

23 Jan. '23



Reply: 24fv

Having learned H. O. W. (Honesty; Open mindedness; Willingness), in the Step One material initiating Recovery from the dreadful OBSESSION - COMPULSION - PROGRESSION elements of addictions to a criminal lifestyle —

And understanding Step Two means Learning from Experience — from others "who have trudged the path of recovery" toward G.O.D. (Good Orderly Direction). Consult the list of CHARACTER DEFECTS / CHARACTER ASSETS, which I attached to earlier material. Which do you identify with?

As you begin reading through Step Three material and considering QUESTIONS TO BE HONEST ABOUT, remember a life of recovery is developed with sincere Intention toward character reform. How does that old saying go?

Sow a Thought
Reap an Action
Sow an Action
Reap a Habit
Sow a Habit
Reap a Character
Sow a Character
Reap a Destiny.

Therefore its easy to see: THOUGHT IS BOSS!

Be vigilant then, and sow accordingly.

Awareness of Awareness is key. Be Mindful of your Thoughts. Strive to replace Character Defects with Character Assets.
For the Love of Truth,

Criminals & Gangmembers Anonymous

STEP THREE

WE MADE A DECISION TO LET GO OF DESTRUCTIVE SELF-WILL, IN EXCHANGE FOR SPIRITUAL PRINCIPALS, BECOMING WILLING TO SEEK GOD'S CARE AND PROTECTION, AS WE UNDERSTOOD GOD.

1. How do our beliefs affect our Choices?
2. How do our beliefs effect our Decisions?

Changes in attitude never come easily

The development of Love and Compassion is a wide – round curve that can be negotiated only slowly, not a sharp corner that can be turned all at once. It comes with daily practice.

H.H. The 14th Dali Lama

I would change “Love and Compassion” to “A life of Recovery”.

Do the exercise on the back

QUESTIONS TO BE HONEST ABOUT:

1. Right here, right now – what kind of choices do^u have?
2. How do our decisions affect our lives?
3. How do our decisions affect the lives of those around us?
4. How do our decisions affect the people we love outside these walls?
5. What about the people we harmed to get here, do our choices today affect them?

KEY WORDS DEFINED:

CHOICE: An opportunity to select or seize something.

DECISION: A result or choice.

For the Facilitator:

Go around the room and (if time permits, if not do half the room) ask each participant to state the total number of years they have spent in prison. This includes time spent for things they were not convicted of, and weekends spent in County Jail, etc... Write the total number of years on the board (if you only counted half the room, double the number).

Now go around the room and (if time permits, if not do the other half of the room) ask each participant how long it took them to make the decision to commit the crime they are in here for. Example, a bank robbery – one might spend weeks planning a bank robbery, but – until one is actually standing outside the bank the decision hasn't been made to commit the crime, that comes once they step through the door and brandish their weapon, or step up to the teller window and pull out the note... Write the total ** on the board (if you only counted half the room, double the number)

Let this sink in. In most cases, it will be hundreds, if not a thousand years or more spent in prison for less than an hour spent in decision. As you go through the questions on the reverse, keep going back to this. Repeat, over and over again, the disparity between how long it took us to "DECIDE" to commit our crimes and the amount of time we have spent away from those we love and who love us, the number of years spent locked up.

**Please note, the total number of seconds it takes to decide to commit a crime, is most often under 5 (five), anybody who says "20 Minutes" or "2 Hours" or something like that most likely doesn't understand the question, or is trying to throw off the result. Don't be afraid to dig a bit here and simplify/clarify the question for those who do not seem to have a grasp on the concept.

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Everything in life is based off of one thing... making a decision. We have to make each and every decision ourselves. We may take advice or even be influenced, but the bottom line is that we are in control of our own decisions and these decisions become the basis of our lives. We have to make the decision to act the right way. We have to make the decision to be responsible. We have to make the decision to not let anything or anyone get in the way of our progress, whether it be a person, place or thing. Which 9 times out of 10, is the reason for our success or failure.

