

'Step 6: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.' – AA Big Book
OA Central NJ Red Bank BB Speaker Series – October 16th, 2010 – Writing the Character Defect Essay

"I do not need to fear failure. I need, rather, the peace of mind that comes with taking the action I have been putting off."
–For Today, p. 168

The OA 12/12 method to use to become entirely ready for God to remove these traits:

1. Make a list of traits for improvement (character defects), which you have realized you have. (Ideally this should be based upon the observations noted in your 4th and 5th steps.)
2. To this list, add in any of the character traits that you have not already identified. (My sponsor told me to assume that I have each of these to some extent.) These are listed in the AA BB (Chapter 5, How It Works), or in the AA 12/12 on pp.66-68, or in the OA 12/12 on pp. 34-43.
3. Do an essay on each trait: first, name the trait.
4. Consider how you began to rely on this trait, and how it filled a need for you at that time.
5. Discuss how this trait is now blocking your progress toward a more balanced/more recovered state.
6. Creatively imagine how you would be better off without this trait, and think of how you might react to life situations without using the same old response. Be specific about replacements you could use.
7. Write one of these essays daily, and share it with your sponsor as your daily writing. Continue until you have written an essay on each defect.

A sample daily essay according to these guidelines:

Expectations

Nobody ever explained to me before Program that expectations are unhealthy for me, that they lead me to having delusions that I am in charge of every aspect of my life, and preserve the notion that I am able to predict the future, both of which are untrue. I developed expectations as an attempt to control my own life. I thought I was supposed to have expectations; I didn't know that expectations and goals are not the same thing. Also probably I grew into the habit of expectations as a sort of fantasy to counteract my feelings of powerlessness. I didn't learn till I'd come into program that while some things are just not possible for me to change, there are areas where I can make a difference. These are where I need to focus (like concentrating on doing my own work and doing it above-and-beyond, rather than having or expressing judgments about people who in my view aren't pulling their own weight). By not understanding that I needed to focus where I can make a difference, I was putting my efforts into things where I was not able to be successful, since I was channeling my efforts into things I could not change. This led to frustration in my own life and a lot of resentments toward others based on my own lack of understanding that I have no control over people, places, and things.

Expectations now block me because they get in the way of my usefulness to others. When I expect others to do or act a certain way, I develop resentments whenever things are different from my expectations. I have no right to have expectations as I am not in charge of others' lives; I can only look at my own part and try to maintain acceptance of how things, and others, are; and I can also devote myself to doing the right thing for others regardless of how they act toward me. I can only control my own actions after all. Others' actions become things I have to accept.

So when I have an expectation now, I try to realize first of all that it is an expectation. I try to call my attention to the expectation, and replace it with a prayer that I can accept what is including the actions of other people that have a direct impact on me, whether intentional or not. If it is hard to accept I write about what things I can change, and what things I cannot change, to call my attention to where I can focus my efforts to change. Life without expectations has increased serenity and peace to offer, because I am not continually getting stuck in what I think things should be. This leaves me more time, effort, and brainpower to devote to more useful purposes; such as service, increased time spent on program, and more time in a humble state of mind.