



“Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.”

# Step 4

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## The One Thing I Need To Know About This Step: It's About Causes & Conditions

**Spiritual Principle of the Step:**  
COURAGE

**Reading Assignment:**  
BB: Pgs. 64-71 / 12&12: Pgs. 42-54

**Literature Reference:** “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.” (Big Book – Page 66, How It Works)

### STEP SUMMARY

Page 64 in the Big Book starts by comparing a personal inventory to a business inventory. In the first full paragraph of page 64, it says, “Therefore, we started upon a personal inventory. A business which takes no regular inventory usually goes broke. Taking a 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.”

The whole point of a business inventory is to identify a company's liabilities and its assets. They identify their liabilities (those things that are no longer selling – or working for them) so they can remove them from the shelves to make room for more assets (those things that will sell – or work for them). Taking a personal inventory is no different. We searched out the flaws in our make-up which caused our failure. Being convinced that self (not alcohol but self), manifested in various ways, was what had defeated us, we considered its common manifestations. We had to get down to causes and conditions.

A solid Fourth Step inventory where we take stock of the manifestations of self-will is divided into three (3) parts:

- 1.) Our Resentments (or “grudge list” as Bill calls it)
- 2.) Our Fears
- 3.) Our Sex Conduct (and harm done toward others in this area)

The Fourth Step is NOT about finding out who we ARE, it's about finding out who we are NOT, so with God's help, we can be rid of it and who we ARE will then shine through. That's another reason why “self-knowledge avails us nothing.” We need to find out what GOD wants us to be.

In our Fourth Step inventories we will discover, for the most part, that our troubles were of our OWN making. We will see how we played a part in every resentment and fear we've ever had and how our conduct has harmed others. These are the very things that have blocked us from God, which is the ONLY Power that can remove the alcoholic obsession.



#### What Can I Surrender in this Step?

- 1.) Fear of looking at who I was, and
- 2.) Any desire to regret the past

To see the **Checklist** for this Step, visit [takethe12.org](http://takethe12.org)

### MYTHS ABOUT THIS STEP

**This step is meant to tear you down.**

Members who complete this step say they feel a newfound confidence once they've finally faced themselves. They are ready to start the next chapter of their lives as sober and better versions of themselves.

### INVENTORY

*Taking a step displays a willingness to write inventory and allow it to surrender something within us. Write inventory on your most serious shortcomings around the practical application of this step in your life today (“How am I applying the spiritual principle found in this Step to every moment of my life?”).*

#### Part 1: Grudge List

Create an inventory of the manifestations of your defects of character (4th column) being careful to stay focused on ONLY where you are wrong (putting out of my mind “their part”). While some may think that the first three columns are the most important – recognition of the 4th column is the only thing that can set us free through the actions you will take in Step 6 & 7 after completing Steps 4 & 5.

#### Part 2: Fears List

Fear can be defined as a distressing emotion aroused by impending pain or danger. The trigger for this emotion can be real or imaginary, and it may or may not be rational. When people feel fear, they may go into panic mode. This means that they are unable to think clearly or make good decisions. It is usual to view fear as a negative emotion, but it can also be highly beneficial, as it helps to keep humans out of danger.

#### Part 3: Sex Inventory

Things to remember when doing the sex inventory: We are building a moral inventory so we look at sex that has gone astray; We look at areas where selfishness kicks up; We need to be as general or as specific as we need to be; We need to remember, it's not a “brag sheet”; We can put them in groups or whatever – the main thing is to get a good solid understanding of those things I am not comfortable with, as well as the ideals I want live up to.

To download the 4th Step Worksheet, visit: [takethe12.org/s4/](http://takethe12.org/s4/)