

Gamblers Anonymous

A Guide to Fourth Step Inventory



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Introduction

A GUIDE TO THE FOURTH STEP MORAL INVENTORY

The Truth Shall Set You Free

The fourth step of the Gamblers Anonymous Programme reads, “Made a searching and fearless moral and financial inventory of ourselves.” Inasmuch as GA presently has an excellent guide (the *Pressure Group Handbook*) to help us come to grips with our financial problems, this guide will concern itself with the other departments of our life.

We feel that a guide to the fourth-step moral inventory is a long-overdue necessity for GA.

The adjectives that describe the seriousness and intensity with which to approach the action demanded in the Fourth Step of the Recovery Programme are *searching* and *fearless*. This means that we must examine, evaluate and categorise every department of our lives. The word *inventory* means a detailed list of articles or ideas and their determined worth or value.

It is with this thought in mind that we approached the writing of this guide. We have tried to be as far-reaching and searching as possible, so as to adhere to the spirit of this most important step in our recovery. There are no boundaries to, nor are there any shortcuts in, the search for truth. In searching for the truth, we must continue to pursue it, regardless of where that search may

take us. We must do this fearlessly for there is nothing to fear in finding the truth. The truth shall set us free: free to take the many opportunities life presents; free to be a contributory and integral part of the wonderful community of mankind.

This guide is divided into three sections. They are:

1. CHARACTER
2. PRIORITIES, PRINCIPLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
3. FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS

Instructions

We herewith submit the following suggestions for the use of this guide:

1. This guide is designed to be most effective if the moral inventory is written. It can then be reviewed by the person who is taking it for its content, thoroughness and truth.
2. This inventory is not designed to be taken in an hour or two. We suggest you take an hour each evening, in the hope that you can complete it in two to three weeks.
3. Take it alone without prompting or coaching from anyone.
4. Upon its completion you may wish to share it with someone in whom you can confide.
5. Everyone in GA, regardless of the number of years in the Programme, should take this inventory at least once each year.

6. Keep your completed inventories and compare them to future ones you may make.
7. A new member of GA should take this inventory only after being in the Fellowship for three months.
8. Be as honest and thorough as you can: if you are not, you are only harming yourself.
9. Search for the truth and come to know the truth, for the truth shall set you free.

I. Character

When we speak of character, we are speaking about distinctive traits, qualities or attributes of an individual's pattern of behaviour, personality and moral constitution. Character, then, is not something with which we are born, but rather something we have become.

It is true that in our early years there were a number of outside influences (parents, teachers, friends and acquaintances) that played important roles in the development of our character, be it good or bad. Fortunately, however, we are never *stuck* with whatever kind of character we may have, for character can always be developed and improved.

Character plays an important role in a person's destiny. Character determines how one will deal with feelings and emotions. A person's character will determine a person's standing with his

peers, and finally, character plays a crucial role for the individual themselves. Character is the key to all departments of one's life, and has a direct effect on the parts of life covered by the ensuing sections of this guide.

Step 6: "Were entirely ready to have these defects of character removed." This step specifically deals with character as a whole.

"The most difficult and time-consuming job with which a person is faced is that of bringing about a personality-change within themselves." It is necessary at this time, and for the sake of this inventory, to show the basic difference between personality and character, so that we may put each in its proper perspective.

Personality: Applies to such personal qualities as voice, hearing, cordiality etc., that determine the way a person acts in his/her social and personal relationships.

Character: Applies to distinctive traits, qualities or attributes of an individual pattern of behaviour, personality and moral constitution.

Again, we can readily see that personality is only a part of character. With this thought in mind, let us now begin to take inventory of our whole character with as much honesty as possible.

Remember, there are three distinctive parts that make up our character. They are:

1. **Behaviour:** A way of acting;
2. **Personality:** A personal or individual quality that makes one person different from and act differently to another;

3. **Moral constitution:** In agreement with a standard of what is right and good in character and conduct.

Strengths of Character

Following is a list of some strengths of character for your review. Read them carefully.

Tolerance: Indulgence or forbearance in judging the opinions, customs or actions of others without necessarily agreeing or sympathising.

Promptness: Doing what must be done without delay or excuse.

Honesty: Being fair and candid in dealing with and talking to other people, characterised by openness and sincerity.

Communication: Ability to transmit and receive information and feelings and understanding through speech, gestures or writing.

Charity: Being kind and generous in the giving of help, understanding and compassion to those in need.

Dignity: A state of worthiness, honour and self-respect about one's general appearance and manner.

Humility: Regardless of ability, fame or fortune, the state of mind that one is not better than another person.

Industriousness: The giving of an earnest, hardworking, diligent and steady effort to all challenges undertaken.

