

The A. A. Beginners' Meetings

Taking Steps Four through Nine using an Assets and Liabilities Checklist

Assumptions:

1. The sponsor and sponsee have a couple of hours to spend together.
2. The sponsor has made a commitment to the sponsee to be a "closed-mouthed, understanding friend."
3. The sponsor asks the questions.
4. The sponsor does the writing.

The inventory contains those events and situations that are bothering the sponsee right now. If he or she has completed previous inventories, those items need not be re-inventoried. Usually, it takes only a few incidents to reveal what is blocking the sponsee from an intimate, two-way relationship with the "One who has all power."

The inventory is based on the principle that, "The healing is in the sharing, not in the writing" and the suggestion that, "The sponsee puts nothing in writing that can be used against him or her in a court of law."

First, the sponsor folds the checklist so the assets are hidden from view.

Next, the sponsor asks the following questions:

Resentment Inventory-----Who or what are you angry at?

Fear Inventory-----Who or what are you afraid of?

Harms Inventory-----Toward whom have you been selfish?

Where have you been dishonest?

What about false pride—do you see yourself as better than or less than others?

Are you jealous of any relationship?

Do you envy anyone's possessions?

Where have you been lazy?

To the right of the applicable liabilities, the sponsor writes the generic equivalents of the names of the "people, institutions (and) principles" to be inventoried (Step Four). It is far more beneficial to take a few incidents through the entire inventory and restitution process than to list so many of them that the sponsee becomes overwhelmed, discouraged, and gives up on the process.

After the checklist has been compiled, the sponsor asks the sponsee to describe the circumstances pertaining to each of the names on the checklist. During the course of the discussion, the sponsor asks the sponsee to "resolutely look for (his or her) own mistakes" and "to disregard the other person entirely" (Step Five).

If the sponsee is angry about an event or situation, the sponsor lets him or her know that we overcome our resentments with forgiveness. If the sponsee is afraid, the sponsor explains that we conquer our fears with faith. If the sponsee has hurt someone, the sponsor tells him or her that we make good on our "past misdeeds" with amends.

If the sponsor and sponsee agree that an amends needs to be made, the sponsor circles the appropriate name. The circled names become the amends list (Step Eight).

Then, the sponsor unfolds the checklist so they can look at the assets. Those liabilities with the least number of names to the right of them are the assets the sponsee already has. Those liabilities with the most names to the right of them are the assets that will be strengthened as the result of making amends.

The sponsor asks the sponsee if he or she wants the liabilities removed. If the sponsee does, then the sponsor asks the question. "Are you now ready to let God remove from you all the things which you have admitted are objectionable?" (Step Six). If the sponsee still wishes to hold on to any of the liabilities, the sponsor and sponsee pray together for the willingness for those shortcomings to be removed.

Next, the sponsor and sponsee say a prayer together (Step Seven).

"My Creator I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen."

Then the sponsor and sponsee talk about the details of each amends. For each event or situation, they decide which type of amends would be appropriate. The four types of amends described in the "Big Book" are direct, living, in-kind, and amends to those who cannot be seen. They decide when and where they will meet immediately following a direct amends so they can discuss what happened and determine if any followup work needs to be done (Step Nine).

With this Assets and Liabilities Checklist, the sponsor has everything he or she needs to take the sponsee through Steps Four to Nine in a couple of hours.

Back to the Basics of Recovery

Fourth Step Questions

Resentment Inventory

1. Who or what are you angry at? -----
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Fear Inventory

2. Who or what are you afraid of? -----
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Harms inventory

3. Toward whom have you been selfish? -----
4. Where have you been dishonest? -----
5. What about false pride—do you see yourself as better than or less than others? -----
6. Are you jealous of any relationship? -----
7. Do you envy anyone's possessions? -----
8. Where have you been lazy? -----
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During the discussion of each event or situation, ask your partner to *“resolutely look for (your) own mistakes. . . . Though a situation had not been entirely (your) fault, (you are) to disregard the other person entirely. Where were (you) to blame?”* (pg. 67: 2 (2-3, 4-7), edited).

Ask him or her, “Are you prepared to forgive those toward whom you feel resentment?” If not, then *“we ask God to help us be willing.”* (pg. 76: 1 (6-7)).

Ask, “Are you ready to overcome your fear with faith?” Together, *“We ask (God) to remove our fear and direct our attention to what (God) would have us be. At once, we commence to outgrow fear.”* (pg. 68: 3 (7-10), edited).

In terms of harms, ask your partner, *“What are you willing (to do) to set these matters straight?”* (pg. 67: 2 (10-11), edited). Keep in mind there are four types of amends: direct, living, in-kind and letters. Together, decide what would be the most appropriate *“course of action”* for each incident or circumstance.

Conclude the sharing session with a prayer. (pg. 76: 2 (1-7)).

