

AA THE ORIGINAL WAY

12 Step Guide



How It Works:

This guide offers an invigorating way of introducing the 12 steps to a new member so they can continue to practice these principles in all their affairs. It lists the instructions and pages in the Big Book for taking the 12 steps. These instructions are put into sequence taking into account their historical context and incorporating the “word of mouth” program of sponsorship handed down since AA’s inception. A simple program for going through the twelve steps with a willing newcomer in approximately 4-12 hours of face to face time. This Step Guide can be done all at once or in multiple sittings. Each person should decide what is best for them. There is no actual time limit and this guide is merely suggestive, a way to help keep things focused and on track. It’s not a rigid thing. The ultimate authority in AA is each person’s Higher Power, which should guide the step

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work, so that it flows naturally. Using their HP and this guide, a sponsor could adjust the process as feels appropriate to each person's situation while still making sure to touch on all the important aspects of step work. Once taken, all the steps can be practiced more thoroughly, forever, as suggested in step 12. Learning the process and taking others through the steps is the best way to deepen our awakening, joy and happiness.

The founders did not work the steps fast because it was a shortcut. They did it because the sudden force and blow to the ego helped break people free; providing an awakening or spiritual experience that could save their lives. Presenting a hopeless drunk with the steps all at once can jar them loose, and may result in sudden awakening experiences, like Bill and the Ministers Son describe in the Big Book. A mega dose approach! But this is not always the best approach for everyone. One of the highest rates of relapse occurs when lingering at the 4th step. So, the founders tried to get all the medicine to the still suffering alcoholic as soon as possible and to get them to the 12th step as soon as possible. This is because taking others through the steps is the most powerful medicine of all the 12 steps. The greatest insurance of immunity to alcohol is working with others. And so they tended to cosponsor the newcomer ASAP! This way a less experienced member could learn to take others through the steps from a more experienced member. It is not a one and done kind of thing. They continued to practice and deepen their step work as suggested in step 12.

Sometimes it may be best to break this work up into smaller 2-3 hour time spans rather doing it all in a day. An ideal stopping point for this can be the 7th step surrender since that makes contextual sense out of the preceding 6 steps. To do this one might focus on 1, 2 and 3 in the first sitting. In subsequent sittings they could start with the 3rd step and end with the 7th step. Simply working 1 or two names on the 4th step at a time, until the 4th step list is completed. There are no specific rules laid down. This is an amazing process. Deeply healing. Incredible to experience. Let your Higher Power be the guide.

Instructions:

Questions to ask the newcomer are in **RED** and passages to READ to the newcomer are in **Blue**. Steps 1 thru 8 are actually worked here. Steps 9 thru 12 are reviewed with instructions given for how to learn and practice these steps. Readings to learn the maintenance steps (10, 11 & 12) are **highlighted**.

“...there was nothing left for us, but to pick up the simple kit of spiritual tools laid at our feet.” –AA pg 25.

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Our Goal: A Spiritual Experience That Can Conquer Alcoholism

STEPS ONE, TWO AND THREE forward to pg. 63

SURRENDER

Before starting, promise confidentiality and ask the newcomer, **“Do you want to quit drinking? Are you willing to go to any lengths to stop? Do you want to work the steps together?”** If yes* pick a special place to go to. **Read page 58-63 in How It Works** then ask the newcomer what is essentially the A, B, C’s posed as questions.

- a) **Do you concede to your innermost self that you are powerless over alcohol?** (step 1, **Read pg 30**)
- b) **Do you now believe, or are you willing to believe in a Power Greater than yourself?** (Step 2, **pg 44 & 47**)
- c) **Do you believe God could and would solve your alcohol problem if sought?** (step 2)

If the answer is yes*, then **read** the paragraph that contains the **third step prayer pg 63**. Ask the last question in that paragraph, **“Have you thought well about this step? Are you willing to abandon your life utterly to God?”**


3

If the answer is yes* to all of these questions then take the **Third Step Prayer** together on your knees. Abandon your life to God with the most **self surrender** you can possibly muster. **Read** from the Big Book or a prayer written for the occasion. This completes 1, 2 & 3, however, this decision has “little permanent effect unless **at once followed**” by action. With this in mind, steps 4 thru 8 are about to be done right now, in one fell swoop.

