

Newcomers Step Workshop Minneapolis Format

Session #2 - Steps 2, 3 and 4

We are about to take our second journey back to the early days of Alcoholics Anonymous -- back to the four one-hour Beginners' Meetings of the mid-1940s. During this session we will complete the surrender process we started last week. In addition, we will learn how to identify the shortcomings that have prevented us from establishing an intimate, two-way relationship with the God of our understanding.

As food addicts, we are using this original format to recover from food. In certain places, we have substituted the word "food" for "drink," the word "food addiction" for "alcoholism" and "OA" for "A.A." In other places, where the history of A.A. is discussed, we stick with the original language.

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WELCOME to session No. 2 of the Newcomers Step Workshop. Together, we are taking the Twelve Steps based on the directions found in the "Big Book" of Alcoholics Anonymous and the personal experiences of our A.A. and OA pioneers.

Our names are _____ and _____ and we are members of Overeaters Anonymous. We are grateful for the opportunity to lead these sessions. This is one way we can be of service to others and, at the same time, grow in the "Fellowship of the Spirit."

Our goal is to recover from the "seemingly hopeless state of mind and body" known as food addiction. And recover we will. The August 1946 issue of The A.A. Grapevine contains an article titled, "Minneapolis Record Indicates that 75% are Successful in A.A." The article demonstrates the importance of the Beginners' Meetings. In Minneapolis, about half of those who stayed on the program for three months recovered from alcoholism. Almost three-fourths of those who remained involved for six months never drank again.

In other areas of the country where these workshops are an integral part of the recovery process, we are seeing similar results. We remain involved in the meetings by taking the Twelve Steps, helping others through the Steps, and if possible, leading these sessions. If you participate in these meetings long enough, you **WILL** experience the miracle and you **WILL** recover from food addiction.

During this session, we'll take Steps Two and Three and establish guidelines for taking the Fourth Step. During the next week, each newcomer is to share his or her inventory with another person or persons.

Older members have told us the only way to understand the "Big Book" is to try to explain it to someone else. They were right. We didn't realize how much we could still learn about our textbook for recovery until we started leading these meetings.

So, we want to thank you for providing us with the opportunity to "grow in understanding and effectiveness" by once again taking the Twelve Steps along with you. As we have discovered right here in these meetings, each time we take the Steps, we grow closer to the "One who has all power."

Before we begin, we must make sure that the newcomers have someone at this meeting to help them with the Steps. In order for the process to work, sponsors or sharing partners need to accompany the newcomers through these sessions.

Are there any newcomers here today who do not have a sponsor or sharing partner with them right now? If so, please so indicate.

[Ask for volunteers to assist those who are standing.]

Thank you.

Is there anyone here who didn't have the opportunity to take the First Step last week and would like to do so now? If so, please so indicate.

[Ask the First Step question: Do you concede to your innermost self that you are a Food Addict? Please answer, "yes" or "no."]

Thank you. Those who answered "yes" to this question have taken Step One.

As we explained last session, the "Big Book" of Alcoholics Anonymous contains step-by-step directions on how to recover from food addiction by finding and relying upon a "Power greater than ourselves." This Power will remove our obsession to act on our addiction and lead us to a "new freedom and a new happiness."

As we go through this meeting, _____ [insert co-leader's name] and I will take turns reading from this format, which includes passages from the "Big Book." One of us will introduce each passage by page number, paragraph and line, and the other will read the passage.

Let's start with a brief review of what we have learned so far.

On page 64 of the "Big Book," in the third paragraph, we find an excellent overview of the recovery process. Starting in the middle of the third line, the authors write:

"For we have been not only mentally and physically ill, we have been spiritually sick. When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically."

This is our goal -- to overcome the spiritual malady that has separated us from the God of our understanding and doomed us, until now, to the living Hell of food addiction.

How do we overcome this malady? The "Big Book" authors tell us we need to experience a spiritual awakening, which Dr. Silkworth defines as a "psychic change." Dr. Silkworth describes the effect of this change on the alcoholic -- or in our case the food addict -- on Roman numeral page 29 (xxix), in the first paragraph. There, he states:

"On the other hand -- and strange as this may seem to those who do not understand -- once a psychic change has occurred, the very same person who seemed doomed, who had so many problems he despaired of ever solving them, suddenly finds himself easily able to control his desire for food, the only effort necessary being that required to follow a few simple rules."

