activity, Honesty and Faith.

We have now looked at both sides of the ledger. Our inventory consists of a list of liabilities to watch

for and a list of assets to strive for.

To show you just how easy it is to do a Fourth Step inventory, we're going to provide you with an example. In this example, we'll assume that the "sponsor" does the writing. O.K. let's begin.

The sponsor starts at the top of the checklist. He or she writes down some of the people, institutions and principles that a newcomer usually has to inventory—parents, spouses, children, siblings, friends, relatives, bosses, employees, police officers, military personnel, government officials, lawyers, prisons, sanitariums, God, religion, etc. The "sponsor" writes down others as they come up during the session.

The "sponsor" asks the newcomer to look over the list and put check marks next to the character liabilities that apply. If the newcomer isn't able to do this, the "sponsor" starts asking questions, filling in the checklist as he or she goes along.

The "sponsor" opens the sharing session with something like, "Let's look at your parents. Do you resent your mother?" If the newcomer answer yes, the "sponsor" puts a check mark next to the word Resentments. The "sponsor" proceeds down the list of liabilities asking, "Have you done anything to make yourself look good at her expense? Have you been envious of her? Are you jealous of her? Have you been selfish toward her? Are you lazy around her? Have you been dishonest with her? Are you afraid of her?" Based on what the newcomer shares, the "sponsor" makes the appropriate checkmarks.

Then the "sponsor" asks the newcomer to describe the incidents surrounding the checkmarks. Together, they decide if an amends or some restitution needs to be made.

For example, the "sponsor" and the newcomer decide that the newcomer needs to make amends to his mother for being selfish and lazy. The "sponsor" circles the checkmarks next to Selfishness and Laziness.

The "sponsor" and the newcomer proceed across the checklist, discussing the people, institutions and principles that apply. The "sponsor" makes checkmarks and circles until the newcomer has described many of his or her "grosser handicaps."

Then, they look at the assets side of the ledger. The assets that are opposite the liabilities with the least checkmarks are the positive characteristics that the newcomer already has. Those assets opposite the liabilities with the most checkmarks are the personal qualities that will be strengthened as the newcomer makes the necessary amends.

In our example, the "sponsor" and the newcomer have put together a list with only a few checkmarks next to Jealousy, Laziness and Dishonesty and numerous checkmarks next to Resentments and Selfishness. The "sponsor" now says something like, "This inventory shows that, for the most part, you are an honest, hard working and trusting person. You will also become more forgiving and generous as you make amends for your Resentments and Selfishness."

We look at assets as well as liabilities because many of us have lost much of our self-esteem and self-worth as the result of our sex addiction. Even though we've done some pretty foolish and destructive things while acting out, we will never have to repeat those actions again, if we are willing to admit our faults and try to correct them. If we are genuinely sorry, God has already forgiven us. Now, it is time to forgive ourselves.

The authors tell us this at the top of page 70. Starting with line four in the first paragraph, they write:

“If we are sorry for what we have done, and have the honest desire to let God take us to better things, we believe we will be forgiven and will have learned our lesson. If we are not sorry, and our conduct continues to harm others, we are quite sure to drink. We are not theorizing. These are facts out of our experience.”

So, it is time to make a searching and fearless moral inventory—time to clean up the wreckage of the past so we can get closer to the Spirit of the Universe. We have copies of the assets and liabilities checklist for anyone who would like to use this format for their Fourth Step inventory.

We have completed our discussion of Step Four, but before we end this session, we need to discuss one more detail—the person with whom we share our inventory.

The Fifth Step reads: ***“Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.”*** Therefore, we must talk over our inventories with someone else.

That person can be the member of S.A.A. who is “sponsoring” you through these sessions, but it doesn’t have to be. The “Big Book” authors provide us other options.

On the bottom of page 73, paragraph four, they provide directions on how to choose the person with whom we share our inventory. Please keep in mind that the “Big Book” was written before any type of formalized sponsorship had been established. The authors do not use the word “sponsor” anywhere in the text of the book. However, they do give us some guidelines regarding the person with whom we review our assets and liabilities:

“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. Those of us belonging to a religious denomination which requires confession must, and of course, will want to go to the properly appointed authority whose duty it is to receive it. Though we have no religious connection, we may still do well to talk with someone ordained by an established religion...”

“If we cannot or would rather not do this, we search our acquaintance for a close-mouthed, understanding friend. Perhaps our doctor or psychologist will be the person.”

Therefore, you can share your inventory with any number of people. For those who are still uncertain who that person should be, have your “sponsor” help you decide.

If any of you have doubts about the value of the Fourth Step, let us read to you what the “Big Book” authors have to say. At the bottom of page 70, paragraph four, they make it clear that God will take away all our difficulties, if we let God:

“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.”

Please let God guide you through the inventory process. If you do, you’ll find the Fourth and Fifth Steps simple and straight forward. Just take the time to complete one of the checklists, either by

yourself or with your “sponsor” or spiritual advisor. Then share your list with another person.

As we have already said, there is no right or wrong way to do the Fourth Step. Just do it.

Are there any questions?