The Fifth Step

"Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs." — p. 59

You have a written inventory and we are prepared for a long talk. Today the housecleaning gets finished — **all** of it.

> *"The best reason first: If we skip this vital step, we may not overcome drinking. Time after time newcomers have tried to keep to themselves certain facts about their lives... They took inventory all right, but hung on to some of the worst items in stock."*
>
> — Into Action, pp. 72–73

HOW THE SESSION RUNS

1. We open with a prayer, and set aside what we think we know.
2. **Sponsor breaks the ice** — shares his own twists of character, his own dark crannies, first. Nothing you say today will be met with shock.
3. **You read your inventory aloud** — resentment by resentment, all four columns, then fears, then conduct.
4. **Sponsor listens.** No advice. No judgment. Questions only to help illuminate.
5. Together we **name the patterns** — marking the defects checklist (pages 2–3) as they surface.
6. **Withhold nothing.** The item you planned to keep is the one that matters most.

GROUND RULES

- **Entire honesty.** "We must be entirely honest with somebody if we expect to live long or happily in this world." (p. 73)
- **It is a confidence.** What is said here stays here — that is the hearer's duty. (p. 74)
- **"Hard on ourselves, but always considerate of others."** (p. 74) We never clear our conscience at someone else's expense.
- **Criminal, medical, financial matters** go to the right professional. Moral matters belong here.
- **"A long talk"** (p. 75) — a couple of focused hours, not an endless retelling. We are after the *nature* of the wrongs, not every incident.

WHAT WE ARE LISTENING FOR

Not a performance of every incident — the **exact nature** of the wrongs. *The inventory is of our defects, not our incidents.* Your Column 4 already asked where you had been **selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened** (p. 67). When the same move shows up in resentment after resentment, that pattern has a name — a defect of character. We mark each one on the checklist and pick a couple of good examples of each. The marked list becomes your Step 6 willingness list and your Step 7 prayer.

> *"What would the exact nature of someone's wrongs be? Well, in my case, it would be spending my life running after money, sex, power, and prestige, comfort, thrills, and looks, admiration, validation, and approval, getting frustrated and vindictive when I do not get them, and dropping into disillusionment and disappointment when I do. I have a history of being arrogant, hostile, distrustful, vain, judgemental, critical, cruel, and indifferent to the suffering of others. In short, I trusted self, not God."*
>
> — "Preparing to Hear a Step Five" (sponsor's guide)

THE FIFTH STEP PROMISES

p. 75

"We pocket our pride and go to it, illuminating every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past. Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are delighted. We can look the world in the eye. We can be alone at perfect peace and ease. Our fears fall from us. We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator. We may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but now we begin to have a spiritual experience. The feeling that the drink problem has disappeared will often come strongly. We feel we are on the Broad Highway, walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe."

Defects of Character

the exact nature of our wrongs, sorted into families — mark what you see in your inventory and hear in your Fifth Step

How to use this list: as each pattern surfaces, check it. Skip what you don't see — we are naming what is *yours*, not collecting all of them. The left side is what God removes (**"God, please remove my…"**); the right side is what He grows in its place (**"God, strengthen my…"**).

> *"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."*
>
> — How It Works, p. 64

FEAR & WORRY

the root the chain hangs from

☐ Fear of rejection, of disapproval	Content with God's approval
☐ Fear of losing control	Trusting God
☐ Fear of people, of authority	Faith; courage
☐ Worry, anxiety	Serenity, faith
☐ Catastrophizing	Seeing reality clearly
☐ Future-tripping	Living one day at a time
☐ Cowardice, timidity	Bravery
☐ Afraid to be vulnerable	Willing to be vulnerable
☐ Staying in my comfort zone	Courage to try new things

DISHONESTY & DECEIT

the lies I tell and live

☐ Lying, exaggeration	Honesty, truthfulness
☐ Half-truths, evasiveness	Candor
☐ Secretiveness, concealing	Openness, transparency
☐ Cheating, stealing	Integrity, restitution
☐ Phoniness, wearing masks	Genuineness
☐ Self-delusion, denial	Facing the truth about reality
☐ Hypocrisy, insincerity	Sincerity
☐ Manipulation	Plain, honest asking
☐ Trust-breaking, broken promises	Trustworthiness

