The Chain — fears, delusions, attitudes, actions

> ***The fears*** *that drive the* ***delusions****, that result in the* ***attitude*** *that are behind the* ***actions****.*
>
> *(BBA workshop interpretation of p.62-¶1: "driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking and self pity." The Big Book lists these four elements; the BBA workshop reads them as a causal chain. The bracket "[my attitude]" after "self pity" is added by BBA, not in the original text.)*

References: Column 4 Instructions | SDSF | Self-Seeking | Selfish | Dishonest | Afraid | Realization | Harm | Common Fears | Examples

What Is The Chain

The Chain is the core insight of the Fourth Column. It describes the mechanism behind every resentment — not just *what* I did, but *why* I did it, traced all the way back to its origin.

The Big Book gives us the map in a single sentence on page 62:

> *"driven by a hundred forms of* ***fear****,* ***self-delusion****,* ***self-seeking*** *and* ***self pity*** *[my attitude]"*

That sentence contains the four links of the Chain:

Link	BB Language	Column 4 Question	Direction
1. Fear	"a hundred forms of fear"	*I was afraid…?*	Root cause (deepest)
2. Delusion	"self-delusion"	*I was in the delusion that…?*	The lie I told myself
3. Attitude	"self pity"	*My selfish attitudes were…?*	How I thought
4. Action	"self-seeking"	*My selfish actions were…?*	What I did (most visible)

The Chain reads from bottom to top: the **fear** drives the **delusion**, the delusion produces the **attitude**, the attitude generates the **action.** But we *write* it from top to bottom — actions first, fears last — because that's the order in which we can see them. Actions are visible. Fears are buried.

How to Read The Chain

Writing Order vs. Chain Order

The instructions in Column 4 tell you to write in this order:

1. **Self-Seeking** (actions) — *What did I do?*
2. **Selfish** (attitudes) — *What was I thinking while I did it?*
3. **Dishonest** (delusions) — *What lies was I telling myself?*
4. **Afraid** (fears) — *What fear was driving all of this?*

This is deliberate. You start with what's most visible and work inward. The actions are easy to see. The attitudes behind them take more honesty. The delusions take real searching. And the fear — the root — is the hardest to find and the most important to name.

Once written, read the chain in reverse — from fear to action — and ask: *Does the fear explain everything above it?*

Template

AFRAID: *I was afraid…?* ↓ drives → **DISHONEST:** *I was in the delusion that…?* ↓ produces → **SELFISH:** *My selfish attitudes were…?* ↓ generates → **SELF-SEEKING:** *My selfish actions were…?*

Tips

- A single fear often drives multiple delusions, attitudes, and actions — this is normal
- If the fear doesn't explain the actions, dig deeper — you may not have found the real fear yet

- The fear is almost never about the other person. It's about *me* — what I might lose, what I might be exposed as, what I might become
- Consider the opposite of each fear and add it to the fear list if it applies *(ref. p.68-¶1-L1)*

The Chain Across All 12 Examples

Summary Table

#	Who	Fear	Delusion	Attitude	Actions
1	Mr. Brown	Lose control of job, marriage, life	Had to protect myself from Brown	No one interferes with my life	Drank, fought, punished wife, harassed Brown
2	Mrs. Jones	Incapable of living up to anyone's expectations	She has no right to an opinion on my drinking	I only care about myself and what I want	Brought alcohol, mocked her concern
3	My Employer	Never succeed or amount to anything	I could get what I need by controlling the world	My private life is none of their business; work owes me	Missed days, poor work, padded expenses
4	My Wife	She'll see I'm incapable and leave me	It's my life and she has no say	I can do whatever I want; she shouldn't get in my way	Ignored her, embarrassed her, made her jealous
5	Susie	If I stand up for myself she'll reject me	It wasn't okay for me to be honest	If I say no, she'll hate me	Loaned money to avoid discomfort
6	Mr. Brown (Alt)	If I stand up for myself, he'll get me and I'll lose my job	Jim was someone I needed to defend myself from	He got what he deserved; justified in my anger	Complained, gossiped, celebrated his demotion
7	My Father	I don't matter; unless I look a certain way, no one will love me	I could get what I needed by acting out; he was capable of putting me first	My pain is the most important thing; he owes me	Self-harm, acting out, name-calling, got drunk at his house
8	My Sister	Too defective to be loved; might relapse or hurt myself	She is not important to me	If she can't talk normally, I'll treat her as lesser	Ignored, shut out, lied, gossiped, stole

