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# *Essay*

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October 1990

Post Office Box 300  
Simi Valley, California 93062

## **A REMEMBRANCE**

**Mark M.—A Remembrance:** Since our last issue of *Essay*, we learned that Mark M. of West New York, NJ died of complications from AIDS. I met Mark a couple of times, and he would phone me from time to time over the years, so I followed his progress in the program. Sobriety and victory over lust did not come easily or quickly for Mark, but when he died, he was, to my recollection, over two years sexually sober. Once Mark made the surrender that ushered in his continued sobriety, I could literally see him grow in grace. As the pool of resentment and anger was uncovered, typical with so many of us in sobriety, he dealt with it in a good program way. The pain of his defects and illness brought him closer to his Higher Power. In his darkest hours I would hear him praise God and give thanks for what he had. I sorely miss our talks, Mark, and thank you for letting His grace in your life touch mine. See you later . . . **Roy K.**

### **INSIDE THIS ISSUE**

- SA and Sexual Abuse
- Are We in This Area Really Part of SA?
- Where Do We Go From Here?

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

*Events listed here are presented solely as a service to readers, not as an endorsement by ESSAY or the Central Office.*

**October 5, 6, 7, 1990—Second Annual Southern California SA and S-Anon Unity Conference.** Contact Jim C. at 20560 Starshine Road, Walnut, CA 91789.

**October 12, 13, 14, 1990—Mid-Central SA/S-Anon Retreat.** “Stepping Into the Light.” For further information write: SA of Wichita, Post Office Box 48023, Wichita, KS 67201.

**October 19-21, 1990—European SA Convention in Worms, W. Germany.** 60 marks for meals and lodging. Contact Hans 011-49-6136-2298.

**October 20, 1990—Fifth Annual Baltimore/Washington SA/S-Anon Marathon.** “Trudging the Road of Happy Destiny.” For information contact Roberta R. at (202) 332-2906 or Bob K. at (301) 320-2827.

**November 10, 1990—Nashville, TN.** “Balance in Recovery” Mid-South Regional Conference. 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. For further information, contact Adam R. at (615) 385-3163 or Tricia M. at (615) 646-9480 or write SA of Nashville at PO Box 158009, Nashville, TN 37215.

**January 11, 12, 13, 1991—Oklahoma City, OK.** SA/S-Anon International Convention. Contact Fred L. (405) 692-0020 or Jay L. (405) 340-4495. Sheraton Hotel (405) 235-2780.

**OVERHEARD AT THE BALTIMORE CONVENTION:** “I have to let others in to make room for myself.”

## AMERICANS VISIT GERMANY

"Two American SAs flew to Germany to attend the German SA Conference this June. We arrived four hours late and missed our German host at the airport. After two obsessive and fearful hours, our powerlessness was rewarded by a phone connection with **Kornelius**, an SA, who directed us to the Thursday meeting in **Mainz**. Friendly Germans helped us use the trains and buses and we arrived 30 minutes early for the meeting. We were again rewarded. Imagine our arriving lost in a strange country and in the same evening sharing deeply with persons we had just met and who understood more about us than perhaps our own families.

"The next day after a very late breakfast with our hosts, **Hans and Eva K.**, we were driven to the conference location. It was a beautiful country village with patchwork fields, rolling hills, woodlands, 'gingerbread' houses and an antique church with steeple clock.

"When we two Yankees entered the dining room full of SA's speaking German (what else) our momentary response was, 'What are we doing here?' So, powerless again, we did our best to surrender our care into the hands of our hosts. Translators are a blessed lot. They do for you what you cannot do for yourself. We were 'a part of' again. We were at our SA conference.

"It was a conference like others, but with its own special flavor. We all led with our weakness. Sharing from the heart was commonplace. Some who belonged to other 12-Step groups as well mentioned something we had also heard—that SA meetings often have a special spiritual nature.

"Our higher power saw to it that we went to the 'right' meetings. One group centered on the freedom some of us were finding in sleeping and dressing apart from our spouses. In another meeting, sharing about childhood injuries, shame, and painful dreams brought us very close.

"Conversation outside meetings had its own special gifts as well. We made good connections in the limited time available.

"We returned to stay with **Hans and Eva** for our remaining time in Germany. In addition to the good food and company, they took us to the charming resort of **Wiesbaden**. **Michael** (Mee-shile), a loving SA brother, took us on a Rhine River tour. We ferried across the river to a hilltop castle. What a view!



"The old city of Mainz had its wonders as well. The cathedral moved us both. And the pastry shops! Too bad switching addictions is VERBOTEN.

