Example #16 — Social Media

This is a principle inventory — Column 1 is not a person but a belief: "I should be further along in life." The trigger is social media, but the resentment is really about comparison and perceived inadequacy. This is one of the most common resentments described in modern recovery forums, especially among younger members.

Columns 1 & 2

#16) Everyone on social media has a better life than me!

- **A)** People I went to school with are posting about promotions, vacations, and happy families — and I'm in a sober house.
- **B)** My ex posted pictures with someone new and everyone congratulated them.
- **C)** Old drinking friends post about having fun and it looks like they're fine without me.

Target: I've wasted my life and everyone else figured it out except me.

Column 3 — Resentment Inventory

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

#16) A — Everyone on social media has a better life than me / People I went to school with are posting about promotions, vacations, and happy families — and I'm in a sober house.

Affects my:

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

- I am smart and capable — I should be where they are. *(failure, behind in life, wasted potential)*

PRIDE — *"Others should..."*

- Others should see that I'm working hard to change my life. No one should see me at rock bottom. *(pitied, judged, embarrassment)*

AMBITION — *"I want..."*

- I want the life I was supposed to have — the career, the house, the family. *(never catch up, permanently damaged)*

SECURITY — *"I need...to be okay"*

- I need to know I haven't ruined my chances at a good life to be okay. *(too late, hopeless)*

PERSONAL RELATIONS

- Real friends don't flaunt their success in front of people who are struggling. *(forgotten, left behind, invisible)*

SEX RELATIONS — *"A real man..." / "A real woman..."*

- A real man/woman has something to show for their life by this age. *(loser, behind, less than)*

POCKET BOOK

- No one should have to start over from nothing while everyone else is getting ahead. *(broke, destitute, stuck)*

#16) B — Everyone on social media / My ex posted pictures with someone new.

Affects my:

SELF-ESTEEM — *"I am..."*

- I am worth loving — they shouldn't have moved on so fast. *(replaceable, forgettable)*

PRIDE — *"Others should..."*

- Others should see that the breakup hurt them too, not just me. *(humiliated, pitied)*

AMBITION — *"I want..."*

- I want to be the one who's doing well and moved on. *(stuck, pathetic)*

SECURITY — *"I need...to be okay"*

- I need to know I'm not unlovable to be okay. *(unlovable, defective)*

Column 4

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

The Realization

Column 1 is not a person — skipped per instructions.

Fourth Column — "Where had I been..."

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

- Spent hours scrolling social media instead of working my program. Used comparison as fuel for self-pity.
- Posted carefully curated content about my own life to project an image — even in early recovery, tried to make it look like I was thriving.
- Stalked my ex's profile instead of doing Step work. Used what I found as evidence that life is unfair.
- Isolated and refused to go to meetings because I felt too ashamed to be seen.
- Compared my insides to other people's outsides and used the gap as an excuse to feel sorry for myself.

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

- I deserve what they have. Life gave them advantages it didn't give me.

- If people really knew what I'd been through, they'd understand why I'm behind.
- Recovery doesn't count as a real accomplishment — the world doesn't give credit for getting sober.

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

- I was in the delusion that social media is real life — that what people post is the full picture.
- I was in the delusion that other people's success means my failure.
- I was in the delusion that I should be "further along" by now — as if there's a schedule I'm supposed to be on.
- I was in the delusion that comparing myself to others would motivate me, when it only paralyzed me.

AFRAID: *I was afraid…?*

- Afraid that I've permanently fallen behind and will never catch up.
- Afraid that people see me as a cautionary tale — the one who didn't make it.
- Afraid that recovery will always feel like starting over and never like arriving.

The Chain

AFRAID: Afraid I've permanently fallen behind — that everyone else figured out life and I didn't. ↓ drives → **DISHONEST:** In the delusion that social media is reality and that other people's lives are what they appear to be. ↓ produces → **SELFISH:** I deserve what they have; life is unfair; recovery doesn't count. ↓ generates → **SELF-SEEKING:** Scrolled for hours, isolated, compared, stalked my ex online, used self-pity as an excuse not to do the work.

Harm

- **Myself** — hours of life consumed by comparison; deepened depression and self-pity; delayed recovery work; reinforced the belief that I'm not good enough.
- **My sponsor and recovery community** — withdrew from fellowship; didn't make calls; didn't show up to meetings; wasted opportunities to connect with people who actually understand.

- **People I judged online** — resented them for things I imagined about their lives; projected motives onto people who were just living their lives.
- **My recovery** — comparison and self-pity are described in recovery literature as the two most dangerous indulgences for the alcoholic mind. Social media fed both simultaneously.

Sources & Attribution

Direct Big Book text: p.64-¶3 ("people, institutions and principles"), p.67-¶2 (SDSF questions), p.62-¶1 ("driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity")

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

Recovery literature & psychology: Leon Festinger's social comparison theory (1954) demonstrated that humans evaluate themselves by comparison with others — and that "upward comparison" (comparing to those perceived as better off) reliably produces negative self-evaluation. Jonathan Haidt and Jean Twenge's research (*iGen*, 2017; *The Anxious Generation*, 2024) documented the correlation between social media use and increased rates of anxiety, depression, and loneliness — particularly among young adults. Recovery forums (r/stopdrinking, r/REDDITORSINRECOVERY, InTheRooms.com) consistently identify social media comparison as a trigger for relapse-thinking, with members describing the "highlight reel vs. behind-the-scenes" phenomenon: seeing curated images of others' success while sitting in the raw reality of early recovery. The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions notes that "nothing so much ensures immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics" (◆ BB p.89) — the opposite of scrolling alone at 2 AM.

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

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 examples/16-social-media.md