CLA STEP FOUR

"Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves."

In the previous three steps, we have built, for ourselves, a beginning foundation in this program of recovery. In Step One, we admitted we were powerless over clutter and recognized that our lives have been, are now, and will remain unmanageable by us alone. Step Two made us aware that we could be restored to sanity by a Higher Power (God as we understood Him) if we rightly relate ourselves to that Higher Power. The Third Step convinced us that we have no choice but to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God.

At this point, we should be convinced that our handling of our past has led to frustration, broken relationships, anger toward ourselves and other people, and resentments. Since alcohol [cluttering] is but a symptom, we now have to get down to the causes and condition of why self-centeredness, in all its various destructive forms, has been the root of our troubles. Thus, we are face to face with the fourth step.

Step Four allows us to uncover and discover the acquired character defects which are a part of the false self. These defects are NOT a part of the real you (the True Inner Self). The false self (the phony you) has picked them up from other people, institutions and society in general. Usually it is not important that you become aware of the fact -- that these defects of character are acquired. Only when you detach yourself from these acquired defects can you start to uncover and discover, in a fear-less manner, these acquired character defects that have controlled you in the past.

These acquired character defects are misdirected instincts. These instincts often far exceed their proper functions. Our excessive desires for more stuff, sex, material and emotional security, and for an important place in society, desires which by their very nature can never be fulfilled, cause us practically all the trouble there is.

Nearly every serious emotional problem can be seen as a case of misdirected instincts. Whenever we become a battleground for the instincts, there can be no peace. Every time we impose our instincts unreasonably upon others, unhappiness follows. These defects lock us into responding in a certain way, usually destructive, to those around us. So in order for us to live happy lives, we must uncover and discover these acquired defects of character.

At this point, we should have arrived at the following conclusions: the acquired character defects have been the primary cause of our cluttering and our failure at life; we must now be willing to work hard at the elimination of the worst of these defects or both sobriety and
peace of mind will elude us; and, that all the faulty foundation of our life will have to be
torn out and built anew on bedrock.

Since the fourth step is but the beginning of a lifetime practice, we should first have a look
at those personal flaws which are acutely troublesome and fairly obvious. Using our
judgment, we make a rough survey of our conduct with respect to our primary instincts
for stuff, sex, security and society. With stuff, we explore our relationship with objects,
and how they came to a critical mass in our lives, crowding us out of our space. With sex,
we uncover how the selfish pursuit of sex damaged other people and ourselves. In the
area of security, we question the financial and emotional insecurities that have led to
financial instability, and the personal relationships which bring continuous or recurring
trouble. In terms of society, we insisted upon either dominating the people we knew or
depended upon them far too much.

THOROUGHNESS ought to be the watchword when taking our inventory. The object is
to search out the flaws in the false self which caused our failure. Being convinced that
the false self, manifested in various ways, was what had defeated us, we will find some
of the following acquired character defects in our inventory: SELF-CENTEREDNESS,
RESENTMENT, ANGER, PREJUDICE, CONCEIT, GREED, LUST, INDIFFERENCE,
PHONINESS, FEAR, PRIDE, FINANCIAL INSECURITY, DEPENDENCE,
DOMINATION, EMOTIONAL INSECURITY, DISHONESTY, PROCRASTINATION,
PERFECTIONISM, IMPATIENCE and others that are found in the list below.

These acquired character defects (misdirected instincts) will balk at our uncovering and
discovering them. The minute we make a serious attempt to probe them, we are liable to
suffer severe reactions. The thinking mind may come up with some of the following false
thoughts: any serious defects have been caused chiefly by our cluttering; our problems
have been caused by the behavior of other people; the defects are us; justifying the need
for defects in order to continue living; and a half-hearted inventory is O.K. In order for us
to combat these false thoughts, we must know that the character defects are indeed
acquired and are NOT a part of the True Self.

In summary, Step Four asks us to make a searching and fearless moral inventory of
ourselves. We are seeking to uncover the hidden acquired defects of character that are
part of the false self. After we have found them, then we discover how, when, and in just
what instances these defects controlled our lives. This inventory is of myself, not other
people. We uncover and discover our faults by listing them. We place them before us in
black and white. We must have courage to honestly do this. Faith can do for us what we
cannot do for ourselves.
The purpose of writing the fourth step is to make us aware of the acquired character defects. As we list and analyze these defects, we will begin to comprehend their futility. The written inventory will be used as a basis for Steps Five through Nine.

Go through the following examples and be as honest and specific as you are able to at this time. This is your inventory. You are about to uncover and discover the acquired character defects, and their associated positive character traits, so do it in a thorough and fearless manner. Your very life may depend on the thoroughness of this step.

We first will go after the easy inventory—the low-hanging fruit, if you will.

PART 1 -- STEP FOUR -- A FEARLESS AND SEARCHING MORAL INVENTORY

It is impossible to measure darkness. Darkness is the absence of light, so one must measure the amount of light instead. In the same way it is impossible to measure cold. Cold is the absence of heat, so the heat is measured instead. Every one of our acquired character defects is just like darkness and cold, it is the absence of something else, so the measurement of a defect is elusive unless we grasp the concept of paired traits. Because our defects of character are acquired, it means that one of our positive traits has deteriorated into the opposite negative trait. The following table shows the positive trait of each defect.

