About this booklet:

This booklet is a guide to doing the fourth step in a chiefly positive manner. In our recovery many of us become overly focused upon looking at our negative characteristics rather than our positive ones. Staying glued to our “defects” puts fear into our fourth step. Why not have our 4th step actually be a “searching and fearless moral inventory” of ourselves? We invite you to try this positive approach to the 4th step and see if it leads **you** on a fruitful journey.

Your Comments and inquiries are welcome at earudach@gmail.com or 612-964-9350

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**TAKING THE FEAR OF THE FOURTH STEP**

And Making it a Joyful Uplifting Journey



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Apple Valley/Burnsville Minnesota Emotions Anonymous (EA) Chapter

**The Inspiration for this Booklet**

Russ has been a member of EA since its inception over 40 years ago. He served as Trustee of EA International for many years. He also served as Twin Cities Area Intergroup President. Russ has been involved in many other aspects of EA. Russ’ creative work in EA stems from his own God inspired 4th step work. Then, at some moment Russ noticed that a very large percentage of EA members both in his home group and abroad never seemed to actually DO a 4th step. One obvious factor seemed to be the common perception of step 4 work as painful and negative.

Russ and the working group who have refined this 4th Step guidebook hope that is will break down some barriers to working the step. We hope that sharing this 4th Step method it will inspire those who have been held back from working this step so far.

**Acknowledgements**

Thanks to the Apple Valley/Burnsville EA group members whose work and recovery stories inspired this 4th step guidebook. Deepest thanks to the booklets’ creator Dave Q., Stu and Sharon, who challenged and motivated , Wayne, for getting ideas on paper, plus Charlie, Zoe and Adam, who added to and refined it. A special thanks to Roxanne S., whose artistic touch and thoroughness made this book possible. Finally, thanks to a higher power for guiding us to and through this work.

A Joyful and Uplifting Journey

**Understanding and celebrating ourselves**

We learned our protective behaviors to be less vulnerable in the world and because we hadn’t seen the strengths in our character. Once we understand and celebrate our strengths and goodness we naturally stop believing in our negative voices.

**Practicing building the good**

When we put time and energy into developing our strengths, our negative behaviors also naturally diminish. We need to be aware of applying BALANCE and putting BOUNDARIES on all of our character traits. **If our goal is to embody our strengths it is vitally important that we spend our energy developing our assets, not trying to control our “defects.”**

**Lessons from our Inventory**

 As we saw earlier, Russ recognized that his shyness was the result of being a careful observer and a good listener. Likewise, Dave’s over-sensitivity was a result of being accepting and understanding of others. Charlie found gift of empathy needed boundaries so that he could let go of caretaking others. Zoe accepted that her behaviors and reactivity were responses to her real pain. By having the courage to dig deeply, Russ discovered his shyness wasn’t all bad while Zoe learned that her anger gave her the energy to make changes in the world, and herself. Charlie found his doubt to be a valuable part of my openness and putting boundaries reduced his perfectionism. Dave discovered his over-sensitivity was a gift that can make him more award of others. With those insights & acceptance, they all began cultivating positive habits and saw their negative characteristics lessen naturally.

**Living from our new awakenings**

This is not an easy process; this is going beyond our old selves. There is a joy in digging and discovering who we really are and it continues to happen every day. It is our hope that using this new positive approach will truly take the fear out of your fourth step journey.

We also know this is a life-long process, and that once is not enough in working through the steps. It’s OK if sometime later we find a need to look at our 4th step again. But for now we invite you to take time to be grateful with yourself and feel how good it feels to have been both honest and loving in your personal inventory. Just as importantly as you go on remember; **look for the good!**

**When it’s time to take inventory again:**

Would we ever expect any personal inventory to be our last? Hopefully as long as we are alive we’ll still want to learn and grow. That’s why we have the 10th step and why we may periodically take the 4th step again. Our 4th step inventory has guided us to take a smaller and more focused look at our most important strengths and shortcomings. If we find new awareness of important strengths or shortcomings we may see that as a cue to take a fearless and joyful personal inventory again. You may choose to use this guidebook again. Whatever comes up though, we hope you’ll always remember to look for the good in yourself!

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**Where are we now?**

In this 4th step process, our goal has been to look at related groups of character traits that when EXPLORED will help us make some HEADWAY in just ONE area of our life. We look at the good in our negative traits, and embrace this goodness. We look at positive traits that are getting us into trouble or have gone astray.

**A few final questions to consider writing about:**

*What is positive about your main “negative” traits like anger, shyness, or over-sensitivity?*

*What are some downsides to “positive” traits like idealism, sympathy, or being helpful?*

*Are you aware of your triggers?*

**

It is gaining deep understanding of our character traits which initiates deep healing. Like putting our hands on a hot stove, once we fully understand the connection between our habits and the pain they bring, our behaviors will naturally change.



