

# Overcoming Resentment

Deep Dives · The Recovery Files

Releasing the Poison of Held Grudges in Recovery

From Bitterness to Freedom — The Recovery Files

Burning · Resentment held, poison spreading · Released · Grudges freed, peace restored

## In this workbook

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Each reading is followed by its check-in questions and exercises, in the same order as the app. Your scored results are shown in the app.

## PART 1 OF 4 · READING

## What Is Resentment? The Poison You Drink

Resentment is the act of re-feeling. The word itself comes from the Latin "re-sentire" — to feel again. And that is precisely what resentment does: it forces you to re-experience the original wound over and over, long after the event has ended. It is not a single emotional event but a chronic emotional state — a bitter, smoldering fire that burns continuously in the background of your internal life, consuming energy, distorting perception, and generating a toxic emotional atmosphere that poisons everything it touches. The most famous metaphor for resentment in recovery circles is the one about drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die. It is repeated so often that it has lost some of its impact, which is unfortunate, because it is precisely, clinically accurate. When you hold onto resentment, you are the one who suffers. The person you resent may not know you are angry, may not care, may have moved on entirely, or may even be dead. But you are still carrying the emotional weight of what they did. You are still replaying the scene. You are still feeling the anger, the betrayal, the injustice. You are still poisoned — and the poison is self-administered. Resentment is distinct from anger. Anger is an immediate, present-tense emotional response to a perceived threat or injustice. It rises, it communicates important information (something is wrong, a boundary has been violated, action is needed), and — when processed healthily — it resolves. Anger has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Resentment is what happens when anger does not end. It is anger that has been swallowed rather than expressed, catalogued rather than processed, and rehearsed rather than resolved. It is anger that has calcified into a permanent grievance — a story you tell yourself over and over about what was done to you, who did it, and why they do not deserve your forgiveness. For people with substance use disorders, resentment is not merely an emotional problem — it is a clinical emergency. The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous identifies resentment as "the number one offender" — the leading cause of relapse — and decades of clinical observation have confirmed this assessment. Resentment creates the exact internal conditions that make substance use feel necessary: chronic emotional pain that demands relief, a sense of injustice that justifies self-destructive behavior, and a state of emotional rigidity that blocks access to the spiritual and relational resources that sustain recovery. The particular danger of resentment is that it feels justified. Unlike many other emotional patterns that drive relapse — self-pity, fear, shame — resentment comes with a compelling narrative of victimhood. You were wronged. The offense was real. The hurt was genuine. The person who did it may have never apologized, may have faced no consequences, may even continue to cause harm. The resentment feels like the last form of justice available to you — the one thing you can do to refuse to let them get away with it. What this reasoning misses is that the resentment does not punish the offender. It punishes you. It keeps you tethered to the person and the event. It gives the offense continued power over your present moment. And it creates precisely the internal toxicity that the disease of addiction feeds on. Understanding resentment is the first step toward releasing it. And releasing it — not excusing what was done, not forgetting, not pretending the hurt did not happen, but genuinely releasing the grip that the resentment has on your emotional life — is one of the most important things you will do in recovery. It is not optional. It is not something you will get around to when you feel ready. It is urgent, necessary, life-or-death recovery work.

### Reflection Questions

1. How does the definition of resentment as "re-feeling" change the way you think about the grudges you carry? Are you choosing to re-experience the original wound?

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2. Who comes to mind immediately when you think about resentment? What is the story you have been telling yourself about what they did?

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3. Can you identify the difference between your immediate anger at an offense and the resentment that developed afterward? When did the anger stop being about the present and start being about the past?

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4. Has your resentment toward a specific person or situation ever directly contributed to a relapse or near-relapse? What was the connection between the bitterness and the substance use?

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5. On a scale of 1 to 10, how much of your daily emotional energy is consumed by resentment? What would your life look like if that number dropped to a 2?

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#### CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 1 OF 5

#### Resentment Intensity & Frequency

Scale: 1 = Not at all · 2 = A little · 3 = Somewhat · 4 = Quite a bit · 5 = Very much

1. I carry grudges that I think about daily or almost daily

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. When I think about people who have wronged me, I feel a physical reaction — heat, tension, or agitation  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
3. I replay past hurts in my mind over and over, sometimes for hours  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
4. My resentments feel as strong today as they did when the original offense occurred  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
5. I have resentments that go back years or even decades that still affect me  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
6. I find it difficult to think about certain people without feeling anger, bitterness, or contempt  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
7. I sometimes fantasize about revenge or about the person getting what they deserve  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
8. My resentments occupy more mental space than I would like to admit  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

#### YOUR EXERCISE

### Exercise 1: The Resentment Inventory

Putting the grudges on paper, one column at a time

Why write it down?

A resentment kept in your head is a loop. It replays, it grows, and it never has to answer a question. On paper it becomes a list, and a list can be examined. This is the four-column inventory used in Step Four: who you resent, what happened, what it threatened in you, and — last, and only after the first three are honest — where your own part was.

Before you begin

"My part" never means you caused harm that was done to you. If a resentment is toward someone who abused, assaulted or exploited you, write "none" in the fourth column for that harm and bring the entry to a counselor rather than working it alone. You can still list it — naming it is part of taking its power back.

#### Step 1: The Roster

Write every person, institution, or principle you feel resentment toward. Do not filter and do not explain yet. Include old ones, small ones, and yourself if you belong on the list.

### People I resent

One name per line...

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Institutions, systems, or groups I resent (a job, a court, a church, a family as a whole, the program itself)

One per line...

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Principles or situations I resent (unfairness, my diagnosis, the way life went)

One per line...

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Do I belong on my own list? For what?

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### Entry 1: Four Columns

Column 1 — I am resentful at:

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Column 2 — The cause. What happened? Stick to what a camera would have recorded.

