

Step Four Outline

I Read *How it Works* **carefully**

II Study the forms carefully

III Make a lot of copies of the Resentment forms, fewer copies of the Fear forms, and fewer still of the Sex Conduct forms.

IV When you're filling out the forms, make certain that you fill out each column *before you go onto the next one*.

V Remember that this does not have to be perfect. You're being asked to list your "grosser handicaps". It's extremely important to fill out these forms quickly and efficiently and to get rid of things through Steps 5 through 9. Step 10 is where you'll get an opportunity to refine things.

VI Resentment form

A The resentment form is about: "The Past did not go my way."

B "Resentment" stems from the Latin words "to feel over and over again". Don't confuse "resentment" with "anger"; "resentment" is much broader. Anything that bugs you should be listed here. Anything that's living rent-free in your mind should be listed here. Any of the "what-ifs" or "if-only's" should be listed here. Anything that you're angry at should be listed here. Anyone who's angry at you should be listed here.

C Column 1:

1 List people, institutions, or principles. "Institutions" includes things like governments, courts, general groups of people ("car drivers who cut you off", for instance). "Principles" includes things like "You always hurt the one you love", or "It's a lousy life and then you die", or "I'm a people-pleaser", or "I'll always be fat". Instead of putting yourself down on the list of "people", put down as principles things that bother you about yourself. You'll find that much more powerful.

2 Since you'll be going into some detail in Column 2 on why these people, institutions, or principles are on your mind, you might want to make certain to leave enough room to fill out Column 2. People, for instance, who are close to you should usually be given a full page, so that you'd fill in each name on the upper left hand box in Column 1, and not fill out any other boxes. On the other hand, people who have passed through your life usually just need the space of one row.

3 Don't worry about the order in which you write them down. Just write them down as quickly as they come to mind.

4 Often you'll remember more people in the morning if you first fill out this column at night, and then go to sleep and let your mind do some work on its own.

D Column 2

1 Just write things down in point form. Just enough so you know what you're talking about. No one else will see this column (in Step 5 you'll hardly talk about it). You might just write "that night in Lisbon", instead of writing the whole story of the relationship and its effect on you in Lisbon, for example.

2 Write down as many things as you can. If you're writing about an ex, for instance, who was sloppy, you could write just: "He's sloppy", but it would probably be better to say: "He left his side of the bed in a mess. He never did the dishes. He wouldn't put the toilet seat down." And so on. This is venting time.

E Column 3

1 Actually, this consists of six sub-columns, and going down each sub-column *before* you go onto the next sub-column seems to work well, regardless of the instructions on the form itself; so fill out the "self-esteem" column before you fill out the "Personal Relations" column.

2 “Ambitions” means “what I want out of life”; most things that bother you are bothering that part of you that wants something different from what occurred, so you’ll probably always have this column checked.

F Acceptance prayer column

1 Read from bottom of page 65 to the end of the third paragraph on page 67. Each person who’s filling your mind up should be thought of as spiritually sick. You would easily accept rude or obnoxious behaviour if you found out the person responsible was suffering from tremendous pain, or had just lost someone dear to him or her. Think of these people as having tremendous spiritual pain, or as having lost some of their humanity, or being loveless because they’re incapable of giving love, or having the painful reality of never being able to change their destructive behavior. This helps you to understand and accept them. Page 552 of the Big Book can help you here if you still have problems. Remember that people who have hurt you hurt themselves; the more one hurts other people, the less human one becomes, and the more difficult it is to find redemption.

2 Then say the prayers listed. (Note that the prayer “This is a sick man. How can I be helpful, etc.” is not the right prayer; that is for resentments that occur in the future.)

G Column 4

1 This is the most important column. *Make sure you fold the paper so that this column is right across from Column 1. In other words, you don’t look at Columns 2 & 3. This is very important.*

2. Remember that in the context of the Big Book, “selfish” doesn’t just mean “wanting things my way for my own benefit”; it means “wanting things my way for other people’s benefit” as well. You can be selfish wanting only the best for other people, at least in the context of the Big Book. You are selfish if you want to play God. So that even if another person has wronged you, you are selfish if you want that person to have acted in another way, because you want that person to be something other than what he or she is/was.

3. In the context of the Big Book, “dishonest” doesn’t just mean (a) “telling a lie”. It can mean, and for most overeaters who are people-pleasers, it does mean, (b) “not telling the truth when the truth should be told”. We can harm people by not speaking the truth when it should be spoken, by letting them continue to do harm to other people, and thus letting them continue to do harm to themselves. The more a person does harm, the more that person harms himself or herself, and the more that person becomes less fulfilled, less of a human being. “Dishonest” can also mean (c) “lying to myself”!

4. In the context of the Big Book, “self-seeking” apparently means looking for yourself in other people; in other words, letting them define how you feel about yourself. Do you dislike someone just because someone you want to impress doesn't like them? Are your actions making you feel better at the expense of someone else? Do you interact with people using a "hidden agenda" only known to you? Are you looking externally rather than turning to your Higher Power for validation?

VII The Fear Form

A The Fear Form is about: “The future won’t go my way.”

B List all the fears that you checked off either in Column 3 (“is any fear involved?”) or Column 4 (“Frightened”). Again, it’s best to be specific.

C This form is easy to fill out. List your fears under “I’m fearful of”. Fill that column out first. Then list your reasons, in point form, for having that fear. Fill those reasons out for each fear before going on to the next column. Then check whether you relied on your finite self or on God (bet you pick finite self!); then check whether self-reliance worked (bet it didn’t!), then do the fear prayer for each fear.

VIII The Sex Conduct Form

A The Sex Conduct Form is about how your resentments (“the past didn’t go my way”) and fears (“the future won’t go my way”) affected those relationships in which there was some physical attraction, you to the other person, the other person to you, or both.

B Note that there doesn't have to have been a physical relationship at all for you to list the person; it could have been just flirtation, or lack of communication (because of shyness or being flustered), or even having a crush on a movie star.

C The aim of this form is to mould your ideals, to understand what a good relationship would be with any person, whether physical attraction is at all involved. The best way of working this out is to work out relationships where there was/is physical attraction, because those are the hardest to work out.

D First fill out "Whom did I hurt?" before going on to the next column. Then work out where you were selfish, dishonest, or inconsiderate in relation to each person. Remember the special meanings of "selfish" and "dishonest" in the context of the Big Book. Then fill out the "jealousy, etc." column.

E A more significant column comes next. "What should I have done instead?" This gives you the opportunity to reflect on what could have made a better relationship so that you can work out better relationships for the future.

F The "Earnest" prayers are prayers you say during current relationships; they don't deal with past relationships.