The Realization — "How have I done the same things?"

"How have I done the things I've resented in Column Two to the person I've listed in Column One and/or others?"

(ref. p.66-¶4 "This was our course: We realized that the people who wronged us were perhaps spiritually sick... like ourselves.")

References: Column 4 Instructions | The Chain | Harm | Examples

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What Is the Realization

The Realization is the bridge between Columns 1-3 (what they did and how it affected me) and Column 4 (what I did). Before writing the Fourth Column for each resentment, you pause and consider in paragraph form:

> *"How have I done the things I've resented in Column Two to the person I've listed in Column One and/or others?"*

Then you pray the Fourth Step Prayer:

> *"God, help me to show this person the same tolerance, pity, and patience that I would cheerfully grant a sick friend. This is a sick person like myself. How can I be helpful to them? God save me from being angry. Thy will be done." (ref. p.66-¶4 to p.67-top ¶-L6)*

(Note: This prayer is a BBA composite constructed from two separate BB passages. The "tolerance, pity, and patience" language comes from p.66-¶4, which is narrative description of the approach, not a prayer. The "This is a sick person" and "Thy will be done" portions come from p.67. BBA combines them into a single prayer. This is sound practice but should be recognized as BBA's construction from BB principles.)

The Realization is only for person-based resentments. If Column One is not a person (principle inventories like #9-12), skip it. *(ref. 03-column-4.md)*

Why It Matters

The Realization performs three spiritual functions simultaneously:

1. It Demolishes Moral Superiority

By the time you finish Column 3, you have spent considerable time cataloging how the other person's behavior affected you across seven areas of self. You can *see* how you were wronged. Your justified anger is at its peak.

The Realization interrupts this by asking one devastating question: *Have I done the same thing?*

The answer, in every person-based example, is yes. The person who resents Brown for flirting with his wife has flirted with other men's wives. The person who resents her father for being condescending has been condescending to others. The person who resents his sister for pushing him around has pushed others around.

This does not excuse what was done to you. The Big Book is explicit: *"this world and its people were often quite wrong" (p.66-¶2)*. The Realization does not deny the wrong. It denies your *unique moral superiority* in relation to it.

2. It Converts the Resentment into a Mirror

Before the Realization, you have been examining how *their* behavior affected *your* seven areas of self. After the Realization, you examine how *your* behavior has caused harm. The mirror turns.

This is the hinge point of the entire inventory. Everything before it looks outward. Everything after it looks inward.

3. It Plants the Seed for Steps 8-9

The Realization is where many of the harms for your Step 8 list first become visible. When you write *"I've flirted and been inappropriate around other men's wives"* (Mr. Brown Realization), you have just identified a harm that goes on the amends list. The Realization is an early amends-list generator.

The emotional work of the Realization — recognizing shared sickness, praying for the other person — is the same emotional work required for Step 9 amends. A person who has done the Realization honestly will approach their amends not from guilt (*"I was terrible"*) or resentment (*"but they were worse"*) but from shared recognition (*"we were both sick"*).

When to Skip It

Skip the Realization when Column One is not a person. The principle inventories (#9-12) have no one to mirror against:

- *"Column 1 is not a person — skipped per instructions."* — #9 God Does Not Care About Me
- *"Column 1 is not a person — skipped per instructions."* — #10 Not Fulfilled Without a Relationship
- *"Principle inventory — do not write on Realization."* — #11 I Am Unloveable
- *"Column 1 is not a person — skipped per instructions."* — #12 Not OK Without Money

Sometimes the person in Column One is not "sick" — they're just going about their business while your ego objects. In that case, you may omit the phrase "sick person" from the prayer but still consider how you have done similar things.

How to Write It

Write in paragraph form — not a checklist. Consider honestly:

1. **Have I done the things I resent in Column Two?** — to this person, to others, or both?

2. **Be specific** — name the behavior. "I have done the same" is not enough. *"I've flirted and been inappropriate around other men's wives, especially when drinking"* is.
3. **After writing, pray:** *"This is a sick person like myself. How can I be helpful to them? God save me from being angry. Thy will be done."*

Template:

"How have I done the things I've resented in Column 2 to the person I've listed in Column 1 and/or others?"