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Column 3 — What did it affect or threaten in me? (choose all that fit)

- ☐ Self-esteem ☐ Pride ☐ Emotional security ☐ Financial security ☐ Ambitions ☐ Personal relationships ☐ Intimate relationships

In a sentence, how did it hit that part of me?

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How strong is this resentment today?

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

0 = Gone 10 = Consumes me

Now set their wrong aside for a moment. It was real, and it stays on the page. The fourth column only asks what was yours.

Column 4 — Where was I selfish, self-seeking, dishonest, frightened, or inconsiderate?

☐ Selfish ☐ Self-seeking ☐ Dishonest ☐ Frightened ☐ Inconsiderate ☐ None — this was done to me

My part, in plain words (what I did, expected, avoided, or kept feeding):

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## Entry 2: Four Columns

Column 1 — I am resentful at:

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Column 2 — The cause. What happened? Stick to what a camera would have recorded.

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Column 3 — What did it affect or threaten in me? (choose all that fit)

☐ Self-esteem ☐ Pride ☐ Emotional security ☐ Financial security ☐ Ambitions ☐ Personal relationships ☐ Intimate relationships

In a sentence, how did it hit that part of me?

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How strong is this resentment today?

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

0 = Gone 10 = Consumes me

Now set their wrong aside for a moment. It was real, and it stays on the page. The fourth column only asks what was yours.

Column 4 — Where was I selfish, self-seeking, dishonest, frightened, or inconsiderate?

☐ Selfish ☐ Self-seeking ☐ Dishonest ☐ Frightened ☐ Inconsiderate ☐ None — this was done to me

My part, in plain words (what I did, expected, avoided, or kept feeding):

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### Entry 3: Four Columns

Column 1 — I am resentful at:

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Column 2 — The cause. What happened? Stick to what a camera would have recorded.

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Column 3 — What did it affect or threaten in me? (choose all that fit)

☐ Self-esteem ☐ Pride ☐ Emotional security ☐ Financial security ☐ Ambitions ☐ Personal relationships ☐ Intimate relationships

In a sentence, how did it hit that part of me?

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How strong is this resentment today?

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

0 = Gone 10 = Consumes me

Now set their wrong aside for a moment. It was real, and it stays on the page. The fourth column only asks what was yours.

Column 4 — Where was I selfish, self-seeking, dishonest, frightened, or inconsiderate?

☐ Selfish ☐ Self-seeking ☐ Dishonest ☐ Frightened ☐ Inconsiderate ☐ None — this was done to me

My part, in plain words (what I did, expected, avoided, or kept feeding):

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### Entry 4: Four Columns

Column 1 — I am resentful at:

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Column 2 — The cause. What happened? Stick to what a camera would have recorded.

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Column 3 — What did it affect or threaten in me? (choose all that fit)

☐ Self-esteem ☐ Pride ☐ Emotional security ☐ Financial security ☐ Ambitions ☐ Personal relationships ☐ Intimate relationships

In a sentence, how did it hit that part of me?

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How strong is this resentment today?

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

0 = Gone 10 = Consumes me

Now set their wrong aside for a moment. It was real, and it stays on the page. The fourth column only asks what was yours.

Column 4 — Where was I selfish, self-seeking, dishonest, frightened, or inconsiderate?

☐ Selfish ☐ Self-seeking ☐ Dishonest ☐ Frightened ☐ Inconsiderate ☐ None — this was done to me

My part, in plain words (what I did, expected, avoided, or kept feeding):

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### Entry 5: Four Columns

Column 1 — I am resentful at:

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Column 2 — The cause. What happened? Stick to what a camera would have recorded.

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Column 3 — What did it affect or threaten in me? (choose all that fit)

- ☐ Self-esteem ☐ Pride ☐ Emotional security ☐ Financial security ☐ Ambitions ☐ Personal relationships ☐ Intimate relationships

In a sentence, how did it hit that part of me?

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How strong is this resentment today?

- ☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

0 = Gone 10 = Consumes me

Now set their wrong aside for a moment. It was real, and it stays on the page. The fourth column only asks what was yours.

Column 4 — Where was I selfish, self-seeking, dishonest, frightened, or inconsiderate?

- ☐ Selfish ☐ Self-seeking ☐ Dishonest ☐ Frightened ☐ Inconsiderate ☐ None — this was done to me

My part, in plain words (what I did, expected, avoided, or kept feeding):

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## Entry 6: Four Columns

Column 1 — I am resentful at:

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Column 2 — The cause. What happened? Stick to what a camera would have recorded.

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Column 3 — What did it affect or threaten in me? (choose all that fit)

- ☐ Self-esteem ☐ Pride ☐ Emotional security ☐ Financial security ☐ Ambitions ☐ Personal relationships ☐ Intimate relationships

In a sentence, how did it hit that part of me?

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How strong is this resentment today?

- ☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

0 = Gone 10 = Consumes me

Now set their wrong aside for a moment. It was real, and it stays on the page. The fourth column only asks what was yours.

Column 4 — Where was I selfish, self-seeking, dishonest, frightened, or inconsiderate?

- ☐ Selfish ☐ Self-seeking ☐ Dishonest ☐ Frightened ☐ Inconsiderate ☐ None — this was done to me

My part, in plain words (what I did, expected, avoided, or kept feeding):

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## Inventory Debrief

1. Look across Column 3. Which part of you gets hit most often? That repetition points to your deepest vulnerability.

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2. Which entry was hardest to find any part of your own in? Did you find one, or are you still arguing their wrong?

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3. Was there an entry where writing Column 4 loosened the resentment even slightly? What shifted?

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4. Which entries are you not ready to work yet? Name them honestly — "not yet" is an answer, and it is different from "never."

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5. Who will you read this inventory to — a sponsor, counselor, or trusted person? Write their name and a date.