**The Need for This Booklet**

*Taking the fear out of the fourth step and making it a joyful uplifting journey.*

Our ability to start and work on Step 4 of the program is based on how well we worked on the first three steps. The first three steps are about letting go and opening our minds so we can look at ourselves in a more positive light. If we have accepted the first three steps of the program, we may look forward to working this step and discovering that we have unique gifts that we have not previously recognized or acknowledged.

Step 4 asks us to do an inventory of ourselves. It does not ask us to look for just the bad. We do an inventory listing both our positive and negative traits, but not necessarily our whole life journey. This inventory should focus on the present. Dwelling too much on the past may prevent us from letting go of negative thinking. After we have done our present inventory, then we can look back at the past with a clearer mind.

Many of us come to EA seeing only our negative emotions and, if asked, cannot identify any positive emotions we experience. One goal of the EA program is to help us explore our positive emotions and characteristics with help of a caring and supporting group. Once we can identify these positive emotions and traits, we can work on learning how to develop them and experience them in our lives. We are freed as we look at our patterns with an *open accepting and allowing mind and heart*, knowing that only this gentle acceptance can allow the loosening of patterns that the program promises us.



A Joyful and Uplifting Journey

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A Joyful and Uplifting Journey

We most benefit from the EA program when we use the 4th Step to discover who we really are. First, our denial ends when we notice and accept that we *have* a negative behavior. Then we can begin turning it to the positive. We have discovered that oftentimes what we see only as a character “defect” is a really character asset gone astray i.e., we haven’t put boundaries on our assets (there will be more clarification of this later). In step 4, one of our challenges is to identify our unique character assets that we may only see as character defects. This step will help us discover how to accept our unique assets and learn how we can start using them throughout our lives and relationships.

Going through this booklet once is not enough to get a really good picture of ourselves. We need to revisit it on regular basis since our mindset has resistance and it takes time to move from our ingrained negative view of ourselves. The goodness can then come through so we become less dependent on our negative traits.

Our character trait system by which we all move through life is so deeply planted, that is why it is so difficult to change it. There are several layers of our characteristics that we have to discover:

* How do we use them ?
* How do they serve us?
* Why do we use them?

Then, we need to become acquainted with our traits (really study them to understand them) and then make an informed decision about what to do with them.

As you start this inventory now, try to notice the state of your mind. Have you worked the first three steps? Are you ready? Do you see you are powerless?

For some, facing our traits may be too difficult to do alone. We may feel overwhelmed because we failed to seek the encouragement of a sponsor or trusted friend. We can be like a picture window to our friends and they see insights that we can’t see, especially our gifts. Let a sponsor or a friend open your eyes to your assets! That said, the process of this booklet may not be for everyone.

**Let’s get started.**



**Notes**



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A Joyful and Uplifting Journey

A Joyful and Uplifting Journey

 **What’s in this booklet for you?**

* Pages 6, 8, 10 and 12 contain stories where EA members share their insights, gifts, and understandings.
* Pages 7, 9, 11 and 13 list positive and negative traits and contain definitions for them.
* Pages 14 - 21 contain four stories about members (Russ, Zoe, Charlie and Dave) who have worked through the process in this booklet. Their experiences are good examples showing how when we work this step well we find that all our character traits are linked together.
* Pages 22-23 are your inventory “trait recognition pages. Here you’ll write out your own 4th step journey.
* Pages 24-25 are for you to make any other notes you’ll need as you take your own joyful journey through the fourth step.
* Pages 26-27 will lead you wrapping up your 4th step process. They guide you to reflect on the process, and suggest how to integrate your new understandings. You are invited to celebrate discovering who you are and begin living in new awakenings that Higher Power has given you.



**Notes**



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##### My Positive Characteristics

|  |
| --- |
| Accepting of Myself and Others |
| Aware of own worth |
| Brave |
| Careful |
| Comfortable with others |
| Faithful |
| Forgiving |
| Friendly |
| Giving, generous |
| Good Listener |
| Grateful |
| Helpful to others |
| Honest |
| Humble |
| Idealistic |
| Loving |
| Observant |
| Optimistic |
| Passionate |
| Patient |
| Peacemaker |
| Prompt |
| Purposeful |
| Realistic |
| Respectful of other's privacy |
| Respectful of others' rights  |
| Responsible |
| Sincere |
| Sympathetic |
| Thoughtful |
| Tolerant |
| Trusting |
| Truthful |
| Willing to compromise |

**Positive Traits**

**My Inventory**

**My Positive Inventory and Progress**

1. In the list to your right, circle your most positive traits.
2. Write the most positive trait and the next 6 in the boxes below.
3. Give some thought to how the next 6 positive traits are related to or support the main one.
4. Give some thought to how some positive characteristics are related to the negative ones.
5. How do you better understand your main character defect?
6. Look for the good aspects of your main “negative” trait. Embrace the goodness. This may seem challenging, but it is well worth the effort!

