How Did I Treat Them?

Step Four · Sex & relationships quick reference — your conduct, and the ideal you build from it

You finished your resentments. You finished your fears. This is the last list: the people you were romantic or sexual with. One rule sets the tone for everything: this inventory is about your **conduct** — how you **treated** people — not about the act, and not about how many names go on the list.

> *"We want to stay out of this controversy. We do not want to be the arbiter of anyone's sex conduct. We all have sex problems. We'd hardly be human if we didn't. What can we do about them?"*
>
> — How It Works, p. 69 · "arbiter" means judge

CONDUCT, NOT THE ACT

NOT ON THIS LIST
the act itself · how many there were · who you were drawn to · that you have a past

ON THIS LIST
lies told · things hidden · people used · promises broken · disappearing · games played

> *"God alone can judge our sex situation."*
>
> — How It Works, p. 69

The program doesn't judge your love life. Neither does your sponsor. Set the shame down and look at the conduct.

HOW TO DO IT

1. **Read** the sex section — p. 68 *"Now about sex"* to p. 70 *"would mean heartache."* Barely two pages. Read it slow.
2. **Pray**, then list your relationships — your whole life. Work the list till you know it's done.
3. Take the first name. Write a **short history** (page 2).
4. Answer the **nine questions** (pages 3–4).
5. Write any **harm** at the bottom. Then the next name.
6. All names done? Build your **Sex Ideal** (pages 8–9). Then bring it all to your sponsor.

WHO GOES ON THE LIST

Girlfriends and wives · the mothers of your kids · flings and hookups · app matches and DM situations · the ones that never got a name · the ones you'd rather forget.

- **Don't rank them.** Just get the names down — a name, initials, or a label ("the app girl") is enough.
- **Don't leave one off out of shame.** The ones you most want to skip usually hold the most freedom.
- Short ones count. Three weeks of conduct is still conduct.

"God, please help me see the Truth about my conduct in relationships."

say it each time before you write · Big Book Awakening worksheet prayer

PART A · START EVERY NAME HERE

First — A Short History

Four prompts. A few honest lines each. The history sets the scene; the nine questions do the digging.

A WHY DID I GET IN? — motives

"My motives for getting involved were…"

What was I really after? Write the true reason, not the pretty one.

LOOK FOR

- Lonely · bored · wanted to be wanted · getting over somebody else.
- She had a place, a car, money, or a soft landing when mine fell apart.
- How she made me look — or how she made me feel about me.

SOUNDS LIKE "I liked her. And I liked what having her did for me."

B HOW DID I ACT? — conduct

"My specific conduct in the relationship was…"

Conduct means how you treated her — not bedroom details.

LOOK FOR

- Honest, or hiding? Showing up, or checked out?
- Giving, or taking? Patient, or pushy?
- Faithful, or a phone full of maybes?

KEEP IT CLEAN If a line is about the act instead of the treatment, cross it out and start again.

C THE BIG MOMENTS — the turns

"The major points that came up were…"

Where did the road turn? Name the moments that changed things.

LOOK FOR

- The pregnancy. The move-in. The relapse. The arrest.
- The catch — the day the stories stopped adding up.
- The break-up-and-back-together loop, and what restarted it each time.

D HOW DID IT END? — or how it is now

"How it ended — or how it is now…"

Endings tell on us. So does today.

LOOK FOR

- By text? By disappearing? By somebody new before this one was over?
- Still going — what shape is it in right now?
- If kids came from it, "how it is now" includes how the two of you handle the kids.

Same street as your resentment inventory: what **they** did belongs on the resentment list. This page is what **you** did. If her wrongs start filling the page, stop — move them to the other list and come back.

PART B · ANSWER ALL NINE, FOR EVERY NAME

The Nine Questions — 1 to 4

> *"We reviewed our own conduct over the years past. Where had we been selfish, dishonest, or inconsiderate? Whom had we hurt? Did we unjustifiably arouse jealousy, suspicion or bitterness? Where were we at fault, what should we have done instead? We got this all down on paper and looked at it."*
>
> — How It Works, p. 69 — the nine questions all come from this passage

1 WHERE WAS I SELFISH?

"Where did I put what I wanted first?"