SELFISHNESS & SELF-CENTEREDNESS

"the root of our troubles" p.62

☐ Selfishness	Unselfishness
☐ Self-absorption	Interest in others
☐ Entitlement, demanding my way	Gratitude, acceptance
☐ Inconsideration	Consideration
☐ Ingratitude	Contentment, gratitude
☐ Using people, giving to get	Giving freely; service
☐ Self-seeking motives	Helpfulness to others
☐ Measuring people by what they do for me	Valuing people for themselves
☐ Thinking of myself most of the time	Thinking of what I can do for others

PRIDE & EGO

self in God's place

☐ False pride, arrogance	Humility
☐ Vanity, boasting, bragging	Modesty
☐ Self-righteousness	Praising the good in others
☐ Self-justification	Admitting my mistakes
☐ Perfectionism; needing to appear perfect	Courage to be seen as imperfect
☐ Needing to impress; attention-seeking	Valuing myself as God's child
☐ Unwilling to admit wrong, to ask for help	Prompt admission; asking for help
☐ Stubbornness, obstinacy	Flexibility, teachability
☐ Snobbery; looking down at others	Viewing all people as my equals

ANGER & RESENTMENT

"the number one offender" p.64

☐ Resentment, grudges	Forgiveness
☐ Anger, temper, rage	Love and tolerance
☐ Hatred, bitterness, rancor	Love; goodwill
☐ Retaliation, vengefulness	Praying for the person
☐ Irritability, crankiness	Patience
☐ Impatience	Patience
☐ Quarrelsomeness, arguing	Tact, courtesy
☐ Cruelty, violence	Kindness, gentleness
☐ Sarcasm and mockery as weapons	Speech that helps, not harms

SELF-PITY & DESPAIR

"poor me" — the attitude link of the chain

☐ Self-pity	Gratitude
☐ Martyrdom, victimhood	Accepting responsibility
☐ Whining, complaining	Acceptance
☐ Morbid reflection, wallowing	Constructive review, then action
☐ Despair, hopelessness	Hope, faith
☐ Self-loathing, beating myself up	Self-acceptance
☐ Shame-spiraling, self-condemnation	Free of shame — a child of God
☐ Low self-esteem	Worth received from my Higher Power

Defects of Character (continued)

PEOPLE-PLEASING & CODEPENDENCE

managing others to stay safe

☐ People-pleasing, approval-seeking	Courage to displease when necessary
☐ Servility, grovelling	Standing on my own feet
☐ Enabling	Declining to enable sickness
☐ Caretaking, rescuing, fixing	Letting others own their lives
☐ Carrying others' actions as mine	Letting go of what others do
☐ Not standing up for myself; no boundaries	Honest boundaries; assertiveness
☐ Emotional entanglement	Healthy detachment
☐ Flattery, ingratiating	Sincerity

CONTROL & PLAYING GOD

the actor running the whole show

☐ Controlling, domineering	Letting go of control
☐ Demanding the world be my way	Accepting God's world as it is
☐ Interfering; unsolicited advice	Staying on my side of the street
☐ Obsession with outcomes	Surrendering the results
☐ Mind-reading, projecting	Asking instead of assuming
☐ Over-protection, smothering	Trusting God with the people I love
☐ Bossing, ordering, pulling rank	"Thy will be done"

ENVY & JEALOUSY

discontent with my place

☐ Envy, coveting	Contentment
☐ Jealousy	Trust
☐ Comparing myself to others	Viewing all people as my equals
☐ Suspicion, distrust	Trust
☐ Jealous policing — interrogating, checking up	Trust, or an honest conversation
☐ Glad at others' misfortune	Goodwill
☐ Selfish rivalry	Celebrating others' success

