



# Step Study Meeting

## Step 4

### *Telemeeting Version*

v1.0.0.2



**Path to Healing and Recovery**  
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## **Week 1**

### *Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*

In taking the Fourth Step, we begin to know ourselves for who we really are. Building on the foundation of the first three steps, we take stock of the feelings and patterns that have shaped our lives. We come to realize that our addiction is more than just unmanageable sexual activities; it includes an entire system of underlying thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. If we neglect this inventory, we risk being stuck in our old habits and mistaken beliefs, and our unexamined defects of character will eventually lead us to relapse. By looking honestly at our moral nature—the failings that kept us trapped in our addiction, as well as our virtues and aspirations—we start to move away from being self-centered and toward being God-centered.

The Fourth Step takes courage, because we are gradually giving up our old rationalizations, dishonesty, and self-pity, in order to discover the truth about who we are. In the process, most of us find ourselves peeling away many layers of denial. Our distorted view of ourselves led us to avoid responsibility for our actions. Our denial about our addictive behaviors prevented us from seeing our faults. At the same time, our belief that we were horrible people kept us from believing we could ever change, or be deserving of a better life. In taking the Fourth Step, we become willing to challenge these old ways of thinking and examine ourselves with a new clarity.

### *Volunteer reader*

A searching and fearless moral inventory is one of the means by which we open ourselves to the care and healing of our Higher Power. It is one of the first and most profound ways we put our Third Step decision into action. As we work Step Four, we practice honesty, courage, and faith, keeping in mind that others have walked this path before us and have found their recovery strengthened through this work.

A moral inventory can be described as a systematic examination of all the beliefs, feelings, attitudes, and actions that have shaped our lives from our earliest years. It is a careful survey of how we have responded to people, circumstances, and the world around us. An inventory allows us to go over our lives methodically and objectively, re-evaluating assumptions, beliefs, and feelings that we have held onto for years but perhaps never examined or questioned. In making this inventory, we take special care to identify those aspects of our character that have caused harm to ourselves and others, so as to bring them forward for healing and change in later steps.

### *moderator*

The Fourth Step inventory is a written inventory. If we merely say it aloud or think about it, it is too easy to miss or ignore important things. All inventories have to be recorded in some way in order to be accurate. Imagine trying to take inventory of all the merchandise in a store without writing anything down. In the same way, our inventory needs to be documented in order to be useful. The written inventory serves as a snapshot of the current state of our moral being and allows us to get an accurate, realistic perspective on ourselves, perhaps for the very first time. We may also draw on this inventory for reference when working Steps Five through Nine.

Experience has shown that it is helpful to work this step one small amount at a time, without trying to rush the process. Most of us cannot write a thorough Fourth Step in one sitting. There is too much work to do, and we need time to reflect on our work as we do it. If we break the step down into manageable pieces, all we need to do is focus on the piece in front of us.

The support of others in doing this work is essential. While making our inventory, we stay in close contact with our sponsor and our friends in the fellowship. A sponsor can

help us pace our work and keep us on track, encourage us to explore new areas, or give us permission to move on when we are stuck. Some of us have found it helpful to set a date for our Fifth Step as part of the Fourth Step process. We may also share parts of our inventory with our sponsor as we go along.

There is no single format that is used by all members in their inventories. We work closely with our sponsor to discover what kind of writing we need to do and what form of inventory is most effective for us. The common element is that we write about a number of aspects of our lives that, when put together, give us an honest picture of ourselves, including our shortcomings. Our inventory is searching, because we try to examine ourselves as thoroughly and painstakingly as possible. It is fearless, because we don't let our fear stop us from digging deeper. It is moral, because it concerns our values and the consequences of our actions for ourselves and others.

I will read the prayer and would all who care to, join me in saying Amen at the end of the prayer.

### **Fourth Step Prayer**

*Dear God,*

*It is I who has made my life a mess.*

*I have done it, but I cannot undo it.*

*My mistakes are mine & I will begin a searching & fearless moral inventory.*

*I will write down my wrongs B*

*ut I will also include that which is good.*

*I pray for the strength to complete the task.*

*"Amen"*

***Return back to main script "Sharing section of the main script" for the conclusion of the meeting.***

## Week 2

### Volunteer reader

#### *Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*

Examining our sexual conduct is an important aspect of our inventory.