Optimism: The tendency to take the most hopeful view of matters or expect the best outcome regardless of circumstances; the practice of looking on the bright side of life.

Forgiveness: To give up the wish to punish or get even with; to pardon or excuse.

Responsibility: Obligated or expected to account for; ability to tell right from wrong.

Consideration: To be thoughtful of others and their feelings.

Friendliness: On good terms with; not hostile; quality or condition of being friendly.

Defects of Character

The following is a list of some defects of character for your review. Read them carefully.

Selfishness: Having such regard for one's own interest and advantage that the happiness and welfare of others become of less concern than is considered right or just.

Alibi: To minimise, pardon or excuse a wrong, fault or action as though it were unimportant.

False pride/arrogance: An excessive belief in one's own worth, merit or superiority.

Phoniness: Presenting oneself to be something one is not, manifesting this through actions, words and deeds; an imposter.

Procrastination: The postponement, deferral or delay in saying or doing those things that must be done.

Laziness: Not willing or eager to work or exert oneself; doing only the minimum required in order to get by.

Coarseness: Not refined in feeling, manner, language or taste.

Self-deception: The act or fact of deceiving oneself; self-delusion.

Condemnation: To criticise or condemn; being judgmental.

Insincerity: Not honest or candid; deceitful.

Impatience: Not willing to bear delay, opposition, pain or bother.

Intolerance

Dishonesty

Inability/unwillingness to communicate

Self-pity

Pessimism

Bigotry

Taking Inventory

Having read all the previous information carefully, we now ask you to begin to consider your character. The following questions are for you to answer in writing to the best of your ability. Try to be as searching and fearless in your answers as is requested in Step Four. Remember, this is for *you* in *your* search for the truth.

1. List which character traits are your particular strengths and weaknesses.

2. Write a description of each of these traits as they apply to you. For each written description ask yourself the following questions. How does this particular trait affect your:
 - a. Self-image? (View of yourself)
 - b. Attitude? (Way of thinking, acting or feeling)
 - c. Performance? (Execution, accomplishment or achievement)
 - d. Reputation? (What other people think and say of your character)(It may help you to write some specific examples.)

3. With reference to your list of strengths:
 - a. Just how strong is each? Score each strength using ten as the highest mark.
 - b. Do you find that you can build on your strengths?
 - c. Are you willing to do so?
 - d. Would it be worth the effort?
 - e. Write what you would be willing to do to develop each of your strengths.

- f. Have you found that any of your so-called strengths are not really strengths at all? Has your scale of one to ten changed?
 - g. If so, what are you going to do about it? Are you willing to make a commitment to the strengthening of your character?
4. With reference to your character- defects:
- a. Score each defect using one as the lowest mark.
 - b. Do you find that some of your defects are not as bad as you thought they were?
 - c. Are you willing to work at removing these defects?
 - d. Are you willing to make a commitment to that effort?
 - e. List the ways the removal of your defects would benefit you and others.
 - f. As you improve on one defect, will this aid you in improving on others? How?

Following is a suggested mini-formula to help you build your character:

1. Take this inventory as thoroughly and honestly as possible.
2. Follow the steps of recovery to the best of your ability, for they are the foundation of character-building.
3. When you are ready, share your inventory with someone in whom you confide.
4. Plan the actions you must take to develop a better character.
5. Implement this plan. Do not be afraid to ask for help.
6. Do not confuse your outgoing personality with your inward character.

DO YOU FEEL YOU ARE EVER FINISHED WORKING ON YOUR CHARACTER-DEVELOPMENT?

II. Priorities, Principles and Responsibilities

When joining GA and committing to a new way of life, a critical review of priorities, principles and responsibilities is necessary to determine if they are in proper perspective.

There are numerous items in our lives that can be hazardous to our basic wellbeing. Because of the high priority placed on them, other areas of life are neglected which causes growing and continuing problems. If priorities are out of order, they will affect participation in all areas of life. A constant balance needs to be maintained between knowledge of self and communication of that inner self with the outside world. Periodic re-evaluation is an essential tool in this phase of moral inventory as life-events, age and participation in the programme will affect emphasis on priorities.

Examine the following suggested priorities to determine if they are in a sensible and orderly sequence. How do you fit into the world around you?

1. Abstinence from gambling
2. To myself and my Higher Power
3. To my family
4. To my job, vocation or profession
5. To my goals, dreams and aspirations
6. To friends, neighbours and community
7. To special-interest areas

1. **Abstinence from gambling:** If, by your own admission, you are a compulsive gambler, and have made a commitment to stop, there is not one thing that should supersede abstinence

from gambling. Without abstinence very little else is possible, for by the very nature of the illness, a lifetime of growth, responsibility, awareness and peace of mind are impossible.

