Who Am I Angry At — and Why?

Step Four · Columns 1 & 2 quick reference — the resentment list, the first writing

You made the Third Step decision. The book says it can have "little permanent effect unless at once followed" by action *(p. 64)*. This list is the action. Two columns, nothing else: **who**, and **why**.

> *"In dealing with resentments, we set them on paper. We listed people, institutions or principles with whom we were angry. We asked ourselves why we were angry."*
>
> — How It Works, p. 64

HOW TO DO IT

1. Say the prayer (below) — **every time** you sit down to write.
2. **Column 1 first — names only.** Write every person, institution, and principle that comes. (Flip this sheet over for the three kinds and the memory joggers.)
3. Don't write *why* yet, and don't judge — if the name comes, it goes on.
4. Don't quit early. Finish the list before anything else — **you will know when it's done.**
5. Now **Column 2** — next to each name, every reason, kept short. Number the names (1, 2, 3…); letter the reasons (A, B, C…).

KEEP IT EASY

- **Brief beats pretty.** Just enough words to know why you were angry.
- **Old anger counts.** "We *were* angry" — past tense on purpose. Childhood belongs here.
- **It's a stock count, not a courtroom.** "A fact-finding and a fact-facing process" *(p. 64)* — nobody is on trial.
- **Two alike?** Combine them. Not really a resentment? Mark it, keep moving.
- **Only you and your sponsor** will ever read it.
- **Stuck for ideas?** A worked list — today's world — is on pages 3–4.

THE BIG BOOK'S OWN EXAMPLE

How It Works · p. 65

COLUMN 1 — I'M RESENTFUL AT:	COLUMN 2 — THE CAUSE
1) Mr. Brown	A) His attention to my wife. B) Told my wife of my mistress. C) Brown may get my job at the office.
2) Mrs. Jones	A) She's a nut — she snubbed me. B) She committed my friend, her husband, for drinking. C) She's a gossip.
3) My Employer	A) Unreasonable — Unjust — Overbearing — Threatens to fire me for drinking and padding my expense account.
4) My Wife	A) Misunderstands and nags. Likes Brown. Wants house put in her name.

Number each name, letter each reason — Column 3 and Column 4 will hang off these numbers later.

> *"God please help me face and be rid of the things in myself which have been blocking me from You, other people and myself."*
>
> say this each time before you sit down to write

When both columns are done — **stop**. Don't start Column 3 (which parts of you got hit) — bring the list to your sponsor.

KEEP THIS SIDE UP WHILE YOU LIST

People · Institutions · Principles

Column 1 takes three kinds of names. Sweep all three.

> *"Resentment is the 'number one' offender. It destroys more alcoholics than anything else."*
>
> — How It Works, p. 64

PEOPLE

Anyone who burns when you think of them — past or present, alive or dead.

SOUNDS LIKE

- "My sister — yells at me over the smallest things."
- "My probation officer — one mistake and she can take my freedom."

SWEEP family · exes · bosses · friends · sponsors · roommates · officials

INSTITUTIONS

Groups, companies, systems — things with a name but no single face.

SOUNDS LIKE

- "The treatment center — took the money, discharged me at 28 days."
- "The company — laid me off after 12 years, no warning."

SWEEP the church · a company · the courts · the government · schools · AA itself

PRINCIPLES

Beliefs and ideas you're angry at — no person needed.

SOUNDS LIKE

- "I can't have fun sober."
- "God does not care about me."
- "I am unloveable."

SWEEP finish the sentence "it's just true that…" — if the ending has heat in it, list it

MEMORY JOGGERS

for when the pen stalls

BY TIME

- childhood
- school years
- first jobs
- relationships
- the using years
- treatment & sober living
- this month

BY PLACE

- home
- work
- church
- court
- bars & the streets
- online

BY TELL

- whose name tightens your jaw?
- who do you avoid at meetings?
- what fight do you still replay in the shower?
- who are you "so over" — with a face you just made?

COMMON STALLS

and what to do with them

✗ **"I'm not angry anymore."** Did it ever burn? It goes on. The list covers your whole life, not just this week.

✗ **"They're dead." / "I'll never see them again."** List them. Paper doesn't need them present.

✗ **"It was really my fault."** Maybe — that's Column 4's question, weeks from now. Today is names and reasons only.

✗ **"I feel rotten writing down my mom."** The list accuses no one. It's a stock count — and no one reads it but you and your sponsor.

