

## The Framework, Limited Version for the 4<sup>th</sup> Step<sup>1</sup> using the Step Group Form

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Most human beings imagine the perfect life as one in which they have no difficulties and no problems. They tend to look at problems as a curse, or bad luck. Through this predisposition toward viewing difficulties as unwanted and certainly unneeded, a tremendous dissatisfaction in life arises.

The reality of life is that we *do* have problems and difficulties. The more balanced we become in our spiritual life, the more we recognize that problems are an inevitable and necessary component of living.

Human problems fall into two categories. The first consists of problems that life itself presents as opportunities for us to work through. These are those circumstances in life where growth is possible in its fullest manifestation. The areas in which we do well and have little difficulty are those which offer us very little opportunity to advance in life. It is in the areas where our problems are the greatest, that we experience the most potential for growth.

The second of these categories consists of problems we make for ourselves. Not knowing our true self leaves us with very little understanding of the nature of reality. In this state, we are influenced by many erroneous points of view which have no basis in reality. These perspectives do come to represent reality to us, but this reality and the problems contained in it show up in our imagination and thinking. When we are caught in this distorted reality, it warps our perception. This interferes with our ability to look at the circumstances of life objectively. We tend to see what we expect to see. The problems that appear in this false reality seem like they deserve our attention. If we could just be free of this compelling predisposition, we would not have to concern ourselves with problems that only exist in our head.

On its own life presents us with valuable challenges which have the inherent ability to

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<sup>1</sup>The Twelve Steps, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, First edition, p. 71, 72.

advance us while making an enormous contribution to ourselves and those around us. If we spend most of our time dealing with problems that don't exist, we propel ourselves deeply into dissatisfaction, which activates the growth of hate and greed.

We begin to move forward through the problems that life presents to us and see them as life's opportunities for growth by acknowledging that there is the possibility that life extends beyond our current world view. We need to accept that problems are inherent and appropriate in our lives. By developing the ability to recognize the limited point of view with which we are currently stuck, we can then move beyond it.

We believe that we can become free of the powerful grip of the problems we make for ourselves by doing a complete self-survey of our lives. This does not in any way mean that life itself will then be free of problems. We are saying, however, that we can be free of the kind of useless problems that we make for ourselves. For some of us, these may be *most* of our difficulties. The Step Group Form presents a clearly defined outline for a daily practice that is, simultaneously, a concise and simple look at our past, coupled with a study of our current point of view.

*The Framework* is the guideline which is an integral part of the entire Step Group Form. This Framework governs the style in which we write, and how we learn to interact with the Form.

We are not trying to impose unnecessary or difficult rules nor to confine anyone. It is our intention to make the undertaking of a thorough self-survey as easy and understandable as possible, without additional complications.

No one particularly likes rules, but rules can be a welcome relief to allow us to be able to play a game at all. Let us explain *The Framework* in a way that is easy to understand.

These seemingly innocuous, arbitrary rules, as set forth in *The Framework* are not capricious at all. They are intentional, focused and purposeful. The Step Group Form is clear-cut and definitive. The purpose of *The Framework* is to define the parameters so that the Form produces a specifically desired result.

If *you* were playing a game of Monopoly or a game of soccer, there would be rules to the game. Those rules have to be followed in order to play the game. They are referred to again and again to determine the proper way to execute the various moves of the game. A referee in a game of soccer makes a call according to the rules of soccer. That settles the matter so that you can go on with the game.

The most important function of *The Framework* is to defines the boundaries of the

self-survey and ensure that it is a thorough and an effective tool for the study of the point of view. It is essential to be acquainted with and to use *The Framework* while writing, just as you would know and adhere to the rules of soccer while playing that game.

Using *The Framework* leads us into the second level of the Form, which is the study of the point of view. Your responses to *The Framework* intentionally cause your point of view to become visible. This idea may be new to many people. Most people don't realize they *have* a point of view. It is thinking that is old and substantial. Furthermore, because thinking is always overlaying itself on the current moment, portrayed as fresh perspectives, it is sometimes undetectable as old and habitual. Thinking is *not* who you really are. Thinking has been masquerading as your supposed self for so long, that your thoughts represent who you *think* you are.

In many cases no workable separation between who you really are and your point of view remains. Given it's undetectable nature there needs to be some way to bring the point of view out into the open. The use of *The Framework* is designed to bring forth a distinction between who we really are and this old undetected thinking which makes up our character.

We know something about the hidden character. Your behavior in relation to *The Framework* exposes, little by little, thinking that is otherwise transparent to you. In the Step Group Form, through *The Framework*; however, this lack of cooperation is used to your advantage. We can count on the point of view not to cooperate with *The Framework* all the time. It is predictable.

