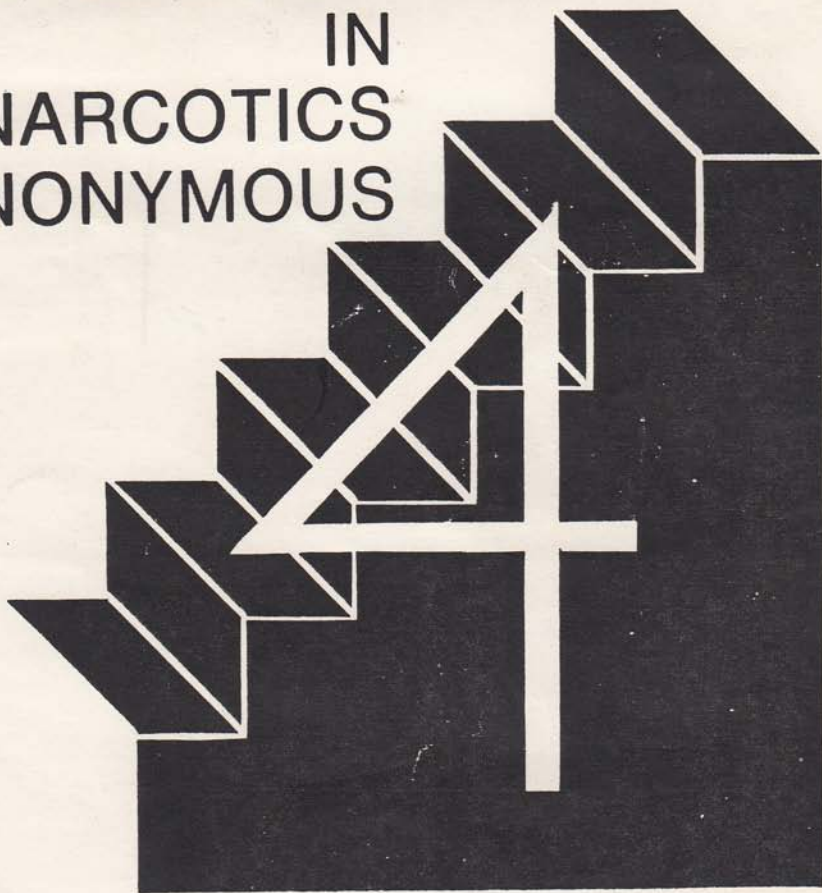




I. P. No. R-10

WORKING
STEP FOUR
IN
NARCOTICS
ANONYMOUS



World Service Conference
Literature Committee
Unapproved Literature
for Review and Input

CarryTheMessage.com
Source: Danny M.

Working Step Four in Narcotics Anonymous

"We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves."

Step Four calls on us to be searching and fearless. We are asked to look carefully at ourselves and to get beneath the self-deceptions we have used up to now to hide the truth from ourselves. We search within, as if entering a dark house with a single candle to guide us. We move ahead, despite our fear or resistance to the unknown. We need to be willing to illuminate every corner of every room of our minds as if our life depends on it, because it does.

It is extremely important that we work with a sponsor. If we don't have one yet, this is a good time to find a sponsor who can help guide us through this crucial step. There are many methods of writing inventories, and no one way is right for everyone. This guide represents the experience, strength and hope of many addicts who have found recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. Regardless of the method, our Fourth Step will be successful if we are searching and fearless.

We need our Higher Power's help here as in all the rest of our program. Our Higher Power is the one who directs us in writing our Fourth Step. We need to pray earnestly and constantly for guidance in this step.

It may seem that our attempts at finding the best way for us to do this step are just ways to procrastinate, to avoid starting. Sometimes that is not the case. There is a lot going on in us beneath the surface we aren't able to understand. It takes time for that process to work itself out. Most of us needed that time. It's not that we won't procrastinate on this step. We might. We just pray for God's guidance to know when to start writing. And we pray for strength to help us face the inventory.

In Step Four we are asked to take a *moral inventory*. When we first heard the word *moral*, most of us thought of sexual morality, or more likely, sexual immorality. But moral is wider than that. Our next thought might have been that being moral meant following all the higher, internal rules that we see guiding us to a peaceful life together and with God. That's a better understanding of moral and it might be as far as we can get in our first inventory. But we know that after being in the program for some years, we come to see that there is a higher morality we find in the program. It may have taken us awhile, but most of us ended up seeing that the highest morality for us was the one that we came to as we constantly sought God's guidance for ourselves in each moment of the day. When we had our Higher Power with us in every one of our actions, there was no way we could be anything but moral in the truest sense of the word.

If something is moral, it is life-giving, if it is immoral it is life-draining. We therefore live a moral life not because some big authority tells us to, but because morality is intrinsically liberating. Our inventory then is a process of looking at how self-centeredness has been life-draining for us, and how our new lifestyle, founded on our first three steps, will be life-giving.

