Supplemental Commentary — nonameyet.org

> *Commentary and practical perspectives drawn from the Step 4 series at nonameyet.org. These notes supplement the main guide — they address common resistance, pacing, and reframes that help people actually get through the inventory.*

References: Columns 1 & 2 | Column 3 | Column 4 | Fear Inventory | The Chain

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Before You Begin

Pacing and Scope

Step Four does not have to take months. It does not have to be a book. In early A.A., the steps were often taken within a few days. A realistic pace for the written work is **one list per week over two or three weeks** — not "one step per year."

The inventory is about *learning, listing, and analyzing certain facts*. It is not an autobiography. It is not a novel. It is a structured troubleshooting process with a clear beginning and end.

Pain Comes from Resisting, Not from Doing

Think of it like vehicle maintenance. The discomfort people associate with Step Four — the dread, the avoidance, the stories about how devastating it was — comes from *not* doing it. Driving around with a grinding brake or a leaking gasket creates ongoing pain. Pulling into the shop and fixing the problem resolves it.

The same is true here. Continuing to carry unexamined resentments and fears is what hurts. Writing them down and looking at them honestly is the relief.

"Utilize, Don't Analyze!"

You may hear this in meetings. It sounds wise. It is misdirection.

The Big Book explicitly asks us to *analyze* our resentments. Page 65: *"we set them on paper."* Page 67: *"we resolutely looked for our own mistakes."* Page 68: *"we reviewed our fears thoroughly."* The entire Fourth Step is an analysis.

"Utilize, don't analyze" may apply to sponsorship advice you overthink instead of following. It does not apply to the inventory itself. The inventory *is* analysis — structured, written, honest analysis of facts. Skipping it because someone told you not to think too hard is not spiritual humility. It is avoidance with a slogan attached.

Columns 1 & 2 — Listing Resentments

"I Don't Have Any Resentments"

Some people get stuck before they start. *"I'm not a resentful person."*

Try this reframe: list every person, institution, or principle you have ever been angry with. Not "resent" — just *angry*. Anger is a universal human experience. Everyone has been angry at someone.

The word "resentment" can feel clinical or foreign. Anger is immediate and honest. Once you start writing from anger, you'll recognize the resentments underneath — the ones you've been carrying, replaying, and "crying in your beer" about.

"Fancied or Real"

The Big Book says resentments may be *"fancied or real" (p.64)*. This is easy to read past, but it matters.

A resentment does not require actual wrongdoing. You can resent someone who did nothing wrong — whose only offense was triggering your ego, your insecurity, or your fear. The employer who fired you for cause. The wife who protected the family finances. The friend who set a boundary.

Put them on the list anyway. The point of the inventory is not to establish who was objectively wrong. It is to examine what is living inside you. If it disturbs you, it goes on

the paper. The analysis in Columns 3 and 4 will sort out the rest.

The Early Resentment Prayer

Before you get to the Column 4 prayer *(p.67)*, you can begin praying for the people on your list as you write Columns 1 and 2:

> *"God, help me pray for _____'s health, their prosperity, and their happiness."*

(ref. p.551-552 — "peace of mind in exact proportion to the peace of mind we bring into the lives of other people")

This is not a requirement at this stage. But if you start early, you may find the Column 3 and 4 work goes more honestly. It is hard to maintain your victim story about someone you've been genuinely praying for.

Column 3 — Natural Instincts

What Column 3 Actually Is

Column 3 identifies which of your natural human instincts were threatened — not your character defects. That comes later, in Column 4. At this stage, you are simply documenting *what got hurt* when the person in Column 1 did the things in Column 2.

The *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* names four primary instincts God gave us:

Instinct	What it protects
Material security	Food, clothing, shelter, finances
Emotional security	Feeling needed, wanted, loved, safe
Companionship	Social connection, belonging
Sex relation	Intimacy, pleasure, procreation

The guide's seven areas of self (self-esteem, pride, ambition, security, personal relations, sex relations, pocket book) map these instincts into the specific language of the Big Book's example on page 65.

Don't Intellectualize Past the Pain

You may be tempted to write *"Others cannot really hurt me"* or *"I shouldn't let this bother me."* That is philosophy, not inventory. It is also not true — other people's actions affect us. That is the reality this step asks you to face.

Step Four does not ask you to pretend you weren't hurt. It asks you to document the hurt honestly, so you can examine what was driving your response. Minimizing or intellectualizing at this stage will produce a shallow inventory that misses the real fears underneath.

Analyzing Resentments — The Key to the Future

The Fundamental Shift

The Big Book embeds a discovery in the resentment analysis that appears nowhere else in A.A. literature. Before you identify a single character defect, you discover *the key to the future*:

> *The shift from* ***constant thought of self and how to get my needs met*** *→ to* ***constant thought of others and how to help meet their needs.***

This is the core spiritual transformation the program offers. And the Big Book reveals it *during* the resentment analysis — not after, not as a separate teaching, but as something that emerges naturally from honestly examining how your self-centered fear has been running the show.

Why This Sequence Matters

Most people assume Step Four is about finding your defects. It is — but the Big Book's order is deliberate:

1. First, you see that your resentments come from unmet instincts and desires *(Column 3)*
2. Then you see that your self-directed efforts to satisfy those needs have consistently failed *(analysis)*
3. Then you discover the key: the solution is redirecting attention from self to others *(the shift)*
4. *Then* you look for your own mistakes and defects *(Column 4)*

The defect-finding happens in the context of the shift. You are not building a shame list. You are identifying the specific ways self-centeredness has expressed itself in your life — so you can redirect.

