

## 155 Fourth Step Questions

### Step 4: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of

This is the sort of fundamental inquiry that can disclose the source of your discomfort and can indicate whether you are able to alter your own conduct and so adjust yourself serenely to self-discipline. Suppose a particular insecurity constantly arouses the same feeling again and again. You can ask to what extent your own mistakes have fed your gnawing anxieties or, if the action of others is part of the cause, what can you do about that? If you are unable to change the present state of affairs, are you willing to take the measures necessary to shape your life to conditions as they are?

#### CHILDHOOD

1. What kind of relationship did your mother have with her parents?
2. What kind of relationship did your father have with his parents?
3. Were you wanted at birth?
4. Write out the circumstances of your family at the time of your birth. Things such as: family size, age differences, and financial status. Was there laughter? Arguing? Depression? Were other relatives or people living with you?
5. In general, describe what you think your family thought of you. Did you feel your parents' attitude toward you was different than other parents' toward their children? How old were you at the birth of your brothers and sisters? How did you feel about the new arrivals? Was either of your parents sick enough to require hospitalization? Were you separated from any important family member? Was there fear or guilt about this separation, in other words, did you feel responsible?
6. Were you threatened by the "Boogey Man," or the Devil, if you misbehaved? If so, what were your fears in this regard?
7. A child is made to feel guilty about his or her normal sexual curiosity. This comes about by his/her being caught and punished for touching his/herself, or being caught masturbating, playing "doctor," or for participating in group masturbation. Many parents tell children that sexual feelings are evil and must be punished. With no sex education, and given this sort of teaching, a child will naturally distort what he knows about sex. When a child is exposed to fully developed nude persons (for instance in the bathroom at home, or in public locker rooms), he/she may begin to feel inadequacy in adult life, even after the person is a thoroughly developed adult. Write down any of the above experiences to which you relate, or that make you feel uneasy.
8. Did you have a difficult time pleasing one or both of your parents? Were you constantly directed and redirected by your parents? Did you obey docilely? Did you have feelings of distress and boredom?

9. Were you afraid of the dark?
10. Were you afraid to fight? Or were you afraid not to fight because of pressure from your father or from any older brothers, or others?
11. Did your parents submit to your whims and immature demands most of the time? Did you have temper tantrums?
12. How did your parents punish you – by trying to reason, or was it physical? How did you react to punishment?
13. What kind of marriage do you think your parents had? If they fought, did you resent it? Did it scare you? Were you used to breaking up their fights? Did you take one side or the other? Were your parents preoccupied with themselves? Did they lack an awareness of your needs? Was there an absence of affection, concern, or loving attention in your home?
14. If your parents were from different religions, did you feel confused about it? What particular idea of “God” was impressed upon you? Did you reject this concept because it seemed inadequate? If you did reject this idea of “God,” did you imagine you had abandoned the “God idea” entirely?
15. Were you afraid of storms?
16. List all the feelings of guilt, fear, resentment you had toward each person in your life, as a child (not your feelings now).
17. Did you feel you were “bad?” Did you put yourself in situations that cause others to punish you?
18. List the first time you stole anything. Inventory all your thefts.
19. How old were you when you first masturbated? Were you ever caught? Did you feel guilty even though you weren’t caught? What other kinds of sexual curiosity were you involved in (homosexual, animal, with any members of the family, anything else)?
20. If you were named after someone, what was/is that person like?
21. Did your family move often? If so, did you make friends and then have to break off the relationship so often that you became afraid to get too close?
22. Do you remember starting school? What were your feelings? Try to remember each successive grade in school and as you do, write out the resentments you felt toward teachers, pupils, anyone. Any fights? Slightings? Hurts? Embarrassments? Put it down on paper!
23. Did you resent your relatives, friends or parents? If so, list them. No resentment is too small to mention. The Big Book states: “Resentment is the number one offender...” (p. 64).

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24. What kind of language did your parents use? Were you ashamed of them for this or for anything else? Did you ever see your parents in the nude? What were your feelings? Did you ever see or hear your parents having sex? What were your feelings?
25. In every family, a child usually has certain "chores" assigned. What were yours? Were they fair? Could you do them in ways that would please your parents? Do you remember longing for a carefree childhood because of the absence of play?
26. Did your parents seem to like your friends better than they did you? And did your friends seem to like your parents better than they did you? If so, did you resent this?
27. Any bad experiences at Sunday school? Or at summer camp?
28. Were you an only child? Did you resent this or enjoy it?
29. Did your parents want a child of the opposite sex when they had you? And did they name you, or dress you, to match their sex choice? Did your appearance (your look, dress, etc.) embarrass you? Did you feel you were different from your classmates?
30. Were you treated as a nuisance or a burden?
31. Did you test possible friends with hostility or obnoxious behavior? Did you force friends to abandon friendly behavior?
32. Write down any other childhood memories that were/are painful.
33. Which of the questions above were the toughest for you to answer? Do you know why?

