12 STEPPERS

Step 4 Resentment Inventory Worksheet

A Guided 4th Step Resentment List With Examples

A printable 4th step resentment worksheet built on the Big Book column method, with prompt lists, a My Part checklist, worked examples and a patterns page. For AA, NA, Al-Anon, OA, CoDA and other 12 step programs.

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Want the complete 4th step workbook?

This worksheet is one part of the free **Step 4 Worksheet** from 12steppers.org, which includes all four inventories, a character defects and assets checklist and guided reflection questions. Find it at 12steppers.org.

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SECTION 1

Before You Begin

Step 4: "Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves."

Why Start With Resentment

The Big Book calls resentment the "number one" offender and says no other problem does more damage to alcoholics (page 64). Whatever your fellowship, resentments are the grudges we replay that keep us angry, stuck and looking for relief.

The word itself comes from roots meaning "to feel again." That's exactly what a resentment does. This inventory is where many people start Step 4, and it's often the longest list. Don't rush it. If it still stings, it belongs on the page.

How to Use This Worksheet

1. **Read, then write.** Each section opens with a short explanation. Read it, then fill in the chart that follows.
2. **Go one column at a time.** Finish all of Column 1 before you touch Column 2. This keeps you from arguing your case on every line and helps patterns show up.
3. **Work with a sponsor.** Step 4 is designed to be shared in Step 5. Ask your sponsor how they'd like you to approach it, and call them when you get stuck.
4. **Set a steady pace.** Pick a regular time and place to write. Don't rush and miss things, and don't let it drag on for months either.
5. **Keep it private.** Store your inventory somewhere secure and share it only with the person you choose for Step 5.

Suggested Reading

Read the resentment section of Chapter 5, "How It Works," in *Alcoholics Anonymous* (pages 64 to 67) before you begin. It's free to read online at aa.org. Members of other fellowships can pair this worksheet with their own step literature.

A note on safety and self-care

Inventory work can stir up painful memories, including trauma, abuse or grief. That's normal, and it doesn't mean you're doing it wrong.

If someone abused, assaulted or exploited you, **you do not have to find "your part" in what was done to you.** You can write it down so it doesn't stay buried, then talk it through with your sponsor and a licensed counselor or therapist.

If you feel overwhelmed or unsafe, pause and reach out. In the U.S., you can call or text **988** (Suicide and Crisis Lifeline) any time, or call SAMHSA's free National Helpline at **1-800-662-4357**. This worksheet is a recovery tool, not medical or mental health treatment.

SECTION 2

How the Resentment Inventory Works

The Big Book's own example on page 65 lays resentments out in three columns. A couple of pages later, it asks where we had been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened (page 67). Over the years, sponsors turned those questions into a fourth column. That's the layout used here.

How to Fill Out the Resentment Chart

Column 1: I'm resentful at	List every person, institution or principle you're angry at, hurt by or threatened by. Use the prompt list in Section 3. Finish this whole column before moving on.
Column 2: The cause	For each name, write briefly what happened. Be specific. “She lied to me about the money” beats “She's a liar.”
Column 3: Affects my	Check every part of self that was hurt or threatened. Most resentments touch more than one.
Column 4: My part	Now set aside what they did. Ask where you were selfish, dishonest, self-seeking, frightened or inconsiderate. Check the boxes, then describe your part in your own words. Use the My Part checklist in Section 3 for help.

Tip: the word “fault”

Column 4 isn't about deciding who was wrong. Often the other person did something genuinely hurtful. Your part might simply be that you held onto it for ten years, retaliated or set yourself up to be disappointed. Look for what you can actually change.

The Seven Parts of Self (Column 3)

The Big Book asks whether our self-esteem, pocketbook, ambitions or personal and sex relations were hurt or threatened. Many sponsors break security into emotional and material security and add pride, giving the seven boxes used on the chart.

