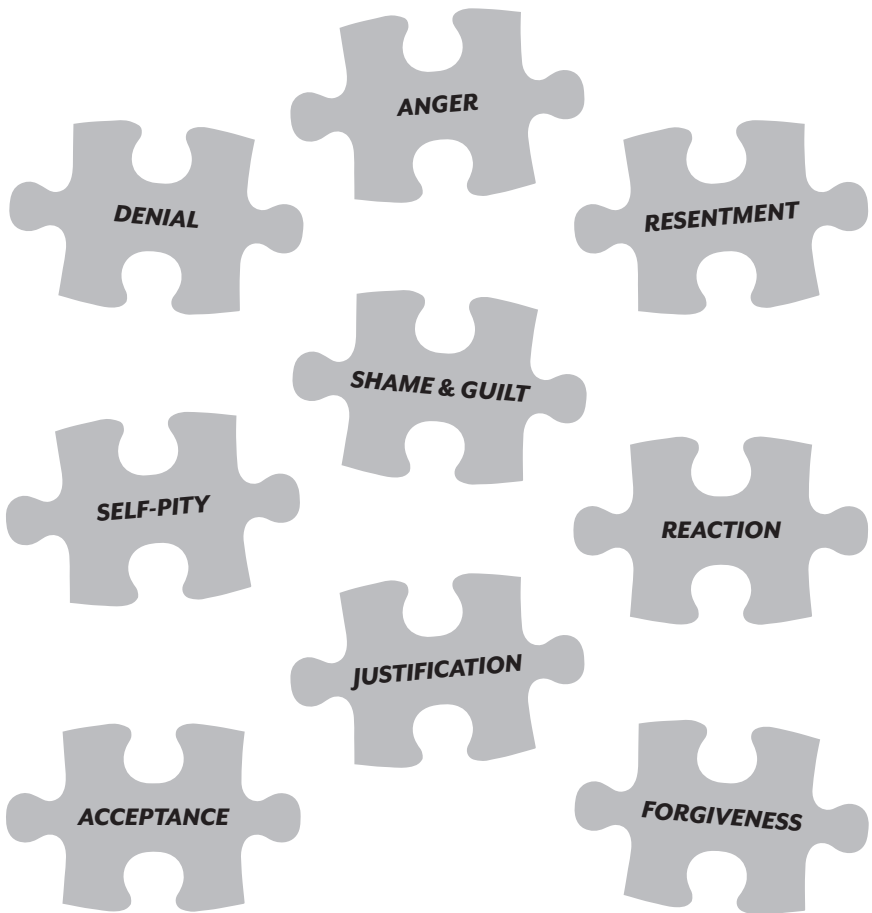


Anger & Resentment:



***Putting the Pieces
Together with the Steps***

“After a while I began to wonder why I was not as happy as I ought to be, since the one thing I had been yearning for all my married life had come to pass. Then one Sunday Bill asked me if I was ready to go to the meeting with him. To my own astonishment as well as his, I burst forth with, “Damn your old meetings!” and threw a shoe as hard as I could.”
(Lois’s Story, How Al-Anon Works p. 153)



Tea is an evil substance!

Tea is much more dangerous than beer.

Please avoid drinking tea.

I discovered this last night. I had drunk 14 beers up until 3.00 am at the pub while my wife was just drinking tea at home.

You should have seen how angry and violent she was when I got home.

I was peaceful, silent and headed to bed as she shouted at me, all night long and even into the next morning.

Please ladies, if you can't handle your tea, just don't drink it....

A) Write down 3 ways you react or behave when you get angry:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

B) Write down 3 feelings you have when you get angry or resentful:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

C) Write down the name of someone you resent or have resented:

D) In one sentence, describe why you resented that person; what did he/she do?

E) Write down 3 qualities or traits of that person that bother you the most:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

F) Write down 3 qualities or traits of that person that you admire:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

“Mad” Libs

What happens when I’m NUTS (Not Using The Steps)

I can’t believe _____ **C** _____! He/she made
me so angry when _____ **D** _____

_____. Because of him/her,
I had to _____ **A (pick one answer)** _____

_____. It’s his/her
fault I feel so _____ **B-1** _____, _____ **B-2** _____,
and _____ **B-3** _____.

I don’t care how _____ **F-1** _____,
_____ **F-2** _____, or _____ **F-3** _____ he/she
is; I am not going the excuse such bad behavior! He/she
is so _____ **E-1** _____, _____ **E-2** _____, and
_____ **E-3** _____! He/she better apologize and change
his/her ways, otherwise I’ll be holding onto this grudge
forever!

