

## Handout for the Workshop:

# How to do your 4<sup>th</sup> Step in the Column Inventory Format

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There are a number of inventory lists out there, but one very effective tool is the Column Inventory described in the Big Book on Step 4. It's simple, straightforward, and lays the foundation for what we'll eventually need to do in Steps 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9.

*NOTE: This is a suggested supplement to the standard CEA-HOW Step Four Inventory questions, and does not replace it.*

Compulsive Eaters Anonymous – H.O.W.  
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## **Step Four: Column Inventory**

### **List of Resentments**

## Step Four: Column Inventory List of Resentments

### *Introductory Comments*

Resentments are one of the key, underlying problems compulsive eaters face. The word resentment means: *re*=to do again, and *sentment*=which comes from a word meaning to feel. Therefore, resentment means not just things we're resentful over, but things we feel over again and again.

Resentments have often become regular pastimes for us. It has become habit for us to replay certain memories again and again about how someone was bad to us and hurt us. The more we think of it, the more the other person or institution or situation was totally bad, and the more we were we were "pure as the driven snow," or "just standing there doing nothing when..." As we replay those resentments in our minds, the picture we paint is often not accurate, but it makes it easier for us to live with ourselves. However, our resentments are a waste of time; they never did us any good or made us feel better. All they do is block us from God. Therefore, to break free of this bondage, we need to list out each resentment and really look at it. And more than that, we also need to list out the cause of the resentment, and what basic life instinct had been threatened in our lives, and then also look at what part we played in that, and what character defect that comes from. We will be amazed at what we find. For 90% of the resentments, once we see it in black and white, they will miraculously go away immediately, releasing us from that resentment. For the few resentments that don't go away immediately, we can pray about it, and God will take it away in days, weeks or maybe even a month or so. But God will ultimately release us from that resentment if we work this step.

Without a doubt, God can absolutely relieve us of our resentments. Our resentments block us off from God and the outpouring of His love, patience, tolerance and good will. So, once the resentments are gone, we will be filled with more of God's light and mercy, and thereby find serenity, peace of mind and happiness. And we will therefore be less likely to compulsively eat.

What if we don't want to let go of some resentments? That's our choice. However, the more we hold on to those things, the more likely we will react in pain towards others, which will cause them to retaliate against us, which will cause us to resent even more, and cause us to hurt others, etc. etc. It's a never ending circle. And bottom line, we will likely compulsively. For those resentments that are really hard to give up, pray. Pray for that other person that hurt us, that God would give them all the things we desire for ourselves. Pray for understanding (e.g., that it's possible the other person would've done that thing to *anyone*, not just to us specifically).

## Step Four: Column Inventory List of Resentments

### *Instructions on how to fill out the List of Resentments*

There is no one right way to fill out the Column Inventory. The key point is that you fill it out, in whatever way is most comfortable (or perhaps *least* uncomfortable!) for you.

However, here's what some Members have found to be effective in filling out the Column Inventory:

- Start with one Resentment at a time, and write out the answer for that row:
  - o Who am I resentful at?
  - o What is the cause of that resentment?
  - o Which of *my* instincts does that affect: my Social instinct, my Security instinct, and/or my Sexual instinct?
    - FYI, this concept of instincts is referenced in the Big Book on page 65, paragraph 2, as well as in the example about Mr. Brown, etc.
    - These instincts are further referenced in Step Four in the 12&12 (The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions), on page 42.
  - o What was *my* part in this?
    - FYI, this question is referenced in the Big Book on page 67, paragraph 3
    - This is where I list out what *my* actions were in the situation
  - o What are the Character Defects *I* have that are exhibited in this situation?
    - FYI, this question is referenced in the Big Book on page 67, paragraph 3
    - This is where I list out what *my* Character Defects were
- Then go on to your next Resentment, and start a new row for that, answering the questions in each column.
- Continue writing on as many Resentments as you have, adding more pages if necessary. Some people have listed over 100 Resentments.
- Don't forget that a Resentment could be towards a person, institution or principle.
  - o Examples of institutions include: the IRS, the police department, the government, etc.
  - o An example of a principle is a list of values set by a group of people. Examples of principles could therefore include:
    - "Children should be seen and not heard."
    - "You make your bed, you lie in it."
- When you are done, go back to each row, and ask yourself, is there anyone else I'm resentful at? Was there anyone else hurt in the situation? Is there anyone else involved in this situation that I need to write about? Am I resentful towards myself? Am I resentful towards God?
  - o FYI, we are encouraged in the Big Book to go back and review our writing again and again, to look at things in different ways to understand what happened (page 66, Paragraph 4, as well as page 67, Paragraph 3).