LETTING GO OF THE GAMBLER

- a. How important is it that you stop gambling?
 - b. Do you try to implement the GA Recovery Programme in your daily life?
 - c. Do you attend meetings regularly?
 - d. What do you do for other compulsive gamblers?
 - e. What does Gamblers Anonymous mean to you?
 - f. Do you listen to and evaluate what others say at meetings?
 - g. How are you involved in the Programme?
2. **To myself and my Higher Power:** One cannot be right for other people until one is right for oneself. In order for this to happen, there must be inner feelings of self-esteem and belonging. Self-knowledge is not enough to sustain you, but with the help of a power greater than yourself all things are possible. That is, when you become one with the Power, happiness and peace of mind are the results.
- a. Have I faced myself honestly and examined my strengths and weaknesses?
 - b. Write a description of yourself.
 - c. After reading the description, can you say that you would choose a friend fitting that description?
 - d. Would you say that you are neat and clean, both of mind and body?

- e. Imagine a model person possessing all the qualities that would make him a desirable friend. How do you compare? Is it possible for you to strive to become that person?
- f. How would you describe your general attitude to life?
- g. Do you believe in a power greater than yourself? Write a description of your Higher Power, whatever you conceive it to be. Be thorough!
- h. What do you will or wish for yourself?
- i. What does your Higher Power will or wish for you?
- j. Is there much difference?
- k. Would living the life designed by your Higher Power be fulfilling?
- l. Can you become *one* with your Higher Power?

3. **To my family:** There is nothing more important to a person's fulfilment than family. Through family one can satisfy all the basic needs of a human being: to love and be loved; to cherish and be cherished; to provide and be provided for; to give and to receive; to feel wanted and needed. All the basic needs of a human being can be realised through interaction with family-members who love one another.

- a. Write a short description of the love and caring you have for each member of your family.
- b. Write a short description of what you think each member of your family feels about you. Do you think these feelings are justified?
- c. Do you reveal by words and actions the feelings you have for each member of your family?
- d. Are you responsive to the material needs of your family?
- e. Are you responsive to their emotional needs?

- f. Do you share your thoughts and feelings with your loved ones, and do you allow them to share their thoughts and feelings with you? How do you do this?
- g. What kind of example do you set for your children? Explain.
- h. What do you do to earn their trust?
- i. Write a description that would best describe your family-life. Do you think that each member feels as though he is a vital part of it? See if you can determine whether each member enjoys peace of mind and happiness as a result of being a part of the family. What do you feel you can do to improve the general wellbeing of your family?

4. **To my job, vocation or profession:** The better part of one's life is spent performing one's job, vocation or profession, be it housewife, attorney, labourer, laundress, hairdresser or salesman. A person's profession plays a vital role in his wellbeing. All too often this area is looked upon as a necessary evil rather than as an area to help achieve fulfilment.

- a. Do you enjoy your job? If not, why?
- b. At the end of a day's work do you feel that you have accomplished something?
- c. What rewards do you think you gain from your job?
- d. Do you give it your best effort?
- e. How can you become better at what you do?
- f. Do you think that you are in the right profession? If not, what do you intend to do about it?

5. **To my goals, dreams and aspirations:** A person with goals has hope, happiness and a healthy state of being. Hope,

happiness and a healthy state of being are natural by-products of the pursuit of worthy goals. A hopeless person merely exists. A person with goals, dreams and aspirations lives life fully. By envisioning ways to rise above yourself and achieve that which is just out of your reach, a healthy state of being is maintained. The thrill of living is not so much an achievement as attempts to achieve. The pursuit of goals fosters confidence, enthusiasm and courage. At day's end a person may be comfortable in the knowledge that he lives 24 hours with serenity.

- a. What are your goals in life? List them and write a description of each.
 - b. Which of these are realistic, achievable and worthy of your time and effort?
 - c. Would the pursuit of these goals interfere with your other responsibilities? How?
 - d. Are you doing anything positive to achieve these goals or are you just wishing they happen?
 - e. Do you have a definite plan to achieve these goals? What is it?
 - f. What actions are you taking on a daily basis to achieve these goals?
 - g. What price are you willing to pay to make these goals a reality? Will it be worth the price?
6. **To friends, neighbours and community:** Our general wellbeing benefits from associations we have with friends and neighbours, and the part we play in our community. It offers us the opportunity to be an integral part of the general scheme of things. It is a great sense of fulfilment to feel you can be a working and integral part of the community of mankind.

- a. Make a list of your closest friends and write a short description of your feelings towards each of them.
- b. Is your action and behaviour towards them consistent with your feelings?
- c. Can you accept them for what they are, or do you find yourself critical of their shortcomings?
- d. Are you there when they need you?
- e. How would you describe your relationship with your neighbours?
- f. What do you think they think of you?
- g. What is your role in your community?
- h. Do you take part in any community activity, such as the Chamber of Commerce, Scouts, Little League or local school activities?
- i. What do you do as an individual to make your community a better place in which to live?
- j. Write a short description of how you feel about your country.
- k. What do you do to make your country a better place in which to live?

