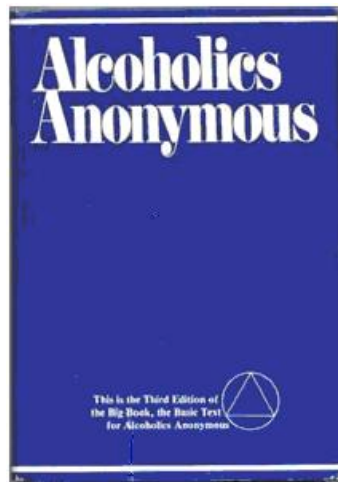


A Weekend of Sharing the BIG BOOK



February 24 & 25, 2001

In

Allentown Pa.

Hosted by the Fogelsville Big Book Study Group

Presented by Mike and Kathy L.
Of West Orange, N.J.

The Set-Aside Prayer *

“Dear God, please set aside everything I think I know [about myself, my disease, the Big Book, the 12 Steps, the Program, the Fellowship, the people in the fellowship, and all spiritual terms, especially you God] so I may have an open mind and a new experience [with all these things]. Please help me see the Truth. Amen.”

* “The Set-Aside Prayer” (sometimes referred to as the “Lay-Aside Prayer”), as stated here, is not word-for-word stated in the Big Book; but statements and ideas that have inspired the prayer can be found in the Big Book on the pages given below and are highlighted in bold font. The words used above, excluding those in the brackets, comprise the prayer in its purest form. Feel free to adapt or modify the bracketed words as needed. Our spiritual advisors have found that this prayer seems to have a profound affect when used while taking someone through Steps 1 and 2 out of the Big Book.

Page 42, ¶ 2: “But the program of action, though entirely sensible, was pretty drastic. **It meant I would have to throw several lifelong conceptions out of the window.**”

Page 46, ¶ 1: “**We found that as soon as we were able to lay aside prejudice and express even a willingness to believe in a Power greater than ourselves, we commenced to get results...**”

Page 47, ¶ 1: “When, therefore, we speak to you of God, we mean your own conception of God. This applies, too, to other spiritual expressions which you find in this book. **Do not let any prejudice you may have against spiritual terms deter you from honestly asking yourself what they mean to you.**”