## Step Four: Column Inventory List of Resentments

### *Instructions on how to fill out the List of Resentments*

- A key point to keep in mind that this is *your* inventory, not someone else's. Yes, others may have done you wrong, but you're trying to uncover what (if anything) *you* did in the situation that caused harm. It's easy to get off track writing about other people's mistakes, but try to stay focused on what *you* did in contributing to the resentment.
- Regarding how you share this with your Sponsor (giving it away, according to Step Five):
  - o Some Members have taken several weeks to write out *all* of their Resentments, and then arranged to read it to their Sponsors in one sitting (lasting several hours). If that works for you and your Sponsor, great!
  - o Some Members write for a few minutes each day, perhaps on one resentment at a time. Then, when they call their Sponsor, they read just that one "resentment row" (Who am I resentful at? What was the cause? Which instinct does this affect? What was my part in this? What are my Character Defects?).
- Some Members have asked, "Well, when I am done?" The answer is, "When you've gone over all of your Resentments." Some people have only a few, most people have many. This is *your* inventory, so take the time to look at each one. As the Big Book says in paragraph 3 on page 58, "With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start."
- Regarding what a Sponsor's role in this is...
  - o As with the standard CEA-HOW Inventory questions, a Sponsor mainly just listens.
  - o But sometimes, after a Sponsee has read to them one Resentment, it's helpful for a Sponsor to ask questions, such as:
    - In this situation, is there anyone *else* you're resentful at?
    - Was there anyone else hurt in the situation?
    - Is there anyone else involved in this situation that you need to write about?
    - Are you resentful towards yourself? Do you need to write more about that?
    - Are you resentful towards your Higher Power? Do you need to write more about that?

### Step Four: Column Inventory List of Resentments

I'm resentful at... <sup>1</sup>	The Cause <sup>2</sup>	Affects my... <sup>3</sup>	What was <i>my</i> part in this? <sup>4</sup>	What are <i>my</i> Character Defects exhibited here? <sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This could be a person or institution or principle (per the Big Book, Page 64, paragraph 4)

<sup>2</sup> List what happened that caused me to feel resentful.

<sup>3</sup> Which of our basic life instincts had been threatened by the other person/institution/principle? Step 4 of the AA 12&12 describes the basic instincts of life that we are all motivated by as:

Social – our need for acceptance, recognition, attention, being with others, wanting to lead or follow leaders, etc;

Security – our need for shelter, clothing, food, money, safety, etc.;

Sex – our basic need to enjoy sex and to procreate, although it is noted that some people have suppressed this need because of past hurts.

<sup>4</sup> Identifying my part in this is referenced in the Big Book on page 67, paragraph 3. In many cases, we did something to set the ball rolling, or we allowed something to happen. And even if we weren't responsible in any way for the original action, why have we held on to the resentment so long?

<sup>5</sup> The need to identify our Character Defects is referenced in the Big Book on page 67, paragraph 3. Some examples of Character Defects include: Selfishness, Self-Seeking, Dishonesty, Frightened, Inconsiderate, Pride, Lust, Anger, Greed, Gluttony, Envy, Procrastination, etc.

## **Step Four: Column Inventory**

### **List of Fears**

## Step Four Inventory List of Fears

### *Introductory Comments*

The following is a quote from the Big Book, Page 67, starting in paragraph 4:

“Notice the word ‘fear’ is bracketed alongside the difficulties with Mr. Brown, Mrs. Jones, the employer and the wife. This short word somehow touches about every aspect of our lives. It was an evil and corroding thread; the fabric of our existence was shot through with it. It set in motion trains of circumstances which brought us misfortune we felt we didn’t deserve. But did not we, ourselves, set the ball rolling? Sometimes we think fear out to be classed with stealing. It seems to cause more trouble.

We reviewed our fears thoroughly. We put them on paper, even though we had no resentment in connection with them. We asked ourselves why we had them. Wasn’t it because self-reliance failed us? Self-reliance was good as far as it went, but it didn’t go far enough. Some of us once had great self-confidence, but it didn’t fully solve the fear problem, or any other. When it made us cocky, it was worse.