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> *"God, this is a sick person like myself. How can I be helpful to them? God save me from being angry. Thy will be done."*

Tips:

- Be honest — the point is not to force a parallel where none exists, but to see where one genuinely does
- Include things done to *others*, not only to the person in Column One — "and/or others" is in the instruction for a reason
- The Realization often reveals that I have done the *exact* same thing — sometimes to the very person I resent
- If you truly cannot find a parallel, write that honestly — but look hard before concluding there isn't one
- Say the prayer *every time*, systematically — it is not optional or ornamental

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Examples from the Inventory

Every person-based resentment (#1-8) includes a Realization. Notice how specific each one is — and how the mirror almost always reflects clearly.

- *"I've flirted and been inappropriate around other men's wives, especially when drinking. I've competed at work for other people's jobs."* — #1 Mr. Brown *(Resented Brown for attention to his wife and competing for his job — has done the exact same things)*
- *"I looked down on Mrs. Jones and talked bad about her. I too have been judgemental and have been disgusted by the way other people live and have voiced it openly to their face and to others behind their backs."* — #2 Mrs. Jones *(Resented her for snubbing him and gossiping — has done the exact same things)*
- *"I've been unreasonable, unjust and overbearing at work as well. I've tried to control my employer by setting my own hours and doing things my way. I haven't trusted the management. I've threatened to quit before when they needed me."* — #3 My Employer *(Resented employer for being unreasonable and controlling — has been the same way)*
- *"I misunderstand and complain (nag) to my wife all the time. I haven't trusted her with a lot of things. I look at other women."* — #4 My Wife *(Resented wife for nagging and liking Brown — nags her and looks at other women)*
- *"I have taken money before and not paid it back. I have lied. I've said I could do things that I never followed through with."* — #5 Susie *(Resented Susie for not caring about paying back a loan — has done the same)*
- *"I have let many people down by not following through with my commitments. I have failed to work as hard as I should letting others down and possibly affecting their paycheck."* — #6 Mr. Brown Alternate *(Resented Brown for attention to wife and threatening job — has let people down at work the same way)*
- *"I've been condescending to others. I have humiliated others. I have betrayed my father and others."* — #7 My Father *(Resented father for being condescending and betraying her — has been condescending and betrayed him)*
- *"I have pushed others around, yelled at others for the smallest things. I have been critical of others when they are in a good mood. I have disrespected people."* — #8 My Sister *(Resented sister for pushing him around and being critical — has done the exact same things to others)*

What the Examples Reveal

The pattern is unmistakable: **in every case, the person has done to others exactly what they resent the person in Column One for doing to them.** The mirror is precise. The man who resents Brown for flirting with his wife has flirted with others' wives. The woman who resents her father for being condescending has been condescending to others. The brother who resents his sister for pushing him around has pushed others around.

This is not coincidence. The Big Book instructs us to consider how we have done the same things (p.66-¶4). *(Note: The further inference that "the behaviors we resent most in others are often the behaviors we are most guilty of ourselves" and the language of "projection" are psychoanalytic reasoning, not direct Big Book text. The BB says to look for where we have done the same; it does not say we resent what we're most guilty of. The pattern is observable in the examples, but the theoretical framing is interpretive.)* The Realization is the honest search for shared condition.

Deeper Understanding

The Shift from "They Wronged Me" to "We Are the Same"

The Realization is not about making excuses for what was done to you. The Big Book is clear that real harm occurred. But the Realization changes the *framework*:

- **Before the Realization:** They wronged me. They are bad. I am justified in my anger.
- **After the Realization:** They wronged me. I have done the same. We share the same condition.

This is a shift from a *moral* framework (sin calls for judgment and punishment) to a *spiritual* framework (error calls for comprehension and correction). The person who wronged me didn't ask for their ego any more than I asked for mine. They are powerless, not guilty. Mistaken, not sinful.

The prayer captures this perfectly: *"This is a sick person **like myself**."* Not "this is a sick person and I am healthy." Not "this is a sick person and I forgive them." The statement is

one of *identification*: we are the same.

