

Fill in the Problem Area you
are currently working on?

A co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous tells how
members recover and how the society functions

TWELVE
STEPS AND
TWELVE
TRADITIONS

Al Kohallek Goes Stepping Again
Another 12 & 12 Workbook

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
WORLD SERVICES, INC.

This Workbook And Its Contents Are Not For Sale

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Book Of Inventories
Al Kohallek Goes High-Stepping

The following suggestions are from the book TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS, in the chapter titled Step Four, published by Alcoholics Anonymous, World Services, Inc. (Reprinted with permission.) Many of us feel that we have two primary textbooks in AA, This one and of course the book titled Alcoholics Anonymous, called by many The Big Book. If you do not have copies of these two books we strongly suggest that you get them ASAP.

“Since Step Four is but the beginning of a lifetime practice, it can be suggested that he first have a look at those personal flaws which are acutely troublesome and fairly obvious. Using his best judgment of what has been right and what has been wrong, he might make a rough survey of his conduct with respect to his primary instincts for sex, security, and society. Looking back over his life, he can readily get under way by consideration of questions such as these:” (12 and 12)

[1] When, and how, and in just what instances did my selfish pursuit of a sex relation damage other people and me?

[2] What people were hurt, and how bad?

[3] Did I spoil my marriage and injure my children?

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[4] Did I jeopardize my standing in the community?

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[5] Just how did I react to these situations at the time?

[6] Did I burn with a guilt that nothing could extinguish?

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[7] Or did I insist that I was the pursued and not the pursuer, and thus absolve myself?

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[8] How have I reacted to frustration in sexual matters?

[9] When denied, did I become vengeful or depressed?

[10] Did I take it out on other people?

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[11] If there was rejection or coldness at home, did I use this as a reason for promiscuity?

Also of importance for most alcoholics are the questions they must ask about their behavior respecting financial and emotional security. In these areas fear, greed, pos-

sessiveness, and pride have too often done their worst. Surveying his business or employment record, almost any alcoholic can ask questions like these:

[12] In addition to my drinking problem, what character defects contributed to my financial instability?

[13] Did fear and inferiority about my fitness for my job destroy my confidence and fill me with conflict?

[14] Did I try to cover up those feelings of inadequacy by bluffing, cheating, lying, or evading responsibility?

[15] Or by griping that others failed to recognize my truly exceptional abilities?

[16] Did I overvalue myself and play the big shot?

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[17] Did I have such unprincipled ambition that I double-crossed and undercut my associates?

[18] Was I extravagant?

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[19] Did I recklessly borrow money, caring little whether it was repaid or not?

[20] Was I a pinchpenny, refusing to support my family properly?

[21] Did I cut corners financially?

[22] What about the “quick money” deals, the stock market, and the races?

Therefore, thoroughness ought to be the watchword when taking inventory. In this connection, it is wise to write out our questions and answers. It will be an aid to clear thinking and honest appraisal. It will be the first tangible evidence of our complete willingness to move forward.

Businesswomen in AA will naturally find that many of these questions apply to them, too. But the alcoholic housewife can also make the family financially insecure. She can juggle charge accounts, manipulate the food budget, spend her afternoon gambling, and run her husband into debt by irresponsibility, waste, and extravagance. All alcoholics who have drunk themselves out of

jobs, family, and friends will need to cross-examine themselves ruthlessly to determine how their own personality defects have thus demolished their security.

The most common symptoms of emotional insecurity are worry, anger, self-pity, and depression. These stem from causes that sometimes seem to be within us, and at other times to come from without. To take inventory in this respect we ought to consider carefully all personal relationships that bring continuous or recurring trouble. It should be remembered that this kind of insecurity might arise anywhere instincts are threatened. Questions directed to this end might run like this:

[23] Looking at both past and present, what sex situations have caused me anxiety, bitterness, frustration, or depression?

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[24] Appraising each situation fairly, can I see where I have been at fault?

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[25] Did these perplexities beset me because of selfishness or unreasonable demands?

[26] Or, if my disturbance was seemingly caused by the behavior of others, why do I lack the ability to accept conditions I cannot change?

These are the sorts of fundamental inquiries that can disclose the source of my discomfort and indicate whether I may be able to alter my own conduct and so adjust myself serenely to self-discipline.

Suppose that financial insecurity constantly arouses these mistakes and fed my gnawing anxieties. And if the actions of others are part of the cause, what can I do about that? If I am unable to change the present state of affairs, am I willing to take the measures necessary to shape my life to conditions as they are? Questions like these, more of which will come to mind easily in each individual case, will help turn up the root causes.

But it is from our twisted relations with family, friends, and society at large that many of us have suffered the most. We have been especially stupid and stubborn about them. The primary fact that we fail to recognize is our total inability to form a true partnership with another human being. Our egomania digs two disastrous pitfalls. Either we insist upon dominating the people we know, or we depend upon them far too much. If we lean too heavily on people, they will sooner or later fail us, for they are human, too, and cannot possibly meet our incessant demands. In this way our insecurity grows and festers. When we habitually try to manipulate others to our own willful desires, they revolt, and resist us heavily. Then we develop hurt feelings, a sense of persecution, and a desire to retaliate. As we redouble our efforts at control, and continue to fail, our suffering becomes acute and constant. We have not once sought to be one in a family, to be a friend among friends, to be a worker among workers, to be a useful member of society. Always we tried to struggle to the top of the heap, or to hide underneath it. This self-centered behavior blocked a partnership relation with any one of those about us. Of true brotherhood we had small comprehension.

Creation gave us instincts for a purpose. Without them we wouldn't be complete human beings. If men and women didn't exert themselves to be secure in their persons, made no effort to harvest food or construct shelter, there wouldn't be any survival. If they didn't reproduce, the earth wouldn't be populated. If there were no social instinct, if man cared nothing for the society of one another, there would be no society. So these desires for the sex relation, for material and emotional security, and for companionship are perfectly necessary and right, and surely God-given.

Yet these instincts, so necessary for our existence, often far exceed their proper functions. Powerfully, blindly, many times subtly, they drive us, dominate us, and insist upon ruling our lives. Our desires for sex, for material and emotional security, and for an important place in society often tyrannize us. When thus out of joint, man's natural desires cause him great trouble, practically all the trouble there is. No human being, however good, is exempt from these troubles. Nearly every serious emotional problem can be seen as a case of misdirected instinct. When that happens, our great natural assets, the instincts, have turned into physical and mental liabilities.

Step Four is our vigorous and painstaking effort to discover what these liabilities in each of us have been and are. We want to find exactly how, when, and where our natural desires have warped us. We wish to look squarely at the unhappiness this has caused others and ourselves. By discovering what our emotional deformities are we can move toward their correction. Without a willing and persistent effort to do this, there can be little sobriety or contentment for us. Without a searching and fearless moral inventory, most of us have found that the faith, which really works in daily living, is still out of reach.