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#### YOUR EXERCISE

### Exercise 4: The Hurt Beneath the Anger

Finding what the resentment is guarding

The iceberg

Anger is the part above the water — visible, loud, and easy to point to. Below it sit the feelings that are harder to carry: hurt, fear, shame, grief, helplessness. Resentment often stays because it keeps us above the waterline. It is easier to be angry than to be heartbroken. This exercise goes under the surface with one resentment, slowly.

Go at your own pace

Feelings under old anger can be strong, and for some people they connect to trauma. If you notice panic, numbness, or feeling far away from yourself, stop, put both feet on the floor, name five things you can see, and reach out to someone. If you are in crisis, call or text 988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline).

### **Above the Water: The Anger**

The resentment I am exploring:

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What I say about it when I am angry — the words, the tone, the story:

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How angry do I feel right now, thinking about it?

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

0 = Calm 10 = Furious

### **Below the Water: What's Underneath**

Take three slow breaths. Ask yourself: if I were not allowed to be angry about this, what would I feel instead?

Which of these are underneath? (choose all that are there, even faintly)

☐ Hurt ☐ Fear ☐ Shame ☐ Grief ☐ Rejection ☐ Helplessness ☐ Loneliness ☐ Disappointment ☐ Betrayal ☐ Embarrassment ☐ Feeling invisible ☐ Feeling not good enough

The strongest feeling underneath, and where I notice it in my body:

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### **Naming the Loss**

Under most resentments is something that was lost: trust, safety, time, a relationship, a childhood, a version of the future, a picture of who someone was.

What did I lose?

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What did I need at the time, that I did not get?

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Have I ever let myself be sad about this, rather than angry? What happens when I try?

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### **Tending the Hurt**

If a friend told me this had happened to them, what would I say to them?

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What do I need now, as an adult in recovery, to care for this hurt? (Talk to someone, a boundary, rest, a meeting, time, grief work with a counselor...)

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After writing this, how angry do I feel?

○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 ○ 6 ○ 7 ○ 8 ○ 9 ○ 10

0 = Calm 10 = Furious

1. Did the anger number change between the beginning and the end? What do you make of that?

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2. What does the anger protect you from having to feel? Is that protection still needed?

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3. Who is one safe person you could share the feeling underneath with — not the anger, the feeling?

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## PART 2 OF 4 · READING

## Why Resentment Takes Root: The Seeds and Soil of Bitterness

Resentment does not appear out of nowhere. It grows from specific seeds planted in specific soil, and understanding the conditions that allow resentment to take root and flourish is essential for developing the ability to prevent its growth in the future. While the offenses that trigger resentment may be external — someone did something harmful — the conditions that allow that offense to become a persistent, chronic source of bitterness are internal. And those internal conditions are often deeply connected to the same vulnerabilities that drive addiction. The first seed of resentment is unmet expectations. Every resentment begins with a belief about how things should have been. These expectations are not irrational — many of them reflect legitimate expectations of decency, fairness, and love. But when the expectation collides with reality and the gap between what should have happened and what did happen remains unprocessed, resentment fills the space. The larger the gap, the deeper the resentment. The second seed is the perception of injustice. Resentment thrives when we believe that the harm done to us was unfair, undeserved, and unaddressed. This perception may be entirely accurate — many people in recovery have experienced genuine injustice, abuse, betrayal, and harm. But the perception of injustice also has a shadow side: it can become a lens through which every interaction is filtered, a confirmation bias that looks for evidence of unfairness and always finds it. When injustice becomes your primary framework for interpreting the world, resentment becomes your default emotional state. The third seed is powerlessness — real or perceived. Resentment is the anger of the helpless. When you have the power to address a wrong directly — to confront the person, to leave the situation, to demand accountability — anger is more likely to resolve through action. But when you feel powerless — because the person is dead, because confrontation feels too dangerous, because the system is too big, because you were a child when it happened — anger has nowhere to go. It turns inward, solidifies, and becomes resentment. For people in addiction, who often experienced genuine powerlessness during their active use and who may carry deep powerlessness from childhood, this dynamic is particularly potent. The soil in which these seeds grow is the inability or unwillingness to grieve. Underneath every resentment is a loss — a loss of trust, of safety, of innocence, of a relationship, of time, of potential, of the life you deserved but did not get. Resentment is what happens when grief is refused. Rather than mourning what was lost, you rage at the person who caused the loss. Rather than accepting the painful reality of what happened, you protest it indefinitely. Grief moves through you and eventually, over time, releases its grip. Resentment stays because it refuses to grieve — it stays angry instead of sad, outraged instead of heartbroken, bitter instead of bereaved. Additional factors that make the soil fertile for resentment include childhood conditioning, trauma history, shame, and active addiction itself. Understanding the roots of your resentment is not about excusing it or explaining it away. It is about seeing clearly how the resentment formed, what internal conditions allowed it to persist, and what needs to change for it to release. When you can see the mechanism, you gain the power to interrupt it.

### Reflection Questions

1. What unmet expectations lie at the heart of your deepest resentments? What did you believe should have happened that didn't?

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2. Do you have a pattern of perceiving injustice? Has this pattern expanded beyond specific grievances to become a general worldview? How does this affect your recovery?

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3. Where has powerlessness played a role in your resentments? Were you genuinely helpless, or were there actions you could have taken but chose not to?

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4. What losses are hidden underneath your resentments? If you stopped being angry about what happened, what grief would you have to face?

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5. How did your family of origin handle resentment and forgiveness? Were grudges held? Was forgiveness modeled? How has this influenced your own patterns?