Why the Prayer Follows Immediately

The Realization generates humility. The prayer converts that humility into spiritual action before the ego can reassert itself.

Notice the prayer's structure:

1. **Recognition:** *"This is a sick person like myself."* — I see our shared condition.
2. **Redirection:** *"How can I be helpful to them?"* — My attention shifts from what they did to what I can offer.
3. **Surrender:** *"God save me from being angry."* — I ask for help with what I cannot do alone.
4. **Acceptance:** *"Thy will be done."* — I release the outcome.

The prayer is not a feeling. It is a practice. You may not *feel* compassion for the person in Column One when you say it. That's expected. The prayer is done anyway, every time, because the spiritual shift happens through the practice, not through the feeling.

The Realization as Preparation for Amends

The Step 9 direct amends format includes:

> *"I see that I've caused you harm through: (1) Harms I caused in my 4th column, (2) Harms I caused through my conduct, (3) Other harms that did not come out in my inventory."*

Many of the harms in category (1) were first discovered in the Realization. The man who writes "I've flirted and been inappropriate around other men's wives" in the Realization has already begun his Step 8 list. When he sits down to make amends, he is not discovering these harms for the first time — he has been sitting with them since the Realization, and the prayer has been softening him.

This is the genius of the Big Book's structure: the Realization doesn't just prepare you for Column 4. It prepares you for Step 9. The compassion cultivated in the Realization — *"how can I be helpful to them?"* — is the same spirit required to sit across from someone you've harmed and take full responsibility.

The Realization and Self-Compassion

The prayer says *"this is a sick person like myself"* — and sometimes the person I resent most is *myself*. In principle inventories (#9-12), the Realization is skipped because Column One is not a person. But the spirit of the Realization — seeing shared sickness with compassion — applies to self-resentment as well.

When someone writes *"I am unloveable"* (#11) or *"I can't be fixed"* (#9), the Realization's question still echoes: *Would I judge another person this harshly for the same condition?* The "tolerance, pity, and patience that I would cheerfully grant a sick friend" — would I extend that to myself?

The Realization, practiced systematically across every person-based resentment, teaches a habit of compassion that eventually turns inward. By the time the inventory is complete, the person has practiced seeing shared sickness dozens of times. That practice changes something. The same spirit that says *"how can I be helpful to them?"* about Brown eventually says the same about the self.

What If I Truly Haven't Done the Same Thing?

Sometimes the parallel is not exact. Perhaps you were abused as a child and you have not abused children. In this case, look wider:

- Have I been cruel or controlling to anyone, even if the form was different?
- Have I used my power over someone weaker?
- Have I prioritized my comfort over someone else's wellbeing?

The Realization does not require an exact behavioral match. It requires an honest recognition of shared *condition* — the same self-centeredness, the same fear-driven behavior, the same spiritual sickness. The forms may differ. The disease is the same.

If, after honest searching, you truly find no parallel, write that honestly. The point is not to manufacture guilt but to search for the truth. But in practice, most people find the mirror reflects more than they expected.

The Realization is unique among the Fourth Column elements — it appears only in person-based resentments, and it functions more as a spiritual practice than a writing exercise. Use it every time, even when it's uncomfortable. The discomfort is the proof that it's working.

Sources & Attribution

Direct Big Book text:

- p.66-¶4: "We realized that the people who wronged us were perhaps spiritually sick… we would show the same tolerance, pity, and patience that we would cheerfully grant a sick friend" — the narrative instruction
- p.67-top: "This is a sick person. How can I be helpful to him? God save me from being angry. Thy will be done." — the prayer text

BBA workshop methodology:

- The composite Fourth Step Prayer — combines p.66-¶4 narrative with p.67 prayer into a single prayer
- The Realization question ("How have I done the same things?") — BBA's structured application of p.66-¶4
- The instruction to skip for principle inventories

Analytical work:

- The observation that "in every case, the person has done to others exactly what they resent the person in Column One for doing to them" — pattern observed across eight person-based examples
- The "projection" interpretation — psychoanalytic reasoning applied to the BB's instruction, not direct BB text

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