LOOK FOR

- What I was getting out of it — attention, a place to stay, money, sex, not being alone, looking good.
- Who did the giving, and who did the taking?
- Whose schedule did everything run on?

SOUNDS LIKE "Her money was our money. My money was mine."

2 WHERE WAS I DISHONEST?

"What did I lie about, hide, or fake?"

LOOK FOR

- What I hid — the using, the money, the other people, my past, my real self.
- Promises made with no plan to keep them.
- "Nothing's wrong" when plenty was.

SOUNDS LIKE "She met a character I made up — and fell for him, not me."

3 WHERE WAS I INCONSIDERATE?

"Where did I never stop to think about her at all?"

Not mean on purpose — it just **never crossed my mind**. That's its own kind of harm.

LOOK FOR

- Disappearing. Showing up late, or high, or not at all.
- Her time, her money, and her heart spent on somebody who wasn't really there.

4 WHOM DID I HURT?

"Look around the whole relationship."

Don't stop at the two of you. Walk the whole circle:

her · the kids · her family · my family · whoever came next · me

THE HEAVY ONE If children were anywhere near the relationship, they belong in this answer. Kids feel adult conduct more than anyone — and whoever you dated next inherited the same patterns.

The Nine Questions — 5 to 9

5 6 7 WHAT DID I STIR UP?

jealousy · suspicion · bitterness

5 · JEALOUSY

Did I keep exes close on purpose? Post things so somebody would see? Keep her guessing to keep the upper hand?

6 · SUSPICION

Did my hiding teach her to check? The phone face-down. The stories that didn't add up. The hours that went missing.

7 · BITTERNESS

Did she walk away feeling used, played, or thrown away? Is she still carrying it today?

NOTE The Book's word is "unjustifiably." The question was never whether she was "the jealous type." The question is what **I did** to feed it.

8 WHERE WAS I AT FAULT?

"Add it up, in plain words."

Pull the answers above into **one honest summary**. No excuses.

- Say what you **did** — the lies, the using, the disappearing.
- No verdicts on what you **are**. "I'm just trash" is not inventory — that's shame, and shame doesn't go on the page.

9 WHAT SHOULD I HAVE DONE INSTEAD?

the gold question

*"How should I have **acted** in it?"*

Never answer "I shouldn't have gotten involved." That's a dodge — it skips everything there is to learn.

- Honest about *what*. Showing up *when*. Paying *what*. Saying *what*, plainly.
- Be specific and be complete — more here is better.

SAVE THESE Every Question 9 answer is a brick in your **Sex Ideal** (pages 8–9). The more real this answer is, the more real your ideal gets.

Then the last line for every name — **HARM:** write any specific harm that came to you while writing. Who got hurt, and how. It feeds your amends list in Step 8. Then take the next name.

Ideas, Not Answers

Four made-up entries, written by the same man — true to life, but nobody's file. Yours will read different. What matters is that it's honest for you.

#1 · "TASHA" — MY DAUGHTER'S MOTHER

together five years · the using years

THE SHORT HISTORY

Why I Got In	Young and in love — that was real. But I also liked how wanting me made her easy to lean on. She had a job and a place. I was already using more than she knew.
How I Acted	Good at first. Then the using ran it. I lied about money and where I was. I disappeared for days and walked back in like nothing happened. When she got pregnant I promised to slow down. I didn't.
Big Moments	She caught lie after lie. Fights got ugly — I'd drag up her past to win. After we split, I made our daughter the battlefield: late on purpose, silent for weeks, then loud about my "rights."
Where It Is	We only talk when we have to, and it turns into a fight by the third text. My daughter is in the middle. She has seen too much.