7. **To special-interest areas:** There are many other areas in life that apply to an individual that hold a high priority. We all have them, but they are different for each one of us. It could be a hobby, or any number of things. If they are all good, if we enjoy them and they are important to us, then we should pursue them, just so long as they do not interfere with the wellbeing of others.

- a. Make a list of things you do in which you take special interest.
- b. Alongside each describe its importance to you and the benefits you derive from doing it.

- c. Is there any value in them other than pleasure?
- d. Can you afford them financially?
- e. Do other members of your family have an interest in them?
- f. In pursuit of these things, what hardships, if any, do you place on your family?
- g. Do you ever find that you are shirking responsibilities in other areas of your life in doing these things? In what way?

III. Feelings and Emotions

At one time or another, every human being has experienced every known feeling and emotion. If there is any difference in our experience in feelings and emotions, it lies in the degree of the experience.

Feelings, be they positive or negative, are not necessarily defects of character. Positive feelings add to your sense of strength and wellbeing, and produce pleasure, hope and fullness of life. Negative feelings interfere with pleasure and use up energy, leaving us feeling lonely and empty. Feelings are a mental result of how we have handled situations throughout our lives, and a result of how our minds were programmed in our formative years.

Feelings, be they love or hate, joy or remorse, happiness or anger, are valid and an integral part of the human makeup. We experience a multitude of feelings every day of our lives, some positive, some negative. Some make us feel good, some bad. It is much healthier to face up to our feelings and deal with them, than to deny their existence.

Feelings can come over us without a moment's notice. They have no boundaries. Everyone, at one time or another has experienced fear, worry, remorse, joy, love and happiness. Whatever the feelings, be they positive or negative, they are all very natural and normal, and serve a definite purpose. Whatever your feelings are, they are not unique. The question is, "How do we deal with them?"

Certain feelings can become a problem when we become consumed with them, and if/when this occurs, we can be sure that the reason this has happened is that we have failed to deal with them properly.

This section will concern itself with various feelings, which we will try to sort out as they apply to us individually, and how we can best deal with them.

Following is a list of some of the feelings that, from time to time, we experience on a regular basis. Some of these feelings we also experience on a daily basis:

guilt (remorse)
happiness
anger
fear
love
hatred
envy
pride
freedom
suspicion

joy
resentment
contentment
frustration
hope
gratitude
loneliness
depression
sadness
worry

1. Do you understand the meaning of the above feelings? If not, look them up in a dictionary and write down the definitions.
2. Have you, at one time or another, experienced each of the above feelings?
3. List the feelings you experience on a daily basis.
4. List the feelings you would like to experience on a daily basis.
 - a. Put a tick next to all the feelings you would like to experience but do not experience. Why are these important to you?
 - b. How does the lack of these feelings affect your daily life?
 - c. What positive steps can you take to achieve these feelings?
 - d. How much of yourself are you willing to give to achieve these feelings? Explain.
5. List the feelings that create problems in your life.
 - a. Write a short description of each of these feelings as they apply to you.
 - b. Why, in your opinion, do you think you are experiencing each of these feelings?
 - c. What action can you take to cope with any of these feelings?
6. Are you capable of expressing your feelings to those around you?
 - a. If you do express your feelings, how do you do this?
 - b. If you tend to hide your feelings, do you know why? What are the reasons?

Following is a suggested mini-formula to help you deal with your feelings. In writing:

1. Isolate and define each of your feelings.
2. Try to pinpoint the people, places, things or circumstances that cause you to have these feelings.
3. Share your thoughts about these feelings with someone in whom you confide.
4. Make a definite plan of attack to control your feelings, good or bad. Review your plan with someone with whom you feel comfortable.
5. Implement your plan. Do not be afraid to ask for help.

Conclusion

Upon completion of this inventory, if taken in the spirit of a search for the truth, you should have a basic and sound overview of what you are made of, for what you stand, what you are doing, where you are going, and how you fit into the world around you. An inventory, of course, reveals the negative, as well as the positive, aspects of one's life, and its primary value is that of sorting things out in an orderly and thorough fashion. It is certainly the starting point for a meaningful and manageable life, but a starting point is all that it is. The massive job lies with what we do with this truth we have found about ourselves. What action will we take towards our newly-made commitments? How well will we practise and implement our plans? The task lies ahead, but it is a task well worth pursuing, for it is the task that stimulates growth, and growth bring happiness, and happiness means love, and love is God, and love is truth, and the truth shall set you free.