Example #15 — My Ex-Wife

This is a modern co-parenting resentment — one of the most common resentments discussed in recovery groups and online recovery forums. It illustrates the inventory process when the resentment involves ongoing contact with the person (shared custody), making avoidance impossible.

Columns 1 & 2

#15) My Ex-Wife

- **A)** Uses the kids against me — tells them I'm the reason the family broke apart.
- **B)** Took me to court for more child support even though she knows I'm barely getting by.
- **C)** Won't let me have the kids on holidays unless I do things her way.

(She wants to punish me and control everything, even after the divorce)

Column 3 — Resentment Inventory

> *"God please help me see the truth about my resentments"*

#15) A — My Ex-Wife / Uses the kids against me — tells them I'm the reason the family broke apart.

Affects my:

SELF-ESTEEM — *"I am..."* | Fear of being...

- I am a good father who loves his kids. *(bad father, failure)*

PRIDE — *"Others should..."*

- Others should see that I've changed and that I'm doing my best. *(judged by the past, seen as a drunk)*

AMBITION — *"I want..."*

- I want my kids to respect me and want to be with me. *(not respected, not wanted by my own children)*

SECURITY — *"I need...to be okay"*

- I need to know my kids still love me to be okay. *(losing my children, abandoned by them)*

PERSONAL RELATIONS

- Parents should never use children as weapons — no matter what happened between them. *(powerless, manipulated)*

SEX RELATIONS — *"A real man..."*

- A real man is the head of his household and his family respects him. *(weak, emasculated, irrelevant)*

POCKET BOOK

- No one should take what little I have when I'm trying to rebuild my life. *(broke, unable to provide, failing)*

#15) B — My Ex-Wife / Took me to court for more child support.

Affects my:

SELF-ESTEEM — *"I am..."*

- I'm doing the best I can with what I have. *(not good enough)*

PRIDE — *"Others should..."*

- She should see that I'm in recovery and trying to make things right. *(judged, punished)*

AMBITION — *"I want..."*

- I want a fair arrangement that lets me get back on my feet. *(trapped, crushed)*

SECURITY — *"I need...to be okay"*

- I need financial stability to rebuild my life. *(drowning, hopeless)*

POCKET BOOK

- No one should use the court system to financially destroy someone who's trying to recover. *(wiped out, destitute)*

Column 4

> *"God please help me see the truth."*

The Realization

"How have I done the things I've resented in Column 2 to the person I've listed in Column 1 and/or others?"

- I used the kids against her too — badmouthed her to them, used them as messengers, tried to be the "fun parent" to make her look bad.
- I put her in financial hardship when I was drinking — spent money on alcohol, missed work, didn't contribute. She had to carry the family financially for years.
- I controlled things my way during the marriage — my schedule, my plans, my priorities always came first.

> *"God, this is a sick person like myself. How can I be helpful to them? God save me from being angry. Thy will be done."*

Fourth Column — "Where had I been..."

SELF-SEEKING: *My selfish actions or activities were...?*

- Complained to my kids about their mother. Used my visitation time to interrogate them about what goes on at her house.
- Refused to pay support on time out of spite. Hired a lawyer to fight the increase instead of talking to her directly.
- Showed up late for custody exchanges. Cancelled visits when it was inconvenient. Made promises to the kids I didn't keep.
- Drank during the marriage, came home late, missed their school events, and then acted surprised when she left.

SELFISH: *My selfish attitudes were...?*

- She has no right to move on with her life while punishing me for the past.
- The kids should just understand that adults have problems.
- The court system is rigged against fathers.

DISHONEST: *I was in the delusion that...?*

- I was in the delusion that the divorce was entirely her fault — that if she had been more understanding, I wouldn't have had to drink so much.
- I was in the delusion that my drinking didn't affect the kids.
- I was in the delusion that I can fix this by fighting harder instead of looking at my own behavior.

AFRAID: *I was afraid...?*

- Afraid my kids will grow up believing I didn't love them.
- Afraid I'll never be more than a weekend father.
- Afraid that she was right — that I was the one who destroyed the family.

The Chain

AFRAID: Afraid my kids will believe I'm a bad father — that I destroyed the family. ↓ drives → **DISHONEST:** In the delusion that the divorce was entirely her fault and my drinking

didn't cause real damage. ↓ produces → **SELFISH:** She has no right to punish me; the system is rigged; the kids should understand. ↓ generates → **SELF-SEEKING:** Badmouthed her to the kids, fought in court out of spite, showed up late, broke promises.

Harm

- **My children** — exposed them to conflict between their parents; put them in the middle; broke promises; used them as pawns.
- **My ex-wife** — failed to provide financially during the marriage; made co-parenting adversarial instead of cooperative; badmouthed her to the kids.
- **Myself** — the resentment consumed my early recovery; distracted me from the real work; kept me stuck in the victim role.
- **My recovery** — the anger at my ex was the resentment I used most often to justify thoughts of drinking. It was the one I most resisted putting on paper.

Sources & Attribution

Direct Big Book text: p.64-¶3 (list resentments), p.65-¶3 (the resentment is the "dubious luxury"), p.67-¶2 (SDSF questions)

BBA workshop methodology: Seven areas of self, Column 4 SDSF format, The Chain

Recovery literature & psychology: Co-parenting resentments after divorce are among the most frequently shared topics in recovery meetings and online recovery forums (r/stopdrinking, r/alcoholicsanonymous, Sober Recovery forums). Judith Wallerstein's landmark longitudinal study (*The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce*, 2000) documented how unresolved parental conflict damages children far more than the divorce itself — a finding that directly parallels the Big Book's warning about resentment as "the dubious luxury of normal men" being fatal for the alcoholic (p.66). The inventory process asks the same question Wallerstein's research answers: the harm to children comes not from the fact of divorce, but from parents who cannot stop fighting each other — and that is the behavior the Fourth Column asks us to own.

Note: This is a constructed example created for this guide. All names and details are fictional.

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