#	Who	Fear	Delusion	Attitude	Actions
9	God Does Not Care	If there is a God, He'll never love me; I can't be fixed	I don't need anyone; God can't be trusted	Closed mind; no one has my back except me	Guarded, attacked first, used sarcasm as weapon
10	Not Fulfilled Without a Relationship	If I'm alone too long, I'll die inside	A relationship will fix me; they are the problem	Get my needs met first, then I'll care about you	Put on an act, overpowered, faked listening, never let go
11	I Am Unloveable	Never be loved and always be alone	Becoming whatever I need to be loved won't have consequences	My needs are more important; boundaries don't exist for me	Be anything to be loved, manipulate, cling
12	Not OK Without Money	Even with money, still unhappy; a nobody forever	I can live behind a mask without consequences; I control money	Sacrifice anyone to get ahead; everyone cheats	Manipulate, lie, use people, take shortcuts

---

Individual Chains

#1 — Mr. Brown — full example

- **FEAR:** *Afraid to lose control of my job, my marriage, my life.*
- **DELUSION:** *I had to protect myself from Brown, that he was out to get me.*
- **ATTITUDE:** *No one interferes with my life or tells me how to behave.*
- **ACTIONS:** *Drank too much at the office party, over reacted, fought with Brown, punished my wife, gave Brown a hard time at work.*

How the chain connects: The fear of losing control creates the delusion that Brown is a threat. The delusion produces an attitude of total autonomy — no one tells me what to do. And that attitude drives aggressive, reactive actions: fighting, punishing, harassing. Every link follows logically from the one beneath it.

#2 — Mrs. Jones — full example

- **FEAR:** *Afraid that I'm incapable of living up to anyone's expectations of me, let alone my own.*
- **DELUSION:** *She has no right to have an opinion on when and where I drink. She was supposed to put up with my behavior.*
- **ATTITUDE:** *I only care about myself, my drinking and what I want.*
- **ACTIONS:** *Brought alcohol to drink with her husband knowing she wants him to stop. Made fun of her for being concerned. Didn't care her husband was struggling.*

How the chain connects: The fear of inadequacy creates a delusion that shields the fear — *she has no right to judge me*. The delusion hardens into pure self-centeredness. And self-centeredness produces actions that harm everyone around him, including his friend.

#3 — My Employer — full example

- **FEAR:** *Afraid that I'll never succeed or amount to anything.*
- **DELUSION:** *I could get what I need by controlling the world around me.*
- **ATTITUDE:** *My private life is none of their business. Work owes me.*
- **ACTIONS:** *Missed days from drinking. Sometimes didn't return after lunch. Work was not good. Padded expense account. Caused problems for others.*

How the chain connects: The fear of failure produces a grandiose delusion — *I can control outcomes*. The delusion generates entitlement — *work owes me*. And entitlement produces theft, dishonesty, and shirking. The very actions that guarantee the feared failure.

#4 — My Wife — full example

- **FEAR:** *Afraid she'll see I'm incapable of doing any better and will eventually leave me.*
- **DELUSION:** *It's my life and she has no say in it. She's unimportant to me.*
- **ATTITUDE:** *I can do whatever I want and she shouldn't bother me or get in my way.*
- **ACTIONS:** *Ignored complaints about drinking. Procrastinated. Embarrassed her. Made her jealous. Got jealous of Brown. Caused her insecurity.*

How the chain connects: The fear of being seen as incapable creates the delusion that she doesn't matter — a protective lie to avoid facing the fear. The delusion produces an attitude of total freedom. And that attitude drives every action that pushes his wife away — the exact outcome he fears.

#5 — Susie — full example

- **FEAR:** *Afraid if I stand up for myself she'll reject me.*
- **DELUSION:** *It wasn't okay for me to be honest and stand up for myself.*
- **ATTITUDE:** *If I say "no," she'll be angry and hate me.*
- **ACTIONS:** *Loaned her money so I didn't have to feel uncomfortable.*

How the chain connects: This is a people-pleasing chain — the opposite of the aggressive chains above, but driven by the same engine: fear. The fear of rejection creates the delusion that honesty is unsafe. The delusion produces anticipatory catastrophizing — *she'll hate me*. And the attitude drives the action: give away what you can't afford to give, to buy peace you'll never get.

#6 — Mr. Brown (Alternate) — full example

- **FEAR:** *Afraid that if I stand up for myself, he'll really be out to get me and I'll lose my job.*
- **DELUSION:** *Jim was someone that I needed to defend myself from.*
- **ATTITUDE:** *He got what he deserved. I felt justified in my anger and gossip.*
- **ACTIONS:** *Complained and gossiped to others. Was happy when he got demoted.*

How the chain connects: The fear of confrontation creates a delusion of danger — *he's a threat*. The delusion produces justified resentment — *he deserves what he gets*. And justified resentment produces passive-aggressive actions: gossip, complaint, and schadenfreude. The "justified" feeling is the clearest fingerprint of the delusion at work.