Given the nature of the false character it is not surprising that it would have problems with *The Framework*. It predictably tends to make problems with *The Framework* in the same style that it makes problems in life. We intentionally use the problems we have with *The Framework* to expose the false character. If we make it our intention to follow *The Framework*, we can begin to see what thinking looks like, and how it operates in our lives.

This point of view does not exist only regarding the Framework. It encompasses every area of our lives. Over time, as we recognize thinking for what it is, our experience of our true self grows stronger. We happily begin to gain a perspective of this thinking as temporary and unnecessary. We begin to make a connection between these old habitual thought patterns and the problems we make for ourselves. The outcome of the Step Group Form is freedom from the problems we make for ourselves. We develop a clear distinction between our true self, and our false character.

If *The Framework* is followed, it will automatically reveal our point of view. To bring

this hidden character out of the shadows and into the light, we examine our commitments regarding each point of *The Framework*. All we can see at first is our specific behavior regarding our commitments to the items in *The Framework*. After writing for a while, we become acquainted with the point of view that accompanies our behavior.

We pay particular attention to what we do *not* do regarding our commitment to *The Framework*. We look at our excuses and justifications. In noticing these things, this transparent thinking is revealed to us. By renewing our commitment weekly, we can begin to get a view of our false character. As we go on, week after week, making commitments within *The Framework*, we are surprised to see the same thinking in life outside the 4<sup>th</sup> Step. In that way *The Framework* has given us a view of the chief point of view of this undetected character.

*The Framework* allows us to see the point of view operating in our lives. We can even see the predictability of the behaviors that come from this point of view. We begin to make a connection between our self-manufactured troubles and the point of view that accompanies it. We also happily find that we can actually operate outside of the grasp of this hidden dictator. We begin to select and intentionally bring forth the goodness of our true nature.

*The Framework* preserves the environment of the Form. We can gauge our progress next to our behavior regarding *The Framework*. It is within this environment that we can expect to be supported throughout the 4<sup>th</sup> Step. With this unique experience of “*commitment*” to *The Framework*, facilitators, guides, and writers will need to refer to *The Framework* often. This will help to accustom them to the way the Form works.

The Unabridged Version of *The Framework* is detailed in the book, *The Twelve Steps as a Transformational Possibility, Section One*. If you are beginning The Step Group Form, facilitating or if you already have been writing for a while, we recommend that you read this book over and over again. If you are a writing group, read a few pages from it every week at your group meeting. Be sure to differentiate between *The Framework* which is not optional and the list entitled “*Helpful Suggestions*.” The Framework is the parameter around which one works this Form. It is not the same as the list of suggestions.

# The Framework

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1. Write no less than five days a week.
2. Write no less than ½ hour and no more than one hour each day.
3. Write whatever comes up *AS* it comes up.
4. Edit nothing. Write every event that comes to mind regardless of perceived importance.
5. Write only in the format of The Step Group Form. The writing format is taught in *The Twelve Steps as a Transformational Possibility, Section One*. It is also taught in the *Workbook*.
6. Sort events chronologically by age.
7. Write one event per sheet of paper.
8. Use the way you keep or do not keep your commitments to further your knowledge of your point of view and the way it governs your life.
9. Ask one person who has completed their 4<sup>th</sup> Step in the Step Group Form to be your guide through the rest of the steps.
10. Begin this self survey with events that happened at least thirty days prior to the date of starting. Current events are not included with the exception of:
  - a. commitments that are not kept.
  - b. a bothersome current experience which plagues the mind.
  - c. any event your Form guide or writing group asks you to put into written form.
  - d. those times one changes, alters, or insists on deviating from this Framework.

11. Renew your writing commitment weekly with your guide and/or writing group.
12. Be in weekly communication with your guide about your thinking. Do this by communicating about your writing and your behavior around your commitments to the Framework.
13. There is no blame, shame, guilt or credit for kept or unkept commitments in the writing portion of the Step Group Form. Use your response to your commitments as a noticing tool.
14. Commitments are made within the framework listed here.
15. If you have deviated from *The Framework*, no matter what the reason, make the instant you decided to alter *The Framework* into a written event.
16. When you find you are doing something outside *The Framework*, put yourself back on course by recommitting to work within this Framework.

***Our commitment is that no one find the Twelve Steps, walk away and die. They can find the life-transforming miracle they are looking for through the beauty of the Twelve Steps.*** This is the principle the International Step Foundation stands upon as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) public educational charity.

We serve two categories of people: those in 12-Step programs wishing a clearer understanding of the Twelve Steps as an enhancement to their 12-Step program, and those people who are sincerely interested in changing their life and altering their current course of existence. For both groups we offer clear and understandable input and suggestions for embracing the Twelve Steps as a way of life.

**Please Note**

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