Ambition — what I wanted to happen here

Start sentences with — *"I want..."*

Example: *I want the respect of others. → (not respected)*

References: Column 3 Instructions | Common Fears | Examples

How to Identify This Area

If I want something I've not got, might not get, or might lose because of the event in Column 2, my **ambitions** are affected. *(ref. 02-column-3.md)*

Using Bill's actor metaphor from Step Three — Ambition is **what I want out of this scene.** It is what I'm chasing, what I demand the situation deliver. It is the goal of my little play — the payoff I need.

How to Write It

Start each sentence with **"I want..."** and write what you wanted to happen, get, or keep in this situation. Then bracket the fear — what you're afraid of not getting.

The want reveals the fear. *"I want the respect of others"* reveals: *(not respected)*. Every "I want" is a demand that reality deliver something — and when it doesn't, the resentment follows.

Template:

- I want _____. *(_____)*
- I want _____. *(_____)*

Tips:

- Ambition is about **what I want** — if it's about what I *need* to be okay, that's Security
- Be specific about what you wanted from this situation
- The want can be anything not covered by other areas: promotion, holiday, success, fame, recognition, appearance, revenge
- No *"I think..."* or *"I feel..."* statements *(ref. p.62-¶1)*

Examples from the Inventory

- *"I want the respect of others." (not respected)* — #1 Mr. Brown
- *"I want the respect of others." (not respected)* — #2 Mrs. Jones
- *"I want others to look up to me." (looked down on)* — #3 My Employer
- *"I wanted to be loved no matter what I do." (unloved)* — #4 My Wife
- *"I want friends to never take advantage of me and appreciate how spiritual I am." (unappreciated, used, judged)* — #5 Susie
- *"I want my employer to respect me and to help me get promoted." (disrespected)* — #6 Mr. Brown Alternate
- *"I want the respect and approval of others." (disrespected, rejected)* — #7 My Father
- *"I want her to go away." (losing my entitlement)* — #8 My Sister
- *"I want them to pay for what they've done to me. I want to believe there is a God who loves and cares for me." (worthless, no rights, never heal, unloveable)* — #9 God Does Not Care About Me
- *"I want to be loved, pursued, adored — Wanted." (invisible, disregarded, worthless, boring)* — #10 Not Fulfilled Without a Relationship
- *"I want to be the center of loving attention. I want people to pay attention to me!" (irrelevant)* — #11 I Am Unloveable
- *"I want people to help me be successful and rich." (poor, disregarded, unwanted)* — #12 Not OK Without Money

Additional Examples

These additional examples show the range of ambition entries — from career aspirations to petty wishes to existential longings.

- *"Never make a mistake. Always do brilliant work. Have lots of work."* — Gillian (client's employee who criticised my work)
- *"Make mistakes without being reprimanded."* — Milford (secretary who polices service)
- *"Get through immigration quickly. More time for fun."* — Immigration system at airport
- *"To be liked and respected by everyone."* — Peter (colleague who ignored me)
- *"To be the director."* — Susan (company director who disagrees with me in meetings)
- *"I want to be given high-profile work."*
- *"I want to have lots of free time to read."*
- *"I want to go on holiday to Germany."*
- *"I want to look like Justin Bieber."*
- *"I want to look like Marilyn Monroe."*

Notice how Ambition covers everything from the profound (*"I want to believe there is a God who loves and cares for me"*) to the petty (*"Get through immigration quickly"*) to the impossible (*"Never make a mistake"*). All of them share one thing: they are **wants that I have turned into demands.**

Common Fears Under Ambition

These fears commonly appear under Ambition in the inventory. Each one is what I'm afraid of not getting or becoming.