Perhaps there is a better way—we think so. For we are now on a different basis; the basis of trusting and relying upon God. We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves. We are in the world to play the role He assigns. Just to the extent that we do as we think He would have us, and humbly rely on Him, does He enable us to match calamity with serenity.

We never apologize to anyone for depending upon our Creator. We can laugh at those who think spirituality the way of weakness. Paradoxically, it is the way of strength. The verdict of the ages is that faith means courage. All men of faith have courage. They trust their God. We never apologize for God. Instead we let Him demonstrate, through us, what He can do. We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be. At once, we commence to outgrow fear.”

It is based on these comments in the Big Book that we have a 2<sup>nd</sup> Column Inventory to fill out...this one for our list of Fears.



## Step Four Inventory List of Fears

### *Instructions on how to fill out the List of Fears*

- As with the Resentment Column Inventory, write down each Fear you have, and answer the questions:
  - Who/What do I fear?
  - What am I afraid of?
  - What part of Self is affected?
    - It says in the 12&12 on page 42, paragraphs 1 and 2 that we have 3 basic instincts: desires for the sex relation, for material and emotional security
    - These are summarized as the Social Instinct, the Security Instinct and the Sexual Instinct
  - Where does this lead me? (i.e., what's the result of me having this fear?)
  - What are the Character Defects that this fear uncovers in me?
  
- Continue writing on as many fears as you have.
  - Again, we are encouraged to review our list several times, looking at it from different angles, to better understand the situation (Big Book page 66 paragraph 4, and page 67, paragraph 3)
  
- You'll know you're done when there aren't any other fears you can think of to write about.
  
- Share it with your Sponsor
  - Some Members do all of their writing on Fears, and then schedule a special session with their Sponsor to read out the entire Fear inventory (which could take several hours)
  - Some Members write for a few minutes each day, and then on a daily basis read to their Sponsor what they've written (e.g., reading out the row for one Fear at a time)

### Step Four Inventory List of Fears

Who/What do I fear?	What am I afraid of?	What part of Self is affected? <sup>6</sup>	Where does this lead me? <sup>7</sup>	Character Defect? <sup>8</sup>

*Continue on a separate piece of paper if you need more room*

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<sup>6</sup> Social, Security, Sexual needs (per Step Four in the 12&12, page 42)

<sup>7</sup> What's the result of me having this fear (per page 68 of the Big Book, paragraph 2)

<sup>8</sup> The need to identify our Character Defects is referenced in the Big Book on page 67, paragraph 3. Some examples of Character Defects include: Selfishness, Self-Seeking, Dishonesty, Frightened, Inconsiderate, Pride, Lust, Anger, Greed, Gluttony, Envy, Procrastination, etc.

## **Step Four: Column Inventory**

### **List of Sexual Relations**

## Step Four Inventory List of Sexual Relations

### *Introductory Comments*

The following is a quote taken from the Big Book, pages 68-71

“Now about sex. Many of us needed an overhauling there. But above all, we tried to be sensible on this question. It’s so easy to get way off the track. Here we find human opinions running to extremes—absurd extremes, perhaps. One set of voices cry that sex is a lust of our lower nature, a base necessity of procreation. Then we have the voices who cry for sex and more sex; who bewail the institution of marriage; who think that most of the troubles of this race are traceable to sex causes. They think we do not have enough of it, or that it isn’t the right kind. They see its significance everywhere. One school would allow man no flavor for his fare and the other would have us all on a straight pepper diet. We want to stay out of this controversy. We do not want to be the arbiter of anyone’s sex conduct. We all have sex problems. We’d hardly be human if we didn’t. What can we do about them?

We have reviewed our own conduct over the years past. Where had we been selfish, dishonest or inconsiderate? Whom had we hurt? Did we unjustifiably arouse jealousy, suspicion or bitterness? Where were we at fault, what should we have done instead? We got this all down on paper and looked at it.

In this way we tried to shape a sane and sound ideal for our future sex life. We subjected each relation to this test—was it selfish or not? We asked to God to mold our ideals and help us to live up to them. We remembered always that our sex powers were God-given and therefore good, neither to be used lightly or selfishly nor to be despised and loathed.