A) Measure where we are on the line from left to right, negative to positive. At first this is a wild estimate of where we are at this moment. It may be helpful to use a scale of 1 to 1000 for each pair of traits, with 500 right down the middle. Or you may place a dot on the relative position on each line. Whatever works for you. We will be using this table through Step 7 and again in Step 10.

B) Write about your experiences with each paired trait in the spaces after the table. Provide examples and be sure to include your emotions in your writing. Try not to use one-word answers. It is better to write too much than not enough.

To explain the last seven on the list, these are “Quads.” Sometimes a negative trait and its exact opposite are both negative, with the positive trait in the middle, just as the extreme pendulum swings are not good. For the purpose of our step work, we fold that line in half, and put the negative traits against the left side, and the positive trait on the right side. Then we treat them as two different paired traits.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character Trait</th>
<th>Positive Trait</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Denial</td>
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<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Powerless</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hate</td>
<td>Love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dishonesty</td>
<td>Honesty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Impatience</td>
<td>Patience</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foolishness</td>
<td>Wisdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Procrastination</td>
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<td>Fear</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexuality - Inappropriate</td>
<td>God-Honoring Sexuality (Discover This!)</td>
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<td>Frozen Feelings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doubt</td>
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<td>Rabble-Rousing</td>
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<td>Abandonment, Fear of</td>
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<tr>
<td>Approval Seeking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caretaking, Inappropriate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Pity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Justification</td>
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<td>Self-Condemnation</td>
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<td>Tolerance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inaction</td>
<td>Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harmful Acts</td>
<td>Good Deeds</td>
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<td>Insincerity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Negativity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vulgar, Immoral, Trashy Thinking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Criticizing</td>
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<td>Selfish and Self-Seeking</td>
<td>Interest in Others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inconsiderate</td>
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<td>Envy</td>
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<td>Slothful, Lazy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gluttony, Bulimia</td>
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<td>Self-Starving, Anorexia</td>
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<td>Anger, Repressed</td>
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<td>Anger, Inappropriately Expressed</td>
<td>Anger, Appropriate</td>
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<td>Authority Figures - Fear of</td>
<td>Respect for Authority</td>
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<td>Authority Figures - Lack of fear of</td>
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<tr>
<td>Isolation</td>
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<td>Self-Esteem - Too Low</td>
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<td>Self-Esteem - Too High, Grandiose</td>
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<td>Responsibility - Just Right</td>
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<tr>
<td>Irresponsibility</td>
<td>Responsibility - Just Right</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Care - Lack of</td>
<td>Self-Care - Just Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Care - Hypochondria</td>
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3. Hate vs Love  
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5. Impatience vs Patience  
6. Foolishness vs Wisdom  
7. Procrastination vs Attention to Priorities  
8. Fear vs Courage  
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10. Sexuality – Inappropriate vs God-Honoring Sexuality  
11. Frozen Feelings vs In Touch with Feelings  
12. Doubt vs Faith  
13. Rabble-Rousing vs Peacemaking  
14. Fear of Abandonment vs Experiencing the Presence of God  
15. Approval Seeking vs True to Self  
16. Caretaking – Inappropriate vs Minding My Own Business  
17. Self-Pity vs Self-Forgetfulness  
18. Self-Justification vs Humility  
19. Self-Condensation vs Self-Forgiveness  
20. Resentment vs Forgiveness  
21. Pride vs Humility – Submitting to God’s Will  
22. Jealousy vs Goodwill  
23. Suspicion (Unwarranted) vs Trust  

-5-
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25. Intolerance vs Tolerance My estimate:
26. Inaction vs Action My estimate:
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48. Self-Care – Lack of vs Self-Care – Just Right My estimate:
49. Self-Care – Hypochondria vs Self-Care – Just Right My estimate:

And now for the Indirect Approach...

PART 2 -- STEP FOUR -- A FEARLESS AND SEARCHING MORAL INVENTORY

Under each question, attempt to start with the specific things you have done or said. List as many things under each question as will help you convince yourself that you have acquired this defect. The answers to these questions are to be brief. For example:
With whom am I angry?
a. My wife -- she doesn't do the things I want her to do.
b. My boss -- he is not paying me enough
c. Joe -- a friend to whom I loaded money, and he didn't pay me back.
You may wish to choose one of these categories to continue your Fourth Step Inventory:

1. ANGER, RESENTMENT, PREJUDICE
   With whom am I angry?
   Do I blame others for the trouble I made for myself?
   Whom do I wish to hurt because I feel they have hurt me?
   Have I contempt for anyone? Whom?
   What is my part in this?

2. SELF-CENTEREDNESS
   Do I act as though the world revolved around my welfare and desires? How?
   If I am a parent, do I use my family to suit my needs and desires? How?
   Do I insist on doing things I like to do, or am I willing to do the things others enjoy?
   Do I do things with my family or others to keep myself in the limelight? If others don't give me special attention in a group, do I feel snubbed?

3. CONCEIT
   Do I insist on things being done my way?
   Do I think I am an "expert?" In what areas?
   Do I think I can manage most things better than those in charge?
   Am I consistently critical of the boss? the police? other authorities? Am I impatient with others who do not meet my standards?

4. GREED
   Am I really content with the things I have?
   Am I constantly running after more and better things?
   Does the good life mean having more things, more money?
   Am I honestly concerned with doing something to help those who are less fortunate than I am?
   Do I give gladly or grudgingly to the work of God and CLA?