- **boring** — *"I want to be loved, pursued, adored — Wanted."* — #10
- **disregarded** — *"I want to be loved, pursued, adored — Wanted."* — #10, #12
- **disrespected** — *"No one should see me being lied to."* — #6, #7
- **invisible** — *"Others should want me and value me."* — #10, #11
- **irrelevant** — *"I want to be the center of loving attention."* — #11

- **judged** — *"I want friends to never take advantage of me and appreciate how spiritual I am."* — #5
- **looked down on** — *"I want others to look up to me."* — #3
- **losing my entitlement** — *"I want her to go away."* — #8
- **never heal** — *"I want to believe there is a God who loves and cares for me."* — #9
- **no rights** — *"I want them to pay for what they've done to me."* — #9
- **not respected** — *"I want the respect of others."* — #1, #2, #3, #4, #5, #6 | fear example
- **poor** — *"I want people to help me be successful and rich."* — #12
- **rejected** — *"I want the respect and approval of others."* — #7, #10
- **unappreciated** — *"I want friends to never take advantage of me and appreciate how spiritual I am."* — #5
- **unloved** — *"I wanted to be loved no matter what I do."* — #4, #7, #10, #12 | fear example
- **unloveable** — *"I want to believe there is a God who loves and cares for me."* — #9
- **unwanted** — *"A real man is wanted anywhere."* — #2, #4, #6, #10, #11, #12 | fear example
- **used** — *"I want friends to never take advantage of me."* — #5
- **worthless** — *"I need others to see my value as a person to be okay."* — #2, #9, #10, #11 | fear example

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Deeper Understanding

Ambition is the script for what I want the scene to deliver. It reveals what I'm chasing — and the chase itself is often the source of the suffering.

Four Types of Ambition

Across the twelve examples and the additional examples, ambition entries cluster into distinct types:

Respect and status — *"I want the respect of others"* appears in multiple examples (#1, #2, #6, #7). This is the most common ambition: I want to matter, I want to be seen, I want to count. The additional examples add *"To be liked and respected by everyone"* and *"To be the director."*

Love and belonging — *"I wanted to be loved no matter what I do"* (#4), *"I want to be loved, pursued, adored — Wanted"* (#10), *"I want to be the center of loving attention"* (#11). These reveal the deeper ambition underneath the surface-level wants.

Control and entitlement — *"I want her to go away"* (#8), *"I want them to pay for what they've done to me"* (#9). Not all ambitions look like aspirations. Sometimes the want is for revenge, removal, or retribution.

Perfection and ease — *"Never make a mistake. Always do brilliant work. Have lots of work"* (Gillian), *"Make mistakes without being reprimanded"* (Milford), *"Get through immigration quickly. More time for fun"* (Immigration). These are the everyday ambitions — the demands that life be smooth, effortless, and free of friction.

Ambition vs. Security: Want vs. Need

The difference between Ambition and Security is the difference between *want* and *need.* Ambitions are what I want to happen. Security is what I need to be okay. Both can drive resentment, but the test is:

- *"I want to be given high-profile work"* — Ambition (I want it)
- *"I need an income to live"* — Security (I need it)
- *"I want to go on holiday to Germany"* — Ambition (I want it)
- *"I need somewhere to live"* — Security (I need it)

If the world doesn't give me what I *want,* I'm disappointed. If it doesn't give me what I *need,* I'm afraid. Both generate resentment, but the emotional texture is different.

The Impossible Standard

Many ambition entries set an impossible standard: *"Never make a mistake," "Always do brilliant work," "I want to be loved no matter what I do."* These are demands that no reality could meet. The resentment is baked in from the start — not because the world fails, but because the demand was never achievable.

What Ambition Reveals About “My Way”

Ambitions are the plans and designs — the screenplay I’ve written for how my life should go. The decision in Step Three was to drop these plans in return for doing God’s will. Column 3 is where we discover what those plans actually are. When written out plainly — *“I want to look like Justin Bieber,” “I want people to help me be successful and rich,” “I want them to pay for what they’ve done to me”* — the demands often look obviously unreasonable. But while they lived inside my head unexamined, they felt perfectly justified.

The trouble with having a results-based plan is perpetual frustration (that the plan isn’t coming off), fear (that the plan won’t come off), disappointment (that the plan, even when it succeeds, hasn’t permanently “fixed” me), and despair (of ever “making it”). The alternative is an attitude-and-action-based plan: my attitude is to rely on God; my action is to attempt to do God’s will — to be useful, cheerful, and kind. Since all I have to do is try to make progress, if I try, I cannot fail.

This list is not exhaustive — your inventory will reveal ambition patterns unique to you. Use this as a starting point to help identify what you wanted from each situation.

From the Big Book Awakening Step Four guide at bigbook.it/step-4/ · a page of the guide, not the workbook itself: the workbook's own pages are linked from “Originals & sources.” · source ambition.md