What are these simple rules? They are, "Trust in God ... "clean house," and "Help others." If we follow these guidelines, we will receive the ultimate reward -- a spiritual awakening.

Last week we started on our journey to this spiritual awakening by taking Step One. We conceded to our innermost selves we are powerless over food that is, we are food addicts.

Will those who have taken Step One, either at the conclusion of our meeting last week or during the week with their sponsor or sharing partner, please so indicate.

[Optional: Also, will those who took the First Step with us earlier today, please so indicate.]

Congratulations. Please be seated. We commend you for admitting you have a problem. As the "Big Book" says, "This is the first step in recovery." Your admission is a major accomplishment, since most food addicts live in total denial they have a progressive and fatal illness.

We are now ready to proceed.

Step 2: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity

Now that we have admitted we are food addicts, let's look at what else we have to do in order to recover. On page 44, in the fourth paragraph, we learn:

"If a mere code of morals or a better philosophy of life were sufficient to overcome food addiction, many of us would have recovered long ago. But we found that such codes and philosophies did not save us, no matter how much we tried. We could wish to be moral, we could wish to be philosophically comforted, in fact, we could will these things with all our might, but the needed power wasn't there. Our human resources, as marshalled by the will, were not sufficient; they failed utterly."

What is it going to take for us to find this Power? The answer is in the back of the "Big Book" within Appendix II. On page 568, starting with the second paragraph, we find:

"Most emphatically we wish to say that any food addict capable of honestly facing his problems in the light of our experience can recover, provided he does not close his mind to all spiritual concepts. He can only be defeated by an attitude of intolerance or belligerent denial. We find that no one need have difficulty with the spirituality of the program. Willingness, honesty and open mindedness are the essentials of recovery. But these are indispensable."

The "Big Book" authors maintain that it is our arrogance and shortsightedness that keep us in the dark and block us from the "sunlight of the Spirit."

Bill W., A.A.'s New York City cofounder, had a great deal of difficulty accepting a spiritual solution to his alcoholism. In his story, he explains how he "came to believe."

In late November 1934, Ebby T. visits Bill at his Brooklyn, New York, home. It is during this visit that Bill first learns about the concept of "God as you understand God."

As we mentioned last week, Ebby is one of Bill's high school friends and a former drinking companion. Ebby has been sober for several months. He tells Bill his life has been transformed as the result of practicing the Four Spiritual Activities of Surrender, Sharing, Restitution and Guidance.

Bill is shocked when Ebby starts talking about God. However, he does listen because he realizes Ebby's life has truly changed -- Ebby is sober for the first time in many years.

Let's pick up the story on page 12, in the first paragraph:

"Despite the living example of my friend there remained in me the vestiges of my old prejudice. The word God still aroused a certain antipathy. When the thought was expressed that there might be a God personal to me this feeling was intensified. I didn't like the idea. I could go for such conceptions as Creative Intelligence, Universal Mind or Spirit of Nature but I resisted the thought of a Czar of the Heavens, however loving His sway might be. I have since talked with scores of men who felt the same way."

Then, Ebby presents Bill with a revolutionary proposition:

"My friend suggested what then seemed a novel idea. He said,
'Why don't you choose your own conception of God?'

"That statement hit me hard. It melted the icy intellectual
mountain in whose shadow I had lived and shivered many years. I
stood in the sunlight at last.

"It was only a matter of being willing to believe in a Power greater
than myself. Nothing more was required of me to make my beginning.
I saw that growth could start from that point. Upon a foundation of
complete willingness I might build what I saw in my friend. Would I
have it? Of course I would!"

Now, let's look at how the "Big Book" authors describe this "Power greater than
ourselves." In the middle of page 46, they ask us to set aside any contempt we may
have for spiritual principles and consider our own conception of this Power. If we
do, we will be in a much better position to understand the OA solution for the food
problem. In the first paragraph, starting with the third line, they write:

"We found that as soon as we were able to lay aside prejudice and
express even a willingness to believe in a Power greater than
ourselves, we commenced to get results, even though it was impossible
for any of us to fully define or comprehend that Power, which is
God."

The "Big Book" authors clearly state that it is impossible to define God. We
have to stop trying to comprehend this Power with our mind and start accepting this
Power with our heart. On page 47, in the first paragraph, they explain the concept
of "God as you understand God":

"When, therefore, we speak to you of God, we mean your own conception of God. This applies, too, to other spiritual expressions which you find in this book. Do not let any prejudice you may have against spiritual terms deter you from honestly asking yourself what they mean to you. At the start, this was all we needed to commence spiritual growth, to affect our first conscious relation with God as we understood Him. Afterward, we found ourselves accepting many things which then seemed entirely out of reach. That was growth, but if we wished to grow we had to begin somewhere. So, we used our own conception, however limited it was."