#7 — My Father — full example

- **FEAR:** *Afraid that I don't matter and that unless I look a certain way, no one will love me.*
- **DELUSION:** *I could get what I needed by acting out (child). He was capable of putting me first (child). If I show him what's wrong with him, he can fix it (adult).*
- **ATTITUDE:** *My pain is the most important thing in the world and he owes me.*
- **ACTIONS:** *Mutilated myself to get his attention. Acted out sexually. Called him names. Got drunk at his house. Told him he was a bad father and made him cry.*

How the chain connects: This is the most layered chain. The fear of not mattering drives three delusions — one from childhood (acting out will work), one from childhood (he *can* put me first), one from adulthood (if I show him, he'll change). All three converge into the same attitude: my pain entitles me to anything. And entitlement drives escalating, desperate actions. Notice how the delusions evolve from child to adult, but the fear never changes.

#8 — My Sister — full example

- **FEAR:** *Afraid that I might relapse, beat her up, or kill myself to make her feel sorry. Afraid her opinion that I'm too defective to be loved is true.*
- **DELUSION:** *She is not important to me.*
- **ATTITUDE:** *If she can't talk to me like a normal human being, I will treat her as a lesser person. She has no right to interfere with my life.*
- **ACTIONS:** *Ignored her. Shut her out. Lied to her. Gossiped. Stole from her.*

How the chain connects: Two fears here — one about what he might do (relapse, violence, suicide), one about what she might be right about (he's too defective to be loved). The delusion is simple and defensive: *she doesn't matter*. The attitude is conditional acceptance — *talk to me on my terms or be discarded*. And the actions are all forms of emotional and material theft. The chain reveals that cutting someone off is rarely about them — it's about the fear of what their presence exposes.

#9 — God Does Not Care About Me — full example

- **FEAR:** *If there is a God, He will never love me. I can't be fixed.*

- **DELUSION:** *I don't need anyone. God can't be trusted.*
- **ATTITUDE:** *Keep a closed mind. I am the most important person here. No one has my back except me.*
- **ACTIONS:** *Guard and protect myself. Not vulnerable. Attack first. Use humor to control situations. Sarcasm as my weapon of choice.*

How the chain connects: The fear of being permanently broken and unloved by God creates the delusion of radical self-sufficiency — *I don't need anyone*. The delusion produces a fortress mentality — closed-minded, self-important, trusting no one. And the fortress produces its weapons: preemptive attack, humor as control, sarcasm as armor. This is the chain where the spiritual problem is most visible: the fear of God's absence *creates* the conditions for God's absence.

#10 — Not Fulfilled Without a Relationship — full example

- **FEAR:** *If I am alone too long, I'll die inside spiritually.*
- **DELUSION:** *A relationship will fix me. They are the problem. Relationships are about getting, not giving.*
- **ATTITUDE:** *If I get my needs met first, then I'll be able to care about you. They should know what I want without having to say it.*
- **ACTIONS:** *Put on an act to attract. Be a chameleon. Overpower and intimidate. Fake listening. Never let go.*

How the chain connects: The fear of spiritual death through loneliness creates the delusion that another person can fix it. The delusion produces a consumer attitude toward relationships — *I take first*. And the consumer attitude drives predatory actions: acting, shape-shifting, overwhelming, and clinging. Every action destroys the thing it seeks.

#11 — I Am Unloveable — full example

- **FEAR:** *I'll never be loved and always be alone.*
- **DELUSION:** *Becoming whatever I need to be loved won't have consequences. I don't tell the truth, and may not even know the truth.*

- **ATTITUDE:** *My needs are more important than your needs. Boundaries don't exist for me.*
- **ACTIONS:** *Be anything and do anything to be loved. Adopt others' values, opinions, beliefs. Manipulate to get affection. Clingy and needy. Won't let go.*

How the chain connects: The fear of permanent unlovability creates the delusion that shape-shifting is free — no consequences. But the deepest part of the delusion is *"I may not even know the truth"* — identity has been so thoroughly abandoned that the self is lost. The attitude is boundary-less need. The actions are total self-erasure in pursuit of love. The chain reveals the terrible irony: by becoming everything, I become nothing, which confirms the original fear.