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## **ADOLESCENCE**

34. Did you have friends when you were an adolescent?
35. Did you consider friendly overtures as a possible trick?
36. Did you have feelings of complete worthlessness?
37. What kind of friend were you?
38. What interest, or lack of interest, did you have in school?
39. How was your social life?

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40. Did you participate in sports or creative activities, such as music, art, etc.? What were the reasons for your participation, or lack of it, in these activities?
41. Did you have a difficult time pleasing yourself? Did it bother you if you made a mistake? Were you overly concerned with every detail?
42. Did you drift in and out of relationships?
43. Did you suffer intensely from insecurities, and tend to keep people at a distance?
44. Did you resent not being part of a crowd? Or not being a leader? Or not being “in?”
45. Were you shy or outgoing?
46. If you dropped out of school, explain your feelings and reasons.
47. Anything happen in high school that was a continuing source of shame?
48. Did you have great longing for someone to care for you? Did you make an effort to appear self-sufficient, independent or others, detached, aloof? Did you pout, sulk, behave like a good child, have temper tantrums, act like a “dummy?”
49. Do you remember the kind of lies you told (if any)? How did you feel when you got caught lying?
50. Were you envious or jealous of others?
51. Did you have great difficulty in giving or receiving love and affection?
52. First sexual intercourse: What were your feelings? Did you feel guilty? Did you feel disappointed? Be as explicit about the feelings as you can.
53. List in detail any homosexual experience, masturbation fantasy, or other sexual activity that you remember from this time in your life. Keep in mind that it is not important “with whom” or “on which date” or “how often,” rather you should concern yourself with your feelings about the experience.
54. Did you become pregnant / get someone pregnant? What did you do and how did you feel about your actions?
55. Were you ashamed of your parents as an adolescent? Were they too old, too sloppy, too fat, too drunk, too whatever?
56. Was there enough money for the things you needed? If not, were you resentful that there wasn't? If there was, did you take it too much for granted? Did you feel any siblings got more than you did? Write out your feelings about money as an adolescent. Did you tend to be impulsive?
57. Were you the kind of child you would want to have?

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58. Were you a thief? What did you steal?
59. Were you undependable as a friend, breaking off relationships without any explanation when someone or something better seemed to come along?
60. Did you pit one family member against another?
61. Some people feel inadequate as adults because they were, at one time, exposed to youngsters more physically developed at that time. Were you exposed to other children in gym class or in the restrooms who were older than you and more developed physically? How did you feel then? How do you feel now?
62. What was the best experience you had during this period of your life? What was the worst?
63. We've covered a lot of ground on these questions. Now, is there ANYTHING that made you particularly uncomfortable when writing about it? Have you put down everything that you can remember now that "bugged" you back then? Even the simplest, most nit-picking things are important if they troubled you – or trouble you still. Put them down now!

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## ADULTHOOD

64. Are you afraid of getting too close to another person for fear of being rejected?
65. Do you test your relationships repeatedly, looking for slights or any indifference in order to find some ground for complaint?
66. Do you reject others before they can reject you?
67. Define love. What do you feel it is? Do you drift in and out of relationships? Does it seem that people mean little to you? Do you feel the desire to be a parent? Do you feel a desire for active caring? For unlimited acceptance?
68. If you are married or have been married, list the things you and your mate had in common and what your goals were at the outset of your marriage. If you have been married more than once, do this for each of your marriages. Now list the things that were different between you.
69. If you married a cold or unloving person, ask yourself why you chose them to be your mate. Did you use it as an excuse to find new romances? Was your mother or father a cold or unloving person? And is this your chance to get even with them through your spouse?
70. Why did you get married? Or, why haven't you gotten married? Did you marry for the right reasons? Did you marry earlier than your peer group? Later? Do you accept or resent the

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responsibilities of marriage and family? Do you share in the responsibilities for the family's problems?