Sometimes we have to take our lives right to the brink of disaster and look death squarely in the eye before we are willing to acknowledge the "Presence of God." But there is hope, even for the most stubborn of us. Starting with the seventh line from the top of page 48, the "Big Book" authors maintain that, eventually, most of us become teachable:

"Faced with food addiction destruction, we soon become as open minded on spiritual matters as we had tried to be on other questions. In this respect food craving was a great persuader. It finally beat us into a state of reasonableness. Sometimes this was a tedious process; we hope no one else will be prejudiced for as long as some of us were."

On page 52, the authors make a powerful case for the existence of God:

"When we saw others solve their problems by a simple reliance upon the Spirit of the Universe, we had to stop doubting the power of God. Our ideas did not work. But the God idea did."

Once again we need to make a decision. We have to decide whether or not we believe in a Power greater than human power -- a "Spirit of the Universe" -- a God of our understanding.

On page 53, in the second paragraph, the "Big Book" authors write:

"When we became food addicts, crushed by a self-imposed crisis we could not postpone or evade, we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or else He is nothing. God either is, or He isn't. What was our choice to be?"

Now, it's time to choose. Are we willing to concede that there is a "Power greater than ourselves?" If we are, we're ready to take the Second Step.

On Page 47, in the second paragraph, we find the directions:

"We needed to ask ourselves but one short question. 'Do I now believe, or am I even willing to believe, that there is a Power greater than myself?' As soon as a man can say that he does believe, or is willing to believe, we emphatically assure him that he is on his way. It has been repeatedly proven among us that upon this simple cornerstone a wonderfully effective spiritual structure can be built."

Let's see who is ready to proceed. This is the Second Step question:

"Do you now believe, or are you even willing to believe, that there is a Power greater than yourself?"

Please answer, one at a time, "yes" or "no." After you have answered, please be seated.

[Have each newcomer answer the question.]

Thank you. According to the "Big Book" authors, those who answered "yes" to this question have taken Step Two.

Now, let's move on to the Third Step.

Step 3: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him

This Step begins on page 60 with the third paragraph. How do we know that? Well, in this case, the "Big Book" authors tell us:

"Being convinced, we were at Step Three ..."

Convinced of what? If we've taken the Second Step, we believe that a "Power greater than ourselves" can restore us to sanity. But, even though we may believe that the "Power of God" is the answer, this doesn't necessarily mean we are willing to accept this solution. In order to recover from food addiction, we must make a decision to put this Power to work in our lives.

On pages 62 and 63, the "Big Book" authors show us how to become God directed. But, first they disclose how operating on self-will keeps us separated from this "inner resource." On page 60, in the fourth paragraph, they explain that, when we live on self will, we are like actors trying to control every detail of a play.

"The first requirement is that we be convinced that any life run on self-will can hardly be a success. On that basis we are almost always in collision with something or somebody, even though our motives are good. Most people try to live by self-propulsion. Each person is like an actor who wants to run the whole show; is forever trying to arrange the lights, the ballet, the scenery and the rest of the players in his own way."

Does this sound familiar? At one time or another, haven't we all tried to convince those around us they would be much better off if they just did things our way? Attempting to control others is one of the characteristics of selfishness.

On page 62, in the first paragraph, the authors declare that it is this selfish self-centeredness that gets us into trouble. We need to take responsibility for our selfishness and ask God to remove this shortcoming from our lives:

"Selfishness -- self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles. Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity, we step on the toes of our fellows and they retaliate. Sometimes they hurt us, seemingly without provocation, but we invariably find that at some time in the past we have made decisions based on self which later placed us in a position to be hurt.

"So our troubles, we think, are basically of our own making. They arise out of ourselves, and the food addict is an extreme example of self-will run riot, though he usually doesn't think so. Above everything, we food addicts must be rid of this selfishness. We must, or it kills us! God makes that possible. And there often seems no way of entirely getting rid of self without His aid."

Then on page 62, in the third paragraph, the authors make clear what happens once we rid ourselves of this selfishness:

"This is the how and why of it. First of all, we had to quit playing God. It didn't work. Next, we decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was going to be our Director. ...