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#### CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 2 OF 5

### Resentment Triggers & Patterns

Scale: 1 = Not at all · 2 = A little · 3 = Somewhat · 4 = Quite a bit · 5 = Very much

1. I become resentful when I feel treated unfairly, even in minor situations

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I resent people who seem to have easier lives or fewer consequences than I do

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I carry deep resentment toward family members for things that happened in childhood  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
4. I feel resentful when people don't acknowledge the harm they caused me  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
5. I resent authority figures — bosses, judges, institutions, or systems  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
6. I become resentful when I feel controlled, criticized, or disrespected  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
7. I carry resentment toward myself for choices I made during my addiction  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
8. I resent the recovery process itself — the meetings, the expectations, the work required  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

### YOUR EXERCISE

## Exercise 3: Identifying Resentment Patterns

Different people, same wound

The names change, the story doesn't

When you look at your resentments one at a time, each seems to be about a particular person who did a particular thing. When you look at them together, a pattern usually appears: the same kind of situation, the same part of you getting hit, the same expectation being broken. The pattern matters more than any single entry, because the pattern will produce your next resentment unless you see it.

### Lay Out Your Resentments

List five to eight resentments — old and current, big and small. One line each: who, and the gist of what happened. (If you completed Exercise 1, use your roster.)

1. / 2. / 3. / 4. / 5.

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### The Situations That Set Me Off

Which kinds of situation show up more than once in my list?

- ☐ Being treated unfairly ☐ Being controlled or told what to do ☐ Not being appreciated ☐ Being criticized or judged ☐ Being lied to ☐ Being left or abandoned ☐ Being disrespected in front of others ☐ Someone getting away with it ☐ Being let down by someone who should have known better ☐ Being ignored or not heard ☐ Someone having it easier than me

The situation that shows up most, and two examples of it from different parts of my life:

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Which part of me gets threatened most often?

- ☐ Self-esteem ☐ Pride ☐ Emotional security ☐ Financial security ☐ Ambitions ☐ Personal relationships ☐ Intimate relationships

## The Kinds of People

Who do I tend to resent?

- ☐ Authority figures ☐ Partners ☐ Parents ☐ Siblings ☐ Friends ☐ Coworkers ☐ People in recovery ☐ Institutions and systems ☐ People who seem to have it easy ☐ Myself

Does this group echo someone from earlier in my life? Who did I first feel this way about?

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## The Expectations Underneath

Every resentment starts with a "should." People should keep their word. My family should have protected me. My boss should see how hard I work. Some of these are reasonable; some were never agreed to by anyone but you.

The 'shoulds' that repeat across my resentments:

People should... Life should...

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Which of these did I ever say out loud, or ask for? Which did I just expect?

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## When It Happens

When resentments flare, what is usually true of me? (choose all that fit)

- ☐ Hungry ☐ Angry already ☐ Lonely ☐ Tired ☐ Stressed at work ☐ After a family contact ☐ At night ☐ When I skip meetings or practice ☐ When I have been isolating ☐ In early recovery stress

What do I do next, most often, when a resentment flares? (Replay it, vent to someone, go silent, get sarcastic, think about using...)

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### My Pattern Statement

Write your pattern in one or two sentences: "I tend to resent people who \_\_\_, especially when I am \_\_\_, because it touches my fear of \_\_\_. What I usually do next is \_\_\_."

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1. Where did this pattern first protect you? What was it doing for you back then?

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2. What is the earliest warning sign that this pattern is starting again?

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3. Who in your support network could you tell about this pattern, so they can point it out when they see it?

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### YOUR EXERCISE

## Exercise 5: Empathy & Perspective Taking

Understanding is not excusing

Seeing the person, not only the offense

It is hard to keep a dehumanizing grudge against someone once you have seen them as a struggling human being. The Big Book suggests seeing the people who harmed us as perhaps spiritually sick, just as we were. This does not make what they did acceptable, and it does not mean you have to let them back in. It means you stop carrying a cartoon villain around in your

head.

Choose carefully

This exercise is not meant for someone who abused, assaulted, or seriously endangered you, and you never owe empathy to someone who is still hurting you. Start with a resentment toward someone who was flawed, thoughtless, or unfair — not dangerous. Boundaries stay in place no matter what you discover here.

### **The Person and the Event**

Who I am working on, and what happened (briefly):

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The story I usually tell about why they did it:

They did it because they're...

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### **Their Side of the Street**

What was going on in their life at the time? What pressures, losses, or fears might they have been carrying?

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What do I know about how they were raised or what was done to them?

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What might they have been afraid of in that moment?

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If they told this story, how would they tell it? Write it in their voice, as fairly as I can.

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In what ways might they have been "spiritually sick" — driven by the same fear, selfishness, or pain I know from my own addiction?

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### The Mirror

Have I ever done something similar to someone else — maybe in a different form? What was going on for me when I did?

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How would I want someone to understand me for that, without excusing it?

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### Holding Both Truths

What stays true no matter what I understand about them? (What they did was still wrong. I was still hurt. My boundary still stands.)

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What has shifted, even slightly, in how I see them?

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How much resentment do I feel toward them now?

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

0 = None 10 = As much as ever

Complete: "You hurt me when you \_\_\_\_\_. I understand now that you may have been \_\_\_\_\_. That does not make it right, and I am choosing to stop carrying \_\_\_\_\_."