****If the answer is NO read & explain the Big Book up to pg 63 to the newcomer and then try this step guide again. Stress the Hopelessness of Alcoholism. “The more hopeless he feels, the better. He will be more likely to follow your suggestions.” –pg 94. This fuels the deep surrender required to break through into a deep spiritual experience. If the newcomer is unsure they are alcoholic you can suggest that they follow the simple “**controlled drinking**” test method outlined in the Big Book on page 31 and 32. We avoid diagnosing others as alcoholic. AA has no monopoly on recovery and is best for those with a desire to stop drinking. It is unfair to expend time with someone who does not want it when that time could be offered to someone who does want it. If someone is drawn to another spiritual path kindly encourage them to “follow their conscience.” But tell them you would still like to stay in touch since as alcoholics we have “much in common”. Pg 95***

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STEP FOUR pg. 60-71, (*This guide refers to the included AA The Original Way 4th Step Inventory. A thorough yet simple “Commercial Inventory” format like Bob, Bill, Clarence and many AA pioneers used. It covers all the bases. Of course, this step guide works great with a 4 column inventory as well.*)

Referring to our list, put an **x** or  in the box that applies. First, enter all the names. Then fill in the boxes. The sponsor usually writes the 4th Step Inventory; the newcomer speaks. Some people save the discussion of details for step 5; others discuss details and amends as they go. We let our Higher Power guide this process.

THREE PARTS OF THE 4th STEP

There are three parts to the 4th step. First, the “grudge list”; listing **Resentments** and filling rows 1a-f. Second, the **Fears**. Third, the **Harms**, including sex and financial harms. This is what the founders focused on.

Part #1- Resentment (Row 1 a-f): “**What People, Institutions or Principles are you angry at?**” After you get all the names down go back to the first name and Ask **1a “Did a decision based on Self later place you in a position to be hurt by this person?”** (Row 1a.) Then do the **Affects My:** (Rows **b-f**). These are “our injuries”. What part of self was “threatened”, injured or “interfered” with? (*Rows 1a--f apply to resentments only. It is not necessary to ask these questions for the fears and harms*).

Part #2- Fear (Row 2): “**Who or what are you afraid of?**” Write down the names of all fears then do harms...

Part #3- Harms (Row 3-16): “**Please, list all of the names of people you have harmed, include financial and sex harms.**” Write all names first then go back and work your way down the list. Start on **(3) Selfishness** ...and work down to **(16) Sexual Selfishness** for every person, including those listed for Resentments or Fears. Ask, “**Did your “(rows 3-16)” harm this person?**” (*More will be revealed; we only list what we remember now, deeper memories will become conscious later. Our inventory is left open for future additions.*)

The main point of 4 & 5 is to see where thoughts of **self** have defeated us. Pg 64 says, “**Being convinced that self, manifested in various ways, had defeated us, we considered its common manifestations.**” Our shortcomings stem directly from **self**. Self centered thinking separates us from others. It blocks the “sunlight of the spirit”. This is spiritual sickness. The founders showed us that thoughts of self block us from a spiritual experience. 4&5 show us the blocks. 6&7 help remove them.

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STEP FIVE pg. 64-75

Read page 64-73 to lead into the Step 5 discussion. *(Many sponsors share intimately about themselves as well.)*

Discuss Resentments: We are looking for "causes and conditions." Avoid wasting time complaining, arguing a point or psychotherapy. **"We asked ourselves why we were angry?"** pg 64. Discuss the Resentment with the intention of discovering where we were at fault, disregarding the other person entirely. We can only sweep up our side of the street. **"Where were we to blame?"** pg 67. **Explain pg 66-67.**

Discuss Fears: Ask **"Why do you have this fear? Isn't it because self reliance fails you?"** **Explain pg 68.**

Discuss Harms Including Sex & Financial: Rows 3 to 16 are harms. The people we harmed can now be discussed including any debts & sex issues. For each relation or person harmed we ask, **"Was it selfish or not?"**

When done **Read page 75 then the first 5 steps.** It says "Every dark cranny of the past." Say, **"If there are any secrets "omitted" now is the time to share them."** Sit quietly in meditation of what's just been done (10-60 min).