When we came to that understanding, we saw how the steps fit together. We began to see *the exact nature* of our wrongs. That meant more than just the wrong things we did. It meant seeing beneath the wrong thing we did, to the *nature* of that wrong. For example, we stole out of our mother or dad's pocket to get money to buy drugs. That was a wrong. What was the nature of that wrong? The nature of that wrong was our self-centeredness, our fear, or dishonesty and unkindness. We were self-centered in that we wanted what we wanted. We were fearful that we wouldn't get what we wanted. We were dishonest in that we took money without the other person's knowledge or permission. We were unkind in that we did a thing that hurt another human being.

When we look at our lives in this way we see that the nature of our wrongs are the characteristics in our lives that are opposite the program. Following the program and seeking our Higher Power's guidance helps us to become kind, honest and giving persons. That is moral in the highest sense of the word because it isn't based on a finite set of rules. It isn't our crazy mind telling us that we should do this and that we shouldn't do that. It is a morality based on a close and loving connection to a Higher Power who guides us in all things.

It makes no difference at this point in our recovery how small our problems seem to be or how often we have thought or talked about them. What we are searching for here is a very complete and a very true picture of ourselves. It helps to remember that this is the only time we will have to go into this complete and true a picture of ourselves. So the deeper we go and the more complete we are, the less material we will have to cover in later inventories. And, the truer and more complete this picture is, the more freedom we gain by doing the inventory.

Keep in mind that this may include character assets as well as liabilities. In looking at our actions, it is important to see how we want to behave differently in the future. Now that we are clean in Narcotics Anonymous, we discover some assets. Willingness to take the steps, faith in a Higher Power, gratitude and open-mindedness are all assets we develop by staying clean. If we are searching, we will surely uncover some good points about ourselves. It is important to consider our assets because as human beings, we are composed of both assets and liabilities.

At this point we need to emphasize that being thorough is not the same as being perfect. When we are ready to begin, we say a prayer asking for God to help us be searching and fearless in this inventory. Some of us even write our prayer at the beginning of our inventory. But the important point is that we sit down and start writing. We try to remember that, for now, what we write is between ourselves and our Higher Power.

General Guidelines

The outline below provides a structure for examining ourselves. It contains the basic elements which we use in our inventory. Throughout our Fourth Step, we look at situations to see how they affected us. It is helpful to focus on the feelings we had such as those listed in Step Four of the Basic Text. These include:

<u>guilt</u>	shame
remorse	<u>self-pity</u>
<u>resentment</u>	anger
depression	frustration
confusion	loneliness
anxiety	betrayal
hopelessness	failure
fear	denial

Throughout this guide, there are many questions to be answered. Whenever the answer is a simple "yes," list examples. In looking at our behavior before, during and after active addiction, patterns begin to emerge. In each situation, try to see where you were wrong or what you could have done instead. In looking at our actions, it is important to see how we want to behave differently in the future.

I. *Review your first three steps.* These provide the necessary preparation and foundation for making a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. If you have written out your first three steps, you have already made a good beginning. Try to look at who, what, where, why and how in describing the circumstances which led you to full acceptance of the first three steps.

II. *Write about resentments.* Our resentments caused us discomfort, so we formed still more resentments. We relived unpleasant past experiences again and again in our lives. We were angry about what happened and kept a mental grudge list. We regretted the clever things we had not said and planned retaliation which may or may not have taken place. We were obsessed with the past and future, and therefore cheated ourselves of the present. We need to write about these resentments now to see the part we played in forming them.

A. List the people, organizations and concepts you resent. Most of us started with our childhood, but any order will work as long as it is complete. We included all the people (parents, mates, friends, enemies, etc.), the organizations, and institutions (jail, police, hospitals, schools, etc.) and the concepts (religions, politics, prejudice, social customs, etc.) at whom we were angry.

B. List the cause or causes of each resentment. We examined the reasons for our anger: Was our self-respect or pride hurt? Was our safety threatened in any way? Was our livelihood attacked? Was a personal or sexual relationship hurt or threatened? We listed whomever or whatever we resented, the cause of the resentment and how it affected us.

C. With each resentment, try to see where you were wrong and what you could have done instead. Try to forget about other people's mistakes, and concentrate on your own. For each situation, we answered these questions: Where have I been selfish? Where have I not been completely honest? Was I thinking only of myself, manipulating toward my own ends? Was I afraid? Though I may not have been all wrong, in what way was I to blame for the situation? We write *our* personal inventory, not the other person's. We make a list of *our* faults, not theirs. We must do this honestly, ignoring nothing. Situations in which we are sure we are right require close observation. Where others have wronged us, we must realize that we need to stop expecting perfection from them. This allows us an opportunity to look at ourselves which is critical to our recovery.

III. *Write about your relationships.* We write about the many ways each of us has been intolerant. In reviewing our past, we have found that many of us were the victims or initiators of abusive relationships. At times, we probably refused to allow others the privilege of voicing or even having an opinion, and this attitude caused indifference or hostility. We had a need, generated by fear, to "always be right." We were unnecessarily critical of others; yet when constructive criticism was directed towards us, we were less than receptive. Every suggestion was met with either irritation or despair. Did we listen only to ourselves? When were we intolerant of others? When did we feel superior to others and correct them?

