Step 4 Inventory

Searching and fearless moral inventory

Printable worksheet · 14 parts

Name _____ Date _____

Progress: 0%

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PART 1 OF 14

Introduction & Guidelines

Step Four: "Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves."

Note: These questions are offered for historical reference and use. Continued study of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous enlightens us to move through the Steps quickly, as though our hair is on fire.

First, read what the Big Book and The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions have to say about taking the fourth step. Reading other publications may help you understand about "...a fearless moral inventory."

Remember, this H.O.W. Fourth Step Inventory is only one of many fourth step options; this is just a suggestion. The Big Book offers an approach. Investigate alternatives if you wish, but try not to use your search as reason for procrastinating.

Consider asking another AA who has completed their fourth step to sponsor you. They are an excellent source for information, suggestions and encouragement. Making a commitment to your sponsor may help you avoid "fourth step procrastination."

Important Reminders:

- •Some questions may not apply to you. Just go on to the next question.
- •Be thorough and honest. The goal is healing, not perfection.
- •Your responses are private. Take precautions to safeguard your writing.
- •There's no set time limit. Many aim for 90 days, but go at your own pace.

"As you begin each writing session, pray for the knowledge of God's will and the power to carry it out."

The major stumbling block is getting started.

JUST DO IT!

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PART 2 OF 14

Childhood, questions 1–12

Childhood

(12 questions)

1. What kind of relationship did your mother have with her parents?

2. What kind of relationship did your father have with his parents?

3. Did your parents want you when you were born? Describe the circumstances of your family at the time of your birth. For example: Family size, Age differences, Financial status, etc.) Was there laughter, arguments, depression? Were there other relatives or people living with you?

4. Describe what you think your family thought of you.

5. Where were you in the birth order of your brothers and sisters? How did you feel about the others?

6. Were either of your parents sick enough to need hospitalization? What was your reaction?

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7. Were you ever separated from any important family member? Was there fear or guilt associated with the separation? Did you feel responsible?

8. Were you threatened by the "bogey man," or the devil if you misbehaved? What were your fears?

9. Sometimes children feel guilty about normal sexual curiosity (self-exploration, masturbation, playing doctor, etc.) Parents may tell children that their sexual feelings are evil and must be punished. Reared in this type of environment, children may develop a distorted view of their sexuality and sexual behavior. Discuss your childhood experiences that cause uneasy feelings about sex.

10. Were you afraid of the dark?

11. Were you afraid to fight? Were you afraid not to fight because of pressure from your parents, siblings or others?

12. How did your parents punish you? Was it emotional or was it physical?

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PART 3 OF 14

Childhood, questions 13–24

Childhood

(12 questions)

13. How did you react to punishment?

14. What kind of marriage did your parents have?

15. If your parents fought, did you resent it? Did the fighting scare you? Did you attempt to break up their fights? Did you take sides?

16. Were your parents so close to each other that you felt left out?

17. If your parents held different religious beliefs, was that confusing to you?

18. Were you afraid of storms?

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19. List all the feelings of guilt, resentment and fear you had toward other people (as a child, not now).

20. Describe the first time you can remember stealing. Describe other times you can remember.

21. Were you ever molested as a child? In other words, touched sexually in any way by another person? What were your feelings about this (these) experience(s)?

22. Did you participate in or observe other sexual behavior, heterosexual or homosexual activities, bestiality, sodomy or anything else that may have upset you? Write about those feelings.

23. How old were you when you first masturbated? Were you ever caught and made to feel guilty? Did you feel guilty even though you weren't caught?

24. If you were named after someone, what was that person like?

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PART 4 OF 14

Childhood, questions 25–36

Childhood

(12 questions)

25. Did your family move often? If so, did you make friends and then have to break-off the relationship so often that you became afraid to get too close?

26. Do you remember starting school? How did you feel? Reflect on each succeeding grade level. Discuss your embarrassments, painful feelings and resentments related to your teachers and classmates. Did you resent your church, relative, parents' friends, parents?

27. What kind of language did your parents use? Were you ashamed of their behavior?

28. Did you ever see your parents or other adults in the nude? How did you feel?

29. Did you ever observe or hear your parents having sex? How did you feel?

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30. Most children have household chore assignment. What were yours? Did you think they were fair? Could you do them to please your parents?

31. Did your parents seem to like your friends better than they liked you? Did your friends seem to like your parents better than they liked you? If so, did you resent it?

32. Did you have any bad experiences at Sunday School or summer camp?

33. Are you an only child? Do you resent it or enjoy it? Did your parents want a child of the opposite sex when you were born? Did they name you or dress you to match their preference?