"Most good ideas are simple, and this concept was the keystone of the new and triumphant arch through which we passed to freedom.

"When we sincerely took such a position, all sorts of remarkable things followed. We had a new Employer. Being all powerful, He provided what we needed, if we kept close to Him and performed His work well."

Now we know our place in God's Universe. Contrary to what we may have thought in the past, the whole world does not revolve around us.

Realizing there is a "Power greater than ourselves" is the essence of God Consciousness. As we become aware of the "realm of the spirit," our lives change. On page 63, starting with the fifth line from the top, the authors explain this awareness:

"Established on such a footing, we became less and less interested in ourselves, our little plans and designs. More and more we became interested in seeing what we could contribute to life. As we felt new power flow in, as we enjoyed peace of mind, as we discovered we could face life successfully, as we became conscious of His presence, we began to lose our fear of today, tomorrow or the hereafter. We were reborn."

We have been delivered from the gates of Hell and have come back to tell what it was like. It isn't a pretty picture. We will never have to "relive the horrors of the past," if we are willing to remain in the "sunlight of the Spirit."

It is decision time once again. The "Big Book" authors tell us we are now ready to take the Third Step. In the third paragraph on page 63, they provide us with the directions:

"We found it very desirable to take this spiritual step with an understanding person, such as our wife, best friend, or spiritual adviser. But it is better to meet God alone than with one who might misunderstand. The wording was, of course, quite optional so long as we expressed the idea, voicing it without reservation. This was only a beginning, though if honestly and humbly made, an effect, sometimes a very great one, was felt at once."

We are so fortunate that in the years since the "Big Book" was written the fellowship has grown to where very few, if any, newcomers have to take the Third Step alone. We're here to take this monumental Step with you right now.

Although they say the wording is optional, the authors do provide us with a prayer we can use to take the Third Step. The prayer is in the middle of page 63. Starting with the second line in the second paragraph, it reads:

"God, I offer myself to Thee -- to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!"

We would like those who are ready to take the Third Step to read the prayer along with us.

Let's read the Third Step Prayer together.

[Read the prayer a second time.]

Well done! According to the "Big Book" authors, we have taken Step Three.

Even though we've spent a considerable amount of time on the first three Steps, we have only made a series of decisions. Now, we need to take some specific actions that will result in the "personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from food addiction."

Step 4: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves

On page 63, in the fourth paragraph, the "Big Book" authors tell us what we need to do now that we've made our decision to proceed:

"Next we launched out on a course of vigorous action, the first step of which is a personal housecleaning, which many of us had never attempted. Though our decision was a vital and crucial step, it could have little permanent effect unless at once followed by a strenuous effort to face, and to be rid of, the things in ourselves which had been blocking us. Our food was but a symptom. So we had to get down to causes and conditions."

Please note the authors say AT ONCE. They instruct us to take the Fourth Step immediately after the Third Step prayer. We must overcome those things that have prevented us from tapping into the spiritual solution to our problem.

So, we are now going to establish a direct line of communication with the God of our understanding by eliminating those manifestations of self that have kept us in the depths of loneliness and despair. The "Big Book" authors disclose that food is only a symptom of our problem. Sure, food has cut us off from God, but once we stop compulsively overeating, we're still separated from the "One who has all power" because of our shortcomings. Now, it is time to look at these "causes and conditions" by taking an inventory.

The "Big Book" authors start by comparing a personal inventory to a business inventory. On page 64, in the first paragraph, they write:

"Therefore, we started upon a personal inventory. This was Step Four. A business which takes no regular inventory usually goes broke. Taking a commercial inventory is a fact-finding and fact-facing process. It is an effort to discover the truth about the stock-in-trade. One object is to disclose damaged or unsalable goods, to get rid of them promptly and without regret."

So, we are going to conduct the equivalent of a commercial inventory on our lives. This implies we are going to look at our assets and liabilities. That's what a commercial inventory is all about. It's an examination of what is working and what is not working in our lives. It allows us to accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative.

Then, in the second paragraph on page 64, the authors clearly explain what we need to do in order to conduct a Fourth Step inventory:

"We did exactly the same thing with our lives. We took stock honestly. First, we searched out the flaws in our make-up which caused our failure. Being convinced that self, manifested in various ways, was what had defeated us, we considered its common manifestations."

