Assembly 2018

Step 4 Inventory Workshop will focus on defects and assets list and action plan.

Please read this Step 4 narrative from Theresa prior to the workshop. Thank you.

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Hi. Good afternoon. My name is Theresa. I am from the New Perspectives Nar-Anon Family Group in Shawnee, KS. I will be speaking on **Step 4, “Made a** **searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.”**

When I first came to Nar-Anon, I was like that person in the SESH book reading with the leaking pipeswho was trying to hold everything together. Finally, she could not staunch the flow, and all those pipes burst apart in a flood. I identified with her because I, too, was desperately trying to hold everyone and everything together. I didn’t know what I was looking for or what to ask for. I only knew that I was exhausted and I was sad. All the time.

I spent my entire first year in Nar-Anon struggling with the idea of powerlessness. That’s how long it took for me to finally accept and eventually embrace what my sponsor was telling me. **“Powerlessness is home. It’s where every day starts and** **ends.”** To this day, when I lose my footing, it is to powerlessness and Step 1 that I return.

When I did step work for the first time, it was offered in a circular class setting, meeting twice a month for a little over a year. Two people who had already done the steps facilitated the class.

I had a handle on Step 1**.** Steps 2 and 3 questioned my mixed beliefs about a childhood God and new age spirituality. It would be another 3-4 years before I developed a real relationship with my Higher Power.

For my first Step 4 Moral Inventory, I used the **Liabilities and Assets checklist.** Defects or Liabilities on the left, Assets or Strengths on the right. A center line between the two to mark where I stood within the 2 extremes. I marked Resentment, Pride, Guilt, Perfectionism and Procrastinationmy first time through. To the point, I was mad at my kids, mad at myself, and unable and unwilling to see how doing nothing would make things better and how doing nothing could only make things much, much WORSE.

The next time I did the steps, a lot of personal growth had taken place. My sponsor and I talked regularly and passionately. I worked through a lot of HP issues. I spent a lot of time separating the person from the disease. I started using the line**, “Love has nothing to do with addiction.”** I stopped blaming the addicts for stalling my life. I started taking personal responsibility for myself and my actions.

My defects list was a more accurate list of issues I was working on. They included: Improve communication,Start conscious contact withHP,Need daily structure and routine, Difficulty identifying emotions, Improve self-care and self-worth. I also added an Assets list:I’mcalm, I’mgrowing, I’mletting go,I’m trying tokeep it simple. And I added a sentence: **“I recognize the addict is a person who suffers and deserves my compassion. Compassion is not money.”**

What was missing from my Self Inventory was action. What to do about the problems or defects, I had identified? For me, **my true A-Ha moment in Step 4** **was realizing I needed more than a list. I needed an action plan.**

Awareness- Acceptance- Action.

How to get from where I am to where I want to be? Perhaps others could work step 4 in their heads, but not me. I needed a plan.

The program asks, did we know anyone, before Nar-Anon, who actually took the time to truly examine their past- to think through the truth of what actually occurred in situations? To admit their part in those scenarios, and then, to replay how those behaviors repeated themselves, over and over, both obviously and insidiously?

The physical, mental and emotional effort necessary to make even one change is a truckload of work. First, we become aware of the behavior. Then we make the behavior someone else’s fault. Then we deny the behavior, and then after a long time, we eventually accept the behavior. Then we try all kinds of new and better ways to function that lessens the behavior. We tweak this and adjust that. We move forward a few steps, then fall back again. We call ourselves out when we are wrong.

Hopefully, along the way, a few tools and slogans are learned and put into practice. One of my personal faves, maybe because it was so hard wrought. **“Let it be. Really, don’t say one word. Let it be.”** A similar slogan that saves me from rescuing is, **“Allow the gap.”** This is for those times when I have to sit in that uncomfortable silence between myself and my addict. The gap allows me time to remember that there are very few true emergencies and I don’t have to respond immediately. Not having the last word was really hard for me to let go of. Not having any word at all was even harder. But it is rare that I will “go there” at all anymore.

Eventually the behaviors or defects we listed no longer cause harm every time we turn around and after even more time, the behavior ceases being part of our go-to repertoire. We do this, or some form of this, over and over in our lifetime of recovery. To ask, “Who am I? Who do I want to be? Where am I? Where do I want to be?”

I’ve heard some say, about Step 4, “Why open old wounds? Why not just move on?” Well, I couldn’t just move on. I didn’t even know who I was anymore. Somewhere between 35 and 50 I got lost. It is only because of the Nar-Anon program and specifically Step 4 that I came out of the dark and into the light. Finally, at 58, I can see what is lying in my path and I can choose to pick it up, or I can choose to walk around it.

**Step 4 is a process of uncovering what I’ve lost, discovering what I need and** **discarding that which no longer serves me.** Much of step work is about balance. I have found that if I am busy making my own life, I have less time to ponder others’. I work to love myself as much as I love my husband, my children and my dearest friends.

One of the reasons I keep hope alive is because I know it is possible to witness change even if it doesn’t last. I have had that same nail-biting-pleasure-pain that comes with seeing my addicts clean for long periods of time.

I had a tendency to hold my breath around my addicts- not wanting to stir up even the air around them, in my attempt to not upset the status quo. My brain knew I had no control over the future. Still, I avoided doing anything that might start the ball rolling in a downhill spiral. Four years ago, when my oldest daughter died from complications of addiction, I didn’t die.

Like many of us, I peered into the future and saw death for the finality it is, I just never looked past that singular point. I never examined life continuing on in our family without her. There is a line you hope to never cross, and then suddenly, you’ve crossed over it and nothing is the same. As I was standing there, I finally released the breath I had been holding. All doors to “the land of before” were locked. The only thing I knew to do was what I had been doing all along. Love her. Carry her with me, in me. Trust God. Be kind to myself. Go to a meeting. Get through the day. Rely on my sponsor and my Nar-Anon family to help me. Breathe. Repeat.

I was, and remain, very grateful to have a program to follow. Following my Step 4 means I don’t have to start at the beginning all over again. On my last inventory, I added these assets: I’m calm, I’m confident, I’m ethical, I’m leading, I know grief, I know survival, I have people who love me just the way I am.

**“The steps are not for people who need them, or for people who want them, they are for people who DO them.”**

It has been my pleasure to spend this time with you today. Thanks for letting me share.

**When you come to the assembly, bring 2 character defects you would like to work on.**

 Theresa