Then ask **"Is our work solid so far?"** If the newcomer "can answer to (their) satisfaction", do 6th & 7th steps. *(The founders describe going immediately from the Moral Inventory into the deep surrender in 6 & 7. A fluid string of events. They don't mention doing an hour long review; although they paused briefly before the 6 & 7th Step Surrender. Of course, it can be helpful for a newcomer to go home and take a full hour to review the Moral Inventory as it says in the Big Book but it is not necessary to stop the work now. They can do that afterward.)*

STEP SIX AND SEVEN pg. 76

Still meditating on the 4th and 5th step ask, **"Are you now willing to let God remove every one of these shortcomings you just admitted are objectionable?" (Step 6)** If there are shortcomings that you still cling to ask God for the willingness to let go. *(Mark these shortcomings and include in 10th & 11th step work.)* Steps 6 & 7 are surrender steps. Six prepares the mind and seven is a full on **surrender of self** ["all of me, good and bad"]. We see the damage of **self** here in our 4th and 5th steps. Now we let go and let God. We let go of **self will** and commit to living in God's Will. This is deep and powerful work. **(Step 7)** When ready we say the **Seventh Step Prayer, pg 76**, humbly, on our knees, holding nothing back. *Coffee Break? Lunch? (Step work can be divided into two sections at this point if needed.)*

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STEP EIGHT AND NINE pg. 76-84

AMENDS: Referring to the 4th Step, If a name has more than 1 or 2 marks under harms they are likely due amends. Put an **A** in the column and ask **“How can you make amends to this person?”** Make sure to review the amends being made to insure that they are appropriate. Plan to discuss the amends before and after they are made. Step Nine is an ongoing process. Living in God’s will, cleaning up the wreckage of the past and helping others repays our debt, “we are reborn”.

It is recommended that Pg 76-84 in AA and Step 8 & 9 in the 12 & 12 and Little Red Book be read by the newcomer before any amends are made.

ASSETS = GOD’S WILL (IDEALS TO STRIVE FOR): The assets are polar opposites of the shortcomings they run parallel to. The ones with the most marks to the left of them are the assets that can be worked on in the 10th step and prayed for in the 11th Step. For example, if there are a lot of people we have harmed with “Selfishness” there will be many marks in that row. The corresponding Asset to selfishness is **selflessness**. We can highlight this asset and work on it in 10 and 11. Accordingly, if there are very few people we have harmed with “Dishonesty” then there will be very few marks along that row. This tells us that we have strength in the corresponding Asset which is “Honesty”.

The pioneers often used the **Four Absolutes** as the opposites of Fear, Anger, Dishonesty and Selfishness (Self Will). So across from these “Liabilities” they used the “Assets” Love, Purity, Unselfishness and Honesty (God’s Will).

Self Will-----God’s Will

Fear----- Love

Anger-----Purity

Selfishness----Unselfishness

Dishonesty-----Honesty

"We grow by our willingness to face and rectify errors and convert them into **assets**." pg 124 Big Book

"The sponsor probably points out that the newcomer has some **assets** which can be noted along with his liabilities." The 12 & 12, Step 4, page 46

"A continuous look at our **assets** and liabilities and a real desire to learn and grow by this means, are the necessities for us." pg 88, Step 10 in the 12 & 12.

A list of Assets from the Big Book pg 67-70: *They like ourselves are spiritually sick (compassion). Patience. Tolerance. Pity. Helpful. Kindly. Tolerant. Honesty. Willingness. Trust. Relying on God. Humble. Serenity. Strength. Faith. Courage. Outgrow Fear. Sensible. Avoid Controversy. Sane and Sound Ideals. Meditation. Sanity. Strength to do the right thing. Helping Others. Thoroughness. Good Will Toward All Men.*