THE NINE QUESTIONS

1 Selfish	Dope money came before diaper money. I saw my daughter when it fit my life, not hers.
2 Dishonest	Lied about using, money, where I slept. Made promises with no plan behind them — the pregnancy promise worst of all.
3 Inconsiderate	Left her at appointments alone. Let rent and food be her problem. Broke plans with my daughter and let her wait by the window.
4 Who I Hurt	Tasha. My daughter most of all — she learned early that my word was thin. Tasha's mother, who covered what I didn't. My own mother, who made excuses for me.
5 Jealousy	Yes — after the split I posted other women partly so she'd see them. I made sure she watched.
6 Suspicion	Yes — years of lies taught her to double-check everything I say. She still does. I built that.
7 Bitterness	Yes — she carried it all alone while I played the victim. She's bitter today, and my daughter hears it in both houses.
8 At Fault	The lying, the vanishing, the money — and using my daughter as a weapon in a war she never signed up for.
9 Instead	Told the truth about my using and gotten help. Shown up every single time I said — early, not late. Paid first, before anything for me. Kept every fight between us two, away from my daughter. Treated her with respect as my child's mother, even after we were done.

Harm: *Took years of peace from Tasha. Taught my daughter not to count on me. Left her family carrying my load.*

#2 · "KEYLA" — MY SON'S MOTHER

started before #1 was over

THE SHORT HISTORY

Why I Got In	I started talking to her before Tasha and I were done. I needed a soft place to land — attention, a couch, somebody on my side. She felt like a fresh start I didn't have to work for.
How I Acted	Moved fast. Told her Tasha was crazy and I was the victim. Moved in within a month. Kept Tasha on the line just in case. When Keyla got pregnant, I still had one foot out the door — I was never all the way in.
Big Moments	My son came before we really knew each other. Same movie, new woman: money lies, gone for days, big promises. Then she found the texts — and her sister found the timeline.
Where It Is	Apart. I see my son when she and I aren't fighting. She and Tasha compare notes about me now. I hate that — and I built it.

THE NINE QUESTIONS

1 Selfish	Used her as a landing pad. Took her place, her car, her money — and called it love.
2 Dishonest	Two women meant lies to both. I played the victim about Tasha so Keyla would pick me up and dust me off.
3 Inconsiderate	Pulled her into a life that was still on fire and never mentioned the smoke. She got the leftovers of me and thought it was the whole thing.
4 Who I Hurt	Keyla. My son — born into a storm I made. Tasha, again. My daughter, who got even less of me. Keyla's family, who took me in on my word.
5 Jealousy	Yes — she spent the whole relationship wondering about Tasha, because I never closed that door on purpose.
6 Suspicion	Yes — she checked my phone because my phone had things in it. Then I got loud about "trust."
7 Bitterness	Yes — she signed up for a fresh start and got a rerun. She says I stole years she can't get back.
8 At Fault	I jumped instead of healing. I started us on a lie and kept us there. Two kids by two women who both got the same broken promises.
9 Instead	Ended one thing all the way before starting anything new. Told her the whole truth about my life up front. Slowed way down. Been a full father to the child I already had before making new promises to anybody.

Harm: *Brought my son into chaos. Set two mothers up to be enemies. Spread myself so thin that nobody — not even my kids — got a whole me.*

Same man writing both pages — watch the pattern cross from one name to the next. That's what the full list shows you that one name never can.

#3 · "ALEXIS" — THE APP

three weeks · fresh out of treatment

The Story	Sixty days sober, lonely, bored, phone full of apps. I came on strong — good-morning texts, big plans, "never met anybody like you" by week one. Hid the sober house. Matched with other girls the whole time. When she started expecting things, I went cold and left her on read — but kept liking her stories every week or two, to keep the door cracked.
1 Selfish	She was medicine for my boredom, not a person.
2 Dishonest	The man she met was a character. Sixty days sober got dressed up as "taking a break." The other apps stayed busy.
3 Inconsiderate	Kept her guessing on purpose. Never gave one straight answer about what this was.
4 Who I Hurt	Her — she was real when I wasn't. And me — I spent my early recovery attention on a game.
5–7 Stirred Up	All three. The breadcrumbs kept her jealous and checking; the ending left her bitter. "You're just like the last one," she said. I was.
8 At Fault	I ran a play on somebody who wasn't playing.
9 Instead	Stayed off the apps my first year, like I was told. Or told the plain truth about where I was in life — and if I wasn't ready, said so and left her free.

