

Step Four - "A Fact-Finding Inventory"

Your Sponsor's Companion Packet

1 Sponsor's Opening Words

You've made a decision in Step Three to turn your will and life over. Step Four is the first major action you take on that decision. It asks us to look straight into the heart of the life that "self-will" built—the habits, fears, and harms that have been running the show.

This isn't a moral beat-down; the Big Book calls it a "fact-finding and fact-facing" mission. It's like a merchant who needs to take a clear inventory to find out what's in stock and what's spoiled. You need to know *what* you're turning over. You are not alone in this; the willingness from Step Three is your flashlight, and I am here to help you hold it steady.

2 Core Concept - The Searching Moral Inventory

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

The Big Book (4th ed.) gives us the *exact* and *complete* instructions for this inventory. The process is simple, practical, and laid out for us clearly.

Section	Pages	What It Shows
"How It Works" (Primary)	pp. 64-71	This is the "how-to" manual. It gives us the precise, three-part inventory: Resentments, Fears, and Sex Conduct.
12x12 - Step Four Essay	pp. 40-52	This essay provides an excellent "why" we do this and explores the "instincts" (social, security, sex) that run riot.

3 What to Do This Week

Action	How to Do It	Approx. Time
Read "How It Works" (pp. 64-71) in the Big Book.	Read these pages several times. This is your <i>only</i>	30 min

	instruction manual.	
Get a Notebook (or use the provided worksheet file).	You must write this down. A "mental" inventory is not a searching one.	5 min
Begin the Inventory, Part 1: Resentments.	Use the 4-column format from p. 65. See the worksheet for clear instructions.	1-2 hours
Complete Part 2: Fears.	Follow the instructions on p. 68. List them, and ask "Why do I have them?"	30-60 min
Complete Part 3: Sex Conduct.	Follow the questions on p. 68-69. Be honest, but remember "we are not saints."	30-60 min
Pause & Breathe.	When shame or anxiety spikes, recite the Step Three Prayer. This is a fact-finding mission, not a trial.	As needed
Read the 12x12 Step-Four Essay (pp. 40-52).	This is a great read <i>after</i> you've done the Big Book work, as it adds depth and context.	20 min

The Big Book's Three-Part Inventory

The process laid out in "How It Works" is our guide.

1. **Resentments (p. 65):** We list people, institutions, or principles with whom we are angry. We use a 4-column table to see our part in it.
2. **Fears (p. 68):** We list our fears and ask "Why do I have them?" We see where self-reliance has failed us.
3. **Sex Conduct (p. 68-69):** We review our conduct, asking a specific set of questions to see where we have been at fault and caused harm.

4 Tradition Four - "Each group should be autonomous except in

matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole."

This Tradition is about responsibility and impact. Just like an A.A. group, your personal inventory is *autonomous*—it is *your work*, and no one else can do it for you. You have the freedom to be rigorously honest within the "four walls" of your notebook.

But this Tradition also reminds us that our "autonomy" ends when our actions "affect other groups" (i.e., other people). This inventory is the process of seeing exactly how our self-will has harmed others. By taking an honest inventory, we prepare ourselves to clean up those harms, ensuring our "personal autonomy" no longer brings chaos to the "A.A. as a whole" of our family, friends, and community.

5 Reflection & Integration (Your Personal Worksheet)

- 1. The Common Thread:** Looking at Column 4 ("My Part") of your Resentment list, what are the most common defects you see? (e.g., "Selfishness," "Frightened").
- 2. The Root of Fear:** Looking at your Fear list, what "self-reliance" patterns do you see? (e.g., "I try to control everything," "I lie to protect myself").
- 3. Connecting the Dots:** How did your fears (Part 2) or your character defects (Part 1, Col. 4) drive your harmful conduct (Part 3)?
- 4. A Glimpse of Freedom:** How did it feel to write this all down? Did you notice any moments of relief or new understanding, even if it was painful?
- 5. Readiness:** Keep this inventory safe and secure. You will need it for Step Five. Are you willing to share this with another person?

6 Suggested Follow-Up Reading

Source	Pages / Sections	What to Highlight
Big Book - "How It Works" (Primary)	pp. 64-71	The exact instructions for the 4-column resentment list, the fear inventory, and the sex conduct questions.
12x12 - Step Four Essay	pp. 40-52	The discussion of "instincts gone awry" (social, security, sex).
12x12 - Tradition Four Essay	pp. 146-151	The concept of "freedom and responsibility."

7 Moving Toward Step Five

Step Four is the "fact-finding" mission. You have done the courageous work of looking at the

wreckage of self-will. You now have the "raw material" for Step Five: "Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs." You don't have to hold this alone anymore. The next step is where the healing of "sunlight" begins.

8 Quick-Help FAQ

Question	Short Answer
What if I can't finish it all at once?	That's normal. It's a "searching" inventory, not a "speedy" one. Work on it, rest, and come back. The goal is thoroughness, not speed.
Can I skip things that feel too painful?	The Big Book says "fearless." Those painful spots are exactly what we need to look at—they are where the freedom is. Pause, say the Step Three prayer, and write.
Is this about blaming myself?	No. This is about finding <i>your part</i> . It's about separating what was done <i>to you</i> from what was done <i>by you</i> . We are only responsible for our side. This is an inventory, not a "guilt list."
Why do I have to write it?	A mental inventory is vague and lets us off the hook. Writing makes it concrete and undeniable. As the book says, "We got this down on paper."

9 Final Encouragement

You are doing the hard work that many are unwilling to do. Seeing yourself clearly—the good, the bad, and the broken—is the ultimate act of courage. The fear and shame you may feel are not roadblocks; they are signposts showing you where the spiritual growth is waiting. Keep the Serenity Prayer close, lean on the support of Step Three, and know that each line you write is a step toward genuine freedom.

-Your Sponsor