How many times have we wanted a job and it just came to us? How many times did we want that nice car and the money for it just fell out of the sky? Things take place based off our decisions to act. It has been said that 10% of life is what happens to you and 90% of life is how you react to that 10%. Think about it... When that guy cut in front of you this morning on the way to the yard, how did you respond? Was that your only option? No. It wasn't, but you only made that choice because you were *willing* to do so. We give ourselves permission to let go of thoughts, words and actions that cause us and others problems. At first it might be hard to let others get away with things that contradict our old ways of thinking (beliefs, manners and habits) but, by letting them go (our willingness to do so) is proof that we are sincere in our efforts to change our character and lifestyle.

QUESTIONS TO BE HONEST ABOUT:

1. Give a recent example of a situation that you reacted to in a new and positive manner, which in the past, due to your old beliefs, manners and habits, would have ended different?
2. Looking back, what decisions have you made that were positive, but got criticized for, even though they helped you or others?
3. How have you felt when someone has taken away the power for you to make your own decision? Describe that feeling.
4. How many times have you entered a situation without having a firm plan (decision)? What was the outcome? Is being prepared part of responsibility?

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"Let go of destructive self-will" these are the same behaviors and habits that caused our problems in Step One. If you made the choices and decisions to do wrong, is it not your own responsibility to make the choices and decisions to correct the wrongs and live right?

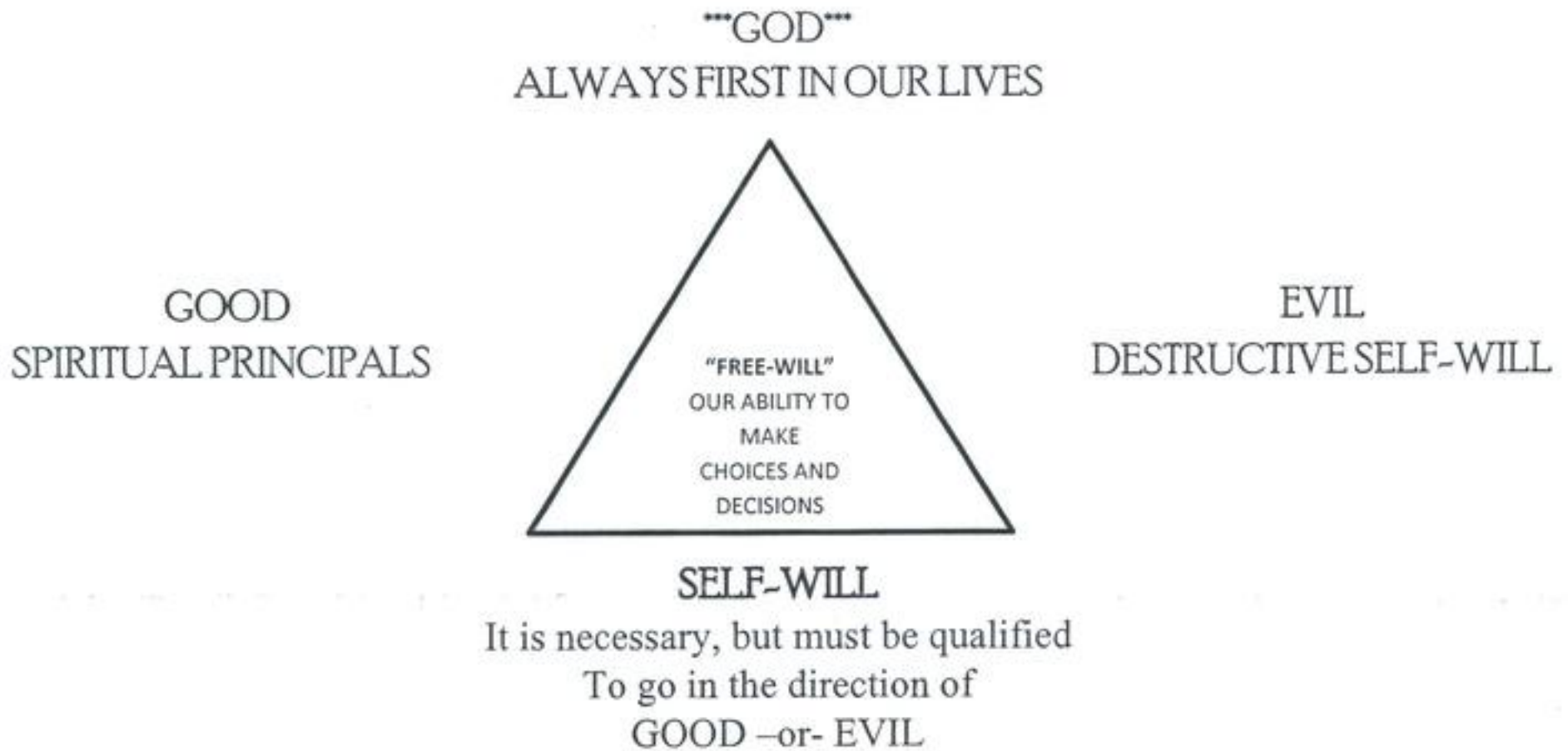
It is critical to your own recovery to understand now, our free-will - the ability to make choices and decisions between good and evil - as this will be the key to our success, or continue being a stumbling block for our failure. We have to learn to become more responsible, instead of making excuses, expecting someone or something else to be responsible for us.