# We begin by exploring our gifts and positive traits

|  |
| --- |
| Accepting of Myself and Others |
| Aware of own worth |
| Brave |
| Careful |
| Comfortable with others |
| Faithful |
| Forgiving |
| Friendly |
| Giving, generous |
| Good Listener |
| Grateful |
| Helpful to others |
| Honest |
| Humble |
| Humorous |
| Idealistic |
| Loving |
| Observant |
| Optimistic |

## Russ' Insight

Our gifts are often locked deep inside us and we don’t have the slightest idea how to uncover them. Some of us don’t even believe that we have gifts. So, then the challenge for us is to discover them. If they are not discovered, they develop into shortcomings and gradually into defects.

Shortcomings start out as small things like anxiousness, frustration, or hyperactivity because we don’t know what to do with ourselves. We’ve found that if we don’t find a way to uncover and use our gifts in a positive manner our energy is channeled into negative thinking patterns like low self esteem, anger, and other negative emotions.

So how do we discover our gifts? One way is to ask a family member or trusted friend to share what strengths they see in us. Another way may be to observe what type of tasks comes naturally for us. Though we may have thought that these gifts come easily for everyone, we learn that this is not so. They are our gifts.

**Consider the positive character traits on the pages that follow. Which ones are strengths of yours?**

**Most Positive Characteristic**

**Six Positive Characteristics**

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

 **My 4th Step Recovery Progress**

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**My Inventory**

**My Negative Characteristics**

**Positive Characteristics Definition (On-line Dictionary)**

|  |
| --- |
| Receiving with approval and favor even during times of disappointment, aware of own worth and worth of others |
| Conscious of one's value as an individual- knowing own strengths and abilities in self-assessment |
| Strong, even in the face of fear |
| Conscientious and painstaking; meticulous; attentive to potential danger |
| Confident and relaxed during interaction with other people; ability to be yourself, no need to pretend or hide |
| Belief and trust in God or another person, conviction that something is true or real; loyal - Firm in allegiance to a person or institution |
| Merciful, pardoning, tolerant of others mistakes |
| Warm, approachable, inviting |
| Willing to give and share unsparingly; Having the wisdom to see people's needs and the desire to meet them |
| Focused on hearing another, paying attention, understanding |
| Thankful, appreciative, pleased with others |
| Giving aid to others |
| True, authentic and assessment of self; knowing truthfully own traits |
| Modest, unpretending, unassuming, not proud or arrogant |
| Witty, able to amuse people or make others laugh |
| Strongly believing in a standard of perfection, beauty or excellence with a passion to better the world. |
| Caring about and showing affection and compassion for, willing to listen and relate to another |
| Alert, attentive, watchful, perceptive |
| Expecting things to turn out well – hopeful  |
| 5 |
| 5 |

 5

|  |
| --- |
| Aimless and indifferent |
| Anger (aggressive) |
| Anger (passive) |
| Avoiding people |
| Co-dependent |
| Critical |
| Dishonest |
| Domineering |
| Envious |
| Fear |
| Flippant |
| Guilt |
| Impatient |
| Impractical |
| Impulsive |
| Judgmental |
| Low self-esteem |
| Narrow-minded |
| Oversensitive |
| Perfectionist |
| Pessimistic |
| Procrastinating |
| Resentful |
| Self Pity |
| Self-centered |
| Self-deceiving |
| Self-indulgent |
| Selfish |
| Shame |
| Shyness |
| Stubborn |
| Suspicious |
| Tactless and Disrespectful |
| Worrier |

**My Negative Inventory and Experience**

1. In the list to the left circle your most negative characteristics. Then write the most negative trait and the next 6 in the boxes provided below.
2. Give thought to how the next six negative traits are related to or feed into the main one. Write a few ideas about how these feelings and behaviors are being exhibited, plus how they are affecting your life and relationships.

