# Step Four — Sex Ideal (Simple)

> *"In this way we tried to shape a sane and sound ideal for our future sex life."* — ◆ BB p.69

You just finished your Sex & Relationships Inventory. That looked **backward** — at how you treated people. The Sex Ideal looks **forward** — at the kind of partner you want to be, and the kind of partner you're looking for. You build it straight from your inventory.

## First — A Word About Shame

Some of us were taught our love or our sexuality was something dirty or wrong. The Big Book says the opposite:

> *"...our sex powers were God-given and therefore good, neither to be used lightly or selfishly nor to be despised and loathed."* — ◆ BB p.69

Read that again. **God-given and good.** Not to be thrown around carelessly — and not to be hated either. The Ideal isn't about fixing who you are. It's about how you want to *love* and *act* going forward.

And it doesn't have to be perfect today:

> *"Whatever our ideal turns out to be, we must be willing to grow toward it."* — ◆ BB p.69

You don't have to live it perfectly. You just have to be willing to grow toward it.

## Where It Comes From — Question 9

Go back to your inventory. Read every answer you wrote to **Question 9** ("What should I have done instead?"). Those answers already name the kind of man you want to be in a

relationship. The same traits will show up again and again. The Ideal pulls them together into one picture.

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## The 20-10-5 Format

This is a funnel. You start wide, then narrow down to what matters most.

*(This format is from the Big Book Awakening workshop. Other groups do it other ways — this is the one we use.)*

### Step 1 — List 20

Write the **top 20 traits** you most want in a forever partner — and that you most want **to be** yourself.

Think about:

- **Character** — honest, patient, kind
- **Values** — spiritual, family-minded, hard-working
- **How they relate** — good communicator, supportive, faithful
- **Practical** — reliable, responsible with money, supportive of your recovery

**One rule: no repeats.** "Faithful" and "loyal" mean the same thing — pick one. "Honest" and "truthful" mean the same thing — pick one. Make all 20 *different*. No word twice.

**Stuck on words?** You know how you want to be but can't find the word for it. That's normal. Go look at the Word Bank — page after page of words, sorted into groups by meaning. Scan a group, grab the one word that hits you, move on. Take **one word per group** and the no-repeats rule takes care of itself. There are banks for other roles too — son, father, friend, employee — if you want to do this for more than partnership.

### Step 2 — Narrow to 10

From your 20, cross out the 10 that matter less. Keep the **10 most important**. Ask: which could I live without, and which could I not?

### Step 3 — Narrow to 5

From your 10, pick the **5 most important**. These are your core — the ones a relationship can't work without.

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## Then — Write Your Ideal as a Prayer

Take your top 5 — and any others that really matter. Then write a short prayer to God. Tell Him how you want to act in love. Tell Him what kind of partner you want. **This prayer is your Sex Ideal.**

See the Sexual Ideal examples for sample prayers.

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## A Few Tips

- **Be honest, not impressive.** List what you really need, not what sounds good.
- **Both directions.** Name what you want *in* a partner. Also name what you want *to be* as a partner. The Big Book says the Ideal is about how *you* love — so it's about your own conduct too.
- **Let Question 9 lead.** Your own answers already told you what matters.

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## Worked Example

Made up, to show you the shape. Yours will be different.

### "Tom" (from a long-term relationship that ended)

Tom's Question 9 answers kept pointing to the same things: be honest, stop hiding, show up, do his share, get help instead of going cold, and stop using people to feel okay.

**20**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Honest** | Present | Faithful | Patient | Kind |
| **Open (no secrets)** | Good Communicator | Sober | Spiritual | Supportive |
| **Reliable** | Responsible with Money | Affectionate | Humble | Forgiving |
| **Self-Aware** | Boundaried | Grateful | Steady | Generous |

**10**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Honest** | Present | Faithful | Open (no secrets) | Good Communicator |
| **Sober** | Spiritual | Reliable | Boundaried | Kind |

**5**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Honest** | Present | Faithful | Open (no secrets) | Kind |

### Tom's Sex Ideal Prayer:

> *God, help me to be honest from the very first conversation — about who I am, what I want, and what I'm carrying. Help me be present instead of checking out when things get hard. Help me be faithful — in my body, my attention, and my heart. Help me keep no secrets, because secrets are where I've done the most damage. And help me be kind — patient when I want to pick a fight, gentle when I want to go cold. Help me remember that the way I love is God-given and good, and let me grow toward this ideal one day at a time. Amen.*

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> ***Ready for more?*** *The full instructions and a blank 20-10-5 worksheet are in 06-sex-ideal.md. More example prayers are in the examples folder.*

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## To Sum Up

When trouble comes, the Big Book gives a simple plan:

> *“To sum up about sex: We earnestly pray for the right ideal, for guidance in each questionable situation, for sanity, and for the strength to do the right thing. If sex is very troublesome, we throw ourselves the harder into helping others. We think of their needs and work for them. This takes us out of ourselves…”* — ◆ **BB p.70**

Pray for the right ideal. Ask for guidance in each tricky moment. And when it gets loud, **go help someone else** — it takes you out of yourself.

## Stop Here

When your 20-10-5 and your prayer are done, bring them to your sponsor. This finishes the written part of Step Four.

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/sex-ideal-simple.md