Self-esteem	How I see myself.
Pride	How I think other people see me.
Emotional security	My sense of being safe, loved and okay inside.
Material security	My money, job, home and possessions. The Big Book calls this the pocketbook.
Ambitions	My plans, goals and hopes for the future, in any area of life.
Personal relations	My relationships with family, friends, coworkers and others.
Sex relations	My romantic and sexual relationships and how I want them to be.

The Five Defects of Self (Column 4)

Selfish	Focused on what I want, with little thought for what others need.
Dishonest	Lying to others or myself, including half-truths and leaving things out.
Self-seeking	Acting to get something for myself: approval, control, advantage or revenge.
Frightened	Letting fear drive my choices instead of my values.
Inconsiderate	Not thinking about how my actions affect other people.

SECTION 3

Resentment Prompt List

Check anything that stirs up anger, hurt or a sense of being wronged. Then carry those names into Column 1. Add your own; this list is only a starting point.

PEOPLE

- ☐ Mother
- ☐ Father
- ☐ Stepparents
- ☐ Siblings
- ☐ Grandparents
- ☐ My children
- ☐ Spouse or partner
- ☐ Ex-partners
- ☐ In-laws
- ☐ Extended family
- ☐ Childhood friends
- ☐ Best friends
- ☐ Former friends
- ☐ Roommates
- ☐ Neighbors
- ☐ Bosses
- ☐ Coworkers
- ☐ Teachers or coaches
- ☐ Clergy
- ☐ Doctors or therapists
- ☐ Police officers
- ☐ Judges or lawyers
- ☐ Probation or parole officers
- ☐ Landlords
- ☐ Creditors
- ☐ Sponsors
- ☐ People in the program
- ☐ Public figures
- ☐ Myself
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

INSTITUTIONS

- ☐ Government
- ☐ The legal system
- ☐ Jails and prisons
- ☐ Schools
- ☐ Churches or religious groups
- ☐ Employers
- ☐ Hospitals
- ☐ Treatment centers
- ☐ Insurance companies
- ☐ Banks
- ☐ The military
- ☐ Child protective services
- ☐ News media
- ☐ Social media
- ☐ 12 step fellowships
- ☐ Marriage
- ☐ Society
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

PRINCIPLES AND IDEAS

- ☐ God or a Higher Power
- ☐ Religion
- ☐ Sin
- ☐ Heaven and hell
- ☐ Death
- ☐ Fairness and justice
- ☐ The Golden Rule
- ☐ Authority
- ☐ Rules and laws
- ☐ Marriage vows
- ☐ Gender roles
- ☐ Morality
- ☐ Karma
- ☐ Forgiveness
- ☐ Sobriety or abstinence
- ☐ The 12 steps
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

My Part Checklist (Column 4)

When you reach Column 4, read each resentment against this list. Check what fits, then write your part in plain words on the chart.

SELFISH

- ☐ I wanted things my way
- ☐ I ignored what they needed
- ☐ I expected special treatment
- ☐ I wanted credit, attention or approval
- ☐ I took more than my share
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

DISHONEST

- ☐ I lied or left things out
- ☐ I told the story so I looked like the victim
- ☐ I blamed them for something I also do
- ☐ I pretended I didn't care
- ☐ I didn't say what I really felt or needed
- ☐ I lied to myself about my motives
- ☐ _____

SELF-SEEKING

- ☐ I tried to control or manipulate the outcome
- ☐ I put them down to feel bigger
- ☐ I kept score
- ☐ I cared more about winning than repairing
- ☐ I got even, or wanted to
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

FRIGHTENED (OF...)

- ☐ Rejection or being left
- ☐ Looking foolish or weak
- ☐ Losing money, status or security
- ☐ Being controlled
- ☐ Being found out
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

INCONSIDERATE

- ☐ I didn't think about how my actions would land
- ☐ I broke commitments
- ☐ I was rude, cold or dismissive
- ☐ I made them carry my responsibilities
- ☐ I didn't really listen
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

OTHER DEFECTS I NOTICE

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Reading the finished chart

Once all four columns are done, read each row from left to right: the resentment, the cause, the part of self that felt threatened and your part. Then read down Column 4. The defects that keep repeating are the patterns you'll tally in Section 5.