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## PART 3 OF 4 · READING

## The Price You Pay: How Resentment Fuels Relapse

Every resentment you carry extracts a price. That price is paid in your body, your relationships, your mental health, and most critically your recovery. Understanding the full cost of resentment is not an intellectual exercise. It is a survival assessment. You need to know exactly what holding onto bitterness is costing you so that you can make an informed decision about whether the cost is worth it. Spoiler: it never is. The physical cost of chronic resentment is well-documented by medical research. When you replay a resentful thought, your body responds as though the original offense is happening right now. Your amygdala activates. Cortisol and adrenaline flood your system. Your heart rate increases, your blood pressure rises, your muscles tense, and your digestive system constricts. This is the fight-or-flight response and resentment triggers it repeatedly, sometimes dozens of times per day. The result is a body that exists in a state of chronic stress: elevated cortisol that suppresses immune function, persistent inflammation that contributes to cardiovascular disease, chronic muscle tension that produces headaches and back pain, and a nervous system that is perpetually activated and never truly rests. Research has linked chronic resentment to hypertension, coronary artery disease, weakened immune response, chronic pain disorders, and shortened lifespan. The body was not designed to carry this load. The relational cost is equally devastating. Resentment is contagious — it leaks into every relationship you have, not just the one with the person you resent. When you carry chronic bitterness, you become hypervigilant for signs of betrayal, unfairness, or disrespect. You interpret neutral actions through the lens of past offenses. You keep score in relationships, cataloguing every slight and every unmet expectation. You become difficult to be close to because you are armored against the very vulnerability that intimacy requires. The psychological cost includes chronic anger, depression, anxiety, bitterness, and victim identity. The recovery cost is the most urgent. Here is the clinical reality: resentment is the number one predictor of relapse. This is not an exaggeration or a scare tactic. It is supported by decades of clinical evidence and is acknowledged across every major recovery framework. The mechanism works like this: Resentment generates chronic emotional pain. The pain becomes increasingly difficult to tolerate without chemical intervention. The disease of addiction presents the substance as a solution to that pain. The person, exhausted by the weight of their bitterness and lacking sufficient alternative coping mechanisms, reaches for the familiar relief. And relapse follows. But there is an additional mechanism that is even more insidious. Resentment justifies relapse. It provides the narrative: after what they did to me, nobody can blame me for using. It transforms the relapse from a failure of recovery into an understandable response to an unforgivable offense. It makes the person the victim not of their own disease, but of someone else's behavior. And as long as someone else is responsible for your relapse, you never have to take full ownership of your recovery. This is the deepest trap of resentment: it lets you off the hook. And the hook is precisely what keeps you alive. The question is not whether you were genuinely wronged. You probably were. The question is whether carrying the resentment is worth your sobriety, your health, your relationships, and your life. When you put it in those terms, the math becomes very simple.

### Reflection Questions

1. What is the physical cost of your resentment? Where do you feel it in your body? What chronic symptoms might be connected to the bitterness you carry?

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2. How has resentment affected your closest relationships? Has the bitterness you feel toward one person leaked into how you treat others?

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3. Can you trace a specific relapse or period of heavy use directly to a resentment? What was the connection between the grudge and the substance?

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4. Has resentment ever provided you with a justification for using? What was the story you told yourself?

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5. If you calculated the total cost of your resentments — physical health, relationships lost, recovery setbacks, emotional suffering, years of your life consumed by bitterness — what would the bill look like? Is it worth it?

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### CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 3 OF 5

#### Physical & Emotional Impact

Scale: 1 = Not at all · 2 = A little · 3 = Somewhat · 4 = Quite a bit · 5 = Very much

1. My resentments cause me physical symptoms — headaches, muscle tension, stomach problems, or insomnia

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. Resentment has made me isolate from people, meetings, or activities that support my recovery  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
3. I have used or seriously considered using substances specifically to numb feelings of bitterness or rage  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
4. My resentments have damaged or destroyed relationships that were important to me  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
5. I feel emotionally exhausted from carrying the weight of my grudges  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
6. Resentment has made me cynical, distrustful, or pessimistic about people in general  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
7. I have acted out in harmful ways — verbally attacking someone, sabotaging a relationship, or making impulsive decisions — because of resentment  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
8. Holding onto resentment has kept me stuck in victim mentality, preventing me from taking responsibility for my own recovery  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

#### YOUR EXERCISE

### Exercise 2: Cost-Benefit Analysis of Holding On

What the grudge gives you, and what it charges

Every resentment pays you something

People do not hold onto things that give them nothing. A resentment can feel like justice, like protection, like proof you were right, or like permission. Pretending it has no payoff makes it impossible to let go of, because the part of you that is getting paid will quietly keep it. This exercise puts both sides of the ledger in front of you.

#### Choose One Resentment

The resentment I am weighing (who, and what happened, in one or two sentences):

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How long have I carried it?

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## Side One: What Holding On Gives Me

Which of these payoffs do I get? (choose all that are true, even if they are uncomfortable to admit)

- ☐ A sense of justice 
 ☐ Proof I was right 
 ☐ Protection from being hurt again 
 ☐ An excuse or permission 
 ☐ Energy and motivation 
 ☐ An identity 
 ☐ Something to bond over with others 
 ☐ Avoiding grief 
 ☐ Avoiding my own part 
 ☐ Keeping the person connected to me

Describe the biggest payoff in your own words. What would I lose if this resentment were gone tomorrow?

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Is there a healthier way to get that same need met? (A boundary instead of a grudge for protection, grief instead of anger for the loss, etc.)

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## Side Two: What Holding On Costs Me

My body — Tension, sleep, headaches, stomach, blood pressure, exhaustion. Where does this resentment live in me?

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How much does this cost my body?

- ☐ 0 
 ☐ 1 
 ☐ 2 
 ☐ 3 
 ☐ 4 
 ☐ 5 
 ☐ 6 
 ☐ 7 
 ☐ 8 
 ☐ 9 
 ☐ 10

0 = Nothing 10 = Everything

My mind — Time spent replaying, rehearsing arguments, planning what I would say. How many hours a week?

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How much does this cost my mind?

- ☐ 0 
 ☐ 1 
 ☐ 2 
 ☐ 3 
 ☐ 4 
 ☐ 5 
 ☐ 6 
 ☐ 7 
 ☐ 8 
 ☐ 9 
 ☐ 10

0 = Nothing 10 = Everything

My relationships — Who else pays for this? Who gets the leftover anger, the distance, the short temper?

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How much does this cost my relationships?

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

0 = Nothing 10 = Everything

My recovery — Meetings skipped, people avoided, thoughts of using, the "after what they did" story.

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How much does this cost my recovery?

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

0 = Nothing 10 = Everything

My peace and spirit — What does this resentment block — gratitude, prayer, meditation, joy, trust?

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How much does this cost my peace and spirit?

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

0 = Nothing 10 = Everything

My future — What am I not building, trying, or allowing because I am still tied to this?

