

A GUIDE TO THE FOURTH STEP  
MORAL INVENTORY

The Truth Shall Set You Free

**Introduction**

The fourth step of the Gamblers' Anonymous program read: "Made a searching and fearless moral and financial inventory of ourselves." Inasmuch as G.A. presently has an excellent guide (the Pressure Group Handbook) to help us come to grips with our financial problems, this guide will concern itself with the other department of our life.

We felt that a guide to fourth step moral inventory is a long overdue necessity in the G.A. program.

The adjectives that describe the seriousness and intensity with which to approach the action demanded in the fourth step of the recovery program are "searching" and "fearless". This means that we must examine, evaluate and categorize every department of our lives. The very nature of the word "inventory" is to make a detailed list of articles or ideas and to determine their worth or value.

It with this thought in mind that we approached the writing of this "guide to moral inventory." We have tried to be as far reaching and searching as possible, so as to keep in tune with the true spirit of this most important step to our recovery. There are no boundaries, nor are there any short cuts in the search for truth. In searching for the truth we must continue to pursue, regardless of where that search may take us. We must do this fearlessly for there is nothing to fear in finding the truth. The results will be quite the contrary for the truth shall set us free – free to choose the many alternatives and opportunities that life presents, and free to be a contributing and integral part of the wonderful community of mankind.

This guide to the fourth step inventory is divided into three sections. They are:

1. CHARACTER
2. PRIORITIES, PRINCIPLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
3. FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS

**Instructions**

We herewith submit the following suggestions for the use of this guide to moral inventory:

1. This guide is designed to be most effective if the moral inventory is written. It can be reviewed by the person who is taking it for its content, thoroughness and truth.

2. This inventory is not designed to be taken in an hour or two. We suggest you take an hour each evening, in the hopes that you can complete it in two to three weeks.
3. Take it alone without prompting or coaching from anyone.
4. Upon its completion and at your option, you may want to share it with someone you can confide in.
5. Everyone in G.A. regardless of the number of years in the program should take this written moral inventory at least once each year.
6. Save your completed inventory and compare it to ensuing inventories you may take.
7. A new member of G.A. should take this inventory after being in the program at least three months.
8. Be as honest and thorough as you can, for if you are not, you are only “short-changing” yourself.
9. Search for the truth and come to know the truth, for the truth shall set you free.

## I. Character

When we speak of character, we are speaking about distinctive traits, qualities or attributes of an individual’s pattern of behavior, personality and moral constitution. Character, then, is not something we are born with, but rather, something we have become.

It is true that in our early years there were a number of outside influences (parents, school, church, friends, and acquaintances) that played important roles in the development of our early character, be it good or bad. Fortunately, however, we are never “stuck” with whatever kind of character we may be, for character can always be developed and improved.

Character plays an important role in a person’s destiny. Character determines how one will deal with feelings and emotions. A person’s character will determine a person’s standing with his peers, and finally, character plays the ultimate role with the individual himself. Character is the key to all departments of one’s life and has direct effect on the parts of life covered by the ensuing sections of this guide to moral inventory.

Step 6: “We’re entirely ready to have these defects of character removed.”

Comment: This step specifically deals with character as a whole.

“The most difficult and time consuming job with which a person be faced is that of bringing about a character change within themselves.”

It is necessary at this time, and for the sake of this inventory, to show the basic difference between personality and character so that we may put each in its proper perspective.

**Personality:** Applies to such personal qualities as voice, hearing, cordiality, etc., that determine the way a person acts in his/her social and personal relationships.

**Character:** Applies to distinctive traits, qualities or attributes of an individual pattern of behavior, personality and moral constitution.

Again, we can readily see that personality is only part of character. With this thought in mind let us now begin to inventory our whole character makeup with as much as honesty as possible.

Remember, there are three distinctive parts that make up our character. They are:

1. Behavior – A way of acting.
2. Personality – A personal or individual quality that makes one person be different and act differently from one another.
3. Moral Constitution – In agreement with a standard of what is right and good in character or conduct.

