

CLA STEP FOUR

"Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves."

In the previous three steps, we have built, for ourselves, a beginning foundation in this program of recovery. In Step One, we admitted we were powerless over clutter and recognized that our lives have been, are now, and will remain unmanageable by us alone. Step Two made us aware that we could be restored to sanity by a Higher Power (God as we understood Him) if we rightly relate ourselves to that Higher Power. The Third Step convinced us that we have no choice but to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God.

At this point, we should be convinced that our handling of our past has led to frustration, broken relationships, anger toward ourselves and other people, and resentments. Since alcohol [cluttering] is but a symptom, we now have to get down to the causes and condition of why self-centeredness, in all its various destructive forms, has been the root of our troubles. Thus, we are face to face with the fourth step.

Step Four allows us to uncover and discover the acquired character defects which are a part of the false self. These defects are NOT a part of the real you (the True Inner Self). The false self (the phony you) has picked them up from other people, institutions and society in general. Usually it is not important that you become aware of the fact -- that these defects of character are acquired. Only when you detach yourself from these acquired defects can you start to uncover and discover, in a fear-less manner, these acquired character defects that have controlled you in the past.

These acquired character defects are misdirected instincts. These instincts often far exceed their proper functions. Our excessive desires for more stuff, sex, material and emotional security, and for an important place in society, desires which by their very nature can never be fulfilled, cause us practically all the trouble there is.

Nearly every serious emotional problem can be seen as a case of misdirected instincts. Whenever we become a battleground for the instincts, there can be no peace. Every time we impose our instincts unreasonably upon others, unhappiness follows. These defects lock us into responding in a certain way, usually destructive, to those around us. So in order for us to live happy lives, we must uncover and discover these acquired defects of character.

At this point, we should have arrived at the following conclusions: the acquired character defects have been the primary cause of our cluttering and our failure at life; we must now be willing to work hard at the elimination of the worst of these defects or both sobriety and

peace of mind will elude us; and, that all the faulty foundation of our life will have to be torn out and built anew on bedrock.

Since the fourth step is but the beginning of a lifetime practice, we should first have a look at those personal flaws which are acutely troublesome and fairly obvious. Using our judgment, we make a rough survey of our conduct with respect to our primary instincts for stuff, sex, security and society. With stuff, we explore our relationship with objects, and how they came to a critical mass in our lives, crowding us out of our space. With sex, we uncover how the selfish pursuit of sex damaged other people and ourselves. In the area of security, we question the financial and emotional insecurities that have led to financial instability, and the personal relationships which bring continuous or recurring trouble. In terms of society, we insisted upon either dominating the people we knew or depended upon them far too much.

THOROUGHNESS ought to be the watchword when taking our inventory. The object is to search out the flaws in the false self which caused our failure. Being convinced that the false self, manifested in various ways, was what had defeated us, we will find some of the following acquired character defects in our inventory: SELF-CENTEREDNESS, RESENTMENT, ANGER, PREJUDICE, CONCEIT, GREED, LUST, INDIFFERENCE, PHONINESS, FEAR, PRIDE, FINANCIAL INSECURITY, DEPENDENCE, DOMINATION, EMOTIONAL INSECURITY, DISHONESTY, PROCRASTINATION, PERFECTIONISM, IMPATIENCE and others that are found in the list below.

These acquired character defects (misdirected instincts) will balk at our uncovering and discovering them. The minute we make a serious attempt to probe them, we are liable to suffer severe reactions. The thinking mind may come up with some of the following false thoughts: any serious defects have been caused chiefly by our cluttering; our problems have been caused by the behavior of other people; the defects are us; justifying the need for defects in order to continue living; and a half-hearted inventory is O.K. In order for us to combat these false thoughts, we must know that the character defects are indeed acquired and are NOT a part of the True Self.

In summary, Step Four asks us to make a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. We are seeking to uncover the hidden acquired defects of character that are part of the false self. After we have found them, then we discover how, when, and in just what instances these defects controlled our lives. This inventory is of myself, not other people. We uncover and discover our faults by listing them. We place them before us in black and white. We must have courage to honestly do this. Faith can do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

The purpose of writing the fourth step is to make us aware of the acquired character defects. As we list and analyze these defects, we will begin to comprehend their futility. The written inventory will be used as a basis for Steps Five through Nine.