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THE MAINTENANCE STEPS

“What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition.” Pg 85

STEP 10 pg. 84-85

Step Ten is for daily inventory and to stay current on new issues. The 10th Step inventory can be done using your 4th step inventory, a journal, a “balance sheet”, or it can be done right out of the [Big Book pg 84-85](#). Regardless of how we do it the main thing is to watch for **Fear, Anger, Dishonesty and Selfishness** (F.A.D.S). The 10th Step becomes our workhorse step all throughout the day. We use it to become vividly aware of our shortcomings and assets. This helps us utilize our strengths and stop hurting others with self centered thinking. There is **no self** when fully present in this moment. **“Thy will not mine be done.”** or similar can help us surrender and stay present. When disturbed take a spot check inventory, pray **“at once”** and *“discuss them with someone **immediately** and make amends **quickly** if we have harmed anyone.”* To learn the tenth step **Read Step 10 in LRB, 12&12 and Pages 84-85 in the Big Book.** Steps 10, 11 & 12 are worked while the amends are being made. **“It should continue for our lifetime.”** pg 84.

STEP 11 pg. 85-88

Pray and Meditate every morning and every night. Pray for help with the assets and shortcomings you found in your 4th and 10th step work. The 11th step can be taken a.m. & p.m. by reading the [Big Book 85-88](#) which suggests 10 questions and 5 prayers. Some people use The 24 Hours a Day book or some relevant spiritual material. Others find formal meditation practice helpful. Knowing that thoughts of Self often trigger Fear, Anger, Dishonesty and Selfishness, AA Pioneers created a test; a **self will vs. God’s Will test**: **“Is this decision Fearful? Is it Angry? Is it Selfish? Is it Dishonest?”** *“After prayer, listening in meditation, I felt God’s guidance was telling me to quit my job because my boss is so abusive. Is this really self will in disguise? Or is it **God’s Will**? Is it Fearful? Is it Angry? Is it Dishonest? Is it Selfish?”* Discussing this with AA friends can further reveal where self will is blocking us from God’s Will. Love, Purity, Unselfishness and Honesty can be used here as well. Dr. Bob used these 4 Absolutes as “yardsticks, to measure decisions”. To learn this step **read the 12 & 12 & LRB on Step 11 and Pg 84-88 in the Big Book.**

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STEP 12 - GIVE IT AWAY TO KEEP IT! pg. 89-164

Dr. Bob took Clarence S through the steps in 3-4 hours. He is believed to have written the following, *"A spiritual awakening is THE RESULT of working, DOING, and LIVING, ALL of the 12 Steps! Then you have this message to carry to others. There is no message unless you have done the first 9 Steps and are living the last three. You can't give what you don't have. You must practice these principles in ALL your affairs.*

Now it is your responsibility to give this message to others as you have received it. Not changed, watered down, or how others may want it in their lives. If they want what you have, they must do what you did. It is now your legacy to hand down, AS IT WAS GIVEN TO YOU -- NO OTHER WAY!!!! It is recommended that two people work with the newcomer through the steps whenever possible, so that both may learn as well as give." – Clarence S.

"This is a GIVE program!" -Father Ralph Pfau, aka Father John Doe, author of The Golden Books, 1947-1967.

To learn this step, practice this 12 step guide, Read pg 89-164 and study the chapter Working With Others. Even though you may not feel ready to pass it on, it is important to remember that working with others is a HUGE part of our program. As soon as you start to make amends and begin having a spiritual experience, it is time to start learning how to pass this on. You know you are beginning to have a spiritual experience when you are **"able to do, feel and believe that which (you) could not do on (your) unaided strength and resources alone."** 12 & 12 pg 107. Which means, If you're not drinking, have worked 1 thru 8, began making 9th step amends and are living 10, 11 and 12 you are beginning to have a spiritual experience. Pass it on. Get out of self. Feel the joy of living!

"Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity as intensive work with others." pg 89.

AWAKENINGS DEEPEN: Bob and Bill stressed that ALL the steps are to be practiced more thoroughly and we do this throughout our lifetime. Gradual Spiritual Awakenings deepen as we get better at this program of living. Sudden awakenings are more likely with sustained effort. **If we use the steps to wear away at our thoughts of self and we let go absolutely...holding nothing back...**well... as Bill wrote about his sudden awakening, "I felt lifted up, as if a great clean wind of a mountain top blew through and through." "I knew at once I was a free man!"

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND SOURCES

Original AA methods such as this realized a 72% success rate from 1934-1938. Clarence S. in Cleveland recorded a 93% success rate and the Tablemate four week beginners meetings are said to have 90% after one year. Fellowship has a lot to do with success too. The old timers called and reached out to newcomers daily and that caring act, regularly practiced, certainly helps.