**Six Negative Characteristics**

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

**Most Negative Characteristic**

**My 4Th Step Experience**

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##### My Positive Characteristics

|  |
| --- |
| Accepting of Myself and Others |
| Aware of own worth |
| Brave |
| Careful |
| Comfortable with others |
| Faithful |
| Forgiving |
| Friendly |
| Giving, generous |
| Good Listener |
| Grateful |
| Helpful to others |
| Honest |
| Humble |
| Idealistic |
| Loving |
| Observant |
| Optimistic |
| Passionate |
| Patient |
| Peacemaker |
| Prompt |
| Purposeful |
| Realistic |
| Respectful of other's privacy |
| Respectful of others' rights  |
| Responsible |
| Sincere |
| Sympathetic |
| Thoughtful |
| Tolerant |
| Trusting |
| Truthful |
| Willing to compromise |

A Joyful and Uplifting Journey

**Positive Traits**

**Most Powerful Positive Characteristic**

**Interested in people**

**Dave’s 4th Step Recovery Progress**

The overwhelming emotional feelings that accompanied the death of my first close relative – my grandma – in 1992 prompted me to develop a relationship with God. I joined a church and became very involved with developing my faith. This was only the first step in my recovery.

My negative traits became less problematic only to come back in full force in mid-life. When I found out about EA, I believed it would be a good fit for me. I was right! I loved the Apple Valley group structure and people. I immediately delved into the program and even did a fourth step during the first month. However, I didn’t dig very deeply and found that I still struggled with many of my negative traits despite my weekly meeting attendance.

Doing this searching, fearless and JOYFUL fourth step really helped turn things around. I found how to funnel my sensitivity into being more aware and responsive to the feelings of others. I can show compassion by helping others. As I do this, however, I must be vigilant of my expectations of others and remember to take care of myself. I have a long way to go in my recovery. I need to but thanks to this new way of life and 4th step inventory, I’m well on my way.

|  |
| --- |
| Passionate |
| Patient |
| Peacemaker |
| Prompt |
| Purposeful |
| Realistic |
| Respectful of other's privacy |
| Respectful of others' rights  |
| Responsible |
| Sincere |
| Sympathetic  |
| Thoughtful |
| Tolerant |
| Trusting |
| Understanding - Sensitive |
| Willing to compromise |

**Celebrating our unique gifts makes us want to get up in the morning…**

To be really freed through our 4th step work, we need a process which will invite and encourage us to find the good in ourselves.

So why not start by looking at our positive qualities? Why not begin by taking a “searching and fearless” inventory of our positive traits?

Celebrating our unique gifts and contributions helps us want to get up in the morning and enjoy life. For most of us discovering and utilizing our gifts takes time and effort.

But just because we have a gift does not mean we want to share it with others. The good news is that each of us has an inner voice which will tell us know if what we are doing is consistent with our integrity.

By starting our 4th step positively in this way we discover the gifts which come easily to us knowing we are free to channel our energy into the gifts we really enjoy using.

**Six Positive Characteristics**

1. Accepting Of Myself and Others

2. Loving – sincerely interested in others

3. Comfortable with others

4. Humble

5. Helpful to others

6. Understanding – Sensitive

**Add your own traits**

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**Dave**

A Joyful and Uplifting Journey



**Positive Characteristics Definition (On-line Dictionary)**

|  |
| --- |
| Given to strong feeling - sometimes romantic and/or sexual |
| Not bothered by having to wait |
| A person who settles disputes and restores tranquility and harmony between persons |
| On time, dependable |
| Determined; having purpose in mind |
| Relating to the representation of objects, actions or conditions as they actually are or were |
| Considerate of personal information that could embarrass or humiliate another person if revealed |
| Thoughtful and careful to make sure others are treated with justice and fairness |
| Able to answer for one's conduct and obligations |
| Truthful meaning what one says or does |
| Having compassion, feeling sorry for another during distress |
| Demonstrating kindness or consideration for others |
| Tending to permit, allow, understand, or accept something or someone |
| Having reliance on, believing with confidence, showing hope |
| Honest, telling the truth |
| Agreeable to settle differences through mutual concessions, giving in to others |

Negative Characteristics

|  |
| --- |
| Aimless and indifferent |
| Anger (aggressive) |
| Anger (passive) |
| Avoiding people |
| Co-dependent |
| Critical |
| Dishonest |
| Domineering |
| Envious |
| Fear |
| Flippant |
| Guilt |
| Impatient |
| Impractical |
| Impulsive |
| Judgmental |
| Low self-esteem |
| Narrow-minded |
| Oversensitive |
| Perfectionist |
| Pessimistic |
| Procrastinating |
| Resentful |
| Self Pity |
| Self-centered |
| Self-deceiving |
| Self-indulgent |
| Selfish |
| Shame |
| Shyness |
| Stubborn |
| Suspicious |
| Tactless and Disrespectful |
| Worrier |

**Most Powerful Negative Characteristic**

**Oversensitive**

**Six Negative Characteristics**

1. Self-Pity

2. Flippant

3. Indifferent

4. Worrier

5. Shame

6. Self-indulgent

Ever since I was I young child, I have been overly sensitive. I was deeply hurt by the slightest criticism or limitation I had.