34. Did your appearance (looks, clothes, etc.) embarrass you? Did you feel "different" from your classmates or friends?

35. Write about any other childhood memories that were painful.

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36. Which of these questions about your childhood was the toughest for you to answer? Do you know why? Write about it.

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PART 5 OF 14

Adolescence, questions 37–52

Adolescence

(16 questions)

37. Children and young adolescents sometimes experience homosexual episodes with each other. While the child may not be homosexual, pleasure may lead a child to repeat the experience. Subsequent fears of homosexuality may suppress other natural desires. Reliance on misguided or erroneous sexual information, as well, may contribute to confused behavior. What are your experiences and feelings of fear and guilt about these statements as they may apply to you?

38. Experimenting with sex is part of the human experience. The expression of homosexual feelings is one aspect of this. For some, this indicates a definite orientation. If this is true for you, how does it compare to what you were taught was normal? Did it effect your relationship with your family, your friends or any others? Were you accepted or rejected by them? What are your own feelings about your sexual orientation?

39. Emotional distress may develop because of adolescent sexual episodes with an adult, or premature sexuality with another adolescent, because of peer pressure, and the desire to please. Later, the distress may manifest itself in anger, guilt, and disappointment, preventing normal sexual and emotional expression. Guilt may be inhibiting communication. Write about your experiences.

40. Some girls learn that men are only interested in one thing -- sex. Some boys accept the idea that they must always know exactly what they are doing and be the greatest all the time. Such attitudes can be destructive. What did you learn? How has that affected you?

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41. Did you have friends? What kind of friend were you?

42. What were your special interests in school? Did you participate in extra-curricular activities? Did you participate in sports? What were the reasons for your participation, or lack of it?

43. Were you considered a troublemaker? Were you a troublemaker? In what way?

44. Did you resent your school's student leaders? Why? Did you resent not being the most attractive person at school? Why?

45. Did you consider yourself a coward because you didn't want to fight? Did you like to fight? Were you a bully? Were you embarrassed because others made fun of you or avoided you?

46. Children develop physically at different rates. Did you feel inadequate or superior to other children?

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47. Did you resent not being part of the crowd, not being a leader, or not being part of the "IN" group? Were you shy or outgoing? Was there a particular type of person that intimidated you or made you feel shy?

48. If you dropped out of school, describe the reasons and how you felt. Did anything happen to you in high school that is a continuing source of shame?

49. Did your parents compare you to others, family members or friends? Did you resent them for wanting you to be like someone else?

50. How did you get attention from your family? Did you pout, sulk, behave, have temper tantrums, act like a dummy?

51. What kind of lies did you tell? How did you feel when you were caught telling a lie?

52. During your adolescence, what incident was the most embarrassing? Are there other embarrassing incidents?

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PART 6 OF 14

Adolescence, questions 53–68

Adolescence

(16 questions)

53. Were you jealous or envious of others?

54. We "catch" attitudes. If your family discounted or "put down" sexual feelings, there is a possibility you may now feel guilty about some of your sexual feelings. Men may have performance anxiety if they were reared with an excessive emphasis on achievement. A woman may dislike her body or distrust her feelings if she learned that it's not OK to feel sexy. These attitudes may cause sexual frustrations. Did you "catch" any of these attitudes?

55. How did you feel about your first sexual intercourse? Did you feel guilty? Were you disappointed? Be specific about your feelings.

56. Describe any sexual fantasies you regret or have felt guilt or shame about. Don't dwell on with whom, when, or how often. Instead reflect on how you felt about the experiences.

57. Did you get someone pregnant, or become pregnant? What did you do? How did you feel?

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58. Were you ashamed of your parents? Were they too old, too fat, too sloppy, too drunk, too rich, too poor, too ... whatever?

59. Did you have the kind of clothes that other kids wore? Was there enough money for the things you needed? If not, were you resentful? If so, did you take too much for granted? Did you feel your siblings got more than you did? Describe your feelings as an adolescent about money.

60. Would you want your children to be like the child you were?

61. Were you a thief?

62. Were you ever "double promoted?" If so, did you have trouble catching up emotionally? How did you act? Did you feel uncomfortable because you were younger than other students?

63. Did you feel uncomfortable because you were superior or inferior in some way to other students?

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64. Were you dependable as a friend? Did you end relationships without explanation when something or someone better came along?

65. Did you ever pit one member of your family against another? Write about it.

66. What was the best adolescent experience you had?

67. What was the worst experience?

68. Review those questions in this section that caused uncomfortable feelings. If something is still bothering you, write about it.

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PART 7 OF 14

Adulthood, questions 69–83

Adulthood

(15 questions)

69. Has your selfish pursuit of sexual relationships damaged you or others? Discuss each occurrence. Who was hurt? How badly? Did you jeopardize your marriage, your relationship with your children, your job, or your standing in the community?

