**Step 5: Sharing the Step-4 Inventory**

*“I admitted to God, to myself, and to another human being, the exact nature of my wrongs.”*

Many recovering people will report that sharing their personal inventories was frightening before they did it and freeing afterward. As noted in the exercise on Step 4, they describe feeling peace of mind, a stronger connection to others and their Higher Power, and a sense of a major step forward in recovery. If you have done this step before, discuss what this was like with your 12-step sponsor, your therapist, or someone else in recovery whom you trust.

1. Like Step 4, this step is very tough for many people. If it’s hard for you, what makes it difficult? Why do you feel Step 5 is hard for most people?

2. Step 5 is frightening for most of us. If you are worried by the idea of writing an inventory and sharing it with someone else, what are you afraid will happen?

3. The two greatest fears most people feel are these: We fear that the people who hear our inventories will reject us—that we will lose their respect and friendship—and we fear that they will tell our secrets to others. Both of these fears are reasonable. To keep these things from happening, it is important to choose the right kind of person to hear the inventory. Some people you might be able to trust with this could include your sponsor or another person from a 12-step program, a close friend, a doctor or therapist, a priest or minister, or a trusted relative. Choose very carefully. Who might you choose to hear your own inventory?

4. Once you have chosen the person, talk to them and explain what you are doing and what you are asking of them. If they seem understanding and agree to help you by hearing your inventory, choose a time and place where the two of you will have privacy and enough time to read through the inventory and talk about it. Then go and share this inventory with that person.

5. If your experience is like that of most people, the person hearing your inventory will not only accept and respect you, he or she will also have had some of the problems you felt the most fear and shame about revealing. Once you have completed Step 5, sit quietly and notice how your feelings have changed. Most people feel a sense of relief and a new peace of mind, as if a great burden had been lifted from them. They feel less isolated and more connected with others, and many even feel a strong sense of the presence of their Higher Power, maybe for the first time. Please list the feelings or thoughts that come to you:

6. Once you have completed Step 5, you are ready to move on to Step 6, and it’s best to do so as soon as you can. We will address this in the next assignment.

Be sure to bring this handout to your next session with your therapist and talk about your thoughts and feelings about the exercise.