Go through the following examples and be as honest and specific as you are able to at this time. This is *your* inventory. You are about to uncover and discover the acquired character defects, and their associated positive character traits, so do it in a thorough and fearless manner. Your very life may depend on the thoroughness of this step.

We first will go after the easy inventory—the low-hanging fruit, if you will.

PART 1 -- STEP FOUR -- A FEARLESS AND SEARCHING MORAL INVENTORY

It is impossible to measure darkness. Darkness is the absence of light, so one must measure the amount of light instead. In the same way it is impossible to measure cold. Cold is the absence of heat, so the heat is measured instead. Every one of our acquired character defects is just like darkness and cold, it is the absence of something else, so the measurement of a defect is elusive unless we grasp the concept of paired traits. Because our defects of character are acquired, it means that one of our positive traits has deteriorated into the opposite negative trait. The following table shows the positive trait of each defect.

- A) Measure where we are on the line from left to right, negative to positive. At first this is a wild estimate of where we are at this moment. It may be helpful to use a scale of 1 to 1000 for each pair of traits, with 500 right down the middle. Or you may place a dot on the relative position on each line. Whatever works for you. We will be using this table through Step 7 and again in Step 10.
- B) Write about your experiences with each paired trait in the spaces after the table. Provide examples and be sure to include your emotions in your writing. Try not to use one-word answers. It is better to write too much than not enough.

To explain the last seven on the list, these are “Quads.” Sometimes a negative trait and its exact opposite are both negative, with the positive trait in the middle, just as the extreme pendulum swings are not good. For the purpose of our step work, we fold that line in half, and put the negative traits against the left side, and the positive trait on the right side. Then we treat them as two different paired traits.

Character Traits - Negative to Positive - Left to Right © 2012 George F

Denial	Fearless Self-Examination
Control	Powerless
Hate	Love
Dishonesty	Honesty
Impatience	Patience
Foolishness	Wisdom
Procrastination	Attention to Priorities
Fear	Courage
Lust	Contentment
Sexuality - Inappropriate	God-Honoring Sexuality (Discover This!)
Frozen Feelings	In Touch with Feelings
Doubt	Faith
Rabble-Rousing	Peacemaking
Abandonment, Fear of	Experiencing the Presence of God
Approval Seeking	True to Self
Caretaking, Inappropriate	Minding My Own Business
Self-Pity	Self-Forgetfulness
Self-Justification	Humility
Self-Condemnation	Self-Forgiveness
Resentment	Forgiveness
Pride	Humility-Submitting to God's Will
Jealousy	Goodwill
Suspicion (Unwarranted)	Trust
Greedy, Hoarding	Generosity, Sharing
Intolerance	Tolerance
Inaction	Action
Harmful Acts	Good Deeds
Insincerity	Straightforwardness
Negativity	Positivity
Vulgar, Immoral, Trashy Thinking	Spiritual, Clean Thinking
Criticizing	Encouraging
Selfish and Self-Seeking	Interest in Others
Inconsiderate	Considerate
Envy	Gratitude

Slothful, Lazy	Diligent
Gluttony, Bulimia	Eating in Moderation
Self-Starving, Anorexia	Eating in Moderation
Anger, Repressed	Anger, Appropriate
Anger, Inappropriately Expressed	Anger, Appropriate
Authority Figures - Fear of	Respect for Authority
Authority Figures - Lack of fear of	Respect for Authority
Isolation	Balanced Relationship Time
Party Animal	Balanced Relationship Time
Self-Esteem - Too Low	Just Another Bozo on the Bus
Self-Esteem - Too High, Grandiose	Just Another Bozo on the Bus
Responsibility - Overdeveloped sense of	Responsibility - Just Right
Irresponsibility	Responsibility - Just Right
Self-Care - Lack of	Self-Care - Just Right
Self-Care - Hypochondria	Self-Care - Just Right