Anger is MY RESPONSIBILITY:

It seems to me that many of us deal with our anger in inappropriate ways. Denying it, we stuff it, or we go off in a fury, directing the feelings outward. I, for one, opt for avoidance of any conflict, and then I turn into a doormat. The Al-Anon program encourages me to acknowledge my feelings and to be responsible for how I express them. The problem is not that we get angry but that I do not know how to direct my anger appropriately. (CTC p. 193)

*It is only by **taking** offense at what others do that I will be afflicted with resentment (ODAT p. 21)*

Resentment is MY DISEASE:

*Losing my temper – call it an “attack of anger” – can be a disease, too. It afflicts many of us before and even after we come into Al-Anon. We try to cure this disease by applying the Al-Anon program to our thinking. The symptom of the anger-sickness is an **uncontrollable impulse** to judge and condemn someone else. In this emotional explosion, I am really asserting that everything I think and do is right, and everything the other person does is wrong. If I were not sick when I denounce and accuse, I would at least realize that the momentary relief I get from my outburst is poor pay for the consequences I must bear.*

*Today's reminder: I learn in Al-Anon to be good do myself. Am I not ill when I allow anger to destroy my poise and peace of mind? When I lose control, am I not **handing over control** to the one I am treating like an adversary? Can anger ever express love? (ODAT p. 69)*

The SOLUTION is in the 12 Steps:

Have I ever sought to find the tiny spark that detonated a family row that brought into the open ugly words and violent recriminations? Can I admit that I may have caused it by being too quick to react to a ridiculous accusation or denunciation? Do I take everything the alcoholic says . . . as an offense to me? When the alcoholic explodes, I must realize that it is always aimed at those nearest and often dearest . . . I will not make the situation worse by taking serious what the alcoholic says at such times. (ODAT p. 55)

It is good to set our standards high, but only if we are prepared to accept, with unperturbed serenity, results that fall short of what we expect. . . I will not expect too much of anyone, not even myself. Contentment comes from accepting gratefully the good that comes to us, and not raging at life because it is not better. This wholesome attitude is by no means resignation, but a realistic acceptance. (ODAT p. 242)

The Solution's In the Steps

**The Serenity Prayer teaches us to
ACCEPT the things we cannot change (feelings of anger),
have COURAGE to change the things we can (resentment),
and gain WISDOM to know the difference
by working the Twelve Steps.**

STEP 1:

That surge of power is just a feeling; it will pass. It is not real power, but it is a compulsion that has power to make my life unmanageable. I am powerless over the past, including my own past choices and mistakes.

Before Al-Anon, I'd have sworn I didn't have an angry bone in my body. Through working the Steps, however, I discovered that without knowing it I'd often been furious at the alcoholics in my life. I began to recognize anger while it was happening. At first it felt great to reclaim this suppressed part of myself – I felt more whole, more powerful – but as time went on I began to abuse my new-found sense of power. I blamed all my problems on the alcoholic, pushed everyone away, and felt worse than ever . . . If I am unhappy with my situation, I can look at my part in it. I am powerless over alcoholism. Sometimes I feel angry about that fact, but anger will not change it. Today I can get angry, express the feelings in the healthiest way I can find, and then let them go. (CTC p. 341)

If I could see myself uttering verbal assaults I would not be proud of the picture . . . When I am angry or frustrated I may get momentary satisfaction in scoring a hit, but does sarcasm get me what I truly desire? Sometimes I feel helpless and angry. When that happens, I might try calling an Al-Anon friend or going to a meeting where I can get some perspective. I might write down every nasty word I want to say and then read it to my Sponsor. Sometimes it feels good to let it out. But I need to do it appropriately and not hurt others needlessly in doing so. Most of us carry more than our share of shame. I will not add to the problem by using cruel, clever words to humiliate a fellow human being. In doing so, I would be shaming myself. (CTC p. 167)

TAKING ACTION: Write down a list of things that make me feel angry or resentful. Pick one and write about how trying to control this situation has made my life unmanageable.

List 5 situations or circumstances that trigger my anger:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Pick one of the above. How has trying to control this made my life unmanageable?