Destructive self-will is simply living in challenges, disputes and in conflict with others. It is a self-centered attitude that only *we* matter and *we* trample on the rights, feelings and freedoms of others. It is generally mixed together with defects in our character that push us directly into destructive addiction. Defects are things that cause us difficulty in living normal. Things like anger, insecurity, dishonesty, selfishness, prejudice and many more...

Merely making a decision to abandon the attitude and behavior we are comfortable with and justify holding on to as a means of survival or to maintain our respect will not be easy nor simple. It took a long time to get used to bad habits and warped beliefs, so it will take a long time to abandon them. Most of us realize good is the opposite of evil, but good only had a role in our lives when we wanted something from others. Doing good was not a normal behavior for us because we were always trying to deceive or manipulate somebody for something. So, "giving up" what is 'normal' behavior in exchange for Spiritual Principals that we are not used to using in our daily lives will be awkward. It is similar to being used to wearing certain types of clothes that we are comfortable in, then suddenly trying to adjust to wearing clothes we are not comfortable wearing because we will 'feel' different and we are afraid that other people will see and treat us differently.

Spiritual Principals obviously represent what is good and decent. Again, we are not used to feeling Good or Decent, nor do we treat most people Good or Decent, with the exception of a very select few. One major part of Recovery is learning to establish Good, Decent relationships with anyone and everyone. When we cannot, we learn to offer tolerance and understanding instead of prejudice and harsh judgment.

When we are practicing doing Good or treating ourselves and others Decently, we will naturally feel uneasy, because it is in our 'nature' to appear 'firm' or 'solid' as if we had no emotions or feelings. When we make a mistake and treat someone too harshly, or when we are too forceful or rude, we begin to own up to our mistakes and apologize instead of making excuses to not do so. In doing the right thing, we are holding ourselves accountable and asking God, through our actions, to be with us and to protect us while we are doing what is right, instead of the way we used to act.



QUESTIONS TO BE HONEST ABOUT:

1. What certain beliefs do you hold on to that prevent you from trusting that you can move forward with change?
2. What 'Bad Habits' do you have that you feel cause problems for you?
3. Why do you feel you can't associate with some people and only associate with others?
(Listen to your own beliefs and prejudices at work here)
4. Whatever you do (no matter how big or small) right or wrong, who makes your Choices and Decisions?
5. When you do or say something to someone and it offends or hurts them, do you justify why you did it so you don't have to apologize?
6. When you have an argument or dispute with someone, and you 'work it out' – do you feel better than if you had "Handled It" like you used to in the old days (using physical violence or the threat of physical violence, extortion, etc...)?
7. Do you normally wait for something to go wrong before you pray?
8. Are you prayers normally centered around the things you want? Or do you pray to gain/maintain closeness with God, or for strength?
9. Do you realize that what you think or feel is normally expressed through the words you speak and the way you act?
10. Do you recognize that the Twelve Steps represent CHANGE as opposed to Avoiding Change?



A simple and meaningful prayer...

We simply overlook the true meaning of...

The Serenity Prayer

"God, Grant Me The **Serenity**...
To **Accept** The things I cannot **Change**,
The **Courage** To Change The Things I can,
And The **Wisdom** To Know The **Difference**."

