Character Defects Reference

This is a reference list of character defects from multiple sources. Use it to help identify and name your faults while writing Column 4, or when hearing a Step 5.

How to use this list: Pick the list that speaks to you. Scan it and ask: *Do I see this in my inventory?* If you've already spotted and written about a defect, ignore it. We're only looking for ones that have been missed. Pick a couple of good examples of each.

References: Faults (Deep Dive) | Column 4 Instructions | The Chain | SDSF | Examples

---

Big Book Defects

Causes and conditions, defects of character, short-comings, flaws in our make-up, the root of our troubles, bondage of self — cited in the BB, p.xxv-164.

(Source: Character Defects — BB Reference)

pride, vanity, egotistical, self-pity, morbidness, jealousy, envy, suspicion, selfishness, self-seeking, unthinking, unjust, insincerity, dishonesty, lying, exaggeration, self-delusion, self-centeredness, self-justification, callousness, cruelty, anger, grudge, rancor, crankiness, bitterness, hate, antipathy, loathing, overbearing, lethargy, impatience, fear, worry, cowardice, intolerance, lust, infidelity, inconsideration, anti-social, uncommunicative, slander, gossip, prejudice, criticism, ridicule, cynicism, diffidence (shyness), servility (grovelling), scraping (quarrelsome), irresponsibility, carelessness, unreasonableness, apathy, martyrdom, fanaticism, squandering, obstinacy, stubbornness, maudlin (self-pity, tearfully sentimental)

Step 5 Defect Summary

“The inventory is of our defects, not our incidents.”

(Source: Character Defects — BB Reference)

- Resentment, Anger
- Fear, Cowardice
- Self-pity
- Self-justification
- Self-importance, Egotism
- Self-condemnation, Guilt
- Lying, Evasiveness, Dishonesty
- Impatience
- Hate
- False pride, Phoniness, Denial
- Jealousy
- Envy
- Laziness
- Procrastination
- Insincerity
- Negative Thinking
- Immoral thinking
- Perfectionism, Intolerance
- Criticizing, Loose Talk, Gossip
- Greed

Defects & Opposites

Each defect paired with its spiritual opposite — showing what the solution looks like. Useful for Steps 6 and 7.

(Source: Moral Inventory Checklist — Defects & Opposites)

Defect	Opposite
Afraid	Brave
Afraid of being vulnerable	Willing to be Vulnerable
Afraid of disapproval	Being content with God’s approval
Angry	Accepting responsibility
Arguing	Accepting what my Higher Power gives me
Arrogant	Humble
Ashamed	Free of Shame
Attention-seeking	Humbly being of service
Beating myself up	Self-acceptance
Blaming others for my mistakes	Honestly admitting my mistakes
Boasting	Modest
Bragging	Humble
Caretaking	Letting others be responsible for themselves
Catastrophizing	Seeing reality clearly
Codependent	Healthy Detachment
Comparing myself to others	Viewing all people as my equals
Confused priorities	Healthy priorities
Controlling	Letting Go of Control
Cowardly	Courage to do the right thing
Demanding that the world be my way	Accepting God’s world as it is
Denial	Admitting the truth about reality
Despairing	Hopeful
Dishonest	Honest
Disobedient	Faithful
Distracted	Focused

Defect	Opposite
Doubting	Trusting my Higher Power
Egotistical	Free of self-centeredness
Emotionally entangled	Healthy detachment
Enabling	Courage to decline enabling another's sickness
Entitled	Grateful
Feeling down	Joyful
Financially irresponsible	Financially responsible
Fragile	Robust
Future-tripping	Being Present
Gossiping	Using my speech to help not harm
Greedy	Generous
Hating	Loving
Impatient	Patient
Inconsiderate	Considerate
Indifferent	Caring
Insensitive	Sensitive
Irresponsible	Responsible
Jealous	Trusting
Judgmental	Judging favorably
Lack of acceptance	Acceptance
Lazy	Disciplined
Looking down at others	Viewing all as God's children
Low Self Esteem	Getting my self-worth from my Higher Power
Lustful	Pure
Mind reading	Admitting I don't know what people think