INTOLERANCE & JUDGMENT

the courtroom in my head

☐ Intolerance	Tolerance
☐ Criticism, faultfinding	Praising the good in others
☐ Judgmentalism	Judging favorably
☐ Gossip, slander	Speech that helps, not harms
☐ Ridicule, contempt	Respect, courtesy
☐ Cynicism	Hope, open-mindedness
☐ Prejudice, bigotry	Viewing all as God's children
☐ Rudeness; dismissing people	Courtesy; listening

LUST & MISUSED SEX

people as objects

☐ Lust	Purity
☐ Infidelity, philandering	Faithfulness
☐ Objectifying people	Seeing a person, not an object
☐ A partner as a trophy — proof of my worth	Worth received from God, not displayed
☐ Possessiveness; a partner treated as property	Love that lets the other be free
☐ Romanticizing — loving the fantasy, not the person	Seeing the real person in front of me
☐ Immoral thinking, vulgar talk	Purity of thought and speech
☐ Seduction; charm used to use	Honest intimacy

GREED & GLUTTONY

the appetites in charge

☐ Greed, stinginess	Generosity
☐ Money as the measure of me	Trusting God for security
☐ Overspending, squandering	Financial responsibility
☐ Dodging creditors and debts	Facing what I owe honestly
☐ Overindulgence — food, screens, spending	Temperance, moderation
☐ Neglecting health and rest	Care of the body God gave me

SLOTH & IRRESPONSIBILITY

refusing to show up

☐ Laziness	Discipline
☐ Procrastination	Promptness
☐ Apathy, indifference	Zeal; caring
☐ Carelessness	Thoroughness
☐ Unreliability	Reliability
☐ Irresponsibility, blaming	Accountability
☐ Avoidance; head in the sand	Facing things as they are
☐ Half-finishing, quitting	Follow-through

IN MY OWN WORDS

patterns the list missed

☐ _____	_____
☐ _____	_____
☐ _____	_____
☐ _____	_____
☐ _____	_____
☐ _____	_____

The left column is **my résumé as an untreated addict**. The right column is **my job description under God's employment**.

The Same Day: Finishing the Arch

the Big Book takes Steps Five, Six and Seven in a single afternoon — pp. 75–76

> *"Returning home we find a place where we can be quiet for an hour, carefully reviewing what we have done. We thank God from the bottom of our heart that we know Him better… Carefully reading the first five proposals we ask if we have omitted anything, for we are building an arch through which we shall walk a free man at last."*
>
> — Into Action, p. 75

THE QUIET HOUR

p. 75

Alone, book open to the twelve steps, review Steps 1–5 and ask the four questions — word for word:

- ☐ *"Is our work solid so far?"*
- ☐ *"Are the stones properly in place?"*
- ☐ *"Have we skimped on the cement put into the foundation?"*
- ☐ *"Have we tried to make mortar without sand?"*

If anything was omitted or held back — call your sponsor. We finish the housecleaning before we move on.

STEP SIX — ENTIRELY READY

p. 76

"Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character." (p. 59)

- ☐ *"Are we now ready to let God remove from us all the things which we have admitted are objectionable?"*
- ☐ *"Can He now take them all — every one?"*

Go down your marked checklist, defect by defect. "If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing." Willingness is the whole of Step Six.

STEP SEVEN — HUMBLY ASKED

p. 76

"Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings." (p. 59) — "When ready, we say something like this:"

> *"My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen."*
>
> Into Action, p. 76 — "We have then completed Step Seven."

We take it together, out loud — then it becomes yours, every day, with your named defects and their opposites filled in. That is the daily prayer sheet.

ASSIGNMENTS — BEFORE WE MEET AGAIN

1. **Daily prayer sheet.** Third Step Prayer on awakening; Seventh Step Prayer each evening — with your own "remove my…" and "strengthen my…" lists spoken out loud.
2. **Start your Step Eight amends list** on the worksheet handout. You are not making amends yet — only listing and becoming willing. "We made it when we took inventory." (p. 76)
3. **Bring the list** to our next meeting. We will plan every approach together before anyone is contacted.

Alcoholics Anonymous (the Big Book), "Into Action," pp. 72–76 · step text p. 59 · checklist families drawn from the Big Book defect lists (pp. xxv–164) and program checklists