With great respect we have attempted to exemplify the Strong Original Way; the **SIMPLE** program the AA pioneers used. There has never been one perfect way to find God or work the steps. The method outlined claims no rigid superiority over other methods. **Autonomy** is also part of the Strong Original Way of AA. Obviously, not everyone does things the same way. Bill Wilson is said to have taken sponsees through the steps in 30 days. Bob Smith took 5,000 through the steps. He did it in a day. Clarence S. took newcomers through in two days or a weekend.

Wally P did historical research to re discover some actual inventory formats passed on by AA pioneers. We have laid out the 4th step inventory so it follows the Big Book. By writing first, then doing the 5th step we can look at resentment, fear and harm individually, the way it says in the Big Book. This step guide uses The Little Red Book and 12 & 12 as they were originally intended, as supporting accompaniments to the Big Book.

SOURCES: *God, The authors personal experience and sponsorship, Big Book 4th ed., Dr. Bob and the Good Old Timers, William James-Varieties of Religious Experience, Henry B Wright-The Will of God and a Man's Lifework, Old audio tapes and video of original members, Wally P-Back to Basics, Clarence S, William Glasser M.D.-Reality Therapy, Dick B.-Twelve Steps for You & Real Twelve Step History, Ernest Kurtz-Not God, AA Archives, Hindsfoot.org, Barefootsworld.net, Silkworth.net, AA.org, AA GSO, NESARC Survey, National Institute of Health- NIAAA, Habib Davanloo M.D.-Unlocking the Unconscious, Father Ralph Pfau-The Golden Books, The Akron Step Guide, An Interpretation of The Twelve Steps aka The Tablemate, Phillip Kapleau-The Three Pillars of Zen, Richard Peabody-The Common Sense of Drinking, Oswald Chambers-My Utmost for His Highest, Original and Pioneer Members descriptions of how they worked the steps. The Language of the Heart, Emmet Fox-The Sermon on the Mount, AA Comes of Age, Pass It On, Ed Webster-The Little Red Book & Stools and Bottles, The 12 & 12, the hand edited version of the original Big Book Manuscript (group conscience edits) Chuck C.-video and A New Pair of Glasses, Hank P, Mrs. Delaney, Greg V, Gerry G & the historical archives at Alina Lodge, Rutgers Center of Alcohol Studies founded by Marty Mann, Lenora W (1938 S.D.), Joe S, Mel B, Tom P. Jr., Harry Tiebout M.D.-The Ego Factors in Surrender in Alcoholism, and the first edition of the Big Book...*

AA THE ORIGINAL WAY - 4th STEP INVENTORY

1935...

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“Being convinced that self, manifested in various ways, had defeated us, we considered its common manifestations.”

- pg. 64 Alcoholics Anonymous

AA THE ORIGINAL WAY - 4th STEP INVENTORY

Row 1a-f – Resentment Row 2 – Fear Row 3-16 – Harms <i>*Did a decision based on self later place you in a position to be hurt by this person?</i>	Names	Bill Wilson	Lois Wilson	Bob Smith	Anne Smith	Peggy Sue	Mona	Suzie Q	Marty Mann	William James	Ed Webster	Detailed instructions are on the AA THE ORIGINAL WAY - 12 STEP GUIDE. (Enter all names first)
Shortcomings		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Assets to Pray For
Resentment	1	✓	✓	✓								Forgiveness
<i>Decision based on self?*</i>	a	✓	✓	✓								<i>Compassion</i>
<i>AFFECTS MY: Self Esteem?</i>	b		✓									<i>Understanding</i>
<i>Financial Security?</i>	c	✓		✓								<i>Serenity</i>
<i>Ambitions?</i>	d	✓	✓	✓								<i>Joy of Living</i>
<i>Personal Relationships?</i>	e											<i>Fun</i>
<i>Sex Relationships?</i>	f											<i>Consideration</i>
Fear	2				✓	✓	✓					Faith
Selfishness	3						✓	✓	✓			Selflessness
Dishonesty	4			✓				✓	✓			Honesty
Self Seeking	5	✓		✓								Helping Others
Self Centered Fear	6	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	Humility
Self Pity	7	✓							✓			Gratitude
Depression	8			✓								Love
Jealousy (people)	9			✓						✓	✓	Trust
Financially Selfish	10									✓	✓	Generosity
Intolerance	11	✓							✓			Tolerance, Patience
Laziness	12											Action
Prideful	13	✓										Kindness
Self Will	14	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		Surrender
Envy (things)	15	✓		✓		✓				✓	✓	Contentment
Sexually Selfish	16						✓	✓	✓			Courteousness
Is this person due Amends?	A	A		A		A	A	A	A	A	A	<i>If more than 1 or 2 harms an Amend is likely due.</i>