### **Strengths of Character**

Following is a list of some of the strengths of character, for your review. Read them carefully.

**Tolerance:** Indulgence or forbearance in judging the opinions, customs or acts of other without necessarily agreeing or sympathizing.

**Promptness:** The state of doing what has to be done, without delay or excuse.

**Honesty:** Being fair and candid in dealing and talking with other people, characterized by openness and sincerity.

**Communication:** Ability to transmit and receive information and feeling and understanding through talk, gestures or writing.

**Charity:** Being kind and generous in the giving of help, understanding and compassion to those in need.

**Dignity:** A state of worthiness, honor and self-respect about one's general appearance and manner.

**Humility:** Regardless of ability, fame or fortune, the state of mind that one is not better than another person.

**Industriousness:** The giving of an earnest, hardworking, diligent and steady effort to all challenges undertaken.

**Optimism:** The tendency to take the most hopeful view of matters or expect the best outcome regardless of circumstances. The practice of looking on the bright side of things.

**Forgiveness:** To give up the wish to punish or get even with. To pardon or excuse.

**Responsibility:** Obligated or expected to account for; ability to tell right from wrong.

**Consideration:** To be thoughtful of others and their feelings.

**Friendliness:** On good terms; not hostile. The quality or condition of being friendly.

### **Defects of Character**

The following is a list of some of the defects of character for your review. Read them carefully.

**Selfishness:** Having such regard for one's own interest and advantage that the happiness and welfare of others becomes of less concern than is considered right or just.

**Alibi:** To minimize, pardon, or excuse a wrong, a fault, or an action as though it were unimportant.

**False Pride (Arrogance):** An excessive belief in one's own worth, merit or superiority that is unjustified.

**Phoniness:** Presenting oneself to be something he is not, manifesting this through his actions, words and deeds; an imposter.

**Procrastination:** The postponement, deferment or delay in saying or doing those things that must be done.

**Laziness:** Not willing or eager to work or exert oneself. Doing only the minimum that has to be done in order to get by.

**Coarseness:** Not refined in feelings, manners, language or taste.

**Self-Deception:** The act or fact of deceiving oneself; self-delusion.

**Condemnation:** To criticize or condemn; being judgmental.

**Insincerity:** Not honest or candid; deceitful.

**Impatience:** Not willing to bear delay, opposition, pain or bother.

Other defects of character:

Intolerance

Dishonesty

Inability or Unwillingness to Communicate

Self-pity

Pessimism

Bigotry

Having read all the previous information carefully, we now ask you to begin to inventory your character. The following questions are put forth for you to answer in writing, to the best of your ability. Try to be as searching and fearless in your answers as is asked for in step four of the Recovery Program. Remember, this is for you, in your search for the truth.

1. List which character traits are your strengths and which are your weaknesses.
2. Write a description of each of these character traits as they apply to you. For each written description ask yourself the following questions. How does this particular character trait affect you:
  - a. Self-Image? – View of oneself.
  - b. Attitude? – A way of thinking, acting or feeling.

- c. Performance? – Execution, accomplishment or achievement.
- d. Reputation? – What people think and say the character of a person is.

(It may help you to write some specific examples)

- 3. With reference to your list of strengths:
  - a. Just how strong is each? Scale each strength, using ten as the highest mark.
  - b. Do you find that you can build on your strengths?
  - c. Are you willing to do so?
  - d. Would it be worth the effort?
  - e. Write what you would be willing to do to further develop each of your strengths.
  - f. Have you found that any of your “so-called” strengths, are really not strengths at all? Has your scale of 1-10 changed?
  - g. If so, what are you going to do about it? Are you willing to make a commitment to the strengthening of your character?
- 4. With reference to your character defects:
  - a. Rate each defect of character using the number on (1) as the lowest possible mark.
  - b. Do you find that some of your defects of character are really not as bad as you thought they were?
  - c. Are you willing to work at removing these defects of character?
  - d. Are you willing to make a commitment to that effect?
  - e. List the number of ways the removal of your defects would benefit you and others.
  - f. List number of ways the removal of your defects would benefit others.
  - g. As you improve on one character trait, will it aid you in improving on others? How?