Living One Day At A Time,
Enjoying One Moment At A Time,
Accepting Hardship As A Pathway To **Peace**.
AMEN"

We start each CGA meeting with the "Serenity Prayer", then amazingly we overlook the meaning of the prayer as soon as the meeting starts. This prayer encourages us to take action in three specific ways:

1. Asking GOD to grant us the Serenity (Peace of Mind) to Accept the Things we cannot Change...
2. The Courage to Change the Things we can...
3. And The Wisdom to Know the Difference.

We are given the free-will ability to make choices and decisions to let go of destructive self-will in exchange for spiritual principals, which represent good instead of evil.

What "Freedom" we are allowed from GOD, if only we are wise enough and have the courage enough to utilize our inner resources to apply our FAITH in being responsible for ourselves and our relationships with others. It is our choice to be at peace with ourselves and to live in harmony with others. "Letting go" of the things we cannot change is not difficult, nor does it require much energy or skill. Holding on to prejudices, dishonesty, lack of personal responsibility, fear, pain, anger and resentments require a lot of energy and drain our strength unnecessarily. We say we strive to recover from our problems, yet sometimes we refuse to 'Let Go' of the 'Source Of The Problem' within ourselves. GOD is always near us, yet we turn away focusing on our resentments instead.

QUESTIONS TO BE HONEST ABOUT:

1. Why do we ask GOD to grant us Serenity, when it is US refusing to accept a person, place or thing the way it is?
2. Why do you have the courage to argue, debate or hold on to resentments, yet lack the courage to be honest with yourself, others and responsible for your self-improvement?
3. What does it mean for you to:
 - A. Accept what you cannot change?
 - B. Change what you can?
4. What is Your understanding of the Serenity Prayer? Please share a personal experience.

KEY WORDS DEFINED:

SERENE: Not disturbed or troubled, Calm, Peaceful, Tranquil.

COURAGE: The attitude of facing and dealing with anything recognized as dangerous, difficult or painful... Instead of withdrawing from it.

WISDOM: The power to judge rightly and follow the soundest course of action, based on knowledge, experience and good judgment.

SERENITY PRAYER

God, grant me the serenity
To accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference.
Living one day at a time,
enjoying one moment at a time;
accepting hardship as a pathway to peace;
taking, as Jesus did,
the sinful world as it is,
not as I would have it;
trusting that You will make all things right
if I surrender to your will;
so that I may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with you forever in the next.

Amen

Reinhold Niebuhr

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Breaking old habits and picking up new ones is a gradual, and (for some) unfamiliar process. The key for us at this early stage in our Recovery is to become WILLING. We give ourselves permission to let go of any thoughts, words or actions that have the potential of causing problems, either for ourselves or others. Although it will be awkward for a while, our willingness to let go of rigid Beliefs, Manners and Habits is proof that we are sincere in our efforts to take action in changing our character and lifestyle. In Step Three, we "Give Up" that which can do us no good (our Destructive Self-Will) in exchange for what can do us no harm (Spiritual Principals).

QUESTIONS TO BE HONEST ABOUT:

1. How many times did you tell yourself you were going to stop doing something, yet you continued to repeat it?
2. Did you ever commit a crime or go someplace, knowing something didn't feel right, yet you were persistent in doing it anyway?
3. What does "Destructive Self-Will" mean to you and how does/did it apply in your life?
4. What does "Spiritual Principles" mean to you and how can you apply them in your life?
5. Does Responsibility play a role in making better choices? How?

Sometimes we blame others for the bad choices we make.

That's like saying,

"Bad behavior by someone else requires that I act just as negative towards them."

That's like thinking,

*"Every time it starts to rain, the only choice I have is to find a mud puddle
And jump into it!"*

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It should be clear for us to see the pattern of destructive behavior we engaged in (conduct and manners) which culminates in our current situation. Most often the negative attitudes and bad habits we had, have not changed. There is a difference between not doing bad and doing good.