AA THE ORIGINAL WAY - 4th STEP INVENTORY

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<i>Financial Security?</i>	c											<i>Serenity</i>
<i>Ambitions?</i>	d											<i>Joy of Living</i>
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<i>Sex Relationships?</i>	f											<i>Consideration</i>
Fear	2											Faith
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Jealousy (people)	9											Trust
Financially Selfish	10											Generosity
Intolerance	11											Tolerance, Patience
Laziness	12											Action
Prideful	13											Kindness
Self Will	14											Surrender
Envy (things)	15											Contentment
Sexually Selfish	16											Courteousness
Is this person due Amends?	A											<i>If more than 1 or 2 harms an Amend is likely due.</i>

AA THE ORIGINAL WAY - 4th STEP INVENTORY

Row 1a-f – Resentment Row 2 – Fear Row 3-16 – Harms <i>*Did a decision based on self later place you in a position to be hurt by this person?</i>	Names											<i>Detailed instructions are on the AA THE ORIGINAL WAY - 12 STEP GUIDE. (Enter all names first)</i>
Shortcomings		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Assets to Pray For
Resentment	1											Forgiveness
<i>Decision based on self?*</i>	a											<i>Compassion</i>
<i>AFFECTS MY: Self Esteem?</i>	b											<i>Understanding</i>
<i>Financial Security?</i>	c											<i>Serenity</i>
<i>Ambitions?</i>	d											<i>Joy of Living</i>
<i>Personal Relationships?</i>	e											<i>Fun</i>
<i>Sex Relationships?</i>	f											<i>Consideration</i>
Fear	2											Faith
Selfishness	3											Selflessness
Dishonesty	4											Honesty
Self Seeking	5											Helping Others
Self Centered Fear	6											Humility
Self Pity	7											Gratitude
Depression	8											Love
Jealousy (people)	9											Trust
Financially Selfish	10											Generosity
Intolerance	11											Tolerance, Patience
Laziness	12											Action
Prideful	13											Kindness
Self Will	14											Surrender
Envy (things)	15											Contentment
Sexually Selfish	16											Courteousness
Is this person due Amends?	A											<i>If more than 1 or 2 harms an Amend is likely due.</i>

AA THE ORIGINAL WAY - 4th STEP INVENTORY

[illegible]

AA THE ORIGINAL WAY - 4th STEP INVENTORY

Example of a 10th Step AA inventory from the Grapevine, Vol3 - No1, June-1946

in the storm-swept sea of alcoholism, have at last a grander day. —H.T.C.

of my life. I have had to go. —W.H.A. M.

MY DAILY MORAL INVENTORY

Month _____ Year _____

Check Results DAILY in Proper Column

LIABILITIES

Watch for —

ASSETS

Strive for —

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	
Self Pity																																Self-Forgetfulness
Self Justification																																Humility
Self Importance																																Modesty
Self Condemnation																																Self Valuation
Dishonesty																																Honesty
Impatience																																Patience
Hate																																LOVE
Resentment																																Forgiveness
False Pride																																Simplicity
Jealousy																																Trust
Envy																																Generosity
Laziness																																Activity
Procrastination																																Promptness
Insincerity																																Straightforwardness
Negative Thinking																																Positive Thinking
Vulgar, Immoral, Trashy Thinking																																High-Minded, Spiritual, CLEAN Thinking
Criticizing																																Look for the GOOD

Eliminate the Negative

CHECK THE SCORE EVERY NIGHT — TRY TO GET THE SLATE CLEAN

Accentuate the Positive