Resentment Inventory

Work down one column at a time and finish it before moving right. Shaded rows are examples. Check every box that applies in Columns 3 and 4.

		COLUMN 3: AFFECTS MY...							COLUMN 4: MY PART					
Col. 1 **I'm resentful at...**	Col. 2 **The cause (what happened?)**	Self-esteem	Pride	Emotional security	Material security	Ambitions	Personal relations	Sex relations	Selfish	Dishonest	Self-seeking	Frightened	Inconsiderate	**My part, in my own words**
My sister	Didn't invite me to Thanksgiving. Told Mom she thinks I'm still drinking.	✓	✓	✓			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	I'd skipped the last two holidays and lied about why. I wanted her to act like nothing happened. Afraid of being judged by the family.
My manager	Gave the promotion to someone newer. Wrote me up for being late.	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓		✓		I was late six times in a month and blamed traffic. I expected to be rewarded for showing up. Afraid I'm falling behind.
The court system	Suspended my license and ordered classes after my DUI.		✓		✓	✓			✓	✓		✓		I chose to drive impaired and could have hurt someone. I want the consequences to disappear without changing my behavior.

Resentment Inventory (continued)

Need more rows? Print this page again or add rows in the Word version. Work down one column at a time and finish it before moving right. Shaded rows are examples. Check every box that applies in Columns 3 and 4.

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Resentment Inventory (continued)

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SECTION 5

Patterns, Letting Go and What Comes Next

Read back over your chart from left to right. The same few defects and fears usually keep showing up, no matter who the resentment is about. Those patterns are what Step 4 is really looking for.

Which parts of self are threatened most?

	Times checked
Self-esteem	
Pride	
Emotional security	
Material security	
Ambitions	
Personal relations	
Sex relations	

Which defects show up most in my part?

	Times checked
Selfish	
Dishonest	
Self-seeking	
Frightened	
Inconsiderate	

1. My top three recurring defects are:

2. People or institutions that show up more than once on my list:

3. The fears that seem to sit underneath most of my resentments:

4. The resentment I'm most afraid to share in Step 5, and why:

Letting Go of a Resentment

The Big Book offers a practical suggestion on page 67. It asks us to see the people who harmed us as spiritually sick, and to show them the same tolerance and patience we'd give a sick friend.

When someone offends us, we can ask how we might be helpful to them and pray to be spared from anger. Many members call this the resentment prayer. It doesn't excuse what happened. It frees you from carrying it.

What Comes Next

Fear inventory	Many of the fears you just named become the start of your fear inventory, the next part of Step 4.
Sex conduct and harms	Your resentment list will also point to relationships and people to review in the sex conduct inventory and harms list.
Step 5	You share your finished inventory with your Higher Power, yourself and another person, usually your sponsor.

SECTION 6

Resources and Sources

Read the Step 4 Literature Free Online

- Alcoholics Anonymous World Services. "The Big Book (Alcoholics Anonymous, Fourth Edition)." *aa.org.* Read, listen or watch in ASL.
- Alcoholics Anonymous World Services. "Chapter 5: How It Works." *Alcoholics Anonymous (PDF).* The Step 4 inventory instructions appear on pages 63 to 71.
- Alcoholics Anonymous World Services. "Step Four." *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (PDF).* Begins on page 42.

If You Need Support Right Now

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. "SAMHSA's National Helpline." *SAMHSA.* Free, confidential treatment referral and information, 24/7, in English and Spanish: 1-800-662-4357.
- 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. "988 Lifeline." *988lifeline.org.* Call or text 988, or chat online, any time.

More From 12steppers.org

- 12steppers.org. "Step 4 Worksheet: The Complete 4th Step Inventory Workbook." *12steppers.org.* All four inventories, a defects and assets checklist and guided questions in one free download.

You'll also find standalone Resentment, Fear, Sex Conduct and Harms Done worksheets, plus worksheets for every step, at **12steppers.org**.

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