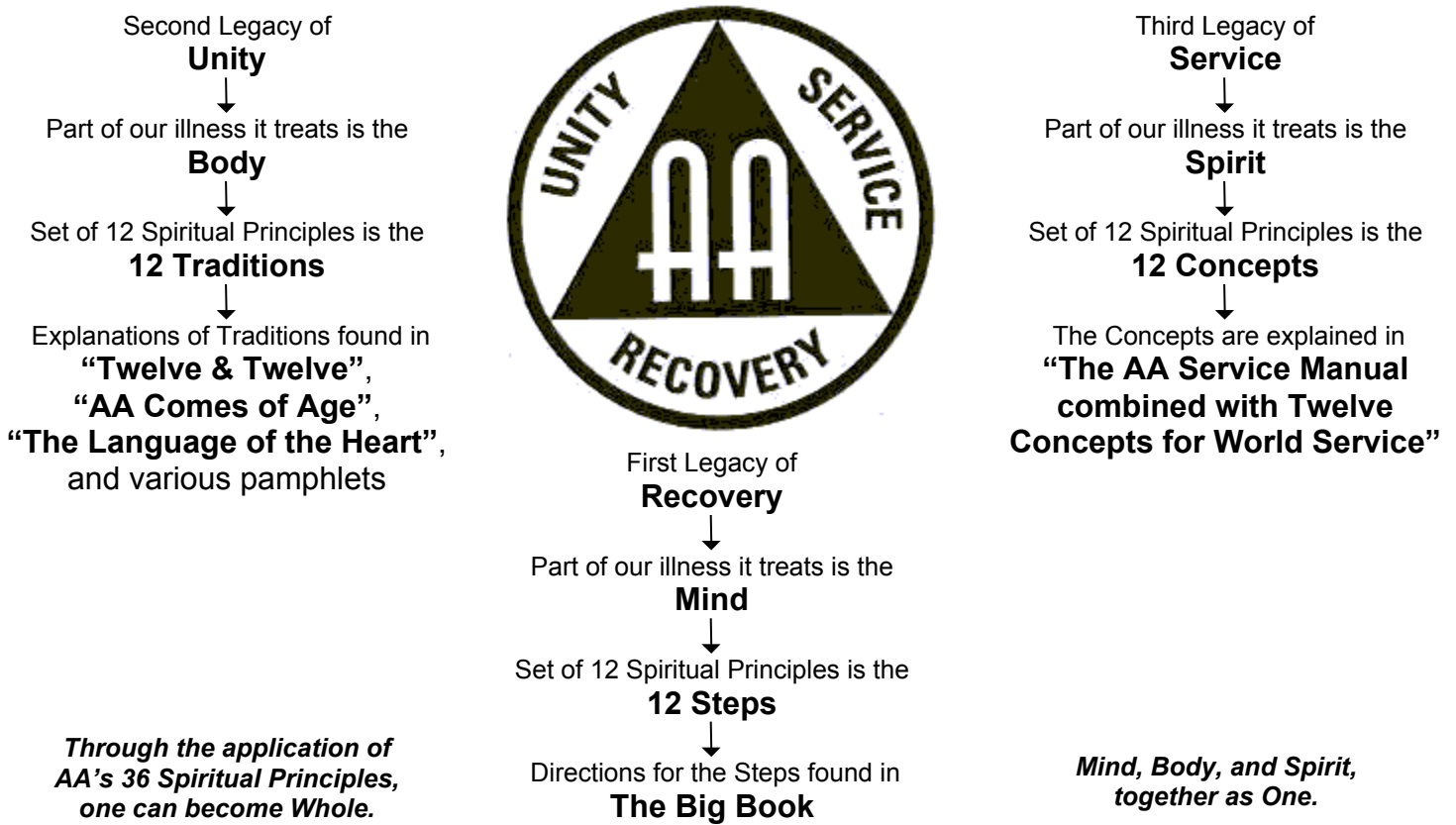
Page 47, ¶ 4: “Besides a seeming inability to accept much on faith, we often found ourselves handicapped by obstinacy, sensitiveness, and unreasoning prejudice. Many of us have been so touchy that even casual reference to spiritual things make us bristle with antagonism. **This sort of thinking had to be abandoned.** Though some of us resisted, **we found no great difficulty in casting aside such feelings.** Faced with alcoholic destruction, **we soon became as open minded on spiritual matters as we had tried to be on other questions.** In this respect alcohol was a great persuader. It finally beat us into a state of reasonableness. Sometimes this was a tedious process; **we hope no one else will prejudiced for as long as some of us were.**”

Page 49, ¶ 2: “**We, who have traveled this dubious path, beg you to lay aside prejudice,** even against organized religion.”

Page 58, ¶ 3: **“Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely.”**

The Circle-and-Triangle

The “Circle-and-Triangle” is **an ancient spiritual symbol meaning *mind, body, and spirit, together as one***. Until 1994, this symbol was used on all of AA’s Conference Approved literature. AA World Services no longer uses the symbol on its literature due to “copyright complications”.



Our Co-founder, Bill W., said the following about the “Circle-and-Triangle” in 1955 at Alcoholics Anonymous’s 2nd International Convention:

“Above us floats a banner on which is inscribed the new symbol for AA, a circle enclosing a triangle. The circle stands for the whole world of AA, and the triangle stands for AA’s Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity, and Service. Within our wonderful new world, we have found freedom from our fatal obsession. That we have chosen this particular symbol is perhaps no accident. The priests and seers of antiquity regarded the circle enclosing the triangle as a means of warding off spirits of evil, and AA’s circle and triangle of Recovery, Unity, and Service has certainly meant all of that to us and much more.” (“AA Comes of Age”, page 139)

It was Bill W.’s hope that the Three Legacies, represented by the “Circle-and-Triangle”, would be the means by which God would continue to use the society of Alcoholics Anonymous for so long as it is necessary.