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How much does this cost my future?

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

0 = Nothing 10 = Everything

## The Other Side of the Ledger

1. What does the person I resent pay, today, for my holding on? Be specific. Do they know? Do they lose sleep?

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2. If I kept this resentment for another five years, what would it have cost me by then?

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3. Has this resentment ever been part of a decision to drink or use, or a close call? What was the story I told myself?

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### The Decision

Looking at both sides: how willing am I to begin setting this down?

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

0 = Not willing 10 = Completely willing

Complete the statement: "Holding onto this gives me \_\_\_, and it costs me \_\_\_. I am choosing \_\_\_."

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If I am not willing yet, what would I need in order to become willing? (Willingness to become willing counts.)

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### YOUR EXERCISE

## Exercise 8: Daily Resentment Check-In

Seven days of catching it early

Catching resentment while it's small

Big resentments usually start as small ones that were not dealt with the same day. Step Ten asks us to keep taking inventory and, when we are wrong, to promptly admit it. A few minutes each evening is enough to notice what stuck to you today, before it has years to grow. Fill in one day at a time.

☐ Day 1 ☐ Day 2 ☐ Day 3 ☐ Day 4 ☐ Day 5 ☐ Day 6 ☐ Day 7

0 of 7 days started

## Day 1

What bothered me today, or what old resentment came back? (If nothing did, write what went well.)

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Strongest resentment level today

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

0 = None 10 = Consumed

What did it touch in me?

☐ Self-esteem ☐ Pride ☐ Emotional security ☐ Financial security ☐ Ambitions ☐ Personal relationships ☐ Intimate relationships

What did I do with it?

☐ Paused before reacting ☐ Wished them well / prayed ☐ Called or texted someone ☐ Wrote about it ☐ Went to a meeting ☐ Talked to them directly and calmly ☐ Replayed it ☐ Vented or gossiped ☐ Snapped at someone ☐ Thought about using

Spot-check inventory: today, where was I...

☐ Resentful ☐ Selfish ☐ Dishonest ☐ Afraid ☐ None of these

Do I owe anyone an apology or a conversation? Who, and when will I do it?

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One thing I am grateful for today:

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## End-of-Week Review

1. Look across the seven days. Which people or situations came up more than once?

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2. Which days were highest? What was happening in your life, body, or schedule on those days?

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3. Which responses actually lowered the resentment? Which ones fed it?

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4. Did any apology or conversation get made this week? What happened?

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5. What one change will you carry into next week?

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## PART 4 OF 4 · READING

## The Path to Freedom: From Resentment to Release

Releasing resentment is not a single moment of decision. It is not a feeling that washes over you and suddenly makes everything better. It is a practice — a daily, deliberate, sometimes excruciating practice of choosing freedom over bitterness, choosing your own wellbeing over the illusion of justice that resentment provides. It is one of the hardest things you will do in recovery. And it is one of the most rewarding. The first thing to understand is what releasing resentment is NOT. It is not forgetting what happened. It is not pretending the offense was acceptable. It is not reconciling with the person who harmed you. It is not excusing their behavior. It is not letting them off the hook. It is not weakness. And it is not a favor you do for the other person. Releasing resentment is an act of self-liberation. It is the decision to stop allowing another person's past behavior to control your present emotional state. It is recognizing that the resentment binds you to the offender more tightly than any other force, and choosing to cut that bond not for their sake, but for yours. The path begins with honesty. You must be rigorously honest about what you resent, who you resent, and why. This is the work of the Fourth Step in 12-step recovery, and it is foundational regardless of your recovery framework. Write it down. Name the person. Name the offense. Name how it affected you. Name the instinct it threatened. And then look honestly at your own role. Not to blame yourself for what was done to you, but to identify where your own choices, expectations, attitudes, or behaviors contributed to the situation. This is not victim-blaming. It is empowerment. Because when you can see your role, you can change it. When everything is someone else's fault, you are permanently helpless. The next step is grief. Underneath the resentment, there is always a loss. You lost trust. You lost safety. You lost time. You lost a relationship. Resentment is a defense against this grief — it is easier to be angry than to be heartbroken. But you must be heartbroken. You must allow yourself to mourn what was taken from you, what was broken, what can never be recovered. Grief is the solvent that dissolves resentment. When you finally allow yourself to be sad about what happened — truly sad, not angry-sad — the resentment begins to loosen its grip. Empathy is the next practice, and it is the most difficult. This is not the warm, fuzzy kind of empathy that comes naturally. This is the hard, deliberate kind that requires you to look at the person who harmed you and try to understand — not excuse, but understand — why they did what they did. What was their own pain? What was their own damage? What were they themselves running from? This does not make what they did acceptable. It makes them human. And it is very difficult to hold a dehumanizing grudge against someone you have recognized as a suffering human being. Prayer and meditation are powerful tools in this work. The instruction in many recovery programs to pray for the person you resent is deliberately provocative. It is designed to interrupt the resentment circuit at the neurological level: you cannot simultaneously hold contempt for someone while genuinely wishing them well. You do not have to mean it at first. You just have to do it. The feelings follow the actions, not the other way around. Service and amends complete the work. When you are consumed by what was done TO you, turning your attention to what you can do FOR others shifts the entire emotional equation. Making amends where appropriate restores your sense of agency and integrity. The result of this work is not that you forget what happened. It is not that the pain disappears entirely. It is that the resentment no longer controls you. You can think about the person or the event without the emotional charge that used to accompany it. You

can encounter them without being destabilized. You can remember without reliving. That is freedom. And that freedom is available to you now, through the daily practice of release.

### Reflection Questions

1. What has been your previous understanding of forgiveness? How does the distinction between forgiveness and excusing change your willingness to engage in this work?

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2. If you were to do a thorough resentment inventory right now, who would be on it? Can you list at least five people or institutions you carry resentment toward?

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3. What grief is hidden underneath your biggest resentment? If you stopped being angry, what loss would you have to face?