Harm: *Wasted her hope. Chipped at my own recovery.*

#4 · "DANI" — GIRL FROM THE PROGRAM

my 90 days · her 60

The Story	Meetings felt better when she was there, and everybody said "give it a year" — I heard everything but that. Coffee after the meeting turned into us. My program turned into her: skipped sponsor calls, and my shares went fake because she was listening. When we blew up, I quit our meetings so I wouldn't see her. She went back out. Her relapse is not mine to carry — her disease did that — but I helped make our safe place unsafe first.
1 Selfish	I used the rooms to hunt instead of heal — took the one place we both had and made it about me.
2 Dishonest	Fake shares. Hid the whole thing from my sponsor because I already knew what he'd say.
3 Inconsiderate	Her recovery was as new and shaky as mine, and I leaned my whole weight on it.
4 Who I Hurt	Both of us. And the group — the drama walked in the door with us every week.
5–7 Stirred Up	Suspicion and bitterness on both sides by the end — two sick people keeping score in the parking lot.
8 At Fault	I knew better. Everybody told me. I did it anyway.
9 Instead	Taken the year. Kept meetings for recovery and let a friendship stay a friendship. Called my sponsor the first day it started, not after it blew up. If it was real, it would have kept.

Harm: *Made the safest room either of us had into a room we couldn't both sit in.*

Short ones count — same pattern as pages 5 and 6, just sped up.

PART TWO · BUILT FROM QUESTION 9

A Sane And Sound Ideal

The inventory looked backward at how you treated people. The Ideal looks forward — the partner you want, and the man you want to be.

> *"In this way we tried to shape a sane and sound ideal for our future sex life. We subjected each relation to this test—was it selfish or not? We asked God to mold our ideals and help us to live up to them."*
>
> — How It Works, p. 69

GOD-GIVEN AND GOOD

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

Some of us learned shame about all of it. The Book says different: **good** — not to be thrown around, and not to be hated either. The Ideal isn't punishment. It's a picture of how you want to love.

THE ONE-QUESTION TEST

"Was it selfish or not?" One question, held up to every relationship — past ones on your list, and new ones going forward.

- Before the text. Before the DM. Before round two with an ex.
- Not "is this wrong?" — ask "is this **selfish**? What am I really after here?"

READ YOUR QUESTION 9S FIRST

Go back through **every** Question 9 answer you wrote. The same things keep showing up: *tell the truth first · show up every time · one woman at a time · keep the kids out of it · slow down · ask for help.* That repeating list **is** your ideal, still in pieces. The funnel puts it together.

THE 20-10-5 FUNNEL

20 **LIST TWENTY** traits you want in a forever partner — and want *to be* as one. **No synonyms:** faithful = loyal, pick one; honest = truthful, pick one. Twenty *different* things.

10 **CUT TO TEN.** Which could you live without, and which are non-negotiable? Cross out ten. It should sting a little.

5 **CUT TO FIVE.** The core — no relationship can work for you without these. Then write your Ideal as a **prayer** (page 9).

Think in four directions: character (honest, patient, kind) · values (God, family, work) · how she treats people · practical (money, reliability, your recovery). Be honest, not impressive — list what you need, not what sounds good.

> *"Whatever our ideal turns out to be, we must be willing to grow toward it."*
>
> — How It Works, p. 69 · you don't have to be this today — willing and growing is the whole assignment

The 20-10-5 format comes from the Big Book Awakening Sponsorship Workshop. The Book's own words say *"our future sex life"* — so the Ideal points both ways: what you want **in her**, and what you commit **to be**. Your kids won't learn love from what you wanted — they'll learn it from how you treat the woman in front of you.

THE FUNNEL, WORKED

From Question 9 To The Prayer

Built from the four worked entries on pages 5–7.

