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**Step Five – We admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.**

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In step 4, we made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Now what?

The next action to take after writing our inventory is three fold. We admit the exact nature of our wrongs (defects) to God first, then to ourselves and then to another human being. Sounds simple, right? It is. This program *is* a simple one. However, it IS NOT easy. Just like everything else, we will get through this one more step at a time.

“This is perhaps difficult-especially discussing our defects with another person. We think we have done well enough in admitting these things to ourselves. There is doubt in that. In actual practice, we usually find a solitary self-appraisal insufficient... If we skip this vital step, we may not overcome drinking. Time after time newcomers have tried to keep to themselves certain facts about their lives. Trying to avoid this humbling experience, they have turned to easier methods. Almost invariably, they got drunk. Having persevered with the rest of the program, they wondered why they fell. We think the reason is that they never completed their housecleaning. They took inventory all right, but hung on to some of the worst items in stock. They only thought they had lost their egoism and fear; they only thought they had humbled themselves. But they had not learned enough of humility, fearlessness and honesty, in the sense we find it necessary, until they told someone else all their life story.” (Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, p72-73)

Seeing the list of liabilities and assets, and how they manifest in our lives, may be a difficult experience for many of us. To admit our shortcomings to God and ourselves might seem like enough of a task, one which requires a great deal of humility. It is also difficult to think, how do we admit these things to ourselves? We already KNOW what we have done, don't we? We may know the actions, and sometimes we may not. The big part we do not know, is how much of it has been motivated by self-centered fear, how much of it has hurt others, and how much of it we have been able to hide even from ourselves. Throughout the process it may seem nearly impossible to have to then admit these things to another human being. You may wish to go back and reread some of the journaling which you have done on trust and on your Higher Power in previous steps to help you prepare for the exercises which follow.

**Different EDA Members' Step Five Experiences:**

“My first fifth step was an impromptu confession of all the major errors I'd committed -- the horrible, irresponsible driving I'd done while drunk, the lies I'd

told to those who loved me, the checks I'd bounced, the food and laxatives I'd stolen. I was about three months sober and purge-free (I'm in AA, too) and was scared I'd drink and/or purge again if I didn't tell someone. It was like a miracle: I felt this incredible rush of connection with the person who heard me out. I felt free of fear, at peace and happy. "Name it, claim it, and dump it!" I'd heard that in meetings, and it really worked!!"

"But, because I hadn't really done a written fourth step prior to that lurch into honesty with someone, I discounted the experience and told myself I'd sit down and do it "right." Well, I was so perfectionistic I never quite got it "right." I'd sit down to write and something would always seem terribly wrong or confused -- how can you tell "selfish" from "self-seeking" anyway? (If you've read the Big Book you'll know what I mean) -- and in fear that I was somehow insufficient to the task of figuring it all out, I invariably set my fourth step aside. I felt like there was something awfully, terribly wrong with me. I could not really draw a clear line between my various and sundry insecurities: they all seemed interconnected, which of course they were and are. My interpretation of the Big Book at the time, however, made it seem like self-esteem and sexual relations should be clear and distinct, and I was quite sure I was somehow too confused to do a proper fourth step. I was too embarrassed to admit my confusion. I thought if I just found the right workbook, it would all make perfectly good sense. Consequently, I didn't really do a fourth step again until I was so miserable I thought I would just die. I did a fourth step using a workbook. I thought it was awful and shared it with no one. I then did the fourth step "by the book," (the Big Book) but I got it all wrong: I wrote about everyone else's failings, and only a little about my own. My first impulse at three months sober -- to blurt out all the wrongs I'd done -- was on the right track. Trying to follow a prescription somehow backfired, because I was in so much pain, fear, resentment and self-pity that I couldn't think straight. By now I really was confused! Since I had given that first fifth step where I had just listed all my errors, I rationalized my inattention to a "proper" fourth step. After all, I hadn't wrecked any cars or run anybody over; I hadn't stolen anything; I hadn't been spiteful or vindictive. But... I'd not been honest with people who needed to know my true feelings; I'd overworked myself and been a burden to those around me; I'd been critical and moody; I'd caused pain and frustration because I was selfish and fearful and untrusting. And while I could see these things, I couldn't see that my thoughts and actions were voluntary. I still felt like a victim. I thought the fifth step would set everything right again. But I was wrong. *I discovered that the fifth step only "works" if we take responsibility for our thoughts and actions.* It does no good to simply admit what we did and then blame something or someone else. When that finally sunk in, I started doing the fourth step with the idea that everything I did was my free choice, whether I knew it or not. Then and only then, I finally started getting the relief I was seeking. When I gave my next fifth step, I again found that incredibly precious feeling of being one with all humanity and finding deep joy and delight in the knowledge that all is basically right with me and with my world."

