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## Step Four

When we read Chapter Five in the Big Book of A.A. where it lists the Steps, we read the phrase, “At some of these we balked.” My guess is that the first step that causes this reaction is Step Four. Some newcomers are uncomfortable with the writing if they have problems with reading and writing. But the majority of those who stall out on the Fourth Step do so out of fear. Since the directions for the inventory require it to be a fearless moral inventory, that fear must be overcome. The easiest way I know to do this is to have done a thorough Third Step. So I advise anyone who is having problems starting Step Four to go back to Step Three. Once I truly believed that my life was in the care of a loving Higher Power, I knew I had nothing to fear from Step Four, and I urge newcomers to do the Steps in order for that reason.

Step Four begins the process of discovering why an alcoholic returns to drinking, knowing full well the consequences. I learned in the first three Steps that once I take that first drink, I am powerless to stop drinking without the help of my Higher Power. But even though I knew the dire consequences of that first drink, I took it anyway—again and again and again. What would lead me to take that first drink? The inventory in Step Four helped me to begin to find out.

As laid out in the Big Book, there are three main parts to the inventory. First comes a list of resentments—people we have resentments against. Then we list our fears. And finally, under the loose heading of “sex conduct” we list the things that cause us guilt. Now in my case, I concentrated on fear. I used a list of common fears, checking each one that I thought applied to me. Then I explored each fear more deeply and found that each one could be broken down into three even more basic fears. There are 92 different natural elements in the universe, with as diverse properties as gold, helium and uranium. But all of those different elemental atoms are made up of three basic particles: neutrons, protons and electrons. For my purposes, all of my fears could be broken down into

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## Tradition Four

A member who does any amount of traveling finds the A.A. spirit much the same everywhere. But apart from this inward kinship, there are vast differences among groups. Here, the traveler finds three members discussing the Steps in somebody’s living room; there, 300 listening to speakers in a church auditorium. In one part of the U.S., respectful silence greets the speaker who begins, “My name is Ann, and I am an alcoholic.” In another, everybody happily shouts, “Hi, Ann!” And in many other places, she may introduce herself with her full name—at a one-hour meeting or a 90-minute meeting. In each neighborhood in every part of the world reached by A.A., the local group is free to work out its own customs.

As always, freedom brings responsibility. Because each group *is* autonomous, it’s up to each group to avoid any action that might harm A.A. And there *have* been such actions—or this Tradition would be unnecessary. “Implicit throughout A.A.’s Tradition,” Bill W. wrote, “is the confession that our Fellowship has its sins. We admit that we have character defects as a society and these defects threaten us continually.”

Blown up to multiple size, the Big Ego may inspire one group to take over all the public information work for its area, without consulting any of the other local groups. Once the group has decided, “*We* have all the answers,” the lid’s off. The group may then decide that, let’s say, the Eleventh Tradition is an outdated technicality: “This is a competitive age! We’re going to come right out and give A.A. some good, vigorous promoting!” To the general public, this one conspicuous group *is* A.A. Its antics reflect, not only on the ignored neighboring groups, but on the entire Fellowship.

In a way, the Fourth Tradition is like the Fourth Step: It suggests that the A.A. group should take honest inventory of itself, asking about each of its independently planned actions, “Would this break any Tradition?”

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three basic fears: fear of abandonment, fear of loss, and fear of the unknown.

I drank over my fears. If I was afraid, say, to dance somewhere because I was afraid I would look stupid and girls would laugh at me and not like me and reject me and tell all their friends to reject me and, their mothers would reject me and tell my mother I was a lousy dancer and then she would . . . well . . . i drank, I wasn't afraid. The bottle would say, "Cove over here, Doug. You don't need to be afraid." And I would get that liquid courage. If I drank, I could dance and sing and be the life of the party (even if I later was so drunk that I looked stupid and the girls laughed at me and did not like me and rejected me, etc., etc., etc.). I could at least temporarily overcome fear by drinking.

Then I turned to the resentments. And what I found out was that the main reason I resented most of the people I did was because they caused me to fear them, or something they might do. If you look at the tables of resentments in Chapter Five of the Big Book, you will see that those examples also can ultimately be broken down into those same fears. So when I reached the column where you try to find your own part in each resentment, it was easy. I resented so-and-so because he was a more popular pharmacist than I was and so I was afraid that my patients and co-workers would all want him instead of me. I resented my first wife because I was afraid she would leave me and even though we were not happy together (to say the least), I was afraid of the abandonment and the unknown if she left. Once again, if I drank, (for a while), I wasn't afraid.

At this point, I listed the things that I felt guilty over. (And no, you aren't going to get my sex inventory here!) Suffice it to say that I drank over the things I felt guilty about because of (you guessed it) fear. I was either afraid of the consequences of my guilty actions, or I was afraid that I would do them again. So, again I would turn to the bottle to alleviate the fears that guilt over my bad behavior resulted in.