Following is a suggested mini-formula to help you build your character.

- 1. Take this inventory as thoroughly and honestly as possible.
- 2. Follow the steps of recovery to the best of your ability.
- 3. When you are ready, and at your option, share your inventory with someone you can confide in.
- 4. Plan the actions you think must take develop a better character.
- 5. Implement your plan. Do not be afraid to ask for help.
- 6. Do not confuse your outgoing personality with your inward character.

DO YOU FEEL YOU ARE EVER DONE  
WORKING ON YOUR CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT?

## II. Priorities –

### Principles and Responsibilities

When joining Gamblers’ Anonymous and committing to a new way of life, and a critical review of priorities, principles and responsibilities is necessary to determine if they are in proper perspective.

There are numerous items in our lives that are hazardous to our well-being. Because of the high priority placed on them, other areas of life are neglected which, in essence, cause growing and continuing problems. If priorities are out of order they will affect participation in all phases of life. A constant balance needs to be maintained between knowledge of self and communication of that inner self with the outside world. Periodic re-evaluation is an essential tool in this phase of moral inventory as life events, age, and participation in the program will affect emphasis on priorities.

Examine the following suggested priorities to determine if they are in a sensible and orderly sequence. How do you fit into the world around you?

1. Abstinence from gambling.
2. To myself and my greater power.
3. To my family.
4. To my job, vocation or profession.
5. To my goals, dreams and aspirations.
6. To friends, neighbors and community.
7. To special interest areas.

#### **PRIORITIES (by consensus of opinion)**

1. **Abstinence from Gambling:** If, by your own admission, you are a compulsive gambler and have made a commitment to stop, there is not one thing that should supersede abstinence from gambling. Without abstinence very little else is possible, for by the very nature of the illness a lifetime of growth, responsibility, awareness and peace of mind are an impossibility.

#### **LETTING GO OF THE GAMBLER:**

- a. How important is it that you stop gambling?
- b. Do you try to implement into your daily life the Gamblers' Anonymous recovery program?
- c. Do you attend meetings regularly?
- d. What do you do for other compulsive gamblers?
- e. What does Gamblers' Anonymous mean to you?
- f. Do you listen and evaluate what others say at meetings?
- g. How are you involved in the program?
2. **To myself and My Greater Power:** One cannot be right for other people until right for oneself. In order for this to happen there must be an inner feeling of self-esteem and a feeling of belonging. An idea that self-knowledge is not enough to sustain you, but with the help of a power greater than yourself all this are possible. That is, when you become one with the power, happiness and peace of mind is the result.
  - a. Have I honestly faced myself and examined my strengths and weaknesses?
  - b. Write a description of yourself.
  - c. After reading the description, can you say that you would choose a friend fitting that description?
  - d. Would you say that you are neat and clean, both of mind and body.