70. How did you react to the situation described in the previous question? Do you feel guilty? Or, did you absolve yourself by insisting you were the pursued, not the pursuer?

71. Have you been sexually frustrated? Describe your reaction. Were you depressed? Did you become vengeful? How did you vent your frustrations?

72. If you've been sexually rejected at home, have you used that rejection as justification for an affair? Lonely people may become involved in an affair, mistaking sex for love. When it's over the feelings of loneliness may be even more intense. Is this your experience? Discuss each occurrence and how do you feel now?

73. Have you ever been sexual with a child or had fantasies about having sex with a child? If so, discuss each occurrence.

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74. Are you married to a "cold" unloving person? Is that your justification for seeking new romances? Are (were) your parents "cold" and unloving? Are you getting even with them through your spouse?

75. Why did you get married? Or, why haven't you married? Discuss the reasons.

76. Did you marry earlier or later than your peer group?

77. Do you resent the responsibilities of marriage and family?

78. If you're married, do you allow other family members to come between you and your spouse?

79. Are you still your parents' "baby?" Do you take advantage of it?

80. Have your parents gotten you out of trouble even though you should have been able to handle it yourself?

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81. Are you a "baby" to your spouse?

82. Do you write bad checks?

83. Do you feel the world owes you a living?

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Adulthood, questions 84–98

Adulthood

(15 questions)

84. Do you gossip? Is so, do you know why?

85. Are laws for other people? Do you make up rules to suit your needs?

86. List the top ten people on your "revenge list." Why are they on the list?

87. Discuss your feelings about: sex; parents; siblings; grandparents; friends; your children; your spouse; your intimate friends; your job; your finances; your marital status; being a compulsive overeater. What are your hopes and goals?

88. How much time do you spend with your family? At your job? With AA?

89. What is your greatest fear?

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90. Do you use sex as a punishment? A reward? How's your sex life? Is it the way you want it to be? What would you change? Are you considerate of your partners' feelings? Discuss your ideal healthy sex life.

91. Discuss any sexual experiences about which you have especially bad feelings.

92. Do you use sex as an ego builder? Do you consider your sexual experiences as "conquests?"

93. Are you afraid of being sexually rejected?

94. Are you ashamed of your body or your appearance? What do you think is wrong with how you look?

95. What do you like about your body and your appearance?

96. Are you ashamed of yourself? Why? About what?

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97. Do you use people to get what you want? Do you "put down" others so you can feel superior? Do you step on others, socially or professionally, on the "way to the top?"

98. Are you a thief? What have you stolen (don't forget your employers' time and others' feelings)?

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PART 9 OF 14

Adulthood, questions 99–113

Adulthood

(15 questions)

99. Do you use illness as an excuse to shirk your responsibilities, to gain attention, to seek sympathy, or to escape from a difficult situation? Is there a pattern to your illnesses?

100Discuss your resentments toward your employer, supervisor and co-workers. Are you jealous of them?

101Do you resent those co-workers that are paid more or have more authority than you?

102On the job, are you careless or indifferent? Do you think you should be the boss? Now that you're thinner, do you feel others expect more (too much) of you?

103Are you divorced? Discuss your negative feelings about the divorce and the people involved. Discuss your feelings (resentments, fears, guilt, etc.) about your former spouse and your children. Have you asked you children to choose which parent they love the best?

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104Are you married? Discuss how you feel about your spouse and children. Are they living up to your expectations?

105What are your expectations? Do you feel they are reasonable or unreasonable?

106Would you be different if your spouse and children were out of your life? Why?

107Do you feel that no one really understands you? (If they only knew ... they wouldn't expect so much.)

108Do you feel different or apart from other AA members?

109Do you feel superior or inferior to other AAs?

110Do you avoid looking honestly at yourself? Do you see yourself in the following statements: "At least I'm not as bad as that person;" "At least I'm not that color;" "At least I'm not that flaky."

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111Do you judge or ridicule those who appear to be less capable -- mentally, physically, morally -- than you think you are?

112Do you compare yourself to others? Do you emotionally beat up yourself because others seem to have more recovery than you; because others have talents or skills that you don't?

113The only person you can realistically compare yourself to is you. How are you now compared to last week, last month, last year, since your first AA meeting?

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PART 10 OF 14

Adulthood, questions 114–128

Adulthood

(15 questions)

114List every deed or secret you swore that you would take to the grave without telling anyone. Be honest, open and willing. Remember, you have good and bad experiences. Some of your acts, even those of which you are very ashamed, may have generated positive growth in your life. Freedom comes when you let go of the past.