Now, just as it turns out that the elemental particles can be broken down further into smaller particles called quarks, those three elemental fears are all made up of the same thing too. All of my fears can be summed up as a basic fear that something will happen that will cause me to be uncomfortable. And knowing that I can get that sense of ease and comfort from alcohol, I drink. And I drink no matter how uncomfortable that makes

those around me. That is the hallmark of the alcoholic according to the Big Book. The alcoholic, so concerned with his own sense of comfort, selfishly drinks and drinks no matter what the consequences are to himself or others. Nothing gets between the selfish alcoholic and his booze. Whether the fears are valid or not, or are ever realized is inconsequential. The alcoholic is so self-centered and selfish that he no longer cares.

So, having finished my Step Four, I recognized that most of my drinking started with fear and that to overcome that fear, I would selfishly drink no matter what. How was I to overcome that selfishness and fear? Surprise!! The Steps that follow address just those issues.

Submitted by,  
Doug H., Hesperia, CA

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Like the individual member who chooses to make the Steps his or her guide toward happy sobriety, the wise group recognizes that the Traditions are not hindering technicalities—they are proved guides toward the chief objective of all A.A. groups. . . .

Via, The Twelve Traditions Illustrated

## Chips, Medallions & Birthdays

The traditions of chips, medallions and birthdays vary in different parts of the country, and I thought it would be interesting to look up some of the history on them.

Sister Ignatius, the nun who helped Dr. Bob get the hospitalization program started at St. Thomas Hospital in Akron, was the first person to use medallions in Alcoholics Anonymous. She gave the drunks who were leaving St. Thomas after a five day dry out a Sacred Heart Medallion and instructed them that the acceptance of the medallion signified a commitment to God, to .A.A. and to recovery, and that if they were going to drink, they had a responsibility to return the medallion to her before drinking.

The practice of sobriety chips in A.A. started with a group in Elmira, N.Y. in 1947 and has grown from there.

The celebration of birthdays came from the Oxford Group where they celebrated the anniversary of their spiritual rebirth. As we have a problem with honesty, A.A. chose the anniversary of the date of our last drink.

Early celebrations of birthdays resulted in people getting drunk and Dr. Harry Tiebout was asked to look at the problem. He commented on this phenomenon in an article titled "When the Big 'I' Becomes Nobody," (AAGV, Sept. '65).

"Early on in A.A., I was consulted about a serious problem plaguing the local group. The practice of celebrating a year's sobriety with a birthday cake had resulted in a certain number of the members getting drunk within a short period after the celebration. (February, 1948.) Why all the congratulations? "When we start taking bows (even on anniversaries) we bow ourselves right into the cuspidor."

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## *Twelve Steps of a Sponsor*

1. I will not help you stay and wallow in limbo.
2. I will help you grow, to become more productive by your own definition.
3. I will help you become more autonomous, more loving of yourself, more free to continue becoming the authority of your own living.
4. I cannot give you dreams or “fix you up,” simply because I cannot.
5. I cannot give you growth, or grow for you. You must grow yourself, by facing reality, grim as it may be at times.
6. I cannot take away your loneliness or pain.
7. I cannot sense your world for you, evaluate your goals, or tell you what is best for you in your world; you have your own world.
8. I cannot convince you of the crucial choice of choosing the scary uncertainty of growing over the safe misery of not growing.
9. I want to be with you and know you as a rich and growing friend, yet I cannot get close to you when you choose not to grow.
10. When I begin to care for you out of pity, when I begin to lose trust in you, then I am toxic, bad and inhibiting for you, and you for me.
11. You must know – my help is conditional. I will be with you, hang in there with you, as long as I continue to get even the slightest hints that you are trying to grow.
12. If you can accept all of this, then perhaps we can help each other to become what God meant us to be . . . mature adults, leaving childishness for ever to little children.

*From a bookmark*

## Beer

as seen by seven year-old kids

A handful of 7 year-old children were asked, “What do you think of beer?” Some interesting responses, but the last one is especially touching.

“I think beer must be good. My dad says the more beer he drinks the prettier my mom gets.”  
Tim

“Beer makes my dad sleepy and we get to watch what we want on television when he is asleep, so beer is nice.” Mellanie

“My mom and dad both like beer. My mom gets funny when she drinks it and takes her top off at parties, but dad doesn’t think this is very funny.”  
Grady

“My mom and dad talk funny when they drink beer and the more they drink, the more they give kisses to each other, which is a good thing.” Toby

“My dad gets funny on beer. He is funny. He also wets his pants sometimes, so he shouldn’t have too much.” Sarah

“My dad loves beer. The more he drinks, the better he dances. One time he danced right into the pool.” Lilly

“I don’t like beer very much. Every time Dad drinks it, he burns the sausages on the barbecue and they taste disgusting.” Ethan