The circumstances in my life brought out my negative traits. I wasn’t good in sports, lacked self-esteem, and was sometimes teased. I worried a lot about fitting in. Furthermore, I had other scandalous childhood experiences that brought about more shame.

I was very shy and felt terrified to speak in front of others - even with people I knew. I carried these fears well into my adult life.

I tackled shyness through classes and work presentations and I continued to put too much negative energy into my other flaws. I became indifferent and frivolous and didn’t make goals in life. I turned to unhealthy habits to cover my pain. As I emerged from my shyness, I sometimes became overly inquisitive of others. I used these negative traits as escapes.

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**Charlie’s 4th Step Recovery Progress**

I'd come a long way and reaped many of the promises by working other 12-step programs, but was still plagued with depression and anxiety. I constantly doubted that I was good enough or doing things well enough. Sitting in my first Emotions Anonymous meeting, I had one of the most important insights of my life. I saw that in all the different ways I had tried to medicate I was really just trying to change, avoid or manage my feelings because of a deep fear that I would be overwhelmed by them. I saw that without help, I was powerless over this process. I was also introduced to this new joyful and uplifting fourth step guide.

It was obvious to me that shame in the form of constant self- doubt was my main "negative" character trait. It was perfectionism, ceaselessly self reviewing in a critical way. Doubt was like a laser scalpel; I used constantly and thoughtlessly leaving me in pieces. What a joy it was to discover that this doubt is also a valuable part of my openness, my humility, high standards, and incisive thinking. I just needed to put healthy boundaries on it so that it didn't fuel perfectionism and soul killing shame.

I found my greatest gift to be my empathy. With it, I truly see and connect with others. By setting healthy boundaries on this gift, I say "no" more easily, put my own needs higher, and am learning that I am good without having to do anything. I am grateful to EA and the positive approach of this four step guide. I'm finding that these shortcomings are just character traits which, with the help of my higher power, can become transformed, and even life-giving.

A Joyful and Uplifting Journey

**Negative Traits**

##### My Positive Characteristics

|  |
| --- |
| Accepting of Myself and Others |
| Aware of own worth |
| Brave |
| Careful |
| Comfortable with others |
| Faithful |
| Forgiving |
| Friendly |
| Giving, generous |
| Good Listener |
| Grateful |
| Helpful to others |
| Honest |
| Humble |
| Idealistic |
| Loving |
| Observant |
| Optimistic |
| Passionate |
| Patient |
| Peacemaker |
| Prompt |
| Purposeful |
| Realistic |
| Respectful of other's privacy |
| Respectful of others' rights  |
| Responsible |
| Sincere |
| Sympathetic |
| Thoughtful |
| Tolerant |
| Trusting |
| Truthful |
| Willing to compromise |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Aimless and indifferent | Patient |
| Anger (aggressive) | Peacemaker |
| Anger (passive) | Prompt |
| Avoiding people | Purposeful |
| Co-dependent | Realistic |
| Critical | Respectful of other's privacy |
| Dishonest | Respectful of others' rights  |
| Domineering | Responsible |
| Envious | Sincere |
| Fear | Sympathetic  |
|  Flippant | Thoughtful |
| Guilt | Tolerant |
| Impatient | Trusting |
| Impractical | Understanding - Sensitive |
| Impulsive | Willing to compromise |
| Judgmental | Passionate |
| Low self-esteem | Patient |
| Narrow-minded | Peacemaker |
| Oversensitive | Prompt |

# We achieve peace by discovering who we really are…

We picked up negative thinking and feelings in the environments we grew up in. One negative feeling led to another, which led to downward spirals of negative thinking. As a result, we actually became addicted to negative feelings. Much of our thinking was about ourselves or our defects. Then our pain showed us we’d become powerless over our emotions.

## In the next pages of our fourth step inventory we ask you to investigate your negative characteristics in an unusual way. We’ve found that it is important to find and focus on our one main negative characteristic.

## Our natural tendency is to tackle several at a time, but we’ve found that generously understanding our main negative trait quickly leads to real healing.

## In practice we will have to look at many negative traits in order to decide which one is the big one. But don’t worry; we are not going to stay focused on these negative traits. We do need to acknowledge and share our defects once, but we don’t keep chewing on them.

## But the results are worth the effort. We’ve discovered our greatest assets are almost always buried in our main defect. By embracing all of our qualities, we’ve achieved more peaceful relationships with ourselves leading to more joyful relationships with others.

