

Introduction to the Fifth Step

After we completed the fourth step of Alcoholics Anonymous—made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. We use this personal inventory to examine the way our being a human being, with natural defects of character, have developed over time. The 5th step is a vital step in receiving the freedom promised in working the steps. By admitting the things we are most afraid to share, we can be turned over to the care of god, who loves and accepts all of us.

If it is your first time doing the fifth step, know that by the time newcomers arrive here they have already done impactful and powerful work in writing a fourth step inventory. It is said that to be completely freed from the obsession of alcohol or drug addiction there are no easier methods than this. And so the good news is that if you have made it this far, to see your destructive behaviors and bring them into the sunlight of the spirit is all that is required in order for a higher power to begin to remove them. Congratulations.

This fourth step inventory is but a launchpad to further self awareness and spiritual awakening. The list of all persons we had harmed that will come in the 8th step will start to materialize in this 5th step recovery process. And the next step after the inventory is read is to experience becoming entirely ready to have God as you understand God—not you—remove your character defects. And this brings us one step closer to that spiritual awakening that is promised as a result of these steps.

Finding a suitable person to share the fifth step with is crucial. AA sponsors often serve as compassionate and understanding listeners, guiding individuals through this vulnerable process. Choosing someone who has walked the same path and has achieved conscious contact with their higher power is essential. Some feel comfortable sharing some of the worst items with a family member or other AA participants. Good reasons for choosing the right person for this step abound and sometimes you may want one or two people to share the load. What's most important is that you share *everything* you have written and share all of the negative thoughts that go with the process.

For newcomers, taking the fifth step for the first time can be daunting. Fear and apprehension may arise as they prepare to disclose their worst items from the personal inventory. However, it is important to remember that the fifth step is a necessary and transformative part of the

recovery journey. By sharing these burdens, individuals can begin to release the weight of their past and embark on the rest of the program with renewed hope and determination. And when in doubt, always rely on the serenity prayer. Some found it best to begin and end each reading session with the serenity prayer as a spiritual container.

Fifth Step Worksheet

After the intensive inventorying-taking of the fourth step, having a fifth step worksheet may seem like overkill and our purpose is not to belabor any of the discoveries made in the fourth step but to facilitate building a *fifth step practice*. It does not come naturally for addicts or alcoholics to tell the *whole truth* about our lives and the act of writing them down, alone with our thoughts, as we did in the fourth steps is not sufficient in order for us to see the whole truth about what we wrote. There is great power in reading aloud what one has written and in the reading, commenting on and expanding upon what you are sharing.

The worksheet below serves as a guide to the sharing process and is not meant to double the work done in the fourth step inventory but something that you will print out and have near you as you share your fifth step—that is, read what you’ve written in your fourth step inventory—in order to take notes that will be used for Steps 6, 7, and ultimately 8. The first column for the 4th Step Nugget—represents the resentment, fear, sex inventory entry, or whatever topic was being inventoried. Feel free to come up with your own title system, as long as it makes sense to God, yourself, and the other person you are sharing your 4th Step inventory with, it will work.

Some of these examples may seem esoteric or complex, but do not worry if they do not make sense just from reading them. It has been said that there is no chapter in the Big Book titled “Into Thought.” In fact, the chapter “Into Action” begins the discussion on the Fifth Step. By printing and using this worksheet in real time, as you read aloud your fourth step, you will easily see how it works. All that is required is a willingness to try.

4th Step Nugget	Additional Details Not Written in 4th Step	Defects active in situation	Persons harmed (if any) and how
Shiela	There was another time I lied to her	Dishonesty, self-centered fear	Self (by cutting off conscious contact to

	when she asked if I had gone to the liquor store and I told her I was at an AA meeting.		HP), Shiela (by perpetuating a dishonest relationship that created emotional and spiritual harm).
Fear of asking for what I need	Instead of asking Carol directly for the money owed the company I sent an email "hoping she was well"	Dishonesty, self-centered fear	Self (by cutting off conscious contact to HP), Carol (by perpetuating a dishonest relationship that created emotional and spiritual harm), my company (by delaying the invoice needed to pay my employees).
People who look different than I do	I have chosen to patronize different businesses out of assumptions made about the cashiers through the window	Resentment/hatred, assumptive, critical and unforgiving	Self (by cutting myself off from making connections with others) and society (by perpetuating behaviors that marginalize others)

It may elude you, too, to come up with words for character defects (perfectionism, greed, worry, fear, resentment, dishonesty, selfishness, arrogance, and many more). However, it is not required to know in advance your own character defects and this is the beauty of the fifth step. The other person who is hearing your fifth step can help you. We learn in recovery that in order to fully understand and see ourselves we must allow ourselves to be seen and understood by another person. Ask your listener what defects they hear as you read your 4th step nuggets and write them down if they resonate. Emotional well-being will begin to flow through you as you expose the double lives we all live to the right person and an almighty god who can transform you.

A note on our PDF version of Sober Speaker's idiot's guide to the fifth step below, it is worth noting that the printable version worksheet we drafted was inspired from the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous but it did not come from Alcoholics Anonymous World Services.

SoberSpeak's Printable Fifth Step Worksheet

4th Step Nugget	Additional Details not written in 4th Step	Defects active in the situation	Persons harmed (if any)