Before we get into the details on how to take this Step, we want to emphasize a few things. First, there is no right or wrong way to conduct a Fourth Step inventory. Various assets and liabilities checklists are in use today. You can use any one of them.

Second, the assets and liabilities checklist described on page 64 precedes the three-column inventory shown on page 65. Because this "commercial inventory" comes first, we assume the "Big Book" authors are asking us to utilize this simple checklist before attempting the much more difficult example on the following page.

Third, Dr. Bob, A.A.'s Akron, Ohio cofounder, has been using an assets and liabilities checklist for many years. Dr. Bob believes that, initially, newcomers should be taken through a simplified version of the Steps. Later, they can work the program in more detail.

Dr. Bob takes newcomers through the Steps as quickly as possible. In many instances, he completes the process during the person's three- to five-day stay at St. Thomas Hospital in Akron, Ohio. Thousands of alcoholics and food addicts have recovered by following Dr. Bob's "keep it simple" approach.

The "Big Book" authors also urge us to take the Steps quickly. We must discover "the truth about the stock-in-trade" in order to remove those behaviors that have cut us off from the "sunlight of the Spirit." On page 65, in the third paragraph, they provide us with some of the details:

"We went back through our lives. Nothing counted but thoroughness and honesty. When we were finished we considered it carefully."

Please note that the authors ask us to be thorough, and in the very next sentence, they tell us what to do when we are finished. Since this is all in one paragraph, we assume they are asking us to complete this inventory in one sitting.

Keep in mind this is only a suggestion. You can spend as much time on this inventory as you wish, just as long as you and your sponsor or sharing partner complete it before the next session.

Now, let's look at what we put on paper. From pages 64 to 71, the authors present us with a list of liabilities we need to eliminate and assets we need to accentuate.

The liabilities they mention are **RESENTMENT, FEAR, SELFISHNESS, DISHONESTY, INCONSIDERATION, JEALOUSY, SUSPICION and BITTERNESS.**

For clarity, we have substituted **FALSE PRIDE** for **INCONSIDERATION**, **ENVY** for **SUSPICION** and **LAZINESS** for **BITTERNESS.**

These liabilities, along with their corresponding assets, are also mentioned in the June 1946 issue of The A.A. Grapevine. You can use either the original or our modified "Big Book" liabilities list as a guide for your Fourth Step inventory.

We are now going to define these shortcomings in a way that, hopefully, will provide you with a clearer understanding of their meaning.

Let's start with **RESENTMENT**, which is the consequence of being angry or bitter toward someone for an extended period of time over some real or imagined insult. It is a hostile or indignant attitude in response to an alleged affront or personal injury.

FEAR is being afraid of losing something we have or not getting something we want. It manifests itself in many ways such as phobia, terror, panic, anxiety and worry. Fear is real or imaginary (the bogeyman).

SELFISHNESS is concern only for ourselves, our own welfare or pleasure, without regard for, or at the expense of, others.

DISHONESTY involves theft or deception. It includes taking things that don't belong to us, cheating people out of what is rightfully theirs, and lying to or withholding the truth from others.

FALSE PRIDE is either feeling better than or less than someone else. Feelings of superiority include prejudice about race, education or religious beliefs, and sarcasm -- putting someone else down to make us feel better about ourselves. Feelings of inferiority include self-pity, which is excessive concern about our own troubles, and low self-esteem -- the lack of self-worth or self-respect.

JEALOUSY has to do with people -- being suspicious of another's motives or doubting the faithfulness of a friend.

ENVY has to do with things -- wanting someone else's possessions.

LAZINESS means lacking the will or the desire to work. Procrastination, which is postponing or delaying an assigned job or task, is a form of laziness.

Now we now know **WHAT** to inventory. Next, we need to decide **WHO** does the writing. For guidance on this subject, let's look to A.A.'s New York City cofounder, Bill W.

On page 13, Bill describes the inventory process he went through in one day. In the second paragraph, starting with the fifth line, Bill states:

"I ruthlessly faced my sins and became willing to have my new-found Friend take them away, root and branch."

Bill doesn't say, "I ruthlessly wrote down my sins." All he does is acknowledge that he has some shortcomings.

In the third paragraph on page 13, Bill discusses his shortcomings with his sharing partner:

"My schoolmate visited me, and I fully acquainted him with my problems and deficiencies. We made a list of people I had hurt or toward whom I felt resentment."

