

## TAKING A PERSONAL INVENTORY

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Years ago, when I first started seriously going to Alcoholic Anonymous, I remember doing my 4th Step. For those of you unfamiliar with the 12 Step Program, the 4th Step reads this way:

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

At first read it seemed simple. Just write down a few things and be done with it. I soon found out it really wasn't simple. Not only did it involve thinking back on the negative situations I was a part of, or had hung on to, it also required brutal honesty! Honesty of "how I really felt" about various situations where I had been harmed emotionally or where I had harmed others.

I probably spent two weeks doing my first personal inventory. I couldn't work on it for too long a period at a time because, yes, it was simply too painful. The honesty required meant really peeling back the "layers of the onion" to try and determine what was at the core of my drinking and using drugs. I had lied to myself for years that "I enjoyed being buzzed or high"--I now know that was not the reason for my drinking and using.

I discovered that I had a lot of pain, and like a person with a headache taking Ibuprofen or aspirin, I was medicating to forget and push aside my feelings. My past mistakes haunted me and drinking

and using were my ways of coping with the pain they caused.

I found I was holding on to past resentments--blaming others for negative events I had experienced. Until I was well in to my 4th Step I couldn't find the courage and the honesty to admit I had played a significant part in everything that had happened. I had to finally admit, and take responsibility, for my parts of the situations.

Anyone going through, or who has completed, the 12 Step Program of Alcoholics Anonymous is also familiar with Step 10--"continued to take a personal inventory and, when we were wrong, promptly admitted it". Keeping up with our resentments and selfish actions is a huge part of staying sober--or, in reality, staying happy, joyous and free!

The 12 Step Program of Alcoholics Anonymous is a wonderful "Spiritual road map"--not just for alcoholics and drug addicts but for everyone. If you are not familiar with it, I would suggest looking into it as a program for cleaning up past mistakes and learning how to take responsibility for your lives. It's just a suggestion--but one I think is well worth looking into!

God bless--

All my best--

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