Step Four — Fear Inventory (Simple)

> *"Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves."*

You have finished the resentment inventory (Columns 1 & 2, Column 3, Column 4). Now you do **fear** — by itself.

Every fear you already wrote in Column 4 carries over. Then you add any fear that didn't show up in a resentment.

Why Fear

> *"Notice that the word 'fear' is bracketed alongside the difficulties with Mr. Brown, Mrs. Jones, the employer, and the wife. This short word somehow touches about every aspect of our lives. It was an evil and corroding thread; the fabric of our existence was shot through with it." (◆ BB p.67)*

Fear ran the show. It set things in motion that brought trouble we felt we didn't deserve — but we set the ball rolling. The Big Book says fear maybe ought to be classed with stealing because it causes that much trouble *(◆ BB p.67-68)*.

You're going to put each fear on paper, look at why it's there, see what you did to try to handle it on your own, and find a better way.

Prayer Before Writing

> *"God, please remove my fear and direct my attention to what You would have me be." (based on ◆ BB p.68)*

Where Fear Comes From

Short version:

- **Self-reliance failed.** *"We asked ourselves why we had them. Wasn't it because self-reliance failed us? Self-reliance was good as far as it went, but it didn't go far enough."* (◆ BB p.68)
- **Demands.** We demand the world be a certain way. When it isn't, fear shows up.
- **Playing God.** We want the universe to suit us instead of fitting ourselves to be of service (◆ BB p.77).

Fear isn't usually about real danger in the moment. It's about what *might* happen — and the things we do to prevent it usually cause the thing we feared.

The 4 Questions

For each fear, write a few honest sentences for each one.

1. **What is the fear?** — Name it. One short line.
2. **Why do I have it?** — What character defects feed it? (pride, insecurity, control, dishonesty, self-pity, etc.)
3. **How has self-reliance failed?** — What do I *do* to try to manage this fear on my own? Include the schemes, the avoidance, the substances, the manipulation, the silence.
4. **What's the better way?** — What would God have me do instead? What's the action of reliance on Him here?

You don't have to write essays. A few honest lines per question is enough.

Digging to the Root

A surface fear usually points to a deeper one. Keep asking *"why does this scare me?"* until you hit the floor.

- Afraid of losing the job? → afraid of poverty, of being a failure, of being nobody.

- Afraid of being single? → afraid of being unwanted, afraid of dying alone.
- Afraid of speaking up? → afraid of being judged, afraid of being seen as stupid.

Common core fears: **loneliness, worthlessness, powerlessness, shame, guilt, physical pain, emotional pain, the fear itself.**

Common Fear Words

If you're stuck naming a fear, see if one of these fits. The full list is in fears.md.

- **Of being seen as:** weak, stupid, a fraud, disposable, not good enough, unwanted, pathetic, a failure
- **Of losing:** control, love, the relationship, my job, my money, my mind, my freedom, my reputation
- **Of being:** alone, abandoned, rejected, used, betrayed, exposed, controlled, powerless
- **That I am:** unlovable, broken, defective, irrelevant, never going to be okay, beyond help

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How to Do the Fear Inventory

1. **Pray.**
2. **Carry over.** Go through Column 4 of your resentment inventory and pull every fear into your fear list. Don't lose any of them.
3. **Add.** What fears do you have that didn't show up in a resentment? Put them on the list too.
4. **Work each one.** For every fear, answer the four questions.
5. **Drill down.** When a surface fear has a deeper one underneath, write the deeper one too.

Worked Examples

These are common fears. Yours may look different — what matters is that they are honest for **you**.

1) Public Speaking

Why: Pride. Vanity. I'm judgmental of others, so I'm sure others judge me. Insecurity. Ego — I want to sound smart.

Self-Reliance: I stay quiet. I don't share at meetings. I judge other people's "bad" shares to feel better about my own silence.

