

Step Four: Was I Ready?

1, 2, 3, AND OUT

By Rick R.

When I attended my first Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) meeting, I had no idea what any of the steps, entailed but at that meeting I heard the things that were read, and sharing about steps and, I now realize that I came away from that meeting a different man. My life took a 180% turn, and I have never been the same since. For the first time in my life, I saw a refreshing, new approach to living and all I had to do, was to show up and listen. That may have been the taking of step 1, but I did not know it at the time. I realize that, from that day on, I have had a huge *change of perception* and I have learned to recognize faulty thinking and to find the answers to life issues as they were articulated by the collective sharing in that meeting.

I have heard people in the program, when attending a *structured* step study meeting, say that there may be as many as 35 people at the meeting when they started on step 1, but by the time they got to step 4 they might be down to 12 or 13 people left in the room, and they say it is like, 1. 2. 3. And out. There seems to be something in step 4 that their ego would not let them address at the time. Like myself, I had things that I thought I would take to the grave with me. When this happens, I believe that they may not be ready for this step yet, and if they are hurried into it, they may start to search for an easier softer way. If they stay on that softer path for long, they may end up having a *half measures* approach, which avails them nothing and they may waste precious years, or worse, they may relapse and do irreparable damage that cannot be undone. When I hear of a person who has a relapse after having long term sobriety I often wonder if it was due to skimping on steps 4 and 5, which leads to a much more superficial approach to the remaining steps. Thoroughness is the watchword when taking these steps.

I use the 4th step in the 12&12 to illustrate what I mean when I try to describe the way reading and hearing the things that they describe in step 4, are things that we live with every day of our lives. Each time we read them again, we realize that we have addressed some of these issues without being aware of it. I have heard people who *have not* taken step 4 yet, using terms such as, "*restraint of pen and tongue, or remove the word blame from my speech and thought*" and, without realizing it, they are reducing their problems as the result of this different mindset. If they are honest, about not being ready to take step 4 and 5 it leaves the door opened for the time when they are more confident, and they will be able to revisit this step and make a clean slate of it without feeling guilty or being in denial about it.

I believe that the main reason why they wrote and published the 12&12 was because they did not want to establish a precedent of editing the A.A.(Big Book), and they wanted to give amplifying information and examples of how to navigate the twelve steps.(a road map if you like) We can tell stories and drunkalogues of our drinking days and that's fine, but if we don't go through a meaningful process of addressing the causes and solutions to our problems, we will be selling ourselves short, and life is too precious to waste. The question is: If this applies to me, am I strong enough to revisit step 4 and 5.