71. Are you able to be cheerful when everything seems to be leading to despair?
72. Do you resist the impulse to complain to others about your situation? Are you able to forgive those who have injured you?
73. Do you continue to assume excessive responsibility if there is no longer a financial need?
74. Do you allow your family to come between you and your spouse?
75. Do you make excessive demands and expectations of your spouse?
76. Are you able to admit that you have no authority, control or power over any other human being? Even if you can admit to it, do you honestly feel it to be true?
77. Do you create a pleasant, cheerful environment? Do you try to?
78. Are you still a baby in your parents' eyes and do you take advantage of this? Are you a baby in the eyes of your spouse?
79. Have your parents gotten you out of trouble that you ought to have been able to handle yourself?
80. Do you gossip about others?
81. Are you comfortable in the company of someone less fortunate than you are?
82. Do you know how to respond to the needs of others? To give of yourself?
83. When, how, and in what instances did your selfish pursuit of sex relations damage other people and yourself? What people were hurt? How badly? Did you spoil your marriage? Injure your children? Did you jeopardize your standing in the community? Just how did you react to these situations at the time? Did you burn with guilt that nothing could extinguish? Did you have bouts of depression? Or did you insist that you were the pursued and not the pursuer, and thus absolve yourself?
84. How have you reacted to frustration in sexual matters? When denied, have you become vengeful or depressed? Did you take it out on other people? If there was rejection or coldness in your home did you use this as a reason for promiscuity? Did you tend to be promiscuous with little or no lasting satisfaction or emotional interchange?
85. Do you use sex as a punishment or a reward?

86. When and how have you withheld sex relations from your spouse? Has it hurt your marriage? Did it give you a sense of control, or revenge, or power? Was it selfish? Did you feel guilty about it afterward?
87. Are laws made for other people? Do you have the right to make up your own laws as you go along?
88. If revenge were possible right now, who would be at the top of your list?
89. What are your feelings about sex, parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents, friends, your children, your mate, your intimate friends, your job, or your being a compulsive person, finances, divorce or marriage (depending on your current status)?
90. What are your hopes and goals?
91. Does diversion and distraction interfere with your adult goals? Do you believe that your situation is not really hopeless and that you are capable of improving it? Are you able to feel that tomorrow will be brighter if you've had a bad day?
92. How much time do you spend with your family? With the program?
93. What is your greatest fear?
94. What is your sex life like? Is it as mature as you might want it to be? Are you disappointed in your mate for not fulfilling your sexual needs? Are you careless with your partner's feelings? Write out your ideal of a healthy sex life.
95. Are you ashamed of your body, or the way you look? Write out what is wrong with the physical you. Write out the best things about you physically. Now list the things about yourself that you are ashamed of.
96. Do you feel you are still trying to please your parents?
97. Do you drive yourself to the point of exhaustion?
98. Do you accept that you can only do your best?
99. Do you use people to get what you want?
100. Do you expect others to pour out love, affection and services?
101. If you are a thief, what have you stolen? Do not forget to include employer's time and the good feelings of others, which you destroyed.

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102. Do you have a pattern of getting sick? Do you go to doctors repeatedly without finding anything organically wrong? Do you use illness as an excuse to avoid responsibilities or to get attention or sympathy?
103. In business relationships, write out your resentments toward bosses and co-workers. Do you feel jealous of them? Are you concerned that others in your office will get more money or prestige than you will? Do you try to prove that you "can take it" on a job that is rough and tough? Do you complain about how hard you must work?
104. List all the negative feelings you have about the people involved in your work life.
105. Are you/were you indifferent or careless on the job?
106. Do you think you should be the boss?
107. Do you use the excuse that your boss (or your family, or your friends) "shouldn't expect so much" from you.
108. Are you able to laugh at yourself for sometimes trying to be other than your true self?
109. Do you often leave jobs or projects incomplete? Do you feel good about yourself when you complete a job because you want to finish it?
110. If married, write out exactly how you feel this minute about your spouse and your children. Are they living up to your expectations? What are your expectations?
111. Is your need for affection so intense that the demands for it may be exhausting in a sexual relationship?
112. Do you feel that no one really understands you?
113. How do you think you would be different if "they" were out of your life?
114. Do you still feel different from other members of the program? Do you feel apart from them in any way? Do you feel superior or inferior? Do you avoid looking at yourself by making statements such as, "Oh, well, some of us are sicker than others"?
115. Do you compare yourself to others who are further along in their program than you are or people who are more talented or accomplished than you are, in order to make yourself suffer?
116. Are you able to accept the fact of a situation, thereby deciding what to do about it?
117. The only person you can adequately compare yourself to is YOURSELF. How were you 6 days ago? 6 weeks ago? 6 months ago? At your first meeting? How are you today?