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4. Can you attempt empathy for someone you resent — not excusing them, but trying to understand what in their own damage led to their behavior? What shifts when you see them as a suffering human rather than a villain?

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5. Write a statement of intention: What would your life look like if you were free from resentment? What would become possible?

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### CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 4 OF 5

#### Willingness to Release

Scale: 1 = Not at all · 2 = A little · 3 = Somewhat · 4 = Quite a bit · 5 = Very much

1. I am open to the idea that letting go of resentment would benefit my recovery  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
2. I understand that releasing resentment is for my benefit, not for the person who wronged me  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
3. I am willing to look at my own role in situations where I feel resentful  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
4. I am willing to pray for or wish well for someone I resent, even if I don't feel it yet  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
5. I believe it is possible to release resentment without condoning what was done to me  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
6. I am willing to discuss my resentments honestly with a sponsor, counselor, or trusted person  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
7. I recognize that holding onto resentment gives the other person continued power over my emotional life  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
8. I am willing to do whatever work is necessary to free myself from the prison of bitterness  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

**CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 5 OF 5****Forgiveness & Release Capacity**

Scale: 1 = Not at all · 2 = A little · 3 = Somewhat · 4 = Quite a bit · 5 = Very much

1. I have successfully let go of at least one significant resentment in my recovery  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
2. I can separate a person's harmful behavior from their humanity — seeing them as a flawed human being rather than a villain  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
3. I have experienced the emotional freedom that comes from genuinely releasing a grudge  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
4. I can wish well for people who have hurt me, even when I don't feel warmth toward them  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
5. I practice regular self-forgiveness for my own past mistakes and harmful behaviors  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
6. I have made amends where appropriate and experienced the healing that comes with accountability  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
7. I can hold two truths simultaneously: that I was genuinely harmed AND that I can choose to release the resentment  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. I view forgiveness as an ongoing practice rather than a one-time event

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

#### YOUR EXERCISE

### Exercise 6: Letters You Will Never Send

Say all of it, to no one, safely

Why write letters you won't send?

Resentment is often made of things never said. Saying them to the person is not always possible, wise, or safe. Writing them out — completely, without editing for politeness — lets the words leave your body and land on the page instead of looping in your head. Three letters, in order: the anger, the grief, and the release.

These letters stay private

Do not send, post, or read these to the person. Keep them here, or share them only with a sponsor or counselor. If writing brings up thoughts of hurting someone or yourself, stop and reach out now — call or text 988, or call a counselor or sponsor.

#### Who This Is To

These letters are to:

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How charged do I feel before writing?

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

0 = Calm 10 = Overwhelmed

#### Letter 1: The Unfiltered Letter

Write everything. What they did, what it did to you, what you have wanted to say for years. Swear if you need to. Do not be fair. Nobody will read this unless you choose.

Dear \_\_,

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#### Letter 2: The Grief Letter

Write to the same person, but this time about what you lost and what you wished had been different. "I wanted..." "I needed..." "I miss..." "I still wish..."

What I lost was...

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### Letter 3: The Release Letter

This letter does not forgive what cannot be forgiven, and it does not invite anyone back. It says what you are putting down, and what you are keeping — a lesson, a boundary, your self-respect.

I am no longer going to carry... What I am keeping is...

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### After the Letters

How charged do I feel now?

○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 ○ 6 ○ 7 ○ 8 ○ 9 ○ 10

0 = Calm 10 = Overwhelmed

1. Which letter was hardest to write? Why that one?

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2. What did you write that surprised you?

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3. What will you do with these letters? (Keep them, read one to your sponsor, delete them, or mark the release in some way that has meaning for you.) Choose something that does not involve contacting the person.

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4. What do you need in the next hour to take care of yourself after this?

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## YOUR EXERCISE

### Exercise 7: Self-Resentment & Self-Forgiveness

The grudge you hold against yourself

The resentment with no escape

You can avoid a person you resent. You cannot avoid yourself. Resentment turned inward sounds like constant self-attack: I ruined everything, I should have known better, I don't deserve this. It does not make you more accountable — it usually makes you less, because shame shuts down the part of you that could repair. Self-forgiveness is not letting yourself off the hook. It is getting off the hook you are hanging on so you can do the work.

If self-resentment turns dangerous

If thinking about your past brings thoughts that you would be better off dead, or thoughts of hurting yourself, please stop and reach out now. Call or text 988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline), or tell your counselor, sponsor, or someone you trust today.

#### What I Hold Against Myself

The things I have not forgiven myself for (one per line):

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The sentence my inner critic repeats most about these:

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How loud is that voice on an average day?

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

0 = Silent 10 = Constant

#### Guilt or Shame?

Guilt says, "I did something wrong." It points to a behavior and to what can be repaired. Shame says, "I am something wrong." It points to your whole self and offers no way forward.

Take the item that weighs most. Write it as guilt (what I did):

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Now write how shame has been saying it (what I am):

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Which version helps me make things right? Which one keeps me stuck — or drinking and using?

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### **Accountability Ledger**

Who was harmed by what I did, including me?

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What amends are possible — direct, or living amends through how I act now? (Discuss with a sponsor before contacting anyone.)

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What has already changed in how I live, that shows I am not the person who did those things?

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What part of this was the disease — and what part is mine to own? (Both can be true.)

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## Speaking to Myself Differently

If someone I sponsor or love told me they had done exactly this, what would I say to them?

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Write a short letter to yourself from the version of you who is five years sober and has made peace with this.

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Self-forgiveness statement: "I did \_\_\_\_\_. It caused \_\_\_\_\_. I am making it right by \_\_\_\_\_. I am choosing to stop punishing myself so I can \_\_\_\_\_."