1. Denial vs Fearless Self-Examination My estimate:
2. Control vs Powerless My estimate:
3. Hate vs Love My estimate:
4. Dishonesty vs Honesty My estimate:
5. Impatience vs Patience My estimate:
6. Foolishness vs Wisdom My estimate:
7. Procrastination vs Attention to Priorities My estimate:
8. Fear vs Courage My estimate:
9. Lust vs Contentment My estimate:
10. Sexuality – Inappropriate vs God-Honoring Sexuality My estimate:
11. Frozen Feelings vs In Touch with Feelings My estimate:
12. Doubt vs Faith My estimate:
13. Rabble-Rousing vs Peacemaking My estimate:
14. Fear of Abandonment vs Experiencing the Presence of God My estimate:
15. Approval Seeking vs True to Self My estimate:
16. Caretaking – Inappropriate vs Minding My Own Business My estimate:
17. Self-Pity vs Self-Forgetfulness My estimate:
18. Self-Justification vs Humility My estimate:
19. Self-Condensation vs Self-Forgiveness My estimate:
20. Resentment vs Forgiveness My estimate:
21. Pride vs Humility – Submitting to God’s Will My estimate:
22. Jealousy vs Goodwill My estimate:
23. Suspicion (Unwarranted) vs Trust My estimate:

24. Greedy, Hoarding vs Generosity, Sharing My estimate:
25. Intolerance vs Tolerance My estimate:
26. Inaction vs Action My estimate:
27. Harmful Acts vs Good Deeds My estimate:
28. Insincerity vs Straightforwardness My estimate:
29. Negativity vs Positivity My estimate:
30. Vulgar, Immoral, Trashy Thinking vs Spiritual, Clean Thinking My estimate:
31. Criticizing vs Encouraging My estimate:
32. Selfish and Self-Seeking vs Interest in Others My estimate:
33. Inconsiderate vs Considerate My estimate:
34. Envy vs Gratitude My estimate:
35. Slothful, Lazy vs Diligent My estimate:
36. Gluttony, Bulimia vs Eating in Moderation My estimate:
37. Self-Starving, Anorexia vs Eating in Moderation My estimate:
38. Anger, Repressed vs Anger, Appropriate My estimate:
39. Anger, Inappropriately Expressed vs Anger, Appropriate My estimate:
40. Authority Figures – Fear of vs Respect for Authority My estimate:
41. Authority Figures – Lack of Fear of vs Respect for Authority My estimate:
42. Isolation vs Balanced Relationship Time My estimate:
43. Party Animal vs Balanced Relationship Time My estimate:
44. Self-Esteem – Too Low vs Just Another Bozo on the Bus My estimate:
45. Self-Esteem – Too High, Grandiose vs Just Another Bozo on the Bus My estimate:
46. Responsibility – Overdeveloped Sense of vs Responsibility – Just Right My estimate:
47. Irresponsibility vs Responsibility – Just Right My estimate:
48. Self-Care – Lack of vs Self-Care – Just Right My estimate:
49. Self-Care – Hypochondria vs Self-Care – Just Right My estimate:

And now for the Indirect Approach...

PART 2 -- STEP FOUR -- A FEARLESS AND SEARCHING MORAL INVENTORY

Under each question, attempt to start with the specific things you have done or said. List as many things under each question as will help you convince yourself that you have acquired this defect. The answers to these questions are to be brief. For example:

With whom am I angry?

- a. My wife -- she doesn't do the things I want her to do.
- b. My boss -- he is not paying me enough
- c. Joe -- a friend to whom I loaned money, and he didn't pay me back.

You may wish to choose one of these categories to continue your Fourth Step Inventory:

1. ANGER, RESENTMENT, PREJUDICE

With whom am I angry?

Do I blame others for the trouble I made for myself?

Whom do I wish to hurt because I feel they have hurt me?

Have I contempt for anyone? Whom?

What is my part in this?

2. SELF-CENTEREDNESS

Do I act as though the world revolved around my welfare and desires? How?

If I am a parent, do I use my family to suit my needs and desires? How?

Do I insist on doing things I like to do, or am I willing to do the things others enjoy?

Do I do things with my family or others to keep myself in the limelight? If others don't give me special attention in a group, do I feel snubbed?

3. CONCEIT

Do I insist on things being done my way?

Do I think I am an "expert?" In what areas?

Do I think I can manage most things better than those in charge?

Am I consistently critical of the boss? the police? other authorities? Am I impatient with others who do not meet my standards?

4. GREED

Am I really content with the things I have?

Am I constantly running after more and better things?

Does the good life mean having more things, more money?

Am I honestly concerned with doing something to help those who are less fortunate than I am?

Do I give gladly or grudgingly to the work of God and CLA?