Fourth Step Inventory

Liabilities
Watch for—

Assets and Liabilities Checklist from the “Big Book”
pg. 64:1(1-7); pg. 64:3(1-9); pg. 68:1(1-3); pg. 69:1(1-6:edited)

Assets
Strive for—

Resentment		Forgiveness
Fear		Faith
Selfishness		Unselfishness
Dishonesty		Honesty
False Pride		Humility
Jealousy		Trust
Envy		Contentment
Laziness		Action

Assets and Liabilities Checklist

Fourth Step Inventory

Assets and Liabilities Checklist from the "Big Book"
pg. 64:1(1-7); pg. 64:3(1-9); pg. 68:1(1-3); pg. 69:1(1-6:edited)

Liabilities
Watch for—

Resentment	<i>En</i>	<i>Myself</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>God</i>
Fear	<i>Count</i>	<i>Relapse</i>	<i>Health</i>	
Selfishness	<i>En</i>	<i>Employer</i>	<i>Friend #1</i>	
Dishonesty	<i>En</i>	<i>Myself</i>	<i>Employer</i>	<i>Friend #2</i>
False Pride	<i>God</i>	<i>Employer</i>		
Jealousy	<i>Family Member</i>			
Envy				
Laziness	<i>En</i>	<i>Employer</i>	<i>Myself</i>	
Shame	<i>Friend #2</i>			

Example of Assets and Liabilities Checklist After Answering Questions

Explanation of Terms

Fourth Step Assets and Liabilities Checklist

In the late 1930's, Dr. Bob, one of the cofounders of Alcoholics Anonymous, developed an Assets and Liabilities Checklist, which he used to take thousands of newcomers through the inventory and restitution process. Since then, various checklists have been used by sponsors, spiritual advisors, and sharing partners to bring those “**interested in a spiritual way of life**” to a greater understanding of the shortcomings that have prevented them from finding a spiritual solution to their difficulties, a solution that is based upon establishing an intimate, two-way relationship with the “**One who has all power.**”

We have defined these shortcomings—the liabilities that have been blocking us from this “**Power**”—in a way that, hopefully, will provide a clearer understanding of their meaning:

RESENTMENT is the consequence of being angry or bitter toward someone for an extended period of time over some real or imagined insult. It is a hostile or indignant attitude in response to an alleged affront or personal injury.

FEAR is being afraid of losing something we have or not getting something we want. It manifests itself in many ways including phobia, terror, panic, anxiety and worry.

SELFISHNESS is concern only for ourselves, our own welfare or pleasure, without regard for, or at the expense of, others.

DISHONESTY involves theft or deception. It includes taking things that don't belong to us, cheating people out of what is rightfully theirs, and lying to or withholding the truth from others.

FALSE PRIDE is either feeling better than or less than someone else. Feelings of superiority include prejudice about race, education or religious beliefs, and sarcasm—putting someone else down to make us feel better about ourselves. Feelings of inferiority include self-pity, which is excessive concern about our own troubles, and low self-esteem—the lack of self-worth or self-respect.

JEALOUSY has to do with people—being suspicious of another's motives or doubting the faithfulness of a friend.

ENVY has to do with things—wanting someone else's possessions.

LAZINESS means lacking the will or the desire to work. Procrastination, which is postponing or delaying an assigned job or task, is a form of laziness.

Fourth Step Inventory

Liabilities
Watch for—

Assets and Liabilities Checklist from the “Big Book”
pg. 64:1(1-7); pg. 64:3(1-9); pg. 68:1(1-3); pg. 69:1(1-6:edited)

Assets
Strive for—

Resentment	<i>En</i>	<i>Myself</i>	<i>Court</i>	<i>God</i>	Forgiveness
Fear	<i>Court</i>	<i>Relapse</i>	<i>Health</i>		Faith
Selfishness	<i>En</i>	<i>Employer</i>	<i>Friend #1</i>		Unselfishness
Dishonesty	<i>En</i>	<i>Myself</i>	<i>Employer</i>	<i>Friend #2</i>	Honesty
False Pride	<i>God</i>	<i>Employer</i>			Humility
Jealousy	<i>Family Member</i>				Trust
Envy					Contentment
Laziness	<i>En</i>	<i>Employer</i>	<i>Myself</i>		Action
Shame	<i>Friend #2</i>				<i>Self-respect</i>

Example of Assets and Liabilities Checklist with Eight Step Amends List

Test for Self-will vs. God's Will

From the "Big Book" of Alcoholics Anonymous

Self-will

God's Will

Fourth Step Test

Selfish(ness) ←————→ **Unselfishness**
Dishonest(y) ←————→ **Honesty**
Self-seeking ←————→ **Purity**
Frightened ←————→ **Love**

"Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened?"
(A.A., p. 67, para. 2, lines 3-4)

Tenth Step Test

Selfishness ←————→ **Unselfishness**
Dishonesty ←————→ **Honesty**
Resentment ←————→ **Purity**
Fear ←————→ **Love**

"Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear."
(A.A., p. 84, para. 2, lines 8-9)

Eleventh Step Test

Resentful ←————→ **Purity**
Selfish(ness) ←————→ **Unselfishness**
Dishonest(y) ←————→ **Honesty**
Afraid ←————→ **Love**

"Were we resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid?"
(A.A., p. 86, para. 1, lines 2-3)