This Step invites us to make a decision and learn how to stop thinking and acting in our old, destructive manner. Each time we reject those thoughts, feelings or actions that we know are 'wrong', our Spiritual Principals can calm our attitude. There will be moments when our patience with others (and ourselves) will be challenged and we will be tempted to react in old, destructive ways. But by using the Spiritual Principals we have re-learned, we can decide to turn away and avoid unnecessary conflict. It is in those situations, where we 'uncomfortably' approach someone in an attempt to resolve a disagreement or own up to our own faults, that we are seeking God's care and protection. For many of us, this kind of display of compassion and tolerance is something that we have rarely, if ever, done.

QUESTIONS TO BE HONEST ABOUT:

1. Destructive self-will can be found throughout our destructive patterns of past behavior. Can you identify your behaviors?
2. Do you still have difficulty with negative attitudes and bad habits? Please explain:
3. Are you in full control of the choices and decisions that you make?
4. When you are tempted to act out aggressively and you don't, do you ever pray for God's assistance?
5. When you are making the choice to apologize to someone, do you pray for God's protection?

KEY WORDS DEFINED:

PATTERN: Reliable sample of traits, acts, tendencies or other characteristics.

DESTRUCTIVE: To ruin, Designed or tending to destroy.

WILL: The power of control over one's own actions or emotions.

PRINCIPLES: A comprehensive and fundamental law, doctrine or assumption.

CARE: Painstaking or watchful attention.

PROTECTION: To cover or shield from exposure, injury or destruction.

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When we were growing up, certain beliefs were instilled in us by family, friends, teachers, etc... Those same beliefs became 'Principles' to most of us later on in life.

Some of us grew up with religions in our lives and understood 'Spirituality' to only be associated with God or the Church, or something specific to religion.

So to some of us, '*Spiritual Principles*' are two new words. If asked what our Spiritual Principles are, a lot of us could not answer in any kind of specific manner. Here in CGA, Spiritual Principles are defined as being "Respect, Balance, Harmony, Compassion and Loving-Kindness.

For many of us, those words sound "soft" or "Girlish" or like something that would only come out of the mouth of a 'Square' or a 'Lame' or a _____. But in learning to change, we know that our old definition of "Spiritual Principles" weren't even close to any of the words we just spoke. The process of changing our old, destructive way of life is all about learning new ways to see the same things. Spiritual Principals are a major part of that change.

QUESTIONS TO BE HONEST ABOUT:

1. Can you separate 'Spiritual Principles' from religion?
2. Are you willing to practice 'Spiritual Principles' in your daily life?
3. Are you scared of what people might think of you in the practice of this new way of life?
4. Are you scared that 'Spiritual Principles' will make you a religious person, or in some way change your religion?

SOME EXAMPLES OF SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES:

Abundance	Acceptance	Admiration	Balance
Beauty	Brotherhood	Clarity	Communication
Compassion	Consistency	Courage	Delight
Faith	Flexibility	Forgiveness	Freedom
Gratitude	Harmony	Healing	Honesty
Hope	Humility	Humor	Independence
Integrity	Joy	Judgment	Love
Loving-Kindness	Loyalty	Open-mindedness	Participation
Patience	Peace	Perseverance	Purpose
Responsibility	Selflessness	Self-Reliance	Serenity
Service	Sharing	Simplicity	Spontaneity
Surrender	Survival	Tenderness	Trust
Truth	Unconditional Love	Unity	Vision

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We will now lay out before us, what it means to be Responsible and Accountable. Although we like to believe we are in 'full control' at all times, we often don't like to accept all the "wrong", "bad", "evil" and "ugly" things we have done. Most often this comes up when we have made the attempt to no longer deny that we have made our own Choices and Decisions throughout our lives. We have injured too many people or destroyed too many relationships, be it with friends, acquaintances, family members or significant others through our irresponsible behavior. We freely rejected Spiritual Principles or the Good and the Right and instead chose Evil and Wrong.

So now, as we put forth a sincere effort toward changing our characters and behaviors, our pride, arrogant masculinity and insecurities will be threatened. As a result we can rebel when our fears or vulnerabilities can be seen by others. Sometimes we make the choice (reluctantly) to refuse to be kind or compassionate when we know we should. These are the moments when the right choice is to seek God's Care and Protection. This is when we feel the inner tug to do right, but can easily - through habit - do wrong through justification or just by neglecting to recognize doing the right thing.