115Do you fear rejection? Are you afraid of getting too close to another person?

116Do you reject others before they can reject you?

117How do you define love? Do you love? Are you loved?

118Are you a responsible person? In what ways?

119What are your fears concerning money? Are you a tightwad? Are you a mindless spender?

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120Is your personal appearance careless or prideful?

121Do you judge others by their appearance?

122What things make you feel greedy, envious, angry?

123Are you scornful of ideas that aren't yours?

124Do you tell others how bad you are or have been? Why? Do you tell people how great you are or have been? Why?

125Discuss how you feel now about your parents, brothers, sisters, and other family members.

126What resentments do you still have?

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127What makes you feel guilty?

128Do you pad your expense account and/or your household budget so that you can spend the money on something for yourself?

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PART 11 OF 14

Adulthood, questions 129–143

Adulthood

(15 questions)

129Do you resent another AA member? Who? Why?

130What do you lie about most frequently? To whom?

131Do you like to play the "Big Shot?" Why?

132Do you feel hurt when others won't play your games?

133Do you resent not getting as much attention now as you did when you were new in AA? Do you get more attention than you want?

134Do you encourage platonic associations with other AAs? Do you nurture more intense relationships that may lead to their or your relapse? Discuss your experience.

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135Do you take advantage of other AAs to indulge your sexual gratification? Does this behavior cause you to feel guilty?

136About what do you worry the most? Do you worry about the future? The past?

137Do you punish your children the way your parents punished you?

138Have you been too busy to spend time with your family? How much time do you spend with your family?

139Do you give your family everything they want? Do they ever seem satisfied?

140Are you trying to build your own ego?

141When your spouse turns cold, do you spend more time with him or her, or do you turn to someone else who is more "understanding?"

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142Do you spend too much time at AA?

143Do you spend at least one night per week with just your family?

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PART 12 OF 14

Adulthood, questions 144–158

Adulthood

(15 questions)

144Is your family situation so intolerable that you depend on AA members to give you positive strokes?

145Do you feel you have to prove you are worthy of love? Write about it.

146Are you cold and indifferent to your own needs, or the needs of family, friends, and work?

147Do you feel guilty for putting people through so much hell?

148Do you threaten to forsake your abstinence if you don't get your way?

149Are you involved in a sexual affair that could cause harm to you or others?

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150Do you argue? Is it important to be "right?" Do you get angry when others disagree with you? Does it have to be your way ... all the time?

151Do you gossip? Do you fabricate tales about others?

152Is your spirituality superior to others'? Is your Higher Power "bigger and better" or not as good as somebody else's? Why?

153Do you feel guilty about masturbation?

154Discuss your feelings of superiority. Do you feel superior because of education, money, intelligence, race, nationality, ethnicity, affluence, vocation?

155List your feelings of inferiority. Do you feel inferior because you have less of any of the above?

156Do you feel superior to most people? Discuss why you feel different.

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157Do you feel inferior to most people? Discuss why you feel different.

158Do you have difficulty being on time? Why?

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PART 13 OF 14

Adulthood, questions 159–173

Adulthood

(15 questions)

159Do you resent others who seem to have found happiness?

160Do you judge the outside of others by the inside of you?

161Have you ever asked a happy person how they got that way?

162Are you envious of people who can drink or do drugs that you can't?

163Are you hostile because you don't like the hand life's dealt you?

164Discuss your present fears.

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165How do you get attention? By pouting, sulking, temper tantrums, being extra good and letting the world know it, playing stupid, frustrating others, complaining so that everyone knows how bad you feel, etc.?

166Are you financially unstable? What character defects contribute to your financial instability? Has compulsive drinking or drug use contributed to this?

167Have feelings of fear and inferiority about your job qualifications destroyed your confidence and/or caused conflict?

168Do you compensate for your feelings of inadequacy by bluffing, cheating, lying, or avoiding responsibility; by complaining that others have failed to recognize your truly exceptional abilities?

169Do you have an inflated ego? Do you play the "Big Shot?"

170Have you ever double-crossed or undercut your associates?

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171Are you extravagant? Do you recklessly borrow money without thought of repayment? Are you miserly, refusing to properly support your family? Do you cut financial corners? Do you invest in quick money deals, "sure things?" Do you spend compulsively?

172Have any of these questions triggered feelings about something that hasn't been covered? Write about it.

173How would you describe your present state of life? What are your hopes, goals and dreams?

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PART 14 OF 14

Completing Your Inventory

Remember: Progress, not perfection

The program makes us twelve promises; they're listed on page 83 in the Big Book. The joy we experience in the attainment and realization of those promises exceeds by far any pain and fear we may experience in step four.

"We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace."

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