Defect	Opposite
Needing to appear perfect	Courage to be seen as imperfect
Needing to impress	Valuing myself as God’s child
Neglecting self care	Self care
Not standing up for myself	Assertive
Not trusting God	Trusting God
Objectifying	Respectful
Obsessive	Surrendering the results
People-pleasing	Courage to displease people when necessary
Perfectionistic	Courage to be seen as imperfect
Projecting	Staying on “my side of the street”
Rescuing	Healthy detachment
Resentful	Forgiving
Self-absorbed	Selfless
Self-hating	Self-love
Self-pitying	Grateful
Self-righteous	Humble
Selfish	Generous
Snobby	Friendly
Staying in my Comfort Zone	Courage to try new things
Stingy	Generous
Stubborn	Flexible
Taking responsibility for other’s actions	Letting go of the actions of others
Trust-breaking	Trustworthy
Uncommunicative	Communicative
Undisciplined	Disciplined

Defect	Opposite
Unforgiving	Forgiving
Unhealthy eating	Healthy eating
Unreliable	Reliable
Unstable	Stable
Unwilling to admit wrong	Honestly admitting mistakes
Unwilling to ask for help	Willing to ask for help
Vain	Modest
Whining	Grateful for God’s attention

Defects of Conduct

(Source: Tim M — Step 04 17 Page 67 cleaning up faults)

Arguing, Attention-seeking, Avoiding amends, Avoiding intimacy, Bad-temperedness, Being different to gain an identity, Bitching, Boasting, Brusqueness, Bullying, Charm (as manipulation), Choosing chaos, Choosing short-term gain over long-term pain, Coldness, Complaining, Complying just to gain approval, Compulsive busyness, Concealing the truth, Controlling, Criticising (even when true), Defensiveness, Dismissing people, Distortion, Dominating conversations, Duvet-diving, Exhibitionism, Fire-fighting (only dealing with the urgent), Fishing for compliments, Fitting in to gain an identity, Fixing, Flattery, Focusing on people who don’t like you, Giving people attention only when they ignore you, Giving to get, Gossiping, Ignoring people, Imbalance between different areas of life, Impatience, Impoliteness, Inaction, Inappropriate self-expression, Inconsistency, Indifference/apathy, Indiscretion, Inflexibility, Ingratiation, Interfering, Isolating, Lack of discipline, Lying, Making excessive demands, Malice, Managing situations, Manipulation, Martyrdom, Monkey-mind (mental restlessness), Mothering, Neglect, Not asking for help, Not listening, Not playing enough, Not resting, Not setting boundaries, Not spending enough, Not working enough, Offering unsolicited advice, Over-dependence, Overeating, Overspending, Overworking, Patronisation, Physical violence, Procrastination,

Provocation, Pulling rank, Punishing, Rearranging the deckchairs on the Titanic, Recklessness, Repeating mistakes and expecting different results, Retaliation, Sarcasm, Saying ‘no’ too often, Saying ‘yes’ too often, Scaring people, Secretiveness, Self-justification, Self-neglect, Shaming people, Showing off, Sloth, Stealing, Stealing other people’s crises and making them your own, Stewing, Sticking your head in the sand, Taking people for granted, Verbal abuse, Withdrawing from others, Withholding yourself from others

---

Defects of Manipulation

Manipulation: inappropriate means to get someone to act a particular way (in contrast to a polite request, legitimate boundaries, and/or positive reinforcement). The following may be legitimate or illegitimate depending on context.