QUESTIONS TO BE HONEST ABOUT:

1. Looking back, what is one consistently bad habit you have?
2. When someone displeases you (intentionally or not) do you have difficulty reacting fairly?
3. Give some examples of Destructive Self-Will from your life:
4. Give some examples of you applying Spiritual Principles from your life:
5. What does it mean for you to 'Seek God's Care and Protection' when you have to move forward into the unknown, not knowing what to expect?

KEY WORDSDEFINED:

MASCULINE: Having qualities appropriate to or usually associated with a 'Man'.

ACCOUNTABILITY: An obligation or willingness to accept responsibility.

RESPONSIBLE: Able to answer for one's conduct and obligations, Able to choose for oneself between right and wrong.

DELICATE: Easily torn or damaged.

RELUCTANT: Feeling or showing aversion, hesitation or unwillingness.

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!NOW!

As Criminals and Gangmembers we often live in the past or the future. We live in a fantasy life of what we have done and what we plan to do in the future. Often we do not live in the NOW.

We can do nothing about the experiences we have had. We have no control over other people places and situations. We cannot control the future. We can only control ourselves.

Everything we do is done in the NOW.

Over the next week, have some self-awareness about how often your attention/thinking is in the past or the future. Do not judge or analyze what you observe, simply be mindful of your thoughts, feelings and emotions and observe your reactions.

REMEMBER: Jets don't have rear-view mirrors!!

The Serenity Prayer tells us to "Accept the things we cannot change", some of these would be what has happened in our past, the actions of others, etc... "Change the things we can", this includes ourselves, our character, habits, beliefs and behaviors, among others. "And the Wisdom to know the difference."

We cannot live in the past or the future.

We can only live in the Now!

QUESTIONS TO BE HONEST ABOUT:

1. What control do you have over your past?
2. What control do you have over your future?
3. Where (the past, present or future) do you spend most of your time thinking?
4. How are the Twelve Steps helping you to improve your life in the now?

*DON'T WORRY ABOUT TOMORROW
TOMORROW WILL TAKE CARE OF ITSELF*



List strengths & weaknesses

	Strength		Weakness
1.	Forceful	1.	Fearful
2.	Enthusiastic	2.	Obstructive
3.	Spontaneous	3.	Pushy
4.	Trustworthy	4.	Loose-tongued
5.	Respectful	5.	Mistrustful
6.	Tolerant	6.	Undisciplined
7.	Observant	7.	Sloppy
8.	Optimistic	8.	Rude
9.	Caring	9.	Contemptuous
10.	Generous	10.	Short-sighted
11.	Practical	11.	Passive
12.	Considerate	12.	Aggressive
13.	Self-assured	13.	Bossy
14.	Inspiring	14.	Chaotic
15.	Adventurous	15.	Cynical
16.	Lively	16.	Blunt
17.	Persuasive	17.	Stand-offish
18.	Serious	18.	Vague
19.	Idealistic	19.	Inflexible
20.	Warm	20.	Moody
21.	Humorous	21.	Indifferent
22.	Friendly	22.	Intolerant
23.	Determined	23.	Wasteful
24.	Patient	24.	Stubborn
25.	Orderly	25.	Reckless
26.	Disciplined	26.	Inhibited
27.	Ambitious	27.	Naive
28.	Dedicated	28.	Greedy
29.	Flexible	29.	Fanatical
30.	Logical	30.	Dull
31.	Open	31.	Arrogant
32.	Accurate	32.	Lazy
33.	Independent	33.	Selfish
34.	Intelligent	34.	Complaining
35.	Tactful	35.	Impatient
36.	Creative	36.	Hard
37.	Honest	37.	Shallow
38.	Straightforward	38.	Strict
39.	Appreciative	39.	Shy
40.	Versatile	40.	Prejudiced

THE 5 C'S

CONFIDENCE:

Stating the simple and obvious truth

CONFESSION:

Stating the true and difficult things

CONVICTION:

Belief in a need for an altered way of life

CONVERSION:

A spiritual awakening and acceptance

CONTINUANCE:

Helping others as they had been helped