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“Putting my inventory down on paper in Step 4 was difficult, actually admitting what was on my paper to God and to myself was hard, admitting it to another human being was extremely difficult. Part of my issues is that I want to be liked and I want to be seen as a nice person. I want to be seen as having my act together, competent, sane. My eating disordered behavior is not sane, not normal, not the behavior of someone that has their act together. My facade had to crumble. I had to let someone behind my walls to see the real me. And there was real fear that if someone saw the real me they would reject me. The Miracle of Step 5 is that we learn that we are accepted no matter who we are or who we fear we are inside. Part of our Eating Disorder tells us that "our" behavior or "our" disease has to be worse than anyone else's. With Step 5 we learn that we are no better and no worse than anyone else. We are a person with an eating disorder and we have disordered behavior and thinking as well. We made mistakes. We can learn from them. And we can be accepted and cared for mistakes and all. We don't have to be perfect. We can just be who we are. What a miracle! What a relief! That is what Step 5 is all about.”

“The higher my expectations for the fifth step experience, the lower my spirits upon completion. In general, if I am doing a fifth step because I think it will catapult me into the next dimension, I am sure to be sorely disappointed: I don't get what I expect and I am unable to appreciate what I do get. Instead, when I go in for my fifth step rather humbly, hoping mainly just to get through it to the other side, I am always amazed by the experience.”

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“I thought that it would make a huge difference if I told my fifth step to a "quality" person, i.e. to someone with whom I already felt a deep connection. To a certain extent, this has been true. But it has made much **more** difference to me (and my recovery) to have done a good **job** at my fourth step -- to take full responsibility for my attitudes and actions -- than it has been to pick just the right person to talk with about them.”

“There really was the feeling of getting rid of stuff inside, of putting it behind me. This is who I used to be. This is what I've done. And this is my formal declaration of intent and desire to change. Saying it out loud to someone else made it real. I could no longer fool myself or allow myself to live in that magic world where nothing was exactly real or irrevocable. What I did was real. I told another person the truth about myself and my life. The secret was out. I could never lie so easily again because someone knew the truth and would hold me to it.”

“Step 5 was not a step I was looking forward to in my recovery journey. I was scared; scared of being judged, and of being vulnerable. However, I knew step 5 was next in the road to recovery, so I found someone who I could trust to do step 5, face-to-face. I looked over my inventory, read the 12 x12 book and prayed. It was not easy to start but my Higher Power allowed me to relax, be honest, clean house and be freed. I felt as though a great burden was lifted after I'd been honest with myself, God, and another person. I was able to then continue on my

grateful road of recovery. I hope reading this helps you too, to move past the fear and embarrassment, to the freedom of living in recovery.”

**Suggestions:**

We can make a new table. Using the journal from the previous steps, start on a fresh page. The first column will be our liabilities (character defects). We copy into this column each of our defects that appear in our step 4 inventory. Near each defect we write the number of times it appears in all our inventory tables. Then we make a list of our assets in the third column. In the fourth column, we write the affected inner self parts (some are listed below, others may be: personal relations, physical security, emotional security, ambitions).

Liabilities from 4 <sup>th</sup> step	# from 4 <sup>th</sup> step	Assets	Affected Inner self parts
Resentment	15	Forgiving	Self-esteem
Fear	29	Trusting	Pride
Selfishness	6	Considerate	Sex-I relations
Anger	12	Caring	\$ security

This table can help you to focus in on certain parts of your fourth step, but is not a substitute for speaking your entire fourth step aloud to God, yourself or another human being. Do not cut corners on details or events to save time or embarrassment. Remember, “Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not COMPLETELY give themselves to this simple program.” (Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, p 58)

**Exercises**

Remember – you do not need to have expectations of perfection. As it says above, you can complete step five without doing a “perfect job.” Looking for perfection is a behavior that many of us struggle with, and that keeps us from moving forward in recovery.

1. Read your written fourth step out loud to a mirror. This is a way you can admit your defaults to God and yourself.
2. Find someone you trust and sit down with them. Read your fourth step out loud to them. Elaborate on things you missed, or feel need clarification.
3. Say the 5th step prayer, or better yet... write your own!

“God, I thank you that I know you better.”

Alternative prayer

Higher Power,  
My inventory has shown me who I am, yet I ask for Your help  
in admitting my wrongs to another person & to You.  
Assure me, & be with me, in this Step,  
for without this Step I cannot progress in my recovery.  
With Your help, I can do this & I will do it.