- e. Imagine a model person possessing all the qualities that would make him a desirable friend. How do you compare? Is it possible that you can strive to become that person?
  - f. How would you describe your general attitude toward life?
  - g. Do you believe in a power greater than yourself?
  - h. Write a description of your greater power, whatever you conceive it to be. Be thorough!
  - i. What do you will or wish for yourself?
  - j. What does your greater power will or wish for you?
  - k. Is there much difference?
  - l. Would living the life designed by your greater power be fulfilling?
  - m. Can you become "one" with the power?
3. **To My Family:** There is nothing more important to a person's fulfillment than the family. Through the family one can satisfy all the basic needs of a human being. To love and be loved: to cherish and be cherished: to provide and be provided for: to give and receive: to feel wanted and feel needed. All the basic needs of a human being can be realized through the interaction of a family who love one another.
- a. Write a short description of love and caring you have for each member of your family.
  - b. Write a short description of what you think each member of your family feels about you. Do you think these feelings are justified?
  - c. Do you reveal (or show) by words and actions the feelings you have for each member of your family?
  - d. Are you responsive to the material needs of your family?
  - e. Are you responsive to their emotional needs?
  - f. Do you share your thoughts and feelings with your loved ones and do you allow them to share their feeling with you? How do you do this?
  - g. What kind of example do you set for your children? Explain.
  - h. What do you do to earn their trust?
  - i. Write a description that would best describe your family life. Do you think that each member feels as though he is a vital part of it? See if you can determine whether each member enjoys peace of mind and happiness as a result of being a part of the family.
  - j. What do you feel you can do to improve the general well-being of your family?
4. **To my Job, Vocation or Profession:** The better portion of a person's life is spent performing his/her job, vocation or profession, be it a housewife, attorney, laborer, laundress, hairdresser or sales. A person's profession plays a vital role in the total picture relative to one's general well-being. All too often this area is looked at as a necessary evil rather than as an area to help achieve fulfillment.
- a. Do you enjoy your job? If not, why?
  - b. At the end of a day's work do you feel that you have accomplished anything?
  - c. What rewards do you think you acquire from your job?
  - d. Do you give it your best effort?
  - e. How can you become better at what you do?
  - f. Do you think that you are in the right profession? If now, what do you intend to do about it?
5. **To my Goals, Dreams and Aspirations:** A person with goals has hope, happiness and a healthy state of being. Hope, happiness and a healthy state of being are natural by-products in the pursuit of worthy goals. A hopeless person merely exists. The person with goals, dreams and

aspirations lives life fully. By envisioning ways to rise above yourself and achieve that which is just out of your grasp, a healthy state of being is maintained. The thrill of living is not so much an achievement, but attempts to achieve. The pursuit of goals fosters confidence, enthusiasm and courage. At day's end a person may be comfortable in the knowledge he lives twenty-four hours with serenity.

- a. What are your goals in life? List them and write a description of each.
  - b. Which of these are realistic, achievable and are worthy of your time and effort?
  - c. Would the pursuit of these goals interfere with your other responsibilities? How?
  - d. Are you doing anything positive to achieve these goals or are you just wishing they happen?
  - e. Do you have a definite plan to achieve these goals? What is your plan?
  - f. What actions are you taking on a daily basis to achieve these goals?
  - g. What price are you willing to pay to make these goals a reality? Will it be worth the price?
6. **Friends, Neighbors, Community and Country:** Our general well-being benefits from associations that we have with friends and neighbors and the part we play in our community. It offers us the opportunity to be an integral part in the general scheme of things. It is a great sense of fulfillment to feel you can be a working and an integral part of the community of mankind.
- a. Make a list of your closest friends and write a short description of your feelings toward each one of them.
  - b. Is your action and behavior toward them consistent with your feelings?
  - c. Can you accept them for what they are, or do you find yourself critical of their shortcomings?
  - d. Are you there when they need you?
  - e. How would you describe your relationship with your neighbors?
  - f. What do you think they think of you?
  - g. What is your role in your community?
  - h. Do you take part in any community activity, such as the Chamber of Commerce, Boy Scouts, Little League, local school activities, etc.?
  - i. What do you do as an individual to make your community a better place in which to live?
  - j. Write a short description of how you feel about your country.
  - k. What do you do to make the country a better place to live in?
7. **Special Interest Areas:** There are many other areas in life that apply to an individual that hold a high priority. We all have them but they are different for each one of us. It could be a hobby, or any number of things. If they are all good, if we enjoy them, and they are important to us, then we should pursue them just as long as they do not interfere with the well-being of others.
- a. Make a list of things you do that you take special interest in.
  - b. Along side each describe their importance to you and the benefits you derive from doing them.
  - c. Is there any value in them other than the pleasure?
  - d. Can you financially afford them?
  - e. Do the other members of your family have an interest in them?
  - f. In your pursuit of these things, what hardships, if any, do you place upon your family?
  - g. Do you ever find that you are shirking responsibilities in other areas of your life in doing these things? In what way?