**Most Powerful Positive Characteristic**

**Empathetic**

**Six Positive Characteristics**

1. Empathetic
2. Great Communicator
3. Helpful to others
4. Intelligent/thoughtful
5. Passionate/playful
6. Purposeful

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**Charlie**

A Joyful and Uplifting Journey

Negative Characteristics Definition (On-line Dictionary)

|  |
| --- |
| Not caring, living life without feeling and direction |
| Hurtful, bullying, punishing, blaming; fiery, impassioned, provoked |
| Silent treatment, evasive, secretive, self-blaming, self sacrificing, annoyed, resentful |
| Persistently withdrawing of staying clear of others |
|  A tendency to behave in overly passive or excessively caretaking way that harm one’s relationships and quality of life. |
| Disapproving of or finding fault in another's work or actions, ungrateful, discriminating, precise |
| Not truthful, not in good faith, not acquired in a fair manner, not authentic |
| Overbearing, bossy, strong-willed, forceful, authoritarian |
| Desiring the good fortune or talent of others in a malicious or begrudging way. |
| Belief that a future event will worsen or a current bad circumstance will continue; tenseness, worry, shyness, intimidation, agitation |
| Lacking in seriousness; excessively joking around |
| Feeling of responsibility for wrongdoing, regret of committing a crime, offense - whether real or imagined |
| Restless and intolerant of delays, overly eager to start something, abrupt, demanding, irritable, restless |
| Unlikely to be effective in a real situation, unable to put to use or solve problems |
| Highly reactive; people who react quickly or feel emotional |
| Overly authoritative in opinions towards others. Feeling others are wrong. Self-righteous. |
| Low opinion of self or negative feeling of self worth |
| Having restricted rigid views; unreceptive to new ideas; bigoted, prejudice, intolerant |
| Easily upset offended or hurt; thin skinned, annoyed, aware of and responsive to feelings of others |

Negative Characteristics

|  |
| --- |
| Aimless and indifferent |
| Anger (aggressive) |
| Anger (passive) |
| Avoiding people |
| Co-dependent |
| Critical |
| Dishonest |
| Domineering / Controlling |
| Envious |
| Fear |
| Flippant |
| Guilt |
| Impatient |
| Impractical |
| Impulsive |
| Judgmental |
| Low self-esteem |
| Narrow-minded |
| Oversensitive |
| Perfectionist |
| Pessimistic |
| Procrastinating |
| Resentful |
| Self Pity |
| Self-centered |
| Self-deceiving |
| Self-indulgent |
| Selfish |
| Shame |
| Shyness |
| Stubborn |
| Suspicious |
| Tactless and Disrespectful |
| Worrier |

**Most Powerful Negative Characteristic**

**Shame / Doubt**

**Six Negative Characteristics**

1. Shame/Self Doubt
2. Fearful
3. Perfectionist.
4. People pleaser/Impression Management
5. Control Issues.
6. Rushing/pushing

I was the youngest boy in a large Irish Catholic family with lots of drama, and addiction. I was fed and educated but often did not get the love and attention that I needed. I came to believe that there must be something wrong with me and I might not be ok. I became angry, mischievous, and hyperactive. I was lying and stealing by the time I was seven and using drugs by the age of 12. At the age of 15 I was committed to a year in drug treatment and halfway houses which gave me my first gift; sobriety from drugs. My character flipped and I shifted from being the black sheep to being a caretaker; getting good grades, mediating family conflicts, and getting validation for being a good boy. This role helped me feel worthwhile, needed and important. Energetic achievement became my adult medication. I did a lot of good working on social justice issues, but when my exhaustion and obsession became too painful I finally turned to the Workaholic 12 step programs for my salvation. With growing sobriety from drugs and work, it seemed my final addictive refuge was in codependency; always trying to feel good about myself by helping other people. In turning to Alanon I finally started getting a balance by learning the goodness of taking care of myself and setting healthy boundaries in my relationships.

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**Zoe’s 4th Step Recovery Progress**

I needed to figure out what had led to my setback. Why was I behaving like this? First, I dusted off my bible and soon reminded that "I too was not without sin", and this was part of my difficulties. Then, remembering what EA had done for me before, I knew I had to go back, and that people can be trustworthy and safe. I desperately needed to learn to forgive again, and to trust, if was to survive this. I needed to dig deep this time if I was to get back on track and regain my serenity. I had to reclaim it, take it back.

I discovered that what I thought was a good thing, my idealistic nature, had really taken over my thinking. It was no longer an asset, but a liability. All of the unfairness in my life had caused me to give up on my sense of reality. Life is not fair. If I was to know serenity again, I had to open up my heart and soul and learn to forgive my abusers, whether they wanted it or not. Forgiveness is not forgetfulness; it's fullness (fullness of heart).

The good thing about my anger is what it’s taught me about life. My anger gave me the passion, the energy, and the urgency to make change in the world, and especially in myself.