STEP 2:

One form of insanity is fear. Anger is a mask for fear – fear of losing something we have or not getting something we want. The antidote for fear is faith . . . in a higher power.

When I succumb to worry, I open a Pandora's box of terrifying pictures, paranoid voices, and relentless self-criticism. The more I pay attention to this mental static, the more I lose my foothold in reality. (CTC p. 10)

With clenched teeth and a painted-on smile I'd say, "Oh no, everything's okay," while thinking, "There'll come a day when I get even." Even that scared me because I was afraid of my own anger . . . when fear engulfed me, all I could think of was "Came to believe . . ." Before taking any action, I need only remind myself that I am in the care of a Higher Power. I know that my Higher Power and I can deal with whatever we are facing. (CTC p. 235)

One definition of insanity is performing the same action again and again, each time expecting to achieve a different result . . . The alcoholic cannot heal our wounds; neither can our will-power, quick-wittedness, or perseverance. Turning to these sources again and again is no more useful – or sane – than going to a car lot to buy groceries . . . In Step 2, what has been impossible for us on our own becomes possible because we have placed ourselves in the presence of something that surpasses our individual human capacity. (How Al-Anon Works p. 47-48)

TAKING ACTION: What fear is hiding behind the mask of anger in this situation? Write about it and share this with a "higher power," whether that be a sponsor, program friend, or the God of my understanding. Meditate on how a loving God has answered these fears for other people and how that could happen for me too. Go to meetings. Get a sponsor.



STEP 3:

Make a decision to trust and turn fears over to a Higher Power. Sometimes it is hard to trust a “person,” but “time” is also a higher power that takes “care” of my problems.

We make a decision, a commitment to take all of our concerns and feelings, worries, fears, resentments, loves, dreams, wishes, thoughts, choices, and relationships – in short, our will and our lives – and place them in the care of the God of our understanding. (How Al-Anon Works p. 50)

No matter what is going on around me, today I know that I am moving forward. I will trust the process of recovery. I'll let time take time. (CTC p. 1)

TAKING ACTION: Make a God Box. Write my fears and resentments on pieces of paper and rubber band them to rocks that I can choose to carry in my pockets, or put in my God Box when I'm ready to release those irritating burdens.

STEP 4:

Anger and resentment has so much information to teach me about myself if I am thoroughly and shamelessly honest with myself. What is my part?

It is a rare person who does not yield to resentment when he feels wronged by someone. Or we resent our fate, our bad luck, our lot in life. No amount of self-discipline can heal us of resentment. Sometimes it seems the more we struggle against it, the more it sneaks up on us, sucking like a dark sickness into the mind, plunging our emotions into turmoil . . . what can we do? Let's dissect it and find out what, inside us, made us react the way we did. I will not fight it with grim determination, but will reason it out of existence by calmly uncovering its cause. (ODAT p. 154)

How easy it can be to justify our own behavior! Perhaps we excuse ourselves, claiming that we were provoked or had no choice. Or we dismiss our actions by telling ourselves that everyone does the same thing. With these and other justifications, we pretend that our wrongs don't count. This denial must be overcome when we take the Fourth Step. (CTC p. 158)

TAKING ACTION: Part 1: Write out “I resent _____ because _____,” and list everything. Get out every ugly, mean, nasty thought I have. Part 2: List everything I did in response. Part 3: List my expectations that contributed to the resentment.

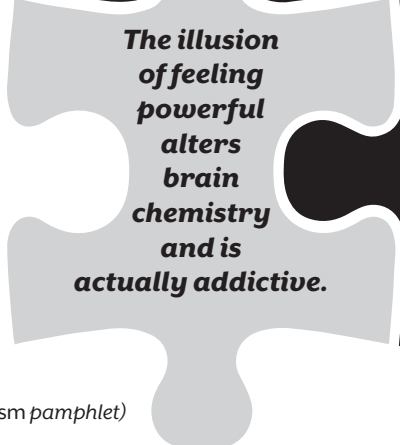
I resent _____ because ...