Better Way: Share my experience to try to help someone else. Find positive things to say about other people's shares. Get over myself. Trust God through the action of sharing — even one sentence.

> *Prayer: "God, use me. Take my fear of looking foolish and let me be helpful instead."*

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2) Being Alone

Why: Insecurity. Co-dependency. I confuse being alone with being unwanted. I seek validation through attention. Lack of boundaries.

Self-Reliance: I jump from relationship to relationship. I text the opposite sex when I'm restless. I settle for less than I deserve so I don't have to be alone. I keep walls up so no one really sees me — but I won't let go.

Better Way: Build a real relationship with God first. Make same-sex friendships in the fellowship. Don't text the opposite sex. Find my worth in God's eyes, not anyone else's. Be deliberately alone sometimes and pray through it.

> *Prayer: "God, teach me that I am never truly alone with You. Show me how to be whole in myself so I can love freely, not desperately."*

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3) Financial Insecurity

Why: Greed. Materialism. Pride — afraid of looking poor. Need for control. Dishonesty about money. Living beyond my means to impress.

Self-Reliance: I obsess about money. I overwork and neglect my family and my health. I avoid looking at bills. I scheme and cut corners. I lie about what I make or owe. I resent people who have more.

Better Way: Trust that God provides what I need *(◆ BB p.63)*. Be honest about my money. Make a budget. Live within my means. Give something away — generosity is the antidote to scarcity. Ask for help when I need it.

> *Prayer: "God, teach me the difference between needs and wants. Free me from the prison of trying to make myself safe with money."*

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4) Rejection / Abandonment

Why: Insecurity. Low self-worth. People-pleasing. Dishonesty — I pretend to be someone I'm not so people will like me. Pride — can't handle being told "no."

Self-Reliance: I bend over backwards to please. I say yes when I mean no. I avoid honest conversations. I stay in toxic relationships to avoid being alone. I change who I am to match whoever I'm with. I isolate before they can reject me. I manipulate with guilt or charm to keep people close.

Better Way: Be honest and authentic — trust that the right people will stay. Stop measuring my worth by people's opinions. Build real relationships on honesty, not performance.

> *Prayer: "God, my worth doesn't depend on any person's opinion. Give me the courage to be honest about who I am, trusting You with the result."*

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5) Failure

Why: Ego. Pride. Perfectionism. Comparison to others. Need for approval. Shame. My self-esteem is tied to performance instead of who I am.

Self-Reliance: I procrastinate to avoid the risk of failing. I don't try new things. I cut corners to guarantee results. I blame others when things go wrong. I take on too much to prove myself. I quit before I can fail. I tear others down so I feel better.

Better Way: Do my best and leave the results to God. Take action in spite of fear. Be willing to be a beginner. Understand that failure is how I learn. *"We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection." (◆ BB p.60)*

> *Prayer: "God, take my efforts and use them as You see fit. Let me care more about faithfulness than about success."*

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6) Authority Figures

Why: Insecurity. Resentment at being told what to do. Pride — don't want to be seen as less than. Past experiences with controlling or abusive authority. Self-seeking — wanting their approval.

Self-Reliance: I avoid or rebel against bosses, doctors, anyone in charge. I become a chameleon — overly compliant or overly defiant. I gossip about authority figures behind their backs. I sabotage myself at work to "get back" at the boss. I lie or hide things to avoid consequences. I refuse to ask for help from people who could help me.

Better Way: See authority figures as people, not threats. Be honest and respectful. Do my best work regardless of who's watching. Trust God as my ultimate authority. Use the sick-man prayer: *"This is a sick man. How can I be helpful to him? God save me from being angry. Thy will be done." (◆ BB p.67)*

> *Prayer: "God, when I'm intimidated, remind me that You are my real authority. When I'm resentful, remind me that they're sick like me."*

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7) Change / the Unknown

Why: Need for control. Lack of faith. Comfortable in misery — at least it's familiar. Self-centered — I want things my way. Rigid thinking.

