

EXAMPLES OF SELFISHNESS, DISHONESTY, SELF-SEEKING, FEAR, AND INCONSIDERATION

By Mike B.

Selfishness: I want what I want. I want it now. I become angry when I don't get it. I want people to behave or act in the manner I think they should. I become angry when they don't.

Dishonesty: I think I'm running the show. I think I know what's best for me and everyone else. I act as though, if I throw enough anger at someone or something they or it will change. I act as if the people are capable of being different from what they are or they are capable of doing what I think they should be doing. I act as if others have the key to my happiness. I act as if people have an interest or should have an interest in behaving in the manner I think they should. The idea that other people or their behavior can actually change my self-worth or self-esteem, positively or negatively, is false. I act as though I need the approval of other people. I give significance to people, events, places, and things that have no significance. I make mountains out of mole hills. I want to make other people's behavior about me. I tend to minimize my part and exaggerate their part in a misunderstanding or resentment. I actually think, at times, I know what someone else is thinking. Then I act as if the fiction I just created is true, and then develop a resentment. I think people are actually thinking about me. I think I am responsible for how others react to my "truth." If left unchecked, it seems I have an infinite capacity to find fault with someone else while justifying or ignoring my inappropriate behavior. I think I know what others are thinking or feeling. I think "getting even" will change what happened or in some way make my life better.

Self-Seeking: This is how selfishness and dishonesty manifest themselves in my behavior. Pages 60 and 61 in *Alcoholics Anonymous* devote two paragraphs to this topic, beginning with the last paragraph on page 60. The discussion clearly defines self-seeking and describes the behavior of the alcoholic, addict, codependent, and adult child. Self-seeking is just another way of describing control, attempts at control, manipulation, subtle or overt. In reference to resentments, I act as if I throw enough anger at the past I will be able to go into "rewind" and it will then somehow turnout differently.

Fear: Basically, I'm afraid I won't get what I want. I'm afraid of what people think of me or might think of me. I'm afraid I won't get the respect or the approval of others. I'm afraid to take responsibility for my own life. I'm afraid of the consequences of being truthful. I'm afraid of conflict and confrontation. I'm afraid of taking action and afraid if I don't. I will tell you what I think you want to hear or tell you what I think you will find acceptable. I am afraid to tell you what I really think or feel. Another way to look at fear is, when I am back into self reliance, I am back into self will and there is a very good chance I am being selfish, dishonest, self-seeking, and inconsiderate. At some level I know this type of self reliance does not work. So, when my life is being run on my selfishness, dishonesty, self-seeking, and inconsideration, fear is inevitably produced. And in turn, fear produces what it lives on, more fear.

Inconsideration: If I am in resentment, I am inconsiderate in its literal meaning to myself and everyone in my life. If I am in resentment, I am aloof to the person I resent. If I am in resentment, I am being inconsiderate ("in" meaning "not"), I am "not" considering that God is in charge and I am not. When I mind other people's business I am being inconsiderate. When I don't consider the consequences of my behavior, I am being inconsiderate.

When Dealing With Resentments: Looking at the fourth column of the inventory process, it can be helpful to ask, "did my character defects create the space for the person I am resenting to behave in this manner?" Whether character defects created the space or not, whether the wrongs are real or fancied, for us to continue to resent or "re-feel" the anger, we are always in our character defects. Resentments are emotional mutilation and are harmful. It is similar to drinking poison, hoping it kills, harms, or gets even with the person I resent. Any behavior that harms me or another is selfish. It is important to remember, self pity is self resentment. Self pity is resenting the position I am in and leads me to think, "my life will be great, if only, (fill in the blank), and then I will be happy." I am then playing the role of the victim leaving me resenting the situation or position I am in and immobilized as a result of not taking responsibility for my life. Until I work through the resentment, what happened to me even years ago, can continue to define me.

Examples of the creative use by combining some or all of the above: I create chaos and drama and then complain about it. When there is a misunderstanding or miscommunication, I act as if I am infallible and it must be due to the other person's poor memory, listening or lack of

understanding. In other words, I am being arrogant and condescending. “People pleasing” is another creative use of all our character defects. We do this by saying yes when we want to say no. This can start simply by being afraid of the response the person might have if we spoke truthfully. We make up they might be disappointed, confrontational, abandon me, or in some other way create conflict. So I decide to tell them what I think they will like to hear. My dishonesty is apparent on several levels. First, I do not know how the other person will respond. Plus, I’m assuming I am responsible for how the other person responds to my truth. Next, I’m acting as if conflict and confrontation are undesirable and will hurt. Most importantly, I am not being authentic. The self-seeking is obvious; I am trying to control the other person’s response to my reality. The resulting inconsideration has many facets. I am creating future resentments because I will feel “boxed in.” I am depriving the other person of knowing who I really am and if I people please long enough, I will lose my identity. Another example of our creative use of our character defects is, “wanting to clean up the wreckage of the future.” It can start with the misuse of my imagination through fear, then I will pretend the fiction I just created has or is about to happen, then I will try to control or manipulate the people and events in my life, so everyone will be OK. Self-centeredness also requires the use of all of my character defects. When I am in this mode, I actually live my life as if I am the center of the universe and act as if it is OK to arrange, control, or manipulate people and circumstances to I get what I want or don’t want.

Final Thoughts: The “big book” states, “Remember that we deal with alcohol (any addiction), cunning, baffling, and powerful!” It also states “our liquor (any addiction) was but a symptom... and our basic problem was our thinking.” So one can conclude, and see from these examples, our THINKING is cunning, baffling, and powerful and “without help it is too much for us.”