##### My Positive Characteristics

|  |
| --- |
| Accepting of Myself and Others |
| Aware of own worth |
| Brave |
| Careful |
| Comfortable with others |
| Faithful |
| Forgiving |
| Friendly |
| Giving, generous |
| Good Listener |
| Grateful |
| Helpful to others |
| Honest |
| Humble |
| Idealistic |
| Loving |
| Observant |
| Optimistic |
| Passionate |
| Patient |
| Peacemaker |
| Prompt |
| Purposeful |
| Realistic |
| Respectful of other's privacy |
| Respectful of others' rights  |
| Responsible |
| Sincere |
| Sympathetic |
| Thoughtful |
| Tolerant |
| Trusting |
| Truthful |
| Willing to compromise |

A Joyful and Uplifting Journey

**Negative Traits**

# Understanding our anger and other negative character traits

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Perfectionist | Peacemaker |
| Pessimistic | Prompt |
| Procrastinating | Purposeful |
| Resentful | Realistic |
| Self Pity | Respectful of other's privacy |
| Self-centered | Respectful of others' rights |
| Self-deceiving | Responsible |
| Self-indulgent | Sincere |
| Selfish | Sympathetic |
|  Shame | Thoughtful |
| Shyness | Tolerant |
| Stubborn | Trusting |
| Suspicious | Understanding - Sensitive |
| Tactless and Disrespectful | Willing to compromise |
| Worrier | Passionate |

## Russ' Personal Insights

When I looked at what happened *prior* to my anger, I was able to see I felt fear in just about every situation. It was fear of vulnerability, fear of not being able to verbalize my response. It seemed like I was always being attacked and put on the spot. My response to protect myself from these fears was to become angry.

I strove to notice the different situations that triggered my anger. I identified which were learned behaviors my original families’ dynamics. I was also triggered when I saw other people using anger to control or manipulate. I came to understand this reaction was hypocritical defensive anger since I was doing this also!

Another anger trigger was my lack of communication skills. I thought and believed that someone with better communication skills could always gain control of any discussion by being able to verbalize their points of view better than I could.

Also, because of my shyness I was told myself I was not worthy and that anyone else I came in contact with was better than me. This frustration of feeling unworthy caused me to become angry at myself. After examining my anger, I realized that it was this rage at feeling unable to verbalize my feelings, thoughts, and emotions in relationships that was the center of my anger.

Once I identified the primary sources of my anger, I could work toward making peace with myself. Participating at the meetings and fellowshipping with others in the program helped me to deal with the shyness. EA meetings and tools gave me better messages to fill my mind. I began to be at peace with myself.

**Most Powerful Positive Characteristic**

**Idealistic**

**Positive Characteristics**

1. Respectful of other’s rights

2. Thoughtful - kind

3. Sympathetic - empathetic

4. Helpful to others

5. Accepting of myself and others

6. Friendly

**Add your own traits**

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**Zoe**

A Joyful and Uplifting Journey

|  |
| --- |
| Negative Characteristics Definition (On-Line Dictionary) |
| Having a propensity for being displeased with anything that is not perfect or does not meet extremely high standards |
| Always expecting the worst - hopeless - ungrateful |
| Persistently delaying taking action - putting off things that need to get done |
| Having feelings of hatred or anger as a result of a real or imagined wrong done, spiteful, argumentative, embittered |
| Belief that we are victims unable to cope with our circumstances and we deserve sympathy from others, self indulgent when facing difficulties |
| Obsessed with self; talking too much about self, thinking oneself better than others, boastful - ungrateful |
| Fooling oneself, not being honest with self |
| Excessive indulgence of one's own appetites and desires. |
| Holding one's self-interest as the standard for decision making; having higher regard for self over other people's well-being, manipulative, ungrateful |
| Painful feeling due to recognition of an improper act, dishonor or other wrong done by self or others, disgrace, strong regret |
| Fear of social interactions, overly timid, reserved, cautious or embarrassed when expressing oneself |
| Having difficulty and refusing to change opinions |
| A feeling of distrust or a belief that another person is guilty, wary, doubtful |
| Acting rude; offending others, blunt, undiplomatic, thoughtless, brash |
| Unnecessarily troubled, without peace of mind, distressed, expecting bad things to happen |

Negative Characteristics

|  |
| --- |
| Aimless and indifferent |
| Anger (aggressive) |
| Anger (passive) |
| Avoiding people |
| Co-dependent |
| Critical |
| Dishonest |
| Domineering |
| Envious |
| Fear |
| Flippant |
| Guilt |
| Impatient |
| Impractical |
| Impulsive |
| Judgmental |
| Low self-esteem |
| Narrow-minded |
| Oversensitive |
| Perfectionist |
| Pessimistic |
| Procrastinating |
| Resentful |
| Self Pity |
| Self-centered |
| Self-deceiving |
| Self-indulgent |
| Selfish |
| Shame |
| Shyness |
| Stubborn |
| Suspicious |
| Tactless and Disrespectful |
| Worrier |

**Most Powerful Negative Characteristic**

**Anger**

**Six Negative Characteristics**

1. Anger

2. Avoiding People

3. Judgmental – intolerant – self righteous

4. Self pity - victim

5. Suspicious - untrusting

6. Tactless - disrespectful

I grew up in an abusive, violent household. I was sullen and withdrawn, even as a small child. I was always thought of as spiteful, wanting to get back at people for hurting me. It was like I thrived on my anger and resentment. I became contemptuous and insolent. My behavior and reactions to my pain were so off-putting that I was denied any kind of validation for the injustices that I suffered. I played the victim and self-pity cards.