#12 — Not OK Without Money — full example

- **FEAR:** *Even with money, I am still unhappy. I am a nobody and will always be a nobody.*
- **DELUSION:** *I can live behind a mask and persona without suffering consequences. I control money, rather than money controls me.*
- **ATTITUDE:** *Sacrifice anyone and anything to get to the next level. Look down on those with less, look up to those with more. Everyone cheats to get ahead.*
- **ACTIONS:** *Manipulate, lie, play favorites, use people, take shortcuts, take undeserved credit, only hang with the rich and successful.*

How the chain connects: The fear has two parts: the despair (*even money doesn't work*) and the identity terror (*I am a nobody*). The delusion is that the mask can hold — that performing success will eventually produce real success. The attitude is ruthless hierarchy. And the actions are the full portfolio of dishonesty in pursuit of advancement. This chain shows how fear can drive someone to pursue the very thing they've already discovered doesn't work.

Patterns — How Fears Generate Delusions

Looking across all twelve examples, specific types of fear produce predictable types of delusion:

The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions identifies the two root categories of self-centered fear: *"primarily fear that we would lose something we already possessed or would fail to get something we demanded" (12&12, p.76)*. The patterns below map to these two categories — the first two are "fear of losing" patterns; the last two are "fear of not getting" patterns.

Fear of Losing Control → Delusion of Self-Defense

When the core fear is about losing control — of job, marriage, life, autonomy — the delusion that follows is *I must defend myself*:

- *"I had to protect myself from Brown"* (#1)
- *"Jim was someone I needed to defend myself from"* (#6)
- *"I don't need anyone. God can't be trusted."* (#9)

The delusion reframes the world as dangerous, which justifies aggressive defense.

Fear of Inadequacy → Delusion of Control

When the core fear is *I'm not enough*, the delusion shifts to *I can make it enough by controlling outcomes*:

- *"I could get what I need by controlling the world around me"* (#3)
- *"It's my life and she has no say in it"* (#4)
- *"I could get what I needed by acting out… if I show him, he can fix it"* (#7)

The delusion substitutes control for competence. If I can just arrange things properly, no one will notice the inadequacy.

Fear of Rejection → Delusion That Honesty Is Unsafe

When the core fear is about being rejected, abandoned, or disliked, the delusion is *truth will destroy me*:

- *"It wasn't okay for me to be honest and stand up for myself"* (#5)
- *"She is not important to me"* (#8 — a lie told to avoid the pain of her opinion)
- *"A relationship will fix me; they are the problem"* (#10)
- *"Becoming whatever I need to be loved won't have consequences"* (#11)

The delusion protects against rejection by eliminating honesty — the one thing that could actually build real connection.

Fear of Being Nothing → Delusion of the Mask

When the core fear is about fundamental worthlessness — *I am a nobody* — the delusion is that a constructed persona will work:

- *"A relationship will fix me"* (#10)
- *"Becoming whatever I need to be loved won't have consequences"* (#11)
- *"I can live behind a mask and persona without suffering consequences"* (#12)

The mask delusion is the most comprehensive. It doesn't just distort a single situation — it replaces the entire self.

Patterns — How Delusions Crystallize into Attitudes

Delusions are unstable — they need to be reinforced. Attitudes are the reinforcement. They are the delusion converted into a way of thinking that feels like common sense.

"I Don't Need Anyone" → Isolation and Self-Importance

- *"Keep a closed mind. I am the most important person here. No one has my back except me."* (#9)
- *"No one interferes with my life or tells me how to behave."* (#1)
- *"My private life is none of their business."* (#3)

"I Must Protect Myself" → Justified Anger and Retaliation

- *"He got what he deserved. I felt justified."* (#6)
- *"My pain is the most important thing in the world and he owes me."* (#7)
- *"If she can't talk normally, I'll treat her as lesser."* (#8)

The word *"justified"* in an attitude is almost always the fingerprint of a delusion underneath.

"I Can Be Whatever They Want" → Boundary-less Need

- *"If I say no, she'll hate me."* (#5)
- *"If I get my needs met first, then I'll be able to care about you."* (#10)
- *"My needs are more important than your needs. Boundaries don't exist for me."* (#11)

These attitudes swing between submission and demand — both are the same thing: the inability to be honest about what is actually happening.

"The Mask Will Hold" → Ruthless Pragmatism

- *"I only care about myself, my drinking and what I want."* (#2)
- *"I can do whatever I want and she shouldn't get in my way."* (#4)
- *"Sacrifice anyone and anything to get to the next level. Everyone cheats."* (#12)

When the delusion is the mask, the attitude becomes permission to do whatever maintains it.