Self-Reliance: I resist change even when it's clearly needed. I cling to old jobs, habits, ways of thinking. I stay in my comfort zone. I overthink and over-plan trying to eliminate uncertainty. I avoid Steps because they will change things. I romanticize the past.

Better Way: Trust that God already knows the future I'm afraid of. Be open-minded and willing. Take the next right action and let go of the outcome. Practice "just for today." Pray for willingness when I don't feel willing.

> *Prayer: "God, give me willingness when I have none. Teach me that change is how You work in my life."*

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8) Intimacy / Vulnerability

Why: Shame. Past hurt. Distrust. Pride — don't want anyone to see the real me. Self-reliant to a fault. Co-dependency — I confuse intimacy with losing myself.

Self-Reliance: I keep people at arm's length. I use humor, anger, or deflection to avoid real conversation. I change the subject when things get personal. I substitute physical closeness for emotional closeness. I pretend everything is fine when it isn't. I numb feelings with work, screens, food, substances. I ghost people when they get too close.

Better Way: Be honest about who I am and how I feel. Let trusted people in. Take the risk of being known — start small. Work with a sponsor and be fully transparent. Share honestly in meetings. **Fear and shame both lose power when spoken aloud.**

> *Prayer: "God, give me the courage to let trusted people see me as I really am. Let me find safety in You so I don't need walls."*

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9) Not Being Good Enough

Why: Low self-esteem. Comparison. Perfectionism. Shame. Self-pity. Pride disguised as humility. Old messages from family or peers that I'm not enough.

Self-Reliance: I overachieve to prove my worth. Or I underachieve because "why bother." I seek constant reassurance and dismiss every compliment. I tear myself down before

anyone else can. I criticize others to feel better. I replay past mistakes obsessively. I avoid opportunities because I'm "not ready." I seek validation like an addict seeks a fix — the relief is temporary and I always need more.

Better Way: My worth comes from God, not from performance or other people's opinions. Be of service — the fastest way out of self. Stop comparing my insides to other people's outsides. Do the next right thing and leave the evaluation to God. *"Most of us find that we were neither as terrible, nor as wonderful, as we supposed." (NA Basic Text)*

> *Prayer: "God, free me from the tyranny of comparison. Let me rest in the knowledge that You made me as I am, on purpose, for a purpose."*

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10) Losing Control

Why: Self-will. Pride. Ego — I think I know best. Stubbornness. Impatience. Denial of powerlessness. Anger when things don't go my way.

Self-Reliance: I micromanage people and situations. I manipulate outcomes through charm, anger, or withdrawal. I plan obsessively and fall apart when plans change. I refuse to delegate or ask for help. I use substances, food, or behavior to regulate my insides. I argue and insist on being right. I avoid surrender because it feels like weakness.

Better Way: Quit playing God — it didn't work *(◆ BB p.62)*. Surrender daily. Practice "turning it over" — not once, but as often as needed. Let go of outcomes. The only thing I need to control is my willingness.

> *Prayer: The Third Step Prayer — "God, I offer myself to Thee — to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self..." (◆ BB p.63)*

The Solution to Fear

> *"Perhaps there is a better way — we think so. For we are now on a different basis; the basis of trusting and relying upon God. We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves. We are in the world to play the role He assigns. Just to the extent that we do as we think He would have us, and humbly rely on Him, does He enable us to match calamity with serenity."* (◆ BB p.68)

> *"We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be. At once, we commence to outgrow fear."* (◆ BB p.68)

When fear comes up, the instruction is simple:

1. **Ask God to remove the fear.**
2. **Ask God to direct your attention to what He would have you be.**

The promise: **at once, we commence to outgrow fear.**

Stop Here

When every fear on your list has its four answers, **stop.** Bring the whole fear inventory to your sponsor.

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 sponsee/fear-simple.md