While in our First Step we examined the patterns of our sexual behavior and disclosed specific instances, here we explore more deeply our sexual history and look at every instance in which our sexual behavior directly or indirectly harmed others or ourselves. We look at whom we hurt, what we did specifically to hurt them, and why we did it. In the process, we may uncover the secret agendas, fantasies, beliefs, and rationalizations contributing to our behavior. While violating others sexually is an obvious example of a harm done, we also acknowledge that using people for our sexual exploits, violating trust, committing infidelity, lying and covering up our behaviors, manipulating others covertly or overtly, and taking advantage of others by using power or authority are other ways we may have caused harm. We may also examine our traumatic sexual experiences or sexually abusive relationships and their effects on ourselves and others. Clarity, honesty, and self-disclosure are essential as we explore each instance. We take full and unequivocal responsibility for what we've done. Even if we were co-partners in sexual misdeeds, in working Step Four we focus only on our part. We look honestly at the defects that drove our behavior, such as selfishness, desire for control, an attitude of entitlement, or feelings of inferiority or superiority.

### Volunteer reader

We also inventory our resentments. For sex addicts, resentment is one of the most stubborn obstacles to our spiritual growth. Resentment means holding on to old hurts, anger, and grudges. When we cling to hurts or anger, we get a negative attitude. We feel victimized. And each time we play the event over in our minds, we feel victimized again. From this victim attitude, we often slip into an attitude of entitlement. If life is unfair, we are entitled to get what we need and want by any means necessary. So feeling entitled, we play by a different set of rules. We lower our moral standards to allow ourselves to get our fair share. We use dishonesty, blaming others, manipulation, or theft to even the score.

### moderator

In our inventory we list the people and situations that have hurt us, citing specific instances. We list what resentments we hold against people, and why—trying to identify exactly what they did, instead of writing in generalities. Many of us write about how we felt when we were hurt, and how we feel now. We may list what we think was lost, taken, or threatened by another person's actions. Some of us have also listed resentments against society or certain institutions. We also write about our blame of others—how we believe their actions have harmed us and affected our lives for the worse. We may find ourselves feeling uncomfortable about this, but it is important to write honestly about our feelings, even if they seem unreasonable.

We then go back over the list of resentments, looking at each incident, and ask ourselves what role we played in the situation. We must take responsibility for our part, however small. Sometimes, especially for resentments from childhood, we determine we had no role in the problem at all. When we review the resentments from our adult lives, however, we discover, often to our surprise, that we've almost always contributed in some way to the troubles that have beset us. When looking at the actions of others, for instance, we need to ask ourselves, "What is it about their actions that may have been a response to something I said or did?" A sponsor can help us sort this out and see where

we need to take responsibility, and where we need to let go of carrying responsibility for the actions of others.

## *Volunteer reader*

When we review our responsibility in conflicts, we see the pattern of our character defects emerge. Character defects are flaws in our moral nature that prevent us from aligning ourselves with God's will; they are expressions of our willfulness. These defects include dishonesty, selfishness, self-centeredness, lack of humility, grandiosity, pessimism, the desire to control everything around us, or any other shortcoming that we see coming up again and again in our relationships with others. For example, if we repeatedly got into conflict with people because of jealousy, we list jealousy as one of our character defects. In our inventory we do our best to list whatever such defects we can identify. We will refer to our list of character defects later in Steps Six and Seven.

In the same way that we write about our sexual conduct and resentments, we may inventory other emotions and behavior patterns in our lives. Examples of troubling emotions that bring out our character defects may include fear, envy, loneliness, shame, embarrassment, or self-hatred. This list may not fit for everyone, and we may inventory other patterns instead. Our sponsor can help us narrow or broaden our focus as needed.

## *moderator*

Our emotions have often been a source of pain and confusion in our lives, and they frequently triggered our addictive sexual behavior. We may have acted out whenever we experienced anger, fear, anxiety, or even joy, rather than responding to these emotions in a healthy way. We also may notice that our feelings increase in intensity when we stop acting out. In taking inventory, we may write about the many ways that these feelings have ruled our lives, using specific examples from our experience. We strive to isolate and recognize each feeling, to the best of our ability, and we practice acceptance of all our emotions, rather than denying or fearing them. In each case we search for the defects of character revealed by our emotional unmanageability, as well as giving ourselves credit for the times we were responsible, caring, and appropriate with our emotional responses. If we find ourselves hesitating, we turn to our Higher Power for help, trusting that with God's care we cannot fail.