Patterns — How Attitudes Drive Actions

Attitudes produce actions as predictably as gravity produces falling. Across the twelve examples, four action patterns emerge:

Control and Aggression

Attitudes of self-protection and justified anger produce fighting, punishing, and intimidation:

- *Fought with Brown, punished wife, gave Brown a hard time* (#1)
- *Ignored complaints, embarrassed her, caused insecurity* (#4)
- *Ignored, shut out, lied, gossiped, stole* (#8)

- *Guarded, attacked first, sarcasm as weapon* (#9)

Theft and Dishonesty

Attitudes of entitlement and ruthless pragmatism produce stealing, lying, and exploiting:

- *Missed days, poor work, padded expenses* (#3)
- *Manipulate, lie, play favorites, take undeserved credit* (#12)
- *Brought alcohol knowing she wanted him to stop* (#2)

People-Pleasing and Self-Erasure

Attitudes of fear-driven submission produce giving away what you can't afford and losing yourself:

- *Loaned money to avoid discomfort* (#5)
- *Be anything and do anything to be loved, adopt others' values, manipulate, cling* (#11)

Performance and Pretending

Attitudes that demand the mask must hold produce acting, shape-shifting, and impression management:

- *Put on an act to attract, be a chameleon, fake listening* (#10)
- *Complained and gossiped, was happy when he got demoted* (#6 — performing victimhood)
- *Self-harm to get attention, acting out sexually* (#7 — performing pain)

The Self-Fulfilling Nature of The Chain

The following pattern is an inference drawn from the twelve worked examples, supported by the actor metaphor on p.61-62. The Big Book does not explicitly state "the actions always produce the feared outcome," but the pattern is visible across every example.

The deepest pattern across all twelve examples: **the actions always produce the feared outcome.**

Fear	Actions	Result
Lose control (#1)	Fought, drank, punished →	Lost control of marriage and job
Never amount to anything (#3)	Missed work, padded expenses →	Fired
She'll leave me (#4)	Ignored, embarrassed, made jealous →	Pushed her away
She'll reject me (#5)	Gave away money, wasn't honest →	Lost self-respect and the friendship
I don't matter (#7)	Acting out, name-calling →	Confirmed she wasn't his priority
Too defective to be loved (#8)	Stealing, shutting out, gossip →	Proved her right
God will never love me (#9)	Closed mind, attacked first →	Cut off from God
I'll die alone (#10)	Faked, overpowered, never let go →	Drove everyone away
Never be loved (#11)	Became someone else entirely →	Lost herself; confirmed unlovability
I'm a nobody (#12)	Lied, used people, took shortcuts →	Remained unhappy with or without money

This is the actor from page 61-62 in action. The more forcefully I try to arrange the lights, the ballet, the scenery, and the rest of the players, the more chaotic the production becomes. The Chain is the mechanism by which self-will defeats itself.

The Opposite-Fear Principle

(BBA teaching methodology. The Big Book says to write down fears "even though we had no resentment in connection with them" (p.68-¶1), which supports adding fears beyond the resentment inventory. The specific instruction to "consider the opposite" is BBA's practical application of this principle.)

The Column 4 instructions include a key instruction:

> *Consider the opposite of each fear; if it applies, add it to the fear list.*
>
> *Example: being alone / being committed? looking bad / looking too good? failing / succeeding?*

This principle is visible throughout the examples:

- **#4 My Wife:** fears she'll leave *(abandoned)*, but also fears the demands of commitment *(controlled)*
- **#7 My Father:** fears she doesn't matter *(insignificant)*, but also fears being seen *(exposed)*
- **#9 God Does Not Care:** fears God won't love him *(unloved)*, but also fears what it means if God does *(accountable)*
- **#10 Not Fulfilled:** fears being alone *(dying inside)*, but the actions show fear of genuine intimacy *(known)*
- **#12 Not OK Without Money:** fears being a nobody *(worthless)*, but also fears that money won't fix it *(the mask is pointless)*

Opposite fears coexist because they come from the same root: the belief that *I* must arrange reality to be safe. Whether I run toward something or away from it, I am still running. The opposite-fear principle reveals that I am often caught between two fears with no honest position in between — and that middle ground is exactly where surrender lives.

Person-Based vs. Principle-Based Chains

Person Inventories (#1–8)

In the person-based resentments, the chains are about **specific relational dynamics**. The fears are about what *this person* might do, see, or expose:

- *Brown will get my job* (#1)
- *She'll reject me* (#5)
- *He'll be out to get me* (#6)
- *Her opinion that I'm defective is true* (#8)

The delusions are situational: *he's a threat, she has no right, she doesn't matter*. The attitudes and actions follow from the specific relationship.

Principle Inventories (#9–12)

In the principle inventories, the chains strip away the relational context and reveal **core identity beliefs**:

- *God will never love me; I can't be fixed* (#9)
- *I'll die inside spiritually* (#10)
- *I'll never be loved and always be alone* (#11)
- *I am a nobody and will always be a nobody* (#12)

These are not fears about what someone will do. They are fears about *what I am*. The delusions are correspondingly bigger — not *he's a threat* but *God can't be trusted, a relationship will fix me, I can live behind a mask*.