What I did in response:

My expectations that contributed to the resentment:

Anger & Resentment

I cannot hurt others without hurting myself. This is a compelling reason for taking thought before I release words that might set off an angry interchange. Have I ever considered that the impulse to say something unkind comes from my own guilt and unease which erupts in blows against others? It may be a momentary release for me, but it returns like a boomerang to increase my own discomfort. Impatience with others only generates their impatience with me.
(ODAT p. 20)



Sooner or later the alcoholic’s behavior makes those around him or her angry. We realize that the alcoholic is not taking care of responsibilities, is telling lies, using us. We have begun to feel that the alcoholic doesn’t love us and we want to strike back, punish, make the alcoholic pay for the hurt and frustration caused by uncontrolled drinking. This is our ANGER.

(Understanding Ourselves and Alcoholism pamphlet)



: How It Fits Together



STEP 5:

You spot it, you got it. The things that bother me most about someone else are often my character defects, too.

I can easily itemize my love one's limitations. . . but not one thing has ever improved as a result of this mental criticism. All it does is keep my mind on someone other than me. Instead of admitting my powerlessness over another person's choices and attitudes, I flirt with illusions of power. In the end, I am a little more bitter, more hopeless, and more frustrated. And nothing about my situation, or the other person, has changed. What would happen if I took my list of criticisms and applied it, gently, to myself? I may complain about my loved one's verbal abuse . . . but at the level of thought I am just as abusive. The same attitude exists in both of us; we just manifest it differently. Al-anon says, "Let it begin with me." When I identify something I dislike in another, I can look for similar traits within myself and begin to change them. By changing myself, I truly can change the world. (CTC p. 337)

Opportunities for spiritual growth, as well as new character defects, pop up like weeds in a newly-mown lawn, and we find ourselves turning to the Steps for a fresh look. I experienced this one day when I noticed that I had begun to be angry much of the time. I thought that other people and situations were to blame, but I decided to concentrate on my own part of the picture. I took a written inventory of my memories, feelings, and behavior whenever I lost my serenity, and then read it aloud to someone I trust. As I read, the common thread – the exact nature of my wrongs – jumped out at me. My problem was my pride and my arrogance, not my situation. (CTC p. 280)

TAKING ACTION: Read my 4th step out loud to God and ask God, out loud, to show me the exact nature of MY wrongs. List the traits about the person I resent that irritate me the most, and then write the times I have behaved in the similar ways. Journal about what patterns I see, and where I have seen those patterns in other relationships and parts of my life. Write down the patterns that I see, and share these patterns with my sponsor or other trusted friend.



The traits in _____ that bother me the most are:

Here is how I see those traits in myself:

STEP 6:

My reactions, attitudes and behaviors are simply survival mechanisms that were helpful in the past but are now hurting me more than they are helping. It's time to let them go with gratitude.

I played the martyr role for a long time. My suffering brought me a lot of attention and pity. I grew accustomed to blaming others for my problems, and I avoided responsibility for my own life. In other words, I suspect I may have benefitted from my pain. But those benefits are no longer worth the price. (CTC p. 365)

TAKING ACTION: Write a break-up letter to each defect, thanking it for the role it played in my life and how it helped me, and stating that I've outgrown it and am ready to move on.

STEP 7:

Self-will doesn't remove defects; only God can do that. If I try to force myself to change, I am just forcing solutions, which makes my life unmanageable; but "acting as if" the defect has been removed is an act of faith.

Resentments poisoned most of my waking hours before I found Al-Anon. I could keep a fire under a resentment for days, or years, by constantly justifying why I felt the way I did. Today, although it is important to notice my feelings, I don't have to continually rehearse and re-rehearse my grievances. It's not necessary to keep reviewing how I have been hurt, to assign blame, or to determine damages . . . I just want to be rid of the resentment because it prevents me from experiencing joy. I try to shift my energy to where it will do some good. I apply Step Six and Seven because, to me, the way to let go of resentment is to turn to my higher power . . . if I am holding a resentment, I can simply ask for relief, for peace of mind in the present moment. I will remind myself that this relief will come in God's time. Then I can grow quiet, be patient, and wait. (CTC p. 218)

Have I said or done things in haste, anger or desperation that made my situation worse? Are there things I recall with regret? We learn only from experience, and only by making up our minds not to repeat past mistakes. "When I am tempted or pressured into irrational behavior, I pray that I may stop and think before I do or say anything whatever. I ask God to remove these impulses and help me grow into the person I want to be." (ODAT p. 2)

TAKING ACTION: Put the letter to my defects in my God box. Pray for God to remove everything that keeps me from being useful to Him. "Act as if" the defect has been removed, and be gentle with myself when it pops up again.

