

Fourth Step

The theory the third step offers is that whenever a human being is disturbed the problem always has something to do with self, driven by some form of fear. The reason why I call it a theory is that “we usually don’t think so”. But truth (principles) doesn’t care what I believe or am aware of. Principles just are. Like the principle of gravity. Gravity could care less if you’re aware of gravity or if you believe in gravity. It just is.

We must be rid of this selfishness (that we don’t know that we have) or it kills us. It might not kill us physically, but it sure can kill us spiritually. So we’re going to put on paper what we can see so that the person hearing our fifth step can point out the fact that each thing that bothers me has something to do with self, driven by some sort of fear. I cannot see it in myself, but I can see it in others. My sponsor, or the person listening, cannot see it in himself, but he can see it in me. My perception of myself is always clouded by my plans, designs and desires. Your perception of me is not clouded by those things and vice-versa. So you and I together can do what neither one of us can do alone...which is see the principle in each other...the principle being that whenever I’m disturbed, there is always one common denominator...me thinking about me in a situation with a lack of awareness or trust in God. In other words...self-centered fear.

Primary Purpose: To get on paper what I can see easily...the things that disturb me (resentments & fears) and my sex conduct.

Format: The formatted columns are designed to try to make this thing simple for us. If you get wrapped up in right or wrong format, you’ll lose focus on primary purpose. The important thing is to just get this stuff written down...if the format is confusing, skip it. Just write down your resentments, fears and sex conduct in whatever format you can. The important thing is that you don’t leave anything off intentionally.

If you use this format, these are the directions that I typically give people:

1. Don't start writing until you are pretty sure that you can stay writing for an hour or two. It's easier to start & finish, then to do a little here and there. So do it in one setting.
2. Say a prayer before starting...ask God to help you be as honest, open-minded, fearless and thorough as possible.
3. Work down on the list, by that I mean, just do the names list (the first column) first. After your first column is done, then you can go back and fill in the blanks for the second column and then the third column.

First Column: Go back through your life, as far back as you can remember, work your way forward to the present time...think about people, places, things and institutions that were in your life and ask yourself this question...When I think about this person, place or thing, does a resentment or a fear crop up or was there sex conduct involved? If the answer is yes, then write the name on the appropriate sheet of paper in the first column. For the sex conduct, if you were engaged in a behavior such as prostitution, anonymous sex, one-night stands, masturbation, pornography etc., you do not need to list each encounter unless

there is a specific harm that you might have caused during a particular incident. If so, then write down that incident. Otherwise just write down the behavior. Do not fill in the second or third column, direct your thinking toward the next person, place or thing. Get the names column done on all three pages first. Don't worry about resentments & fears that you used to have, but don't anymore. We only need to talk about resentments & fears that you currently have or still have from your past.

Second column: Use *key words* to describe the cause of the resentment or the cause of the fear. On the second column for the sex conduct page, use *key words* to describe how you were being selfish or excessive while engaged in this behavior or relationship. We're not looking for pornographic details, this is not confession...we are looking for root underlying causes and conditions for things that are blocking us from an absolute knowledge and awareness of God in our hearts. Write down keywords to describe where you were selfish or excessive. Keywords are used so that you can be thorough when you do your fifth step. You can explain the details during the fifth step.

Third column: Use page 65 in the Big Book as an example. "Affects my" examples are all over that page...self-esteem, ambitions, personal security, financial security, personal relations and sex relations, fear, etc. Do not limit yourself to these examples...however you really feel it affected you is good enough.

Note: For fourth and subsequent columns, see note 6.

4. There is no way to do this thing perfectly. Just do it to the best of your ability. You can always do it again another time. It should be easy and simple. If it's complicated, you're not doing it right. Pick up the phone and call me if you get stuck.

5. For the sex conduct, you should do a complete inventory, including the relationships/behaviors that don't disturb you. Two reasons for this...one, you will be able to see that when we engage in behaviors that are "love" driven and not "fear" driven, the experiences are actually enjoyable and desirable. Second reason is that we want the person listening to our fifth step to see all of our behavior patterns because sometimes we can't see if we're harming anyone. We only want to write down sexual behaviors with people who we have had significant relationships with and then combine the other sexual experiences into behaviors, except when there was an incident where someone was harmed. Don't forget that the primary purpose is to identify the things that are blocking me off from feeling the presence of God in my heart so I can get free of those things. If you're not sure if you should write it down, just write it down. It's better to cross it off the list than to leave it off the list. This is an area where most people leave things off and therefore never get free. Don't be afraid to put anything down on this list. Confidentiality should go without mentioning. The things you don't want to talk about are probably the things that will kill you the quickest. Maybe not physically kill you, but definitely spiritually kill you. If it's in the dictionary, that means someone did it before you and they've done it so often they had to come up with a word to describe it. And if

you're a mess like I am, they probably did it better so walk through the fear and just write it all down. If you can be thorough, this may be the last time you'll ever have to do this.

6. We hear a lot of people talk about 4th columns and sometimes 5th and 6th columns. I realize that if you dive in to intellectually analyze precisely with grammatical accuracy the words in the Big Book, the 4th step directions clearly tell you to write down your part in things. The problem with analyzing this book, or any spiritual literature for that matter, with grammatical accuracy is that you're attempting to comprehend spiritual principle with intellectual limitation. Spiritual principle is too big to be defined in intellectual form. Intellectual concepts can only serve to limit how spiritual principle can guide you. The temptation to understand spiritual principle on the intellectual plane is one of man's greatest and longest living shortcomings, both individually and collectively. There is spiritual value behind the words and you can only hear this message if you're listening. People who are determined to intellectualize these principles can hear the words, but they cannot hear the music. If you can't hear the music you can't dance and the gift of life is in the dance. With that said, let's return to the 4th and subsequent columns.

We believe that we are so delusional that we cannot see that we have a part in the things that disturb us. Then we tell the new person to write down their part. It's a contradiction. However, the person who has been around for a while and the occasional exceptional person can see that he has a part. Therefore the guidelines that I use are as follows:

- a) The person who is new and probably unaware that he has a part in these things, I have him/her only do the three columns. We will address his/her part in it when we get to the 8th step.
- b) The person who is new but is an exception and realizes that he/she has a part in it, I still only do three columns with them because I want them to see how I pass this thing on to others. Again, we will address their part in things when we get to the 8th step.
- c) The person who has done this before and knows how we pass this thing on to others can write down his part in it while doing his 4th step in order to be more efficient. This way, when we sit down to go over the list, he/she can leave with directions based on 9th step principles.

The idea is to keep this as simple, yet effective and efficient, for the person we are trying to help. The temptation is to do it the "right" way rather than the "effective" way. Having to have "one" right way leaves no room for the hand of God and therefore no room for exceptions. Do we want to be right or do we really want to help this person?