(Source: Tim M — Step 04 17 Page 67 cleaning up faults)

Verbal anger, Making noise (with furniture, doors, vehicles), Encroaching on physical space, Criticism, Blaming, Chiding, Inventory-taking, Ordering, Hostility, Argument, Nit-picking, Sophistry, Legalism, Threatening, Punishing, Shaming, Sighing, Face-pulling, Glaring, Ridiculing, Sarcasm, Interrupting, Talking over, Repetition, Long-windedness, Filibustering, Terseness, Incoherence, Rambling, Expressing grudging acceptance, Withholding thanks, Mismatch between tone and words, Running away, Storming out, Weeping (as manipulation), Expressions of upset, Expressions of victimhood, Expressions of good motive, Assertion of reliance on God (as manipulation), Assertion of reliance on prayer (as manipulation), Silence, Patchy engagement, Ignoring, Sullenness, Self-pity, Grumbling, Promises, Bribery, Flattery, Charm, Flirting, Seduction, Intermittent reward, Invoking favours, Invoking obligation

---

St. Augustine's Prayer Book — The Seven Deadly Sins

A spiritual framework for character defects organized under seven root sins. Each category includes the root definition and its specific manifestations.

(Source: Tim M — Step 04 17 Page 67 cleaning up faults)

Pride

Putting self in the place of God as the center and objective of our life.

- **Irreverence** — Neglect of worship, failure to thank God, disrespect for holy things, using religion for personal advantage
- **Sentimentality** — Satisfied with pious feelings without striving to obey God's will
- **Presumption** — Dependence on self rather than God, satisfaction over spiritual achievements, dispensing ourselves from ordinary duties, foolish optimism
- **Distrust** — Refusing to recognize God's wisdom and love, worry, anxiety, scrupulosity, over-sensitiveness, timidity, surrender to depression or self-pity
- **Disobedience** — Rejection of God's known will, slow or reluctant obedience, failure to fulfil responsibilities, irresponsibility, violation of confidence, treachery
- **Impenitence** — Refusal to face up to sins, self-justification, self-righteous comparison, refusal to accept forgiveness, unwillingness to forgive self
- **Vanity** — Crediting ourselves rather than God, hypocrisy, pretence to virtues we don't possess, false humility, boasting, seeking flattery
- **Arrogance** — Insisting others conform to our wishes, overbearing, argumentative, opinionated, obstinate
- **Snobbery** — Pride over race, family, position, education, achievements, or possessions

Anger

Open rebellion against God or our fellow creatures.

- **Resentment** — Dissatisfaction with our talents or opportunities, unjustified rebellion at circumstances, cynicism, escape from reality

- **Pugnacity** — Combativeness, nursing grudges, quarrelsomeness, nagging, rudeness, snubbing
- **Retaliation** — Vengeance, harsh punishment, hostility, refusal to forgive, unwillingness to pray for enemies

Envy

Dissatisfaction with our place in God's order of creation.

- **Jealousy** — Offense at others' success or good fortune, selfish rivalry, pleasure at others' distress
- **Malice** — Ill-will, false accusations, slander, backbiting, gossip, unnecessary criticism, deliberate annoyance
- **Contempt** — Scorn of another's virtue or failings, prejudice, ridicule

Covetousness (Greed)

Refusal to respect the integrity of other creatures.

- **Inordinate Ambition** — Pursuit of status at expense of others, ruthless competition, conformity to wrong standards to get ahead
- **Domination** — Seeking to possess others, over-protection, imposing will by force or guile, patronizing, putting others under obligation, flattery or fawning
- **Avarice** — Inordinate pursuit of wealth, theft, dishonesty, cheating, making worldly success the standard
- **Prodigality** — Waste, extravagance, living beyond means, gambling
- **Penuriousness** — Undue protection of wealth, stinginess, sponging on others, failure to support those with a claim on us

Gluttony

Overindulgence of natural appetites, and by extension the quest for comfort.

- **Intemperance** — Overindulgence in food, drink, smoking, or other pleasures
- **Lack of discipline** — Neglect of bodily health, failure to get sufficient rest, using sickness as escape

Lust

Misuse of sex for personal gratification.