Here again, Bill doesn't say, "My schoolmate visited me and I read him my inventory." He also doesn't say, "I made a list of people..." Rather, Bill writes, "WE made a list of people"

So, together Bill and Ebby made an amends list. Let's think about this for a minute. Bill is in Towns Hospital in December 1934, being withdrawn from alcohol for the fourth time. He is suffering from delirium tremens and is a very sick man. Ebby has been sober for several months. Who do you think did the writing? (It wasn't Bill!)

We are now going to look at the assets and liabilities checklist in more detail. On page 64, in the third paragraph, the "Big Book" authors ask us to examine our resentments:

"Resentment is the 'number one' offender. It destroys more food addicts than anything else. From it stem all forms of spiritual disease. ... In dealing with resentments, we set them on paper. We listed people, institutions or principles with whom we were angry."

On page 66, in the first paragraph, the authors emphasize that our resentments keep us separated from the "Power greater than ourselves." We must eliminate them if we are to have a spiritual awakening:

"It is plain that a life which includes deep resentment leads only to futility and unhappiness. To the precise extent that we permit these, do we squander the hours that might have been worth while. But with the food addict, whose hope is the maintenance and growth of a spiritual experience, this business of resentment is infinitely grave. We found that it is fatal. For when harboring such feelings we shut ourselves off from the sunlight of the Spirit. The insanity of compulsive eating returns and we eat compulsively again. And with us, to drink is to die."

Then on page 67, in the second paragraph, the authors instruct us to look at our part in each situation to see if we need to make amends:

"Referring to our list again. Putting out of our minds the wrongs others had done, we resolutely looked for our own mistakes. Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened? Though a situation had not been entirely our fault, we tried to disregard the other person involved entirely. Where were we to blame? The inventory was ours, not the other man's. When we saw our faults we listed them. We placed them before us in black and white. We admitted our wrongs honestly and were willing to set these matters straight."

Let's look at the third sentence again. It reads, "Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened?" These shortcomings are based on self-will. In addition, they are the opposites of the Four Standards of Honesty, Purity, Unselfishness and Love, which is used as a test for God's will.

Early on, Bill W., Dr. Bob, and other A.A. pioneers learned to test everything they thought, said or did. Now, they are asking us to do the same thing -- test our actions.

We need to know which path we're on. Are we living in the solution and "walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe," or are we living in the problem and sinking deeper and deeper into "that bitter morass of self pity?" It is our selfish, self-centeredness that keeps us blocked from the "One who has all power" and prevents us from finding the spiritual solution to our difficulties.

We can use either the A.A. test for self-will or the Four Standards as a test for God's will to determine if we need to make amends:

Test for self-will

Selfish(ness)

Dishonest(y)

Self-seeking

Frightened

Test for God's will

Unselfishness

Honesty

Purity

Love

Concerning our resentments, the "Big Book" authors provide us with specific instructions on what to do. We must get beyond them if we "expect to live long or happily in this world."

On page 66, in the third paragraph, the authors explain that when we hold onto grudges, we are actually allowing others to control our lives.

"We turned back to our list, for it held the key to the future. We were prepared to look at it from an entirely different angle. We began to see that the world and its people really dominated us. In that state, the wrongdoing of others, fancied or real, had power to actually kill. How could we escape? We saw that these resentments must be mastered, but how? We could not wish them away any more than food."

If we don't deal with our resentments, the future will just be a repeat of the past. Every time we are reminded of an old hurt, the old pain returns and we feel it again and again. In the past we may have eaten compulsively to numb this pain, but now we are going to take actions to eliminate this pain.

The first thing we do is talk about our resentments with our sponsor or sharing partner. Healing starts with sharing the hurt. But, the healing is not complete until we forgive those who have offended us. We overcome resentment with forgiveness. Therefore, forgiveness is the asset that corresponds to the liability of resentment.

We must change our attitude about the experience. We do this by seeing the source of our pain in a new light. We see the person as a sick individual who needs our prayers not our anger. Whether it is a person who is still in our lives, someone who has passed on, someone we may never see again, or ourselves, the process is the same. Starting with the first line on page 67, the "Big Book" authors write:

"Though we did not like their symptoms and the way these disturbed us, they, like ourselves, were sick too. We asked God to help us show them the same tolerance, pity, and patience that we would cheerfully grant a sick friend. When a person offended we said to ourselves, 'This is a sick man. How can I be helpful to him? God save me from being angry. Thy will be done.'