The Big Book is a textbook. The directions in a textbook should be followed in order.

The recovery portion of the book can be broken down into three parts:

What is the **problem**? What is the **solution**? What is the **program of action**?

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My Name Is Bill W. ©
Hallmark Hall of Fame
April 30, 1989

Starring James Wood as Bill Wilson

The scene is a living room. Bill is just down from another drunk and Lois comes home from work and sees him peering out a window. Hanging up her coat, she walks into the room and asks:

"Does it have anything to do with me...your drinking?" asks Lois.

"No, it's not you. It's me."

"Why? Why do you do it to yourself?" she asks.

"I've been standing here all afternoon asking myself the same question. I look out the window and I watch all the normal people walking by and it's funny, I don't think I've ever felt really normal all my life, I mean like other people. I feel different somehow, like I don't really measure up.

"Ever since I can remember, I've had this feeling deep down in my gut...scared. I see people laughing, at ease with each other. I'm on the outside looking in, afraid that I won't be accepted.

"And then overseas, I found that a drink...a few drinks...makes me feel comfortable, like I always want to feel, gives me courage...to be with people, do things...to dream.

"The money, the respect, the success...it was all good for a while, but it never seems enough. I always want doubles of everything to make me alive, worthwhile inside. But then it all began to slip away. I feel cheated, angry, always so full of fear...so I drink...more. And it makes me feel OK for a while. I convince myself that things will turn around tomorrow. Soon that I'll make it all up to you, but it only gets worse.

"I...I keep promising you, others, myself..."That's it!" And I think I mean it, but the guilt and the depression...I can't look in the mirror or at you... especially...especially at you.

"I've stopped believing in everything, people, God, myself. I know it sounds insane, Lois, but in spite of all this, what I want right now more than anything else...is another drink."

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Am I SELFISH?

If I am resentful it is because someone did not do what I wanted them to do in the past.

They did not do it my way. **That is being SELFISH.**

If I am angry it is because someone is not doing what I want them to do right now.

They are not doing it my way. **That is being SELFISH.**

If I am fearful it is because I know someone is not going to do what I want them to do in the future. They are not going to do it my way. **That is being SELFISH.**

If I feel guilty or remorseful it is because I got my own way at your expense. **And that is being SELFISH.**

It seems that page 62 of the Big Book is correct when it says **SELFISHNESS is the root of all my trouble.**

The Echo of Life

A man and his son were walking in the forest. Suddenly the boy trips and feeling a sharp pain he screams, "Ahhhh"

Surprised, he hears a voice coming from the mountain, "Ahhhh"

Filled with curiosity, he screams: "Who are you?" But the only answer he receives is: "Who are you?"

This makes him angry, so he screams: "You are a coward!" and the voice answers: "You are a coward!"

He looks at his father, asking, "Dad, what is going on?"

"Son," the man replies, "pay attention!" Then he screams, "I admire you!"

The voice answers "I admire you!"

The father shouts, "You are wonderful!" and the voice answers "You are Wonderful!"

The boy is surprised, but still can't understand what is going on.

Then the father explains, "People call this 'ECHO', but truly it is 'LIFE!' Life always gives you back what you give out! Life is a mirror of your actions. If you want more love, give more love! If you want more kindness, give more kindness,!. If you want understanding and respect, give understanding and respect! If you want people to be patient and respectful to you, give patience and respect!. This rule of nature applies to every aspect of our lives."

Life always gives you back what you give out. Your life is not a coincidence, but a mirror of Your own doings. --Arthur Unknown

Third Step Parable

I'm going to paraphrase a wonderful speaker I heard who told a story about the third step.