At one of my crisis points I found EA. After years in EA I felt I had gained a lot of insight into my assets and defects, even learning to forgive some of the past. I did an extensive 4th step and was very involved in the EA program. I thought I had learned it all. As my life and circumstances changed, I let go of the EA program after 12 years - no more groups, no more support and no more accountability. I did ok for several years, I thought. Then, old triggers and even newer traumas sent me reeling. I even ended up in the hospital. My behavior was so out of control. I was abusive, rude and hateful even to those who were trying to help me. My serenity was lost. Like a fool, I had given it up – tossed it aside

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##### My Positive Characteristics

|  |
| --- |
| Accepting of Myself and Others |
| Aware of own worth |
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| Faithful |
| Forgiving |
| Friendly |
| Giving, generous |
| Good Listener |
| Grateful |
| Helpful to others |
| Honest |
| Humble |
| Idealistic |
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| Passionate |
| Patient |
| Peacemaker |
| Prompt |
| Purposeful |
| Realistic |
| Respectful of other's privacy |
| Respectful of others' rights  |
| Responsible |
| Sincere |
| Sympathetic |
| Thoughtful |
| Tolerant |
| Trusting |
| Truthful |
| Willing to compromise |

**Russ’s 4th Step Recovery Progress**

My acute shyness caused me to avoid people in EA at first. So I simply listened and observed. By funneling energy into these areas, I discovered that my shyness could be used as an asset.

To eliminate my isolation, I had to start finding safe places to socialize. EA group meetings were the first places I felt safe to socialize. The slogans and Just -For -Today’s” were a good start in my EA journey. It started to change my mind-set from negative to positive. For example, after reading “This too shall pass” I found that it really did pass, and I was more able to let go of worrying about my life.

My anger was another problem. After examining and pulling apart the various issues and causes of my anger, it no longer seemed so big problem. Only then was I was able to let go of it and turn it over to God (Higher Power). The result was that the burden was lifted. I used this same process on other negative character traits. When I saw my goodness more clearly, I started leading my life through those strengths. I am extremely grateful for discovering the goodness in my traits. Now I am living a much happier and more fulfilling life.

**Russ**

A Joyful and Uplifting Journey

Negative Characteristics

|  |
| --- |
| Aimless and indifferent |
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| Anger (passive) |
| Avoiding people |
| Co-dependent |
| Critical |
| Dishonest |
| Domineering |
| Envious |
| Fear |
| Flippant |
| Guilt |
| Impatient |
| Impractical |
| Impulsive |
| Judgmental |
| Low self-esteem |
| Narrow-minded |
| Oversensitive |
| Perfectionist |
| Pessimistic |
| Procrastinating |
| Resentful |
| Self Pity |
| Self-centered |
| Self-deceiving |
| Self-indulgent |
| Selfish |
| Shame |
| Shyness |
| Stubborn |
| Suspicious |
| Tactless and Disrespectful |
| Worrier |

**Most Powerful Negative Characteristic**

**Shy**

**Six Negative Characteristics**

1. Anger

2. Fear

3. Critical

4. Shame

5. Guilt

6. Perfectionist

My most powerful inherited negative characteristic is severe shyness. In my original family I picked up anger, resentment, envy, guilt and a lack of social skills. I had a constant fear of failure of not being good enough. I had ongoing anger about this social awkwardness.

My energy was devoted to doing my work and using my shyness to stay away from people. This resulted in becoming a highly skilled and hard worker, but it also resulted in increasing isolation. My shyness resulted in not talking to people, which was usually interpreted by others with as rudeness or arrogance.

I learned to use anger by watching others use it. I used anger in many different ways to get what I wanted. I used it to keep people away and I used it for protection as my self-esteem was low. I recognized that fear was the emotion that triggered all these anger responses. In my examination of my anger, I recognized that it was a learned behavior. Then I realized that if I learned it I should be able to unlearn it!

**Most Powerful Positive Characteristic**

**Good Listener**

**Six Positive Characteristics**

1. Responsible

2. Realistic

3. Patient

4. Careful

5. Observant

6. Grateful

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