Names first. Reasons second. **Don't go on till the list is finished — you will know when the list is done.**

WORKED EXAMPLES · PAGES 3–4

Ideas, Not Answers

One man's list, picking up where the book's four (page 1) left off — true to life, but nobody's file. Yours will read different.

> *"We went back through our lives. Nothing counted but thoroughness and honesty."*
>
> — How It Works, p. 65

THE LIST, CONTINUED

first the people — then the institutions

COLUMN 1 — I'M RESENTFUL AT:	COLUMN 2 — THE CAUSE
5) Susie PERSON	A) She didn't respect that I loaned her money or care about paying me back.
6) My Father PERSON	A) He loves a woman who tormented me and he talks down to me.
7) My Sister PERSON	A) Pushes me around, yells at me for the smallest things, picks fights, makes me feel like the loser brother.
8) My Mother PERSON	A) Never satisfied — always criticized me, compared me to my siblings. B) Ignored what was happening in the house and pretended everything was fine. C) Guilt-trips me when I set a boundary.
9) My Ex-Wife PERSON	A) Uses the kids against me. B) Took me to court for more child support. C) Won't let me have the kids on holidays unless I do things her way.
10) My Sponsor PERSON	A) Told me I wasn't "working the Steps right" and dropped me after I missed a few calls. B) Shared something I told him in confidence. C) Always has time for newer sponsees but makes me feel like an afterthought.
11) The Church INSTITUTION	A) Told me I was sinful and going to hell. B) Covered up abuse scandals. C) Controlled my family with guilt and fear. D) Took money my family couldn't afford.
12) The Company INSTITUTION	A) Laid me off after 12 years with no warning. B) Promoted younger, less experienced people over me. C) Toxic culture — long hours expected, no recognition.

THE SMALL ONES COUNT TOO

same pen, same page

Big names aren't the whole list. The small, steady ones do damage too — **who irritates you every single day?**

- "The coworker who takes credit for my work in every meeting."
- "My neighbor — his dog barks all night, and I'm the bad guy for saying something."
- "The IRS — three letters, three different answers, and the penalty is still mine."
- "Drivers on the freeway. Every day. All of them."

The Beliefs Go On By Name

Principles (#13–17, #21) are resentments with no face — the belief itself goes in Column 1. The names of early recovery (#18–20) go on too.

THE LIST, FINISHED

principles · recovery names

COLUMN 1 — I'M RESENTFUL AT:	COLUMN 2 — THE CAUSE
13) "God does not care about me" PRINCIPLE	A) If God cared, He wouldn't have let people abuse me. B) God ignores me. C) God doesn't protect me.
14) "I'll never be fulfilled if I'm not in a relationship" PRINCIPLE	A) They always leave me. It will never work out for me. I can't stand to be alone.
15) "I am unloveable" PRINCIPLE	A) Too many people have rejected me and failed me. I am disposable, irrelevant and defective.
16) "I'll never be OK unless I have a lot of money" PRINCIPLE	A) It takes money to be happy. It takes money to have security, friends, and successful relationships.
17) "Everyone on social media has a better life than me" PRINCIPLE	A) People I went to school with are posting promotions, vacations, happy families — and I'm in a sober house. B) My ex posted with someone new and everyone congratulated them.
18) My Roommate in Sober Living PERSON	A) Eats my food and never pays me back. B) Leaves the place a mess and I get blamed at house meeting. C) Told the house manager I broke curfew.
19) My Probation Officer PERSON	A) Treats me like I'm still using no matter what I do. B) Drug tests me at the worst times and makes me miss work. C) One mistake and she can take my freedom.
20) The Treatment Center INSTITUTION	A) Took my family's money and discharged me at 28 days, fixed or not. B) Staff talked down to us. C) Promised aftercare that never happened.
21) "I can't have fun sober" PRINCIPLE	A) Everything fun in my life had a drink or a drug in it. B) Sober people seem boring. C) The party moved on without me.

WHAT TO NOTICE

- **All three kinds made the list** — people, institutions, and principles, in the order they came. Don't sort, don't rank — just capture.
- **Column 2 stays short.** A letter and a line — just enough to know why. Nobody has to prove anything.
- **Old anger sits next to new.** Childhood (#6, #8) shares the page with last week (#18). Both count.
- **Family is on it** (#6–9) — and so are recovery names: a sponsor (#10), the sober house (#18), treatment (#20). No name is off-limits. The list accuses no one.
- **The numbering runs straight through** — Columns 3 and 4 will hang off these numbers next.

Ideas, not answers — your names will be your own. **If the name comes, it goes on.** Both columns done? Stop — bring the list to your sponsor.