A drunk is walking (staggering?) along the street and he meets God. "God, I can't do this anymore," he says. "Please, please, will you give me sobriety?" "Sobriety isn't free," says God. "How much money have you got?" Drunk reaches into his pocket. "Fifty bucks." "I'll take it," says God. "You're sober." The man stands up straight, drunk no more. It feels pretty good. Yeah, but... "God?" "Yes?" "I know I gave you my money willingly. But, you see, I need to get gas for my car." "You have a car?" "Well, yes." "You didn't tell me that. I'll take the car." "But..." "I'll take the car. It's part of the price for your sobriety." "But how will I get to work?" "You have a job? I'll take the job, too." "But God, how will I pay my mortgage?" "Mortgage? You have a house? I'll take that too." "But God, my family. How will I take care of them if you have my house and my job." God says to him gently: "In order to keep your sobriety, you must give me these things. But I will let you drive my car as long as you remember it's my car. You can have the job, but remember you're working it for me. It's my house but I will let you live in it. And as for the family, they are my family but I will trust you to take care of them."

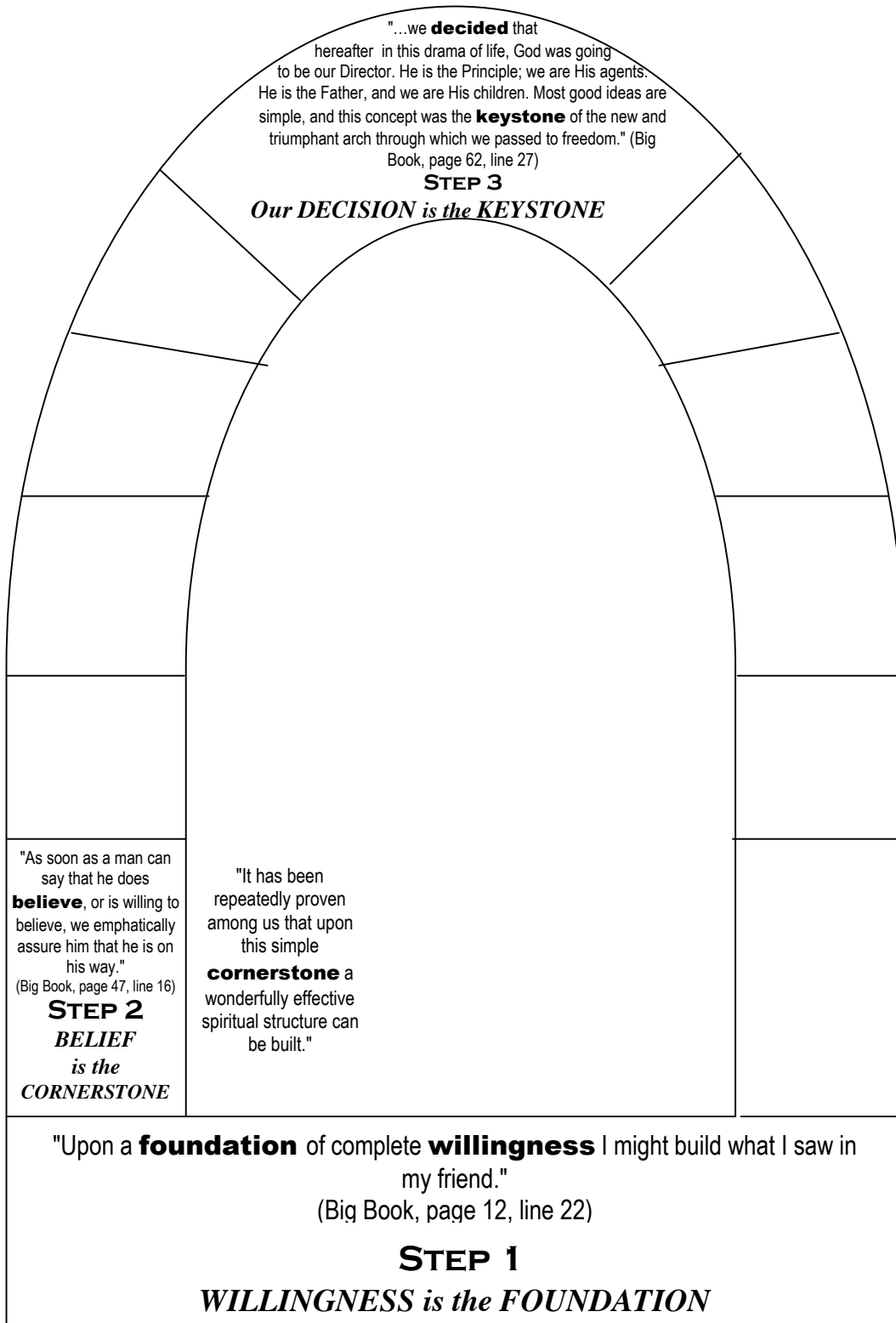
The Wonderfully Effective Spiritual Structure

The “arch through which we passed to freedom”.

Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over alcohol— that our lives had become unmanageable.

Step 2: Came to believe that a Power greater than our-selves could restore us to sanity.

Step 3: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.



Some Variations of “The Third Step Prayer”*

* This statement follows the Third Step Prayer on page 63 of the Big Book:

“*The wording* [used for the prayer to affirm our “3rd Step Decision”] *was, of course, quite optional so long as we expressed the idea, voicing it without reservation.*”

Some of our founders and early members of the fellowship used a prayer other than the one on page 63 of the Big Book to take newcomers through their “decision” -- namely because the Big Book wasn’t printed until 1939 and they got our Program from Oxford Group principles. Bill W., Dr. Bob, and Bill D. started making 12 Step calls and taking others through the “steps” in the summer of 1935.

Here are a couple examples of “3rd Step Prayers” used by our early members:

THIRD STEP PRAYER

Used by Dr. Bob

Dear God,

I'm sorry about the mess I've made of my life. I want to turn away from all the wrong things I've ever done and all the wrong things I've ever been. Please forgive me for it all.

I know You have the power to change my life and can turn me into a winner. Thank You, God for getting my attention long enough to interest me in trying it Your way.

God, please take over the management of my life and everything about me. I am making this conscious decision to turn my will and my life over to Your care and am asking You to please take over all parts of my life.

Please, God, move into my heart. However You do it is Your business, but make Yourself real inside me and fill my awful emptiness. Fill me with your love and Holy Spirit and make me know Your will for me. And now, God, help Yourself to me and keep on doing it. I'm not sure I want You to, but do it anyhow.

I rejoice that I am now a part of Your people, that my uncertainty is gone forever, and that You now have control of my will and my life. Thank You and praise Your name. Amen.

THIRD STEP PRAYER

Used by Clarence Snyder

(Both sponsor and protégé on knees...)

Sponsor says: God, this is _____, he is coming to You in all humility to ask You to guide and direct him.

_____ realizes that his life is messed up and unmanageable. _____ is coming to You Lord in all humility to ask to be one of your children – to work for you, to serve and dedicate his life to you and to turn his will over that he may be an instrument of your love.

(Protégé repeats after the sponsor):

Lord, I ask that you guide and direct me, and that I have decided to turn my life and will over to you. To serve You and to dedicate my life to You. I thank you Lord, I believe that if I ask this in prayer, I shall receive what I have asked for. Thank you God. Amen.

Prayer of Abandonment

Father, I abandon myself into Your hands; do with me what you will.

Whatever You may do, I thank You; I am ready for all, I accept all.

Let only Your will be done in me, and in all Your creatures – I wish no more than this, O Lord.

Into your hands I commend my soul; I offer it to You with all the love of my heart, for I love You, Lord, and so need to give myself, to surrender myself into Your hands, without reserve, and without reserve, and with boundless confidence, for You are my Father.

--Charles de Foucauld

Third Step Prayer “Translated”

God, I give myself to you.

You use me as you want.

Relieve me of my self-will,

So I may better do God’s will.

Take away my fears, my selfishness, and self-centeredness,

So I can be an example of your Power, your Love, and your Way of Life to others.

May I do God’s will always.

The Third Step Prayer Exercise

Here is the Third Step Prayer as stated in the Big Book on page 63:

**“God, I offer myself to Thee—to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt.
Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will.
Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help
of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life.
May I do Thy will always!”**

Try this exercise to be done after you've “decided to turn your will and your life over to the care of God as you understood God”. **Write your own Third Step Prayer**. As the Big Book says on page 63, “The wording was, of course, quite optional so long as we expressed the idea, voicing it without reservation.” (Examples can be found on previous page.)