## **Fourth Step Prayer**

I will read the prayer and would all who care to, join me in saying Amen at the end of the prayer.

*God help me to show this person the same tolerance,*

*pity and patience that I would cheerfully grant a sick friend.*

*This is a sick person, how can I be helpful to him?*

*God save me from being angry.*

*Thy will be done.*

**"Amen"**

*Return back to main script "Sharing section of the main script" for the conclusion of the meeting.*

## **Week 3**

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

### *Volunteer reader*

In the case of fear, we may write about times in which we risked our lives, health, careers, or relationships, while denying that we were in danger. We can list the ways in which we have been handicapped by our fears: how fear motivated actions that we later regretted, how it prevented us from achieving the things we desired, or how the fear of intimacy and commitment contributed to our loneliness. Many of us have found that fear was a pervasive influence throughout our lives, profoundly affecting our beliefs, our relationships, and our self-worth. Yet we also need to credit ourselves for the times when we have been courageous—the times we felt fear but still did what was worthwhile or healthy for us.

In writing about envy, we may look at all of the ways we compare our insides with the outsides of others. We might list the things others have that we think we're lacking, write about our responsibility for not pursuing these goals, and then list the things in our lives for which we are grateful.

### *moderator*

When examining loneliness, we may write about the ways in which we have isolated ourselves. If we keep ourselves too busy to have friends, or otherwise avoid intimate contact, we note that. We list the ways we have avoided emotional intimacy with those closest to us. And we list the ways we still avoid it. If we have kept secrets or kept parts of our lives hidden, we record that as well.

We may want to write down the things we've done that brought us shame or embarrassment. Although embarrassing events might seem trivial, we sometimes feel as much embarrassment as if the events happened yesterday. We can also list the things we feel guilty about. We look at things we did that we knew were wrong and about which we feel remorse. And we write down any secrets that we feel ashamed about, or other events that bring up shame when we recall them. These painful events and feelings must come to light if we are to continue on our path of recovery. As long as they remain secret, they have the power to lead us back to our addiction.

### *Volunteer reader*

We may inventory self-hatred by listing the things we've done that we feel we cannot accept or forgive ourselves for. These are the things time does not seem to heal. We look at the ways we let ourselves down. We list the resentments we hold against ourselves. We record the things about ourselves that we don't like, or that we wish were different. We write about how we have acted in self-hating ways, listing the ways that we've abused our bodies, our emotions, and our spirits. We look at how we have neglected our physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual needs. We examine the ways in which we allowed others to abuse us and treat us poorly. We list the negative things we believe about ourselves, and the abusive messages we tell ourselves. We look for the patterns in our self-hating behaviors, trying to identify the character defects underlying them.

A moral inventory wouldn't be complete without some acknowledgment of our positive aspects. We list the ways we have acted in a self-loving manner. We may write about the friendships we have nurtured and the people we have helped. We list the things we are genuinely proud of, such as healthy accomplishments that we worked hard to achieve. We write about our love, faith, and gratitude. We give ourselves credit for the success we have had at turning our addiction over to our Higher Power.

## *moderator*

When we make a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of the God of our understanding, we begin to notice signs of growth and transition, evidence that the program is working. We find ourselves being more honest, more willing to share the truth about ourselves with others. We attend meetings consistently, making room in our lives for the fellowship. We ask for and accept help, reaching out to other recovering sex addicts on a regular basis, instead of living in secrecy. We may experience abstinence from our inner-circle sexual behaviors as a gift from our Higher Power rather than as the result of our own white-knuckled efforts. We start to value and enjoy a new sense of spirituality. We feel grateful for our recovery and for the gifts we are starting to receive from our Higher Power.

## *Volunteer reader*

We need to remember that our Fourth Step is an inventory, not the inventory. We may always return to our inventory when we need to. We may have only been ready to face certain truths about ourselves when we first worked the step. We may work a Fourth Step again when we have new challenges to face or when we need to examine ourselves more closely. There is no one right inventory, and there are no perfect inventories.