What This Means

The person-based chains are individual threads. The principle-based chains are the fabric those threads are woven into. When you write multiple person inventories and start seeing the same fear repeating — *not good enough, alone, unwanted, worthless* — you are seeing the principle underneath. The principle inventories (#9–12) name what the person inventories (#1–8) can only hint at.

This is why the Big Book has you consolidate fears into a separate fear inventory after the resentment columns: *"We put them on paper, even though we had no resentment in connection with them" (p.68-¶1)*. The fear list reveals the principles that run through all your person-based chains.

Deeper Understanding

The Chain Is a Self-Reinforcing Loop

The Chain is not just linear (fear → delusion → attitude → action). It is **circular** — the actions produce consequences, and the consequences produce more fear.

The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions describes this cycle:

> *"When our failings generate fear, we then have soul-sickness. This sickness, in turn, generates still more character defects." (12&12, p.49)*

The Self-Fulfilling Nature table above shows this in action: the fear of losing control (#1) drives actions that cause loss of control, which deepens the fear. The fear of being a nobody (#12) drives actions that confirm nobodiness, which deepens the fear. Each pass through the loop intensifies everything — the fears get deeper, the delusions more rigid, the attitudes more entrenched, the actions more desperate.

(Note: The 12&12 text describes a cycle — defects generate fear, fear generates more defects. The interpretation that this cycle "accelerates" and "intensifies" is analytical reasoning drawn from the twelve worked examples, not explicit 12&12 language.)

This is why untreated fear escalates over time. The chain isn't running once — it's running in a loop. And it's why the spiritual solution must interrupt the *root* (the fear), not just the *output* (the action). Stopping the action temporarily pauses the consequences, but the fear remains, and the loop will restart through a different set of delusions, attitudes, and actions.

Actions Are Never the Real Problem

The Chain reveals that **actions are the last link, not the first**. The drinking, the lying, the fighting, the people-pleasing, the stealing, the manipulating — these are *symptoms*. They are the visible output of a machine that begins with fear.

This is why behavior modification alone doesn't work. You can stop the action, but if the fear still drives the delusion, and the delusion still produces the attitude, a new action will

emerge to replace the old one. The Chain must be addressed at its root.

The Real Work Is Finding the Fear

The Fourth Column is written top-down — actions first, fears last — because that's how we peel back the layers. But the insight comes bottom-up. The moment someone names the fear, the rest of the chain becomes visible:

*"Oh — I was **afraid** I'm incapable of doing any better. So I **told myself** she has no say in my life. So I **thought** I could do whatever I want. So I **ignored her, embarrassed her, and pushed her away** — exactly what I was afraid of."* (#4)

The fear is the explanation. Everything else is the fear's expression.

The Actor Metaphor

The Big Book's actor metaphor (p.61-62) is the Chain in narrative form. The actor who tries to run the show — arranging the lights, the ballet, the scenery, and the rest of the players — is acting from fear (that the show won't work without his direction), through delusion (that he *can* direct it), via attitude (that everyone should follow his script), into action (demanding, controlling, retaliating when they don't).

Every single chain in the twelve examples is the actor trying to run the show. And every single time, the show falls apart.

Why "Afraid" Comes Last in Writing but First in Reality

The writing order of the Fourth Column — Self-Seeking, Selfish, Dishonest, Afraid — moves from surface to depth. You start with what you *did* because you can see it. You end with what you *feared* because it was hidden.

But the Chain runs the other direction. The fear was there first. The fear created the delusion long ago — maybe in childhood (#7). The delusion hardened into attitude over years. And the attitude produced the actions that brought you to this inventory.

The writing order is an archaeological dig. The Chain is the geological history. You dig from the surface, but the layers were laid from the bottom up.

If Fear Is the Root, Faith Is the Remedy

The Big Book's solution to fear is explicit:

> *"We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be." (p.68-¶3)*

The prayer doesn't address the actions, attitudes, or delusions. It goes straight to the root. Remove the fear, and the delusion has nothing to drive it. The attitude has nothing to maintain it. And the actions — the ones that seemed so intractable — lose their fuel.

This is the purpose of the Chain: not just to catalog behavior, but to trace it to its source, so that the source can be handed over. The Chain doesn't just show you *what* you did. It shows you *why* you did it. And that *why* is always fear. And the answer to fear is always the same: *"God, please remove this fear and direct my attention to what You would have me be."*

Common Chain Archetypes

The following archetypes are analytical categories derived from pattern analysis across the twelve worked examples. They are not from the Big Book, BBA, or any other cited source — they are groupings created for this guide to help identify recurring patterns.

Across the twelve examples and broader inventory work, several chain archetypes recur. These are not the only patterns, but they are the most common. Recognizing them can help identify your own chains faster.