YOUR prayer can be read to your sponsor, spiritual advisor, or a friend (expressing the idea, voicing it without reservation) before we say the Big Book's Third Step Prayer, together, as a group. - Mile L.

RESENTMENT INVENTORY PROMPT SHEET

Here is a list of people, institutions and principles that may be helpful in your resentment inventory. Feel free to add to the lists if you need to.

PEOPLE

- Father (Step)
- Mother (Step)
- Sisters (Step)
- Brothers (Step)
- Grand Father (Step)
- Grand Mother (Step)
- Aunts
- Uncles
- Cousins
- Clergy
- Police
- Lawyers
- Judges
- Doctors
- Employers
- Employees
- Co-Workers
- In-Laws
- Husbands
- Wives
- Creditors
- Childhood Friends
- School Friends
- Teachers
- Life Long Friends
- Best Friends
- Acquaintances
- Girl Friends
- Boy Friends
- Parole Officers
- Probation Officers
- A.A. Friends
- U.S. Service Friends

INSTITUTIONS

- Marriage
- Church
- Religion
- Races
- Law
- Authority
- Government
- Education System
- Hospitals
- Health Care System
- Correctional System
- Mental Health System
- Welfare
- Philosophy
- Nationality
- Rehabs
- Mental Institutions

PRINCIPLES

- God
- Bible
- Retribution
- Ten Commandments
- Jesus Christ
- Satan
- Death
- Life After Death
- Heaven
- Hell
- Sin
- Adultery
- Golden Rule
- Original Sin
- Seven Deadly Sins
- Love, Honor, Obey
- Theory of Reciprocity
- Twelve Steps
- Twelve Traditions
- Twelve Concepts
- "Do Unto Others..."
- "Can't be too thin..."
- Other Popular Sayings

FEAR INVENTORY PROMPT SHEET

Here is a list of fears that may be helpful in your fear inventory.
Feel free to add to the lists if you need to.

- Fear Of God
- Fear there is no God
- Fear Of Dying
- Fear Of Living
- Fear Of Insanity
- Fear Of the Truth
- Fear Of Lies
- Fear Of Insecurity
- Fear Of Rejection
- Fear Of Acceptance
- Fear Of Loneliness
- Fear Of Disease's
- Fear Of Drinking
- Fear Of Relapse
- Fear Of Sex
- Fear Of no Sex
- Fear Of Sin
- Fear Of Authority
- Fear Of Not Being in Control
- Fear Of Heights
- Fear Of Working
- Fear Of Not Working
- Fear Of Parents
- Fear Of Losing A Wife
- Fear Of Losing A Husband
- Fear Of Losing A Child
- Fear Of Not Having a Relationship
- Fear Of Being in a Relationship
- Fear Of Animals
- Fear Of Insects
- Fear Of Police
- Fear Of Jail
- Fear Of Doctors
- Fear Of Stealing
- Fear Of Creditors
- Fear Of Being Found Out
- Fear Of Failure
- Fear Of Homosexuals & Lesbians
- Fear Of Failure
- Fear Of Success
- Fear Of Responsibility
- Fear Of Physical Pain
- Fear Of Drowning
- Fear Of Men
- Fear Of Women
- Fear Of Being Alone
- Fear Of People
- Fear Of Crying
- Fear Of Poverty
- Fear Of Races
- Fear Of The Unknown
- Fear Of Abandonment
- Fear Of Intimacy
- Fear Of Disapproval
- Fear Of Confrontation
- Fear Of Sobriety
- Fear Of Hospitals
- Fear Of Feelings
- Fear Of Getting Old
- Fear Of Hurting Others
- Fear Of Making Amends
- Fear Of Writing Inventory
- Fear Of Violence
- Fear Of Being Alive
- Fear Of Government
- Fear Of Gangs
- Fear Of Gossip
- Fear Of Wealth
- Fear Of Guns
- Fear Of Change
- Fear Of Anger
- Fear Of Love
- Fear Of Fear