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118. List every act (or event) you swore you would take to the grave, disclosing to no one. Be honest and open. (Remember, life gave us all good and bad experiences. Often the things we are most ashamed of are the very things that made us try to grow into someone better.) If you want freedom, you have to let all of it go. The Big Book states, "We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it, no matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. If you want to help bring peace into the lives of the people you will be dealing with later, you must find it in your own life first." pp 83-84.
119. In what way are you a responsible person?
120. Are you a "tightwad?" What are your fears concerning money? Do you spend money with no thought for tomorrow? Are you in debt?
121. Do you try to fill your life with the gratification of impulse?
122. Is your personal appearance particularly careless... or prideful? On sight, do you judge people by their appearance? Are you ever/never satisfied with yourself and others?
123. What things make you feel greedy, angry, envious?
124. Do you pad your expense account? Do you use household money to buy things for yourself?
125. Do you feel resentment toward another member of the program?
126. What kinds of things do you lie about most?
127. Do you still need to play (or be seen as) the "Big Shot?"
128. Are you hurt when people turn away and won't play your game?
129. Do you resent not getting as much attention as you did when you were new in program?
130. What kinds of things do you waste most time worrying about – the future or the past?
131. Do you find it difficult to find moments of relaxation and freedom from responsibility?
132. Do you find yourself punishing your children the way your parents punished you?
133. Have you been so busy making money that your family sees little of you?
134. Have you been so busy making money that you have no family?
135. Do you feel aloof with your spouse and tend to inhibit any spontaneous warmth and interest in sex?

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136. When your mate turns cold, do you spend more time with him/her or do you turn to someone else more "understanding?"
137. Do you spend too much time at program meetings?
138. Do you take at least one night a week for the family only?
139. Are you able to be yourself and honest with others about "who you are?"
140. Have communications with your family become so intolerable that you are depending on members of the program to get your necessary "strokes" and attention?
141. Do you feel that somehow you have to prove that you are worthy of love, either in the program or elsewhere? Elaborate on this point.
142. Are you cold and indifferent to your family, friends, co-workers? Are you cold and indifferent to your own needs?
143. Do you threaten others by saying that you will return to your compulsive behavior if you don't get your own way, etc?
144. Are you concerned about your performance in sexual relationships?
145. Are you involved in a love affair that could bring harm to you or to others?
146. Do you become angry when others don't see things the way you do?
147. Are you loaded with a sense of guilt for having put people through so much hell?
148. In addition to your compulsive behavior, what character defects in you contribute to your financial instability? Do you tend to be impulsive about spending money? Do you spend beyond your means?
149. Are you extravagant? Do you recklessly borrow money, caring little about whether it is repaid or not?
150. The most common symptoms of emotional insecurity are: worry, anger, self-pity, and depression. These stem from causes, which sometimes seem to be within us, and at other times without. To take inventory in this respect, we ought to consider carefully all personal relationships that bring continuous and recurring troubles. It should be remembered that this kind of insecurity could arise in any area in which instincts are threatened. Questioning directed toward this end might run like this:
  - a. Looking at both past and present, what sex situations have caused me anxiety and bitterness, frustration, or depression?

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- b. Appraising each situation fairly, can you see where YOU have been at fault? Did these perplexities beset you because of selfishness or unreasonable demands?
  - c. Or, if your disturbance was seemingly caused by the behavior of others, why do you lack the ability to accept conditions you cannot change?
151. Do you feel that faith and dependency upon a Higher Power is somewhat weak, even cowardly?
152. Has your inability to accept much "on faith" been handicapped by obstinacy, sensitiveness, and unreasonable prejudice?
153. Do you dissect spiritual beliefs and the practices of spiritually minded persons on the basis of wholesale condemnation?
154. What would your choice be if you fearlessly had to face the proposition that GOD either IS or he ISN'T?
155. These are the sorts of fundamental inquiries that can disclose the source of your discomfort and can indicate whether you are able to alter your own conduct and so adjust yourself serenely to self-discipline. Suppose a particular insecurity constantly arouses the same feeling again and again. You can ask to what extent your own mistakes have fed your gnawing anxieties, and if the action of others is part of the cause, what can you do about that? If you are unable to change the present state of affairs, are you willing to take the measures necessary to shape your life to conditions as they are?