The Spiritual Sickness Framework

When you look at the people on your list through the lens of the shift, something changes. The person who wronged you is not evil — they are spiritually sick. They are operating from the same self-centered fear you are. As the Big Book puts it:

> *"Though we did not like their symptoms and the way these disturbed us, they, like ourselves, were sick too." (p.66-¶4)*

This is not about excusing what they did. It is about seeing it accurately. A sick person acting from their sickness deserves the same compassion you'd give a friend with a physical illness. *(See Realization for the full treatment of this concept.)*

The Resentment Prayer as Daily Practice

The Column 4 prayer — *"This is a sick person like myself. How can I be helpful to them? God save me from being angry. Thy will be done." (p.67)* — is not just an inventory exercise. It is a practical tool for daily life.

When someone offends you after the inventory is complete, the same prayer applies. Instead of retaliating or stewing, you pause and ask: *How can I be helpful?* This is the shift in

real time — redirecting from self-concern to other-concern. The inventory teaches the practice. Daily life provides the repetitions.

Column 4 — Our Own Mistakes

"Putting Out of Our Minds the Wrongs Others Had Done"

The Big Book's instruction is direct: *"Putting out of our minds the wrongs others had done, we resolutely looked for our own mistakes." (p.67)*

This means *disregard the other person entirely* when writing Column 4. Do not write "but they started it." Do not explain why your behavior was justified given what they did. Set aside their wrongs — you have already documented those in Columns 1-3. Column 4 is exclusively about your own mistakes.

This is harder than it sounds. The ego will fight to include context, explanation, and justification. Resist it. The inventory is not a court case. You do not need to establish mitigating circumstances. You need to see your own behavior clearly.

The St. Francis Prayer as a Column 4 Lens

One useful framework for examining your own mistakes comes from the Prayer of St. Francis. For each resentment, consider:

- Where did I fail to bring **love** — and instead brought hostility or indifference?
- Where did I fail to bring **forgiveness** — and instead held a grudge?
- Where did I fail to bring **harmony** — and instead created or escalated conflict?
- Where did I fail to bring **truth** — and instead operated from delusion or dishonesty?
- Where did I fail to bring **faith** — and instead acted from fear and self-reliance?
- Where did I fail to bring **hope** — and instead spread despair or cynicism?
- Where did I fail to bring **light** — and instead kept others (or myself) in the dark?
- Where did I fail to bring **joy** — and instead was a source of misery?

These questions complement the SDSF framework by approaching the same territory from a spiritual-ideal perspective rather than a defect-identification perspective. Some people find one approach more accessible than the other.

Inventory as Spiritual Growth, Not "Rap Sheet"

The inventory is not a criminal record. It is not evidence of what a terrible person you are. It is a tool for spiritual growth — a way to see clearly what has been running your life so you can let something better take over.

The tone of Column 4 should be honest but not self-flagellating. *"I was controlling and dishonest in this situation"* is inventory. *"I am a horrible person who ruins everything"* is self-pity wearing the costume of honesty. Name the behavior. Name the defect. Move on to the next one.

Fear Review

Healthy Fear vs. Destructive Fear

Not all fear is the problem. The Big Book distinguishes between fear that serves a logical purpose — common sense that keeps you from walking into traffic — and fear driven by emotion and self-reliance that distorts your thinking and behavior.

The fear inventory targets the second kind: the fears that arise from trying to manage life on your own terms. These are the fears that produce the delusions, attitudes, and actions described in The Chain.

A useful test: **Does this fear drive me to a constructive action, or does it drive me to a self-protective reaction?** Looking both ways before crossing the street is the first kind. Refusing to trust anyone because you might get hurt is the second.

Two Fear-Driven Extremes

Destructive fear tends to push people toward one of two extremes — sometimes alternating between them:

Extreme	What it looks like	What it's protecting
Isolation	Withdrawing, avoiding vulnerability, keeping people at arm's length, "I don't need anyone"	Protection from rejection, betrayal, or exposure
People-pleasing	Saying yes to everything, managing others' emotions, performing for approval, "I need everyone to like me"	Protection from abandonment, conflict, or worthlessness

Both are self-reliance strategies. The isolator tries to control by removing the variables. The people-pleaser tries to control by managing the variables. Neither works. Both are fear running the show.

When reviewing your fears, notice which extreme you gravitate toward — or whether you swing between them. This pattern often reveals a core fear that drives multiple resentments on your list. *(See Afraid for the full treatment of fear identification.)*

Self-Reliance as Fear Generator

The connection between self-reliance and fear is direct: *"self-reliance failed us"* and *"set in motion trains of circumstances which brought us misfortune" (p.67-68)*.

When I believe I must manage life on my own, every threat becomes my problem to solve. The fear is proportional to the responsibility I've assumed. If I am the sole guarantor of my security, my relationships, my reputation, and my future — then there is a great deal to be afraid of.

The solution the Big Book offers is not "don't be afraid." It is: redirect your faith. *"We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be." (p.68)*

Fear shrinks in proportion to the amount of life I stop trying to run.

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