STEP 8:

The person I harm the most by my resentment is myself, and I belong at the top of the list. My expectations (of others and of myself) are where I do much harm.

Resentments mark the places where I see myself as a victim. I want to let them go because they cost me too much self-esteem. I will love myself enough to release myself from the closet in which resentments keep me locked. (CTC p. 352)

*A longtime member says, "An expectation is a premeditated resentment." I take this statement to suggest that when I have a resentment I can look to my expectations for a probable source. Here's an example: I have a brother who is less attentive to being prompt than I am. When I make a plan with him that involves meeting at a certain time, **I am cooperating in establishing conditions that encourage me to nurse a resentment.** . . . I have the right to choose my own standards of conduct, but I do not have the right or power to impose those standards on others. (CTC p. 153)*

*One source of frustration we seldom recognize is in expecting too much of others or expecting too specifically what we feel they ought to be, say, give or do. If I expect another person to react in a certain way to a given situation, and he or she fails to meet my expectation, have I the right to be disappointed or angry? **This is interference of a subtle and damaging kind;** it damages my peace of mind and dignity, and those I am smothering with my expectations. (ODAT p. 217)*

TAKING ACTION: For each person I've resented, make a list of their admirable qualities, and acknowledge the ways I also have the capacity for those qualities. Looking at my 4th step, meditate on and journal about how my expectations and behaviors may have harmed the person I resented.



What are some of the most admirable qualities of the people on my resentments list? Am I willing to see and nurture those traits in myself?

Looking back at my 4th and 5th Steps, how did my expectations do harm to myself and others?

STEP 9:

If the person who wronged me made amends to me today, would I be willing to accept those amends? Making amends means mending my part of the relationship, not necessarily restoring it. Forgiveness is not the same thing as reconciliation. Amends is not an apology, but demonstrated change of behavior on my part. Bless them, change me.

Again and again in Al-Anon meetings over the years I heard the suggestion to pray for those I resented. My early attempts to follow this suggestion did me little good. Over time, however, it has become one of the most effective tools of my recovery. What made the difference? I stopped praying for other people to change . . . today I focus on what I can change, instead. I ask for a new way of thinking about the situation . . . I pray that the person in question be given the serenity, love and joy that I want for myself. (CTC p. 352)

. . . my alcoholic loved one might be the messenger my higher power used to let me know that I needed to get help. It is not fair to shackle her with the credit or blame for the amount of time it took for me to pay attention to that message. I chose to tolerate a great deal of unacceptable behavior because I was unwilling to admit that I needed help . . . I don't deny that hurtful things were said and done along the way, but I refuse to carry the burden of bitterness any further. Instead, I am grateful for what I have learned. "Forgiveness is not forgetting; it's letting go of the hurt." (CTC p. 178)

TAKING ACTION: Pray for the people I resent, asking God to bless them with health, happiness, and prosperity. List the ways in which I am grateful for those people. Accept amends and attempts at amends with grace and kindness, and practice detachment with love.

STEP 10:

**The sooner I admit I am wrong, the better I will feel.
Acknowledging my assets cultivates my self-esteem.**

*If a sharp thorn or splinter pierces my hand, what do I do? I remove it as quickly as I can. Surely I wouldn't leave it there, hurting me, until it festered and sent its infection throughout my body. Yet what do I do with the thorns of resentment and hatred when they pierce my thoughts? Do I leave them there and watch them grow, while I suffer increasingly from the pain? If I really don't want to be hurt, **and if I am sure that self-pity isn't giving me a certain secret satisfaction**, I will take all the steps necessary to free my mind from painful thoughts and emotions. The best way to do this is not by grimly exerting will power, but by replacing those hurting ideas with thoughts of love and gratitude. (ODAT p. 235)*

Most of us have spent far too much time feeling badly about who we are and what we have done. We may have been harshly criticized by others or we may have simply lost perspective and become overly hard on ourselves. Today we have an opportunity to stop that kind of self-destructive thinking. Isn't it about time we allowed ourselves to feel good about ourselves? It takes time for old doubts to fade and wounds to heal . . . some of us find it helpful to list five things about our day that we have a right to feel good about before we go to sleep. With practice, we learn to treat ourselves with gentleness and compassion. (CTC p. 183)

TAKING ACTION: At the end of each day, list 5 things I am grateful for, 3 things I like about myself, 2 things I accomplished, and 1 thing I could have done better.