The Defender

Fear: I will be harmed, exposed, or overpowered. **Delusion:** They are a threat. I must protect myself. **Attitude:** No one tells me what to do. I am justified in my anger. **Action:** Fight, retaliate, punish, gossip, give a hard time. **Examples:** #1 Mr. Brown, #6 Mr. Brown Alternate

The Defender chain is the most aggressive. It reframes the world as dangerous and casts every response as self-defense. The telltale sign is the word "justified" — whenever I feel

justified in my retaliation, a Defender chain is likely running.

The Controller

Fear: I am not enough. Things will fall apart. **Delusion:** If I can control the situation, the fear won't come true. **Attitude:** My private life is my business. They owe me. I can do whatever I want. **Action:** Manipulate, set my own rules, ignore others' needs, procrastinate. **Examples:** #3 My Employer, #4 My Wife, #7 My Father (adult delusion)

The Controller chain is the most common. It substitutes control for competence — if I can just arrange things properly, no one will notice that I'm not enough. The actions look like independence but are actually desperation.

The People-Pleaser

Fear: If I am honest, they will reject me. **Delusion:** It's not okay to be honest. Honesty will destroy me. **Attitude:** If I say no, they'll hate me. I must keep the peace at any cost. **Action:** Give away what I can't afford, suppress my needs, enable. **Examples:** #5 Susie, #11 I Am Unloveable (partially)

The People-Pleaser chain is the opposite of the Defender but driven by the same engine — fear. Where the Defender fights, the People-Pleaser complies. Both are dishonest. Both cause harm. The People-Pleaser's harm is subtler: enabling, fostering dependency, and preventing the other person from facing truth.

The Fortress

Fear: I am beyond help. God can't or won't reach me. **Delusion:** I don't need anyone. No one can be trusted. **Attitude:** Closed mind. I am my own authority. No one has my back. **Action:** Guard, isolate, attack first, use humor and sarcasm as weapons. **Examples:** #9 God Does Not Care About Me

The Fortress chain is the most spiritually isolating. It creates the very condition it fears — separation from God and others — by building walls so high that nothing can get in. The irony: the fear of God's absence *creates* the conditions for God's absence.

The Performer

Fear: I am nothing. I am a nobody. **Delusion:** A mask, persona, or relationship will fix me. Shape-shifting has no consequences. **Attitude:** Get my needs met first. Sacrifice anything to maintain the image. **Action:** Put on an act, be a chameleon, fake, manipulate, cling. **Examples:** #10 Not Fulfilled Without a Relationship, #11 I Am Unloveable, #12 Not OK Without Money

The Performer chain is the most comprehensive. It doesn't just distort a single situation — it replaces the entire self. The actions look different in each example (romantic pursuit in #10, self-erasure in #11, financial ambition in #12), but the chain is the same: the fear of being nothing drives the delusion that becoming something else will work.

The Victim

Fear: I don't matter. My pain entitles me. **Delusion:** If I show them how much they've hurt me, they'll change. **Attitude:** My pain is the most important thing. They owe me. **Action:** Self-harm for attention, acting out, name-calling, punishing through guilt. **Examples:** #7 My Father, #8 My Sister (partially)

The Victim chain is the most painful to see in yourself. The pain is real — the fear of not mattering often formed in childhood. But the delusion that displaying pain will force others to care creates actions that push everyone further away. The chain is self-fulfilling: the more I perform my suffering, the more people withdraw, confirming that I don't matter.

The Chain and Harm

Every chain produces harm. The harm is not an accident — it is the predictable collision between fear-driven behavior and other people's lives.

Chain Archetype	Typical Harms
Defender	Physical conflict, emotional suffering, workplace disruption, gossip
Controller	Financial harm (theft, neglect), emotional suffering (neglect, insecurity), broken trust
People-Pleaser	Spiritual harm (enabling), dishonest relationships, fostering dependency
Fortress	Emotional suffering (isolation of those who care), spiritual harm (cutting off from help)
Performer	Emotional suffering (deception), spiritual harm (trampling others for needs), financial exploitation
Victim	Emotional suffering (guilt, manipulation), relationship damage, self-harm

The Harm section of Column 4 asks: *Do I see harm that I caused?* The Chain explains *why* the harm occurred. Together they provide both the what and the why — which is exactly what is needed for Step 9 amends.

Additional Examples

The following are illustrative examples constructed for this guide. They are not from the Big Book, BBA workshop, or any other source material — they are created to show how the chain archetypes appear in different contexts.

Workplace Chain — The Controller

Resentment: My co-worker got the promotion I deserved.

