

Understanding the Purpose of Step Four

Uncovering the Defect that Caused the Short-coming

By Rick R.

On Page 65 in the Big Book it suggests a simple approach to uncover the defects of character that cause us to have resentments. In the column on the left side of the page it names the person that we have the most glaring resentment against. In the center column it asks the question, what causes us to resent that person and when the surface reason was explained, *and in my own words*, the next question might be “and why does that threaten you?” and repeats that question over again until you uncover the core reason that you are threatened, such as: Sex Relations, Self-esteem, Financial insecurity and so on. Then we discover that each of these conditions are founded in some sense of fear, and I might add, Irrational fear and that most of our behavior problems stem from those fears and insecurities and the need for self-preservation. These delusions are easily put to rest simply by taking a drink of alcohol but that only masks those fears temporarily and only lead to deeper anxieties and stress. Once we recognize these Fears and Insecurities, it becomes easier to neutralize them. When I look at irrational *fear as the defect* and the *behaviors that it causes, as the shortcomings* it makes perfect sense to me, for example: If the breaks on my car fail, the car doesn’t stop properly. The faulty brakes are the Defect. The behavior of the car is the Shortcoming. Once we fix the defect, the shortcoming goes away. I was uncomfortable concerning the topic of gossiping about other people and in a conversation with a close friend (mentor) of mine and he explained it this way. “All forms of criticism and character assassination stem from low self-esteem.” i.e. The low self-esteem is the defect and the criticisms are the shortcomings. Once I understood that, as time went on, I stopped criticizing everyone and eventually my self-esteem has returned to, what I consider, a normal range. Step four was more about understanding and correcting my faulty thinking. I could spend the rest of my life listing all the people that I’ve gossiped about, but this is not the objective of step Four. Our objective in this step is to expose the defects of character and correct them. We can address those other people in step eight and nine after we have a track record of righting the wrongs of the past and replaced them with healthy, mature behaviors. For now, it should be our goal to address the obvious issues such as: Shame, Dishonesty, Cruelty, Neglect, Pride, and the like. And again, it’s not necessary to list everyone that they apply to, but I found it practical to address three or four of the more glaring infractions and the people that they apply to. Once I discovered the defect, (Fear/self-esteem) in each of these cases it started to become redundant and I could move on to the next Behavioral issue. As I was going through this process, new topics would pop up and I would flip a few pages in my notebook and add it to my inventory and go through the same process. It got very easy and I was excited as new ideas kept coming up during this process and it was not, in any respects, as ponderous as I thought it would be. Things were coming to me faster than I could write them down. Once I completed the inventory, to the best of my ability, as in step Five, it suggests that admit to God, to myself and to another human being, the exact nature of our wrongs. I was very thorough with this step. Step Six and Seven suggests dealing with those Defects and Short-comings (Fears and Behaviors.) and establishing habits based upon unselfish principles, and that, I found to be the path to right living and peace of mind.