5 Gratuudes:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

3 things I like about myself:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

2 things I accomplished today:

- 1.
- 2.

1 thing I could have done better:

STEP 11:

The only power I have is the power to carry out God's will.

Anger can give me an illusion of power. For a little while I may feel I have control over my situation and over other people, but that kind of false security always lets me down. The only real power available to me is that which is mentioned in the Eleventh Step: the power to carry out God's will. (CTC 341)

TAKING ACTION: Start each morning with journaling about my upcoming day and asking God what *his* priorities are for me that day. Read CAL. Set the timer for 10 minutes and sit and meditate. Take breaks during the day to take brief walks with God to clear my mind.

STEP 12:

Service is love in action. I only get to keep it if I give it away.

I've heard my Al-Anon friends refer to Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve as "maintenance Steps." But I don't want to merely maintain where I was when I completed Step Nine. . . instead, I call them "growth" Steps. No matter how old I get, these last three Steps let me continue to challenge myself . . . the icing on the cake has been that I have more time to carry the message of this beautiful way of life. Some of my most pleasant memories, not to mention the times of greatest growth, have come from this sharing with others and in giving service to my group and to Al-Anon as a whole. With the help of the Steps, I need never be stuck again. "Be not afraid of growing slowly, be afraid only of standing still." (CTC 220)

TAKING ACTION: Lead a program on the lessons I have learned. Take a service position. Say yes when service opportunities arise (GR, chairing a meeting, being a sponsor, speaking, area service).



Each of us is worthy of love, and each of us is doubly blessed when we are able to dig down past our grievances and resentments, no matter how justified we may feel in harboring them, and find within ourselves the recognition of that part of the other person that is and always will be loveable . . . Yet some of us balk at the idea of adopting such an attitude toward people who, in the past, may have caused us great physical, emotional, financial, or spiritual harm. If we find their behavior totally reprehensible, why should we bother to look for a place within ourselves that can relate to them with love? Aren't some things simply unforgiveable? **To answer these questions, we must ask another: what is the purpose of our recovery?**

We don't forgive the actions another person has chosen, because it was never our job to judge the person for those actions in the first place. Instead, we forgive when we acknowledge our common humanity with everyone, even the person we feel the most entitled to condemn. **In this spirit, we can even forgive ourselves, no matter what we've done or how guilty or shame-filled we may feel.** We, too, deserve love. Forgiveness is no favor. . .We simply pay too high a price when we refuse to forgive. Lingering resentments are like acid eating away at us. Shame never liberated a single spirit. And self-righteous never softened a heart. Can we afford to perpetuate such self-destructiveness? (How Al-Anon Works pp. 85-86)

Lately, when I feel like hitting somebody, I take my pillow and beat the daylights out of my bed. When I want to wipe someone out, I attack my dirty oven. I try to release my anger as soon as I can so that it won't build resentments that will be harder to get rid of later. I'm learning to communicate my anger too. I may not do it gracefully, and my words may not be well-received. It means facing the awful discomfort called conflict, but I can't run away any more. Feeling our feelings is one important part of our recovery process. Learning how to balance feelings with appropriate action is another. (CTC p. 193)

why is this happening to me?
what is this teaching me?

“Glad” Libs

What happens when I LOVE (Let Others Voluntarily Evolve)

I can't believe how grateful I am, and it's all because of _____ **C** _____. It all started the other day when _____ **D** _____
_____. At first, I felt really angry, and I wanted to _____ **A** _____
_____. But I called my sponsor instead, and after working the Steps I realized I can be _____ **E-1** _____, _____ **E-2** _____,
and _____ **E-3** _____ sometimes, too. I know he/she might never change or even apologize for what he/she did, but I decided to pray for his/her health, happiness, and prosperity. I'm also asking God to help me become more _____ **F-1** _____, _____ **F-2** _____,
and _____ **F-3** _____. Today I no longer have to feel _____ **B-1** _____, _____ **B-2** _____, and _____ **B-3** _____, all thanks to _____ **C** _____,
my sponsor, the steps, and of course, my higher power!

Notes:

*Gratefully created and presented by Christy J.
at the 2019 Virginia Area Al-Anon Convention August 24, 2019*
Take what you like and leave the rest!