- **AFRAID:** I'll never succeed. I'm not good enough.
- **DISHONEST:** I was in the delusion that the system is rigged and the only way to advance is to play politics.
- **SELFISH:** Management doesn't appreciate real talent. The rules don't apply to me.
- **SELF-SEEKING:** I badmouthed the co-worker to others, took credit for shared work, and started looking for another job to "show them."

Chain connects: The fear of inadequacy creates a delusion that the system is unfair (rather than that I need to grow). The delusion produces entitlement. The entitlement drives sabotage and flight — confirming to management that I wasn't ready.

Friendship Chain — The People-Pleaser

Resentment: My best friend always cancels plans at the last minute.

- **AFRAID:** If I confront her, she'll decide I'm not worth the effort.
- **DISHONEST:** I'm in the delusion that if I just keep being accommodating, she'll eventually prioritize me.
- **SELFISH:** If I make it easy enough, she'll have no reason to leave.
- **SELF-SEEKING:** I never said anything. I rearranged my schedule every time. I complained to others instead of talking to her.

Chain connects: The fear of rejection creates a delusion that accommodation equals love. The delusion produces an attitude of silent martyrdom. The martyrdom drives passive behavior and backbiting — the very things that erode the friendship.

Family Chain — The Victim

Resentment: My mother always criticizes how I raise my children.

- **AFRAID:** I'm afraid she's right — that I'm failing my kids the way she feels she failed me.
- **DISHONEST:** I'm in the delusion that if I can prove her wrong, I'll finally feel like a good parent.
- **SELFISH:** She has no right to question me. I'm nothing like her.
- **SELF-SEEKING:** I yelled at her in front of the kids. I limited her visits. I used the grandchildren as leverage.

Chain connects: The fear of being a bad parent (which mirrors her fear about herself) creates a delusion that proving her wrong will provide security. The delusion produces defensive entitlement. The entitlement drives the very behavior she criticizes — harshness, control, using others as weapons.

Recovery Chain — The Fortress

Resentment: My sponsor keeps pushing me to work the steps faster.

- **AFRAID:** If I go deeper, I'll find something I can't handle and fall apart.
- **DISHONEST:** I'm in the delusion that my sponsor doesn't understand my unique situation.
- **SELFISH:** No one can push me. I'll do it when I'm ready. They don't know what I've been through.
- **SELF-SEEKING:** I dodged calls, showed up late to meetings, argued about the process instead of doing it.

Chain connects: The fear of what the inventory might reveal creates a delusion of uniqueness — *my situation is different*. The delusion produces an attitude of defiant autonomy. The autonomy drives avoidance disguised as independence — keeping the very help needed at arm's length.

The Chain patterns above are drawn from twelve worked examples plus additional illustrations. Your inventory will reveal chain patterns unique to you — the specific fears, delusions, attitudes, and actions that make up your version of "running the show." Use this as a guide to help trace each resentment from its visible surface to its hidden root. For the four-part diagnostic framework that names these links, see SDSF. For deeper exploration of each link, see the individual deep dives: Afraid, Dishonest, Selfish, Self-Seeking.

Sources & Attribution

Direct Big Book text:

- p.62-¶1: "driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking and self pity" — the four elements
- p.62-¶2: "Selfishness — self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles"
- p.61-62: The actor metaphor — the self-will run riot passage

- p.67-¶2: “Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened?” — the diagnostic question
- p.67-¶3: “This short word somehow touches about every aspect of our lives” — fear’s pervasiveness
- p.68-¶1: “We put them on paper, even though we had no resentment in connection with them” — fears beyond resentments

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions:

- p.49: “When our failings generate fear, we then have soul-sickness. This sickness, in turn, generates still more character defects” — the cycle
- p.76: “The chief activator of our defects has been self-centered fear” — fear as root cause

BBA workshop methodology *(interpretive frameworks built on the BB text above):*

- The Chain formulation itself — reading p.62-¶1 as a causal sequence (fear → delusion → attitude → action) rather than a descriptive list
- The mapping of “self pity” to “my attitude” (bracket added by BBA)
- The writing order (actions first, fears last) and reading order (fears first, actions last)
- The Opposite-Fear Principle — practical application of p.68-¶1
- The Chain template and tips

Analytical work *(pattern analysis derived from the twelve worked examples):*

- The Self-Fulfilling Nature table — inference that actions produce the feared outcome
- The Self-Reinforcing Loop — extended interpretation of ◆ 12&12 p.49
- Common Chain Archetypes (Defender, Controller, People-Pleaser, Fortress, Performer, Victim)
- Person-Based vs. Principle-Based Chain patterns
- Harm by archetype table
- Additional constructed examples (Workplace, Friendship, Family, Recovery)

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 the-chain.md