A. List your personal relationships. Examine the positive and negative aspects of each one, being honest about your assets and liabilities. Avoid spending time on the wrongs others have done. We focus on *our* mistakes, and concern ourselves with areas where self-centeredness seemed to prevail. We must look within and honestly appraise our motives. This is *our* inventory and if it is to succeed, we need to list *our* faults, not those of others. Self-pity is one of the ways we manipulated others for our benefit. Indulging in self-pity was asking others

to change or to bow to our demands; it was looking for a way to avoid responsibility. We ask ourselves these questions. When did we use self-pity to get attention? Did we lie or “stretch the truth” to make ourselves look more pathetic? Did we make others feel guilty by feeling sorry for ourselves? Did we bill ourselves as victims of life and everyone around us?

- B. List your sexual relationships. This may include deep relationships or short affairs, spouses, lovers or others. We answered these questions about each relationship: Did I manipulate and lie to others to meet my own needs? Did I care about the other person? How did I demonstrate that? Did I feel better or less than my partner? Did I sell myself short? Did I say “yes” when I wanted to say “no?” Did I end up feeling worthless, used and abused? Did I think that only sex would make me happy and fulfilled? Did my relationships always end up in pain and unhappiness both for myself and others?

We all have sexual needs and desires, and part of recovery is learning to deal with these needs in a constructive rather than destructive manner. Our sexuality is a gift from God, but sexual needs should not be fulfilled at someone else’s expense. Like everything else, we need to ask direction from a Power greater than ourselves. With this in mind, sexual relations can be a fulfilling and joyful experience.

- C. With each relationship, try to see where you were wrong and what you could have done instead. Many of our character defects colored and damaged our personal relationships. When we didn’t get what we wanted, did we choose to pout or complain? Were we so consumed with self-pity and our own suffering that we had very little perspective or understanding of others? Did we exaggerate our problems? Could we feel any sympathy for others when so consumed with self? Were others frustrated by our negativity? As

addicts, our emotions often run to extremes—past the point of what is appropriate. We must now find a way to change our actions or be driven back to active addiction.

- IV. *Write about your fears.* A part of Step Four is looking at our fears. If we look closely, we find that we are afraid of almost everything. Our fears have kept us from doing the things we want to do and becoming the people we want to be. If we are as honest as we can be, many of our previous fears will begin to lose their power over us.

- A. We list our fears. Many times, we find them to be unreasonable. Some of our fears include: fear of the unknown, pain, rejection, abandonment, responsibility, commitment, growing up, success and/or failure. We feared we would never have enough or that we would have too much—drugs, love, sex, money and attention. We answered these questions about our fears: Why do I have this fear? Am I afraid because I cannot depend upon myself? Am I afraid of fear itself?

Sometimes we were very confident and self-assured, especially when we were drugged. But drugs never conquered our fears, or any other problem. At best drugs hid them, sometimes so deeply that we did insane things without really knowing why. We begin to see that our fear originates in us and we are responsible for it in its various forms.

- B. With each fear, we try to see where we were wrong and what we could have done instead. There is a better way. We are now on a completely different foundation. Instead of being self-reliant, we are God-reliant. Instead of depending on self, which is limited, we trust in a Higher Power, which is limitless. The more we attempt to follow God’s will, and rely on God, the more we are given the ability to meet hardship with peace and happiness.

We need to examine ourselves in close detail in order to get a balanced and realistic picture of ourselves. Through this process, we discover some assets as well as liabilities. By

continuing on with the steps, those attitudes which have not worked for us, for our peace of mind, are modified. We are trying to build a happy life in recovery and Step Four is our first clear-cut attempt at that.

What are the results that come from making a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves? Our Basic Text says: "Anyone who has some time in the program and has worked this step will tell you that the Fourth Step was a turning point in their life." When we live the Fourth Step, we begin to experience freedom from the past, freedom to be ourselves and knowledge of who and what we really are.

If we have written a thorough inventory, we end up with a large amount of information about ourselves. We have carefully examined our resentments and begin to understand how worthless and deadly they really are. We realize their power to destroy us and now seek a better way to live. Our liabilities may destroy us if we withhold any faith or trust in our Higher Power. With God's help we are guided through a maze of confusion which often confronts us. We grow toward freedom, peace of mind and balance.

Throughout our literature, we read again and again that "we can't, God can." By taking the remaining steps, we begin to realize that through God and our own efforts, we can remove the various forms of self-centeredness that have kept us from spiritual awareness. If we have sincerely taken the first three steps and followed through with a searching and fearless moral inventory, we have uncovered some strong realities about ourselves and are ready to move on to Step Five.

THE TWELVE STEPS OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

1. *We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction – that our lives had become unmanageable.*
2. *We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.*
3. *We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.*
4. *We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*
5. *We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.*
6. *We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.*
7. *We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.*
8. *We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.*
9. *We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.*
10. *We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.*
11. *We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us, and the power to carry that out.*
12. *Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of those steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.*

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