“I give Dad’s beer to the dog and he goes to sleep.” Shirley

“My mom drinks beer and she says silly things and picks on my father. Whenever she drinks beer she yells at Dad and tells him to go bury his bone down the street again, but that doesn’t make any sense.” Jack

*Via, the Internet*

# Upcoming Events

May 22, 2010

**7th Annual Women's A.A. Banquet, 5:00 p.m-10:00 p.m., Quality Inn and Suites — Green Tree, Victorville, CA. For more information contact Melissa at 760-2179330 or Casey at 760-983-6763.**

May 28 — 31, 2010

26th Annual South Bay Roundup, Torrance Marriott Hotel, Torrance, CA. Call the Roundup Hotline at 310-354-7660 or visit [www.southbayroundup.org](http://www.southbayroundup.org) for more information.

July 1 — 4, 2010

International Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous, San Antonio, TX. For more information visit [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org). There will also be information at Central Office.

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August 1948. The Artesta, NM Group awards marbles to all members. If you are caught without your marbles, you are fined 25 cents. This money goes into the Foundation Fund.

June 1953, we operate a poker chip club in the Portland Group (Maine). We have poker chips of nine colors of which the white represents the probation period of one month. If he keeps his white chip for one month he is presented with a red chip for one month's sobriety. Also, at the end of the year and each year thereafter, we present them with a group birthday card signed by all members present at the meeting.

January 1955, Charlotte, NC. "When a person takes "The Long Walk" at the end of a meeting to pick up a white chip, her is admitting to his fellows that he has finally accepted the precepts of A.A. and is beginning his sobriety. At the end of three months he exchanges his white chip for a red one. Later, a handsome, translucent chip of amber indicates that this new member has enjoyed six months of a new way of life. The nine month chip is a clear, sea green and a blue chip is given for the first year of sobriety. In some groups, a sponsor will present his friend with an engraved silver chip at the end of five years of clear thinking and clean living.

March 1956, The One Ton Poker Chip, Alton, Illinois. Author gave friend a chip on his first day eight years ago (1948), and told him to accept it in the spirit of group member ship and that if he wanted to drink, to throw the chip away before starting drinking.

July 1957, New Brunswick, Canada. Birthday Board Member contributes one dollar for each year of sobriety.

July 1957, Oregon. Person is asked to speak and is introduced by his or her sponsor. The wife, mother, sister or other relative brings up a cake. The Group sings "Happy Birthday. The wife gives a two or three minute talk.

And that's a little bit of info on chips, cakes and medallions. Written by Jim Burwell (edited by Betty B.).

Submitted by, Mary Ellen S., Hesperia, CA

A bartender is just a pharmacist with a limited inventory.

# Become a "Faithful Fiver"

## What are Faithful Fivers?

They are A.A. members who pledge at least \$5.00 each month toward the support of their Central Office to "carry the message." Many of us have spent more than \$5.00 daily/hourly on alcohol during our drinking days!

I agree to pledge \$\_\_\_\_\_ and enclosed is my contribution.

Name\*: \_\_\_\_\_

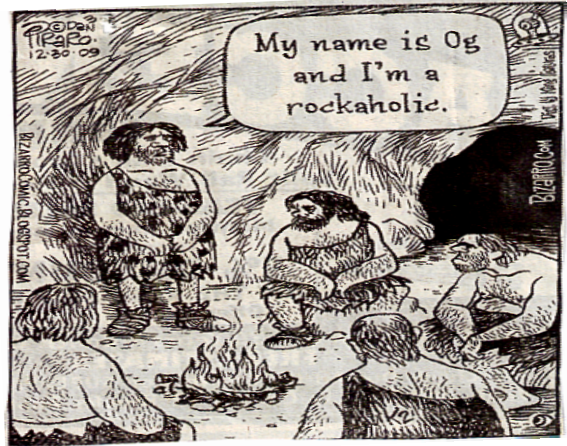
Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State/ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

*\*You may remain anonymous if you wish.*

Chips and medallions are available at Central Office. And we can order fancy medallions for those special birthdays! Be sure to order in time for the big date!



Submitted by, Mary Ellen S., Hesperia, CA  
"Borrowed" (as in stolen) from Bizzaro

## And Finally . . .

An alcoholic judge gets tired of his caseload and decides to take the afternoon off. After a few drinks, he gets on the train headed for home. While on the train, he notices that the train starts spinning and he promptly throws up all over himself. Upon arriving at his home his worried wife exclaims, "Thank God you're all right! What happened to you?"

The quick thinking judge explains that some drunk in court threw up all over him. She says, "Well O.K. Why don't you hop in the shower and get cleaned up."

While in the shower the wife asks the judge, "You know that drunk who threw up on you?"

What did you do to him?"

The judge responds, "Uh, I umm, gave him 30 days."

The wife replies, "You should've given him 60 because he peed in your pants, too!"