Whatever our ideal turns out to be, we must be willing to grow toward it. We must be willing to make amends where we have done harm, provided that we do not bring about still more harm in so doing. In other words, we treat sex as we would any other problem. In meditation, we ask God what we should do about each specific matter. The right answer will come, if we want it.

God alone can judge our sex situation. Counsel with persons is often desirable, but we let God be the final judge. We realize that some people are as fanatical about sex as others are loose. We avoid hysterical thinking or advice.

Suppose we fall short of the chosen ideal and stumble? Does this mean we are going to get drunk? Some people tell us so. But this is only a half-truth. It depends on us and on our motives. If we are sorry for what we have done, and have the honest desire to let God take us to better things, we believe we will be forgiven and will have learned our lesson. If we are not sorry, and our conduct continues to harm others, we are quite sure to drink. We are not theorizing. These are the facts out of our experience.

## Step Four Inventory List of Sexual Relations

### *Introductory Comments*

To sum up about sex: We earnestly pray for the right ideal, for guidance in each questionable situation, for sanity, and for the strength to do the right thing. If sex is very troublesome, we throw ourselves the harder into helping others. We think of their needs and work for them. This takes us out of ourselves. It quiets the imperious urge, when to yield would mean heartache.

If we have been thorough about our personal inventory, we have written down a lot. We have listed and analyzed our resentments. We have begun to comprehend their futility and their fatality. We have commenced to see their terrible destructiveness. We have begun to learn tolerance, patience and good will towards all men, even our enemies, for we look on them as sick people. We have listed the people we have hurt by our conduct, and are willing to straighten out the past if we can.

In this book you read again and again that faith did for us what we could not do for ourselves. We hope you are convinced now that God can remove whatever self-will has blocked you off from Him. If you have already made a decision, and an inventory of your grosser handicaps, you have made a good beginning. That being so you have swallowed and digested some big chunks of truth about yourself."

It is based on the above quote from that Big Book that we have our last Column Inventory, on Sexual Relations.

## Step Four Inventory List of Sexual Relations

### *Instructions on how to fill out the Sexual Relations Inventory*

- The questions in this Column Inventory on Sexual Relations are taken from Pages 69, paragraph 2 of the Big Book
- For each sexual issue you have, answer the questions:
  - o Who did I hurt?
  - o What did I do?
  - o Which part of Self was affected?
    - As previously mentioned, the Big Book and the 12&12 talk about how we have three main instincts: The Social Instinct, the Security Instinct, and the Sexual Instinct
    - Which of these instincts were affected in the situation I'm writing about here?
  - o What feelings did I create in others?
  - o What are my Character Defects
- Continue to write on as many issues as come to mind.
- Don't forget to go back and review each item, asking yourself, "Is there anyone else hurt in this situation?"
  - o For example, if a Member who is married has had a sexual relationship with someone else during the marriage, there are several people involved: you, your Spouse, the "someone else" you had a sexual relationship with. But are there others that have been hurt by this as well? Your children? The children of the other person? Has this impacted your work (so have your employer and/or co-workers been harmed?). Who else has been harmed, even beyond just the people immediately involved?
- Many Members have been harmed by the sexual actions of other people. Perhaps they were subject to sexual abuse as children. It's important to list out any and all sexual issues that trouble us. But keep in mind that we are writing *our* inventory. Make sure you write about the harm that *you* did to others, and find out what your own Character Defects are in the situation.
- Share this with your Sponsor
  - o Some Members do a little writing every day, and then share one of the sexual relations issue "rows" with their Sponsor on their daily call.

### Step Four Inventory List of Sexual Relations

Who did I hurt?	What did I do?	What part of Self was affected? <sup>9</sup>	What negative feelings did I create in others? <sup>10</sup>	Which character defect is involved? <sup>11</sup>

*Continue on a separate piece of paper, if you need more room*

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<sup>9</sup> Social, Security, Sexual needs (per Step Four in the 12&12, page 42)

<sup>10</sup> For example, jealousy, bitterness, bitterness, etc. (per Page 69 of the Big Book, paragraph 2)

<sup>11</sup> The need to identify our Character Defects is referenced in the Big Book on page 67, paragraph 3. Some examples of Character Defects include: Selfishness, Self-Seeking, Dishonesty, Frightened, Inconsiderate, Pride, Lust, Anger, Greed, Gluttony, Envy, Procrastination, etc.