Completing Step Four is a major milestone in our recovery. To complete it we need patience, persistence, honesty, and courage. It takes support, for we do our Fourth Step with the help of our Higher Power, our sponsor, and our group. And it takes gentleness in the form of self-care. By completing this step we show a commitment to our recovery and to living in reality. Now, after gaining such hard-won insight into ourselves, it is time to open up and share our truth, and in this sharing help make our recovery secure. It is time for Step Five.

## *moderator*

### **Fourth Step Prayer**

I will read the prayer and would all who care to, join me in saying Amen at the end of the prayer.

God.

I offer myself to you

I give up on running the show...

I give up on playing God in my life....

I'm done running the show!

Please, You be the director...

the boss, the father I long for....

**"Amen"**

*Return back to main script "Sharing section of the main script" for the conclusion of the meeting.*





## Week 4

Week 4 will always be the week we have a business meeting. Starting with January, the first two business meetings will be brief and held at the beginning. Every 3rd month - starting with March, there will be a longer full Business meeting and Group consciousness meeting. The full business meetings will be held on the 4th Tuesday of March, June, September, December. Thus, next Month we will have a full business meeting.

### **Brief Business Meeting Agenda**

- \* Finances
- \* What is working well, what isn't work well for people.
- \* Is the current format still working for people
- \* Workshops
- \* Study Groups

#### Volunteers

- \* literature
- \* meeting facilitator/key holder for the next month
- \* greeter for new people
- \* Room/signs setup/teardown

***Return back to main program and continue with the normal meeting. We will return here for the sharing and weekly reading portion and then later for the prayer later in the main meeting.***

## Week 4/5

At the discretion of the moderator the format for week 4 will vary.

*The format may be a speaker meeting, a discussion meeting with discussions on the Step or, discussion on items in general.*

*If this is a discussion meeting on Step 1, go to the next page, otherwise refer to the Week 4-5 supplemental bulletin.*

*Moderator - if you choose a discussion format, read the section on the next two pages and then proceed to the discussion questions and choose a few for the group to think about.*

# Week 4/5 Step Reading

## *moderator*

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

### **What Is the Purpose of This Step?**

### **How Do You Complete This Step?**

### **What Are Some Myths About This Step?**

Keep an open mind: Set yourself up for success. Be open to the idea of looking outside yourself for help and support, and you'll be able to better conceive of the idea of recovery.

Maintain humility: Accept that you can't conquer your addiction alone.

### **What Are Some Myths About This Step?**

*If Step related discussion questions format selected start here*

### **Step 4 Discussion Questions**

*Moderator - pick a few questions for people to reflect on.*

1. What things have you been doing over and over again, expecting different results each time?
2. What is your definition of sanity?
3. How have your past expectations of yourself or others been unrealistic? Give examples.
4. In the past, how has trusting only your own feelings/emotions gotten you in trouble?
5. How can spirituality, a Higher Power, or a belief in something bigger than yourself help restore you to make sane decisions?
6. What areas of your life are you ready to release control of and hand over? Be specific..

## **Non Step related Discussion Questions**

1. Often times, a person's relation with drugs, alcohol, acting out and other compulsive behaviours will change over time. For example, you might've initially acted out only a few times a month as a fun way to relax, but, eventually they became everyday necessity. How has your relationship with acting out behaviours changed from early on to now. Do you still act out for the same reasons or have those reasons changed.
2. The rituals and activities that surround acting out can be difficult to give up. For example, a smoker might enjoy the ritual of having a cigarette - not just the nicotine. Similarly, a sex addict might have difficulty saying goodbye to their strip club buddies, dancers or mistresses. What are some rituals or activities that you associate with acting out, and how do you feel about giving them up. Do you think you can achieve sobriety without changing your lifestyle.
3. Some people say that addiction is a disease, and others think it's a choice. What do you think and why? How do you believe counseling, support groups or other treatments could help a person who struggles with addiction.

## **moderator**

I will read the prayer and would all who care to, join me in saying Amen at the end of the prayer.

### **Fourth Step Prayer**

I am but one, but I am one;  
I can't do everything,  
But I can do SOMETHING;  
What I can do, I ought to do,  
What I ought to do,  
God helping me,  
I WILL DO

### **"Amen"**

***Return back to main script "Sharing section of the main script" for the conclusion of the meeting.***