Character Defects

Character & Emotions

Step-Working Guide · The Recovery Files

In this workbook

1. **Character Defects** — key ideas, worksheet

Each topic's scored self-assessment and mind map are in the app.

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TOPIC

Character Defects

KEY IDEAS

Character Defects

Naming the Patterns Beneath the Using

Stopping the substance is the beginning, not the whole of recovery. The same patterns that drove the using — dishonesty, selfishness, pride, fear, resentment — keep running after it stops. Steps Four through Seven are the program's way of finding those patterns, admitting them, becoming ready to let them go, and asking for help to change.

Old Survival Strategies

Why the Word "Defect" Is Not an Insult

A character defect is a pattern that once protected you and now harms you. Lying kept you out of trouble. Control kept chaos at bay. Pride kept shame hidden. Naming a defect is not a verdict that you are bad. It is an honest description of a strategy that no longer fits the life you are building.

Exact, Not General

From "I Have Problems" to Specific Patterns

"I'm a mess" gives you nothing to work on. "I exaggerate to impress people, and I do it most when I feel inferior" gives you a target. The assessment in this topic breaks defects into specific, observable behaviors so the patterns can be seen clearly, discussed with a sponsor, and worked on one at a time.

Dishonesty and Pride

Protecting an Image

Dishonesty ranges from outright lies to omission, exaggeration, and lying to yourself about motives. Pride shows up as difficulty admitting you are wrong, resisting help, and needing to be right. Both protect an image. Both keep other people from knowing you, and both make honest recovery work harder.

Selfishness, Greed and Envy

The Scarcity Mindset

Putting your own wants first, always needing more, and feeling diminished by other people's good fortune often share one root: the fear that there will not be enough for you. In addiction that fear had a very concrete object. In recovery it shows up in money, attention, time, and love.

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Anger and Fear

The Engines of Resentment

Anger is often the visible layer over fear, hurt, or shame. Fear — of losing security, status, control, or connection — drives more defects than any other single force. Recognizing the fear under the anger is one of the most practical skills in recovery, because fear can be named, shared, and faced.

Gluttony and Sloth

Excess and Avoidance

Gluttony is more than food: it is the pattern of excess — spending, screens, work, sex, anything used to fill an empty feeling. Sloth is not laziness so much as avoidance of what is hard or uncomfortable, including recovery work itself. Both can quietly replace the substance while the underlying pattern stays the same.

The Assets

Every Defect Has an Opposite

Honesty, humility, patience, courage, generosity, gratitude, discipline, and selflessness are the qualities that grow as defects loosen. Taking inventory of assets is not bragging — it is accuracy. You are not only your worst patterns, and the assets you already have are the tools you will use to change.

From Naming to Changing

Progress, Not Perfection

Naming defects leads to Step Six — becoming willing to let them go — and Step Seven — humbly asking for help to change. Change comes slowly and unevenly, through practice rather than willpower alone. The goal is not a flawless character. It is a life where your defects no longer run the show.

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WORKSHEET

Character Defects Worksheet

Spiritual Transformation & Growth

PROFILE

Understanding Your Profile

1. What character defects have caused the most problems in your life?

2. Which defects have you been most reluctant to examine?

3. How have your defects changed throughout your recovery?

4. What defects have surprised you with their persistence?

5. What situations tend to activate your problematic defects?

PSYCHOLOGY

Psychology of Character

6. How does viewing defects as spiritual illness affect your willingness?

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7. How might your defects have contributed to your drinking?

8. How do your different defects interact (e.g., pride fueling dishonesty)?

9. What early warning signs indicate defects are becoming active?

10. How might childhood experiences have contributed to these patterns?

ASSETS

Developing Assets

11. What strategies work best for addressing your toughest defects?

12. What role do sponsors and meetings play in this work?

13. How do you distinguish between human imperfection and defects?

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14. What spiritual practices help transform defects into assets?

15. How might you strengthen the assets you need most?

TRANSFORMATION

Building Transformation

16. How has your relationship with your defects changed?

17. What helps you maintain principles when defects are triggered?

18. How do you balance acceptance with commitment to growth?

19. What does viewing this as ongoing practice look like for you?

20. How might sharing your experience help others?

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MAPPING

Your Defects Map

List specific examples for each category:

Dishonesty & Deception:

Selfishness:

Pride & Arrogance:

Envy & Jealousy:

Greed & Materialism:

Anger & Wrath:

Fear & Cowardice:

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Gluttony & Excess:

Sloth & Laziness:

ACTION

Action Plan

Specific Defect to Address:

Goal (Asset to Develop):

Action Steps:

Accountability:

Timeline:

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Remember: Character development is a lifelong journey. Progress, not perfection.

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