### III. Feeling and Emotions

At one time or another, every human being has experienced every feeling and human emotion known to mankind. If there is any difference in our experience with feelings and emotions, it lies in the degree of experience. We have all had a taste of every human feeling and emotion in existence.

Feelings, be they positive or negative, are not necessarily defects of character. Positive feelings add to your sense of strength and well being and produce pleasure, hope and fullness of life. Negative feeling interfere with pleasure and use up energy, leaving us feeling lonely and empty. Feelings are a mental result of how we have handled various situations throughout our lives and a result of how our minds were programed in the formative years.

Feeling, be they love or hate, joy or remorse, happiness or anger, are very valid and an integral part of the human make-up. We experience a multitude of feelings everyday of our lives, some positive and some negative. Some make us feel good and some make us feel bad. It is much healthier to face up to our feeling and deal with them, than to deny their existence.

Feelings can come over us without a moment's notice. They have no boundaries. Everyone, at one time or another has experienced fear, worry, remorse, joy, love, and happiness. Whatever the feelings, be they positive or negative, they are all very natural and normal and serve a definite purpose. Whatever your feelings are, they are not especially unique. The question is: How do we deal with them?

Certain feeling can become a problem when we become consumed with them, and if and when this occurs, we can be assured that the reason this has happened is because we have failed to deal with them properly.

This section will concern itself with various feelings which we will try to sort our as they apply to us individually and how we can best deal with them.

Following is a list of some of the feelings that, from time to time, we experience on a regular basis. Some of these feelings we also experience on a daily basis.

guilt (remorse)	joy
happiness	resentment
anger	contentment
fear	frustration
love	hope
hatred	gratitude
envy	loneliness
pride	depression
freedom	sadness
suspicion	worry

1. Do you understand the meaning of the above mentioned feelings? If not, look up the meaning in a dictionary and write the definitions down.
2. Have you, at one time or another, experience each of the above mentioned feelings?
3. List the feelings you experience on a daily basis.

4. List the feeling you would like to experience on a daily basis.
  - a. Put a check mark on all those feeling you would like to experience but do not experienced. Why are these important to you?
  - b. How does the lack of these feelings affect your daily life?
  - c. What positive steps can you take to achieve these feelings?
  - d. How much of yourself are you willing to give to achieve these feelings? Explain.
5. List the feelings that create problems in your life.
  - a. Write a short description of each of these feelings as they apply to you.
  - b. Why in your opinion, do you think you are experiencing each of these feelings?
  - c. What action can you take to cope with any of these feelings?
6. Are you capable of expressing your feelings to those around you?
  - a. If you do express your feelings, in what manner do you do this?
  - b. If you do tend to hide your feelings, do you know the reason? What are the reasons?

Following is a suggested mini-formula to help you deal with your feelings. In writing:

1. Isolate and define each of your feelings.
2. Try to pinpoint the persons, places, things, or set of circumstances that cause you to have these feelings.
3. Share your thoughts about these feelings with someone you can confide in.
4. Make a definite plan of attack to control your feelings, good or bad. Review your plan with someone you feel comfortable with.
5. Implement your plan. Do not be afraid to ask for help.

### **Conclusion**

Upon completion of this inventory, if taken in the spirit of a search for the truth, you should have a basic and sound overview of what you are made of, what you stand for, what you are doing, where you are going, and how you fit in the world around you. An inventory, of course, reveals the negative as well as the positive aspects of one's life and its primary value is that of sorting things out in an orderly and thorough fashion. It is certainly the starting point for a meaningful and manageable life. But a starting point is all that it is.

The massive job lies with what we do with this truth we have found out about ourselves. What action will we take toward our newly made commitments? How well will we practice and implement our plans? The task lies ahead but it is a task well worth pursuing for it is the task that stimulates growth, and growth brings happiness and happiness means love, and love is God, and love is truth, and the truth shall set you free.