"We avoid retaliation or argument. We wouldn't treat sick people that way. If we do, we destroy our chance of being helpful. We cannot be helpful to all people, but at least God will show us how to take a kindly and tolerant view of each and every one."

Next, the authors ask us to look at our fears. In the first paragraph on page 68, they write:

"We reviewed our fears thoroughly. We put them on paper, even though we had no resentment in connection with them. We asked ourselves why we had them. Wasn't it because self-reliance failed us? Self-reliance was good as far as it went, but it didn't go far enough. Some of us once had great self-confidence, but it didn't fully solve the fear problem, or any other."

If we have faith that God will keep us safe and protected, we will receive the strength and direction to overcome all of our fears. We overcome fear with faith. Therefore, according to the "Big Book" authors, faith is the asset that corresponds to the liability of fear.

On page 68, in the second paragraph, they inform us that we will lose our fears if we trust our Creator:

"Perhaps there is a better way -- we think so. For we are now on a different basis; the basis of trusting and relying upon God. We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves. We are in the world to play the role He assigns. Just to the extent that we do as we think He would have us, and humbly rely on Him, does He enable us to match calamity with serenity.

"We can laugh at those who think spirituality the way of weakness. Paradoxically, it is the way of strength. The verdict of the ages is that faith means courage. All men of faith have courage. They trust their God. We never apologize for God. Instead we let Him demonstrate, through us, what He can do. We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be. At once, we commence to outgrow fear."

In the first paragraph on page 69, the authors mention six additional shortcomings we need to address. They also ask us to make a list of those we have harmed. This will become our amends list -- the people to whom we need to make restitution:

"We reviewed our own conduct over the years past. Where had we been selfish, dishonest or inconsiderate? Whom had we hurt? Did we unjustifiably arouse jealousy, suspicion or bitterness? Where were we at fault, what should we have done instead? We got this all down on paper and looked at it."

According to the "Big Book" authors, the additional shortcomings we inventory are SELFISHNESS, DISHONESTY, INCONSIDERATION, JEALOUSY, SUSPICION and BITTERNESS.

That's the liabilities side of the ledger. Now, what about the assets?

The 'Big Book' authors list assets throughout Chapter 5. We've already presented passages that refer to the assets of FORGIVENESS and FAITH, which are the opposites of RESENTMENT and FEAR.

Additional assets listed in the 'Big Book' and the June 1946 issue of The A.A. Grapevine are UNSELFISHNESS, HONESTY, HUMILITY, TRUST, CONTENTMENT and ACTION.

We have now looked at both sides of the ledger. Our inventory consists of a list of liabilities to watch for and assets to strive for.

We have completed our presentation of the Fourth Step, but before we end this session, we need to consider one more detail -- the person or persons with whom we share our inventory.

Step Five reads: "Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs."

According to the "Big Book" authors, we must discuss our "problems and deficiencies" with at least one other person. This individual can be the member of OA who is helping you through these sessions, but it doesn't have to be. The 'Big Book' authors provide us with other options.

On page 73, starting with the fourth paragraph, they give us directions on how to choose the person or persons with whom we share our inventory. Our sponsor or sharing partner may assist us in putting our checklist together, but we may feel more comfortable sharing the intimate details with a third party. The "Big Book" authors provide us with guidelines regarding the individual or individuals with whom we review our shortcomings:

"We must be entirely honest with somebody if we expect to live long or happily in this world. Rightly and naturally, we think well before we choose the person or persons with whom to take this intimate and confidential step. Those of us belonging to a religious denomination which requires confession must, and of course will want to go to the properly appointed authority whose duty it is to receive it. Though we have no religious connection, we may still do well to talk with someone ordained by an established religion. ...

"If we cannot or would rather not do this, we search our acquaintance for a close-mouthed, understanding friend. Perhaps our doctor or psychologist will be the person."

Therefore, we can discuss our inventory with any number of people. For those who are still uncertain about who to share your checklist with, have your sponsor or sharing partner help you decide.

So, we've explained what needs to be inventoried, who does the writing, and the person or persons with whom we share our checklist. Now we are going to provide you with an example to illustrate the inventory process.

We have a one-page checklist for you to use. It has the liabilities on the left side and the assets on the right side of the sheet, which is the same format used in the June 1946 issue of The A.A. Grapevine. All we have done is add vertical lines, so you can list people, institutions and principles across the top of the page.

In our example, the sponsor or sharing partner does the writing. The first thing he or she does is fold the checklist so the assets are hidden from view.