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### YOUR EXERCISE

## Exercise 9: Release & Letting Go Toolkit

Tools you will actually use

Letting go is a practice, not a feeling

Most people wait to feel ready to let go. The feeling rarely comes first. What comes first is action, repeated, and the feeling follows. This toolkit gives you twelve tools. For each one, rate how likely you are to use it and write how it would fit your life. Then build your own short plan from the ones that fit.

### In the moment

Pause and name it

Before you speak, text, or replay: stop, breathe out slowly, and say to yourself, "This is a resentment." Naming it moves you from inside the loop to watching it.

How likely am I to use this?

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

0 = Never 10 = Definitely

How and when would I use it? What might get in the way?

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HALT check

Ask: am I Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired? A resentment that feels enormous at 11 p.m. on an empty stomach is often smaller after food and sleep.

How likely am I to use this?

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

0 = Never 10 = Definitely

How and when would I use it? What might get in the way?

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The "spiritually sick" reframe

Picture the person as someone sick, as you were sick. Ask: how would I treat a sick friend who acted this way? You still keep your boundary.

How likely am I to use this?

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

0 = Never 10 = Definitely

How and when would I use it? What might get in the way?

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## Daily practice

Two weeks of wishing them well

A practice from the Big Book: for two weeks, pray for — or, if prayer does not fit you, sincerely wish for — the person you resent to have the good things you want for yourself. You do not have to mean it at first.

How likely am I to use this?

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

0 = Never 10 = Definitely

How and when would I use it? What might get in the way?

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Nightly spot-check

Each evening: where was I resentful, selfish, dishonest, or afraid today? Do I owe anyone an apology? (Exercise 8 is this tool, written down.)

How likely am I to use this?

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

0 = Never 10 = Definitely

How and when would I use it? What might get in the way?

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Write it out, same day

Put a fresh resentment through the four columns the day it happens, before it has a chance to become a story.

How likely am I to use this?

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

0 = Never 10 = Definitely

How and when would I use it? What might get in the way?

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## With other people

Tell someone before it grows

Call a sponsor, counselor, or trusted person and say it out loud. Resentment shrinks when someone else hears it and does not feed it.

How likely am I to use this?

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

0 = Never 10 = Definitely

How and when would I use it? What might get in the way?

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A boundary instead of a grudge

If someone keeps doing the thing, the answer is a clear limit ("If you \_\_\_, I will \_\_\_"), not years of silent anger. Grudges try to do a boundary's job and fail.

How likely am I to use this?

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

0 = Never 10 = Definitely

How and when would I use it? What might get in the way?

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A calm, direct conversation

Where it is safe and wise, say what happened and what you need, once, without an audience. Talk it through with your sponsor first.

How likely am I to use this?

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

0 = Never 10 = Definitely

How and when would I use it? What might get in the way?

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## Body and spirit

Move it through the body

Resentment is stored as tension. A walk, a workout, stretching, or slow breathing gives the stress response somewhere to go.

How likely am I to use this?

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

0 = Never 10 = Definitely

How and when would I use it? What might get in the way?

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### Service

When you are stuck on what was done to you, do something for someone else. Help at a meeting, call a newcomer, do a kindness nobody sees.

How likely am I to use this?

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

0 = Never 10 = Definitely

How and when would I use it? What might get in the way?

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### Gratitude list

Write ten things you are grateful for, including something about the person or situation if you honestly can. It is hard to be grateful and bitter in the same moment.

How likely am I to use this?

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

0 = Never 10 = Definitely

How and when would I use it? What might get in the way?

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## My Letting Go Plan

My top three tools, in the order I will reach for them:

1. / 2. / 3.

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When I notice resentment rising, I will first \_\_\_, then \_\_\_. If it is still strong in an hour, I will \_\_\_.

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The people I will call (names and numbers):

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The resentment I will use this plan on first, starting this week:

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#### YOUR EXERCISE

### Exercise 10: Building a Resentment-Free Life

From clearing old grudges to not growing new ones

Keeping the ground clear

Working through old resentments clears the ground. Living free of resentment is keeping it clear: holding expectations more lightly, using boundaries instead of grudges, noticing the early signs, and dealing with things the same day. A resentment-free life is not one where nobody wrongs you. It is one where being wronged does not get to run your life, or your recovery.

#### Where I Am Now

Which resentments have loosened since I started this intensive? What helped?

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Which are still heavy? What is the next step with each?

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Overall, how much of my emotional energy goes to resentment now?

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

0 = None 10 = Almost all

### Expectations Into Agreements

Unspoken expectations are resentments waiting to happen. Some can be turned into requests ("Would you let me know if you'll be late?"). Some can be held as hopes instead of demands. Some need to be let go of because nobody ever agreed to them.

Expectations I will say out loud as requests (to whom):

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Expectations I will hold more loosely, as preferences:

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Expectations I am letting go of:

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### Boundaries Instead of Grudges

People or situations that are still actually harmful to me:

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The boundary for each ("If \_\_\_, I will \_\_\_"):

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Who will support me in keeping these boundaries?

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### My Early Warning Signs

The first signs a new resentment is taking hold in me:

- ☐ Replaying a conversation
- ☐ Rehearsing what I will say
- ☐ Keeping score
- ☐ Sarcasm
- ☐ Going quiet or cold
- ☐ Venting to others about one person
- ☐ Losing sleep over it
- ☐ Avoiding meetings or people
- ☐ Self-pity
- ☐ "After what they did..." thinking

Any other signs that are specific to me:

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What I will do within 24 hours of noticing a warning sign:

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### **My Ongoing Routine**

Daily (for example: evening spot-check, gratitude, wishing someone well):

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Weekly (for example: talk with sponsor, meeting, service):

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Every few months (for example: revisit my inventory, re-take the self-assessment):

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### **The Life I Am Building**

Describe an ordinary day one year from now, without the resentments I carry today. What is different — in my body, my relationships, my recovery?

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What does the energy that used to go to resentment go to instead?

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Commitment: "I am choosing freedom over being right. When I am wronged, I will \_\_\_\_\_. I will review this plan with \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_."

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