- **Unchastity** — Violation of marriage, unfaithfulness, sexual indulgence outside marriage
- **Immodesty** — Stimulation of sexual desire in others by word, dress, or actions
- **Prudery** — Fear of sex, condemnation of it as evil, repression
- **Cruelty** — Deliberate infliction of pain, mental or physical

Sloth

Refusal to respond to opportunities for growth, service, or sacrifice.

- **Laziness** — Neglect of duties, procrastination, busyness to avoid important commitments, devotion of excessive time to rest or amusement
- **Indifference** — Unconcern over injustice, ignoring needy or lonely persons, failure to take informed part in community or service

---

Al-Anon Character Defects

Features of alanonism — useful as self-diagnosis or as a character defect inventory. The items are grouped for reference.

(Source: Tim M — Step 04 17 Page 67 cleaning up faults)

Narrative

Blaming others, Building cases, Caricature, Cultivating victimhood, Demonising, Dramatising, Exaggerating adversity, Focusing on the past/childhood/family of origin, Focusing on ‘their effects on me’, Focusing on ‘them’, Fostering pathos, Karpman Drama Triangle, Lying, Manipulative euphemism, Masking the truth with metaphor, Narcissistic storytelling, Oversimplification/denying nuance, Speculating about other people’s insides, Talking solely or largely about others

Persona

Exaggerating fragility or impotence, Exhibitionist emoting, Laughing through own discourse when it's not funny, Masking unresolved pain with glibness, Organised joy, Over-apologising, Pleading disorganisation, Pleading general incompetence, Pleading ignorance, Pleading incapacity, Pleading stupidity, Pleading technological incompetence, Stating one is smiling when one isn't, Stream of consciousness broadcasting, Theatrical enthusiasm, Venting

Interaction

Anticipating and treating others' hurt feelings, Anticipating and meeting others' needs inappropriately, Asking questions to start a fight, Commentary-ing, Compensating for others' passivity, Controlling, Correcting, Criticising, Filling the silence, Infantilising, Interrupting, Lavish gratitude, Lavish praise, Love-bombing, Manipulating by inducing pity, Masking control as sharing, Nitpicking, Not listening, Offering unneeded encouragement, Over-comforting, Over-explaining, Patronising, Punishing, Re-enactment of past dynamics with new people

Boundaries

Asking permission already given, Making requests indirectly, Setting boundaries then apologising, Setting boundaries then compensating, Setting boundaries then fixing the reaction

Sponsee

Approval-seeking, Arguing, Arousing pity, Blaming extraneous factors, Blaming others, Changing the subject, Constant updating, Contextualising, Deal-making, Defending, Denying, Evading, Excuse-making, Explaining, Expressing good intentions, Negotiating, Non-compliance, Over-apologising, Over-thanking, Playing dumb when caught out, Pleading confusion, Pleading incompetence, Trying to have the last word, Verbal diarrhoea

Service

Apologising for following procedure, Battling on rather than asking for help, Battling on rather than giving up, Doing minor favours at great personal cost, Excessive expectation

management, False-humbling to forefend criticism, Not intervening firmly when necessary, Offering help not asked for, Over-communicating availability, Pre-discounting upcoming performance, Shame-spiralling following minor errors, Volunteering when one doesn't have capacity

Participation

Adjusting one's behaviour because someone is upset, Apologising for raising a valid point, Backseat driving, Complimenting indifferent performance, Giving people permission to do what they're entitled to do, Instructing others on their jobs, Interfering, Invoking 'people who've left / might leave' to control the group, Limelight hogging, Nightly performance of the same Greek drama, Overselling the group, Over-thanking, Self-criticising when raising a valid point, Taking charge

---

When I read this list, I'm opening a great big box of chocolate-covered ouchies.

Sources: Alcoholics Anonymous ("Big Book") pp.xxv-164; Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions; RapidStep10.com; Tim M — Step 04 17 Page 67 cleaning up faults; St. Augustine's Prayer Book; Al-Anon fellowship materials

---

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 faults-reference.md