HIS QUESTION 9S KEPT SAYING

the raw material

Tell the truth about my using · show up every time I say · pay what I owe first · end one thing before starting another · keep fights away from the kids · slow down · stay off the apps early · stay honest with my sponsor.

THE 20 — WITH THE CUTS

crossed out = cut when narrowing to 10

Honest	Faithful	~~Patient~~	Kind	Loves God
Good to my kids	~~Hard-working~~	Good communicator	Guards my recovery	Keeps her word
~~Good with money~~	~~Affectionate~~	~~Humble~~	~~Forgiving~~	Fights fair
~~Fun~~	~~Steady~~	~~Independent~~	~~Grateful~~	Clean and sober

Ten survive. Then the harder cut — down to the five a relationship can't work without:

Honest · Faithful · Kind · Loves God · Good to my kids

HIS SEX IDEAL PRAYER

short form

> *God, mold my ideal and help me live up to it. Make me honest from the first conversation — no characters, no games, no doors left cracked. Make me faithful all the way: my body, my phone, my attention. Make me kind in a fight, especially where the kids can hear. Send me a woman who loves You, is good to my children, and guards my recovery like it's hers — and make me a man who is safe to love back. Let my daughter and my son learn what love looks like by watching how I treat it. Amen.*

A FULLER EXAMPLE

Big Book Awakening workshop

> *"God please help me make my decisions about love and sex that they be based more in reality, aligned with your will, and not simply in carnal desire. Help me to avoid the fear of being alone. I want to be a man who has sex with someone, after having had some time to get to know the person, as an act of love, and a way of getting closer or becoming more intimate. God, please enable me to be willing to be honest and to communicate openly with regards to our differences, goals, dreams, sex and finances. Please help me to bring a God consciousness into my relationships. Please help me to have a relationship that is free of all abuse. I want to love all others as they are, and not hope to change them. You, God, make no mistakes. Help me not to get involved with someone who is committed in a relationship on any level, or while I am committed to someone else. Please help me to be an equal partner in every way possible. Help me avoid the temptation to control others with attention, affection, gifts, love or sex. Please help me to act sexually as I would want a friend to act towards me. With honor, respect and love. Amen."*
>
> — Big Book Awakening workshop example prayer

KEEP THIS PAGE

After The Writing

IF YOU STUMBLE

> *"Suppose we fall short of the chosen ideal and stumble? Does this mean we are going to get drunk? Some people tell us so. But this is only a half-truth. It depends on us and on our motives."*
>
> — How It Works, p. 70

- Sorry, honest about it, and willing to let God take you to better things — the Book says **forgiven**, lesson learned.
- Not sorry, and the conduct keeps harming people — the Book is blunt: *"we are quite sure to drink."*

Falling short isn't the danger. Staying dishonest about it is.

ASK, THEN LISTEN

> *"In meditation, we ask God what we should do about each specific matter. The right answer will come, if we want it."*
>
> — How It Works, p. 69

- Take each tricky situation to God — and to your sponsor. *"Counsel with persons is often desirable."* (p. 69)
- Skip the loud voices. The Book says to avoid "hysterical thinking or advice" — from either extreme.

ABOUT MAKING IT RIGHT

> *"We must be willing to make amends where we have done harm, provided that we do not bring about still more harm in so doing."*
>
> — How It Works, p. 69

Willing — but not tonight. Amends come at Steps 8 and 9, planned with your sponsor. Don't call the mothers of your kids to unload your inventory on them — some repairs, done wrong, just break more. For now the assignment is smaller: write the harm down, every entry, and get willing.

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. It quiets the imperious urge, when to yield would mean heartache."*
>
> — How It Works, p. 70 · "imperious" means pushy, demanding

Pray for the right ideal. Ask for guidance in each questionable spot. And when it gets loud — **go be useful to somebody**. Call a newcomer. Take the commitment. Show up for your kids. Service is the Book's own prescription for the urge.

When every name has its history, its nine answers, and its harm — and your 20-10-5 and prayer are written — **stop**. Bring all of it to your sponsor. This finishes the written work of Step Four.