Then, the sponsor or sharing partner starts asking the newcomer about his or her resentments. As the newcomer talks about his or her "grudge list," the sponsor or sharing partner puts the names at the top of the sheet.

Keep in mind that it is not necessary to list every resentment the newcomer has ever had to in order for the inventory to be thorough. The objective is to get "to causes and conditions" and "get rid of them promptly and without regret." Sometimes it takes only a few incidents to make clear that RESENTMENT has been blocking the newcomer from an intimate, two-way relationship with the "One who has all power." Besides, it is more productive to take a few resentments through the entire inventory and restitution process than to list so many resentments that the newcomer becomes overwhelmed.

It is the pain associated with this "fact-finding and a fact-facing process" that must be relieved as quickly as possible. Once the newcomer develops confidence and conviction that this course of action will reduce the "terror, bewilderment, frustration, (and) despair" associated with living on self-will, he or she will be much more inclined to do additional inventory work in the near future.

Next, the sponsor or sharing partner asks the newcomer to describe the reasons why he or she is angry and to look at his or her part in each situation. If they both agree that the newcomer needs to make an amends, the sponsor puts a mark (an X, checkmark, circle, etc.) in the box to the right of **RESENTMENT** under the name of the individual or organization the newcomer is talking about.

After the sponsor or sharing partner has compiled the resentment list, he or she moves on to the fear inventory by asking, "Who or what are you afraid of right now? Let's start with those items for which there is no resentment." After noting any fears at the top of the sheet, the sponsor or sharing partner asks, "Let's revisit your resentment list. Are there any situations where there is both fear and resentment?"

Then the newcomer describes the events surrounding each fearful episode. Once again, the sponsor or sharing partner asks the newcomer to look at his or her part in each situation. If they both agree that the newcomer needs to make an amends, the sponsor puts a mark in the box to the right of **FEAR** under the name of the individual or organization the newcomer is afraid of.

After compiling the **RESENTMENT** and **FEAR** checklists, the sponsor or sharing partner asks the newcomer to consider the remaining items on the liabilities side of the sheet. He or she asks, "Toward whom have you been **SELFISH**? Where have you been **DISHONEST**? What about **FALSE PRIDE**, feeling better than or less than someone else? Are you **JEALOUS** of any relationship? Do you **ENVY** anyone's possessions? Where have you been **LAZY**?" As each incident comes up, the sponsor or sharing partner adds the name to the top of the sheet and, if an amends is agreed upon, he or she puts marks in the appropriate boxes.

After completing the liabilities side of the checklist, the sponsor or sharing partner unfolds the sheet so that together they can look at the assets side of the ledger. The assets opposite the liabilities with the **LEAST** marks are the positive characteristics that the newcomer already has. Those assets opposite the liabilities with the **MOST** marks are the qualities that will be strengthened as the newcomer makes the necessary amends.

In our example, the sponsor or sharing partner and the newcomer have put together a list with only a few marks to the right of DISHONESTY, "JEALOUSY," "ENVY" and "LAZINESS" and numerous marks to the right of "RESENTMENT," "FEAR," "SELFISHNESS" and "FALSE PRIDE."

The sponsor or sharing partner summarizes the session by saying, "This inventory shows that, for the most part, you are an honest, trusting, contented and hardworking person. In addition, you will become more forgiving, loving, unselfish and humble as you make amends for your resentments, fears, selfishness and false pride."

We look at assets as well as liabilities because many of us have lost much of our self-esteem and self-worth as the result of our compulsive overeating. Even though we've done some very foolish and destructive things while compulsively overeating, we will never have to repeat these actions, provided we are willing to admit our faults and correct them. If we are genuinely sorry, God has already forgiven us. Now, it is time to forgive ourselves.

The "Big Book" authors tell us this on page 70. In the first paragraph, starting with the fourth line, they write:

"If we are sorry for what we have done, and have the honest desire to let God take us to better things, we believe we will be forgiven and will have learned our lesson. If we are not sorry, and our conduct continues to harm others, we are quite sure to overeat. We are not theorizing. These are facts out of our experience."

So, it is time to make a searching and fearless moral inventory -- time to clean up the wreckage of the past so we can experience the "miracle of healing." We have copies of our assets and liabilities checklist for those who would like to use this format for their Fourth Step.

As we have already said, there is no right or wrong way to do the Fourth and Fifth Steps. Just do them.

Are there any questions?