"When our time was all spent, Hans drove us to the train. Two strong hugs and we were on our way. Powerlessness had turned out well as usual."  
**Michael and Sid, So. Calif.**

## **NOTES FROM THE CENTRAL OFFICE**

**Welcome to our new prison coordinator**

Van V.  
41867 East Florida, Suite 111  
Hemet, CA 92344

### **Charges for postage and handling**

Up to \$ 9.99 add \$1.75  
\$10.00 to \$19.99 add \$2.95  
\$20.00 to \$29.99 add \$3.40  
\$30.00 to \$49.99 add \$4.25  
\$50.00 to \$99.99 add \$5.00  
\$100.00 and over add \$6.50

### **Change in Policy**

To prevent the Central Office from being placed in a position of endorsement, the CO will no longer mail flyers or do select mailings for regional retreats, marathons, conventions, and the like. The CO will continue to list such activities (SA only) in the Calendar section of *Essay*.



## Second Quarter Statistics

\$11,789.15	Donations
\$17,763.96	Literature Sales
\$29,553.15	Total Income
\$34,972.63	Total Expenses

## Literature Dispersed

Books	1675
Meeting Guides	43
Brochures	3857
<i>Member Stories—1989</i>	355
<i>Recovery Continues</i>	222

We are pleased to be supplying literature to 24 bookstores (mostly Twelve Step bookstores) around the country, with interest continuing to grow. One of our customers recently wrote: "We are absolutely delighted with the RUSH we have had of people in the **Seattle** area who want SA materials. It really is unbelievable how fast the word has gotten out on your materials. . . . It is great that (our orders) are getting bigger all the time."

## THANK YOU

**Simi Valley, CA:** I would like to express, however inadequately, my profound appreciation for having my expenses taken care of so I could go to Baltimore. A special thank-you must also be said to **Jim K.** and **Bob K.** for being so helpful and kind. Meeting so many members and now being able to put a face to many of the names I am so familiar with was such a pleasure! I was really touched by the generosity and affection of all. Thank you from my heart. **Nan, Central Office**

## USE OF SA LOGO AND COPYRIGHT

As announced in previous *Essay* issues, SA's logo (gender symbols on circle and letters SA or words SEXAHOLICS ANONYMOUS) is a trademark, registered with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. We have been advised by counsel not to repeat AA's mistake of letting others use their logo without permission. (Since 1988, AA has taken legal action to stop infringement of its marks and copyrights.) To prevent our own SA trademark from being put to risk, we must ask that our SA logo *not* be used on anything without prior written permission from the Central Office. This includes local meeting directories, convention flyers, stationery, printed or copied material in any form, etc. We again also remind the fellowship that SA literature cannot be reprinted without prior written permission. Unfortunately, the abuse of a few imposes these requirements on all of us.

*Essay* We encourage every member who is interested to ask to be put on the *Essay* mailing list. Please announce this in your groups. *Essay* is free for the asking, and there are no plans to change this. Our goal has been at least four issues a year, quarterly. Sometimes we miss the schedule for various reasons, as we did this year. Thank you all for your forbearance. To receive *Essay*, simply send in your name and address and ask for it.

**Contribution Limits and the IRS** Periodically members ask if there are any contribution limits in SA, as there are in AA. The answer is yes; as in AA, the maximum individual contribution is \$1000. And yes, contributions to Central Office are tax-deductible for the IRS.

**"Characteristics of the Addict"** Since revision of our book, *Sexaholics Anonymous*, some have asked what happened to "Characteristics of the Addict," appearing on page 27 - 29 of the old "white book" (1984 edition). The Literature Committee decided to delete this material, since it was summerized from sources in other literature. Of course, members are free to use those pages from the old edition as they please. However, prior permission should be obtained for printing as a publication, as with all SA literature, since it is under copyright.

**Unanswered Phone Calls???** If you left messages on the Central Office answering machine that were never answered, please contact us again. We discovered problems with the answering machine and have changed machines.

**Roy's Amends to the Fellowship** "I was derelict in not following more closely what was happening with the IGC from its very inception. I stepped back too far too soon. I was wrong. I am now taking steps to try and correct that wrong." **Roy K.**

**Early SA History** Roy is making available his personal "Notes on the Origin and Early Growth of SA" (13 pages). There have been several requests for early SA history. This is available from the Central Office at no charge. These notes go up through 1984 and include excerpts from Roy's personal journals. Call or write CO if you want a copy.

*Opinions expressed in ESSAY are not to be attributed to Sexaholics Anonymous as a whole; publication of any opinion or article does not imply any endorsement by either SA or ESSAY.*

## FEEDBACK CORNER

**Chicago, IL:** "...my sobriety date is April 24, 1988. . . . I am concerned about a letter that was printed in the February issue of ESSAY. The letter related the experience of a member who attended a retreat that was attended by members of other sex addiction recovery groups.

"I am a member of the committee who coordinated the retreat. First of all, the retreat was never advertised nor intended as an SA-sponsored event. The retreat has been held for three successive years, and grew out of a desire of members of the sex addiction fellowships in both **Chicago** and **Milwaukee** for prayer and fellowship at the start of the new year. The retreat is not endorsed by any fellowship, and is open to anyone who is a member of any of the sex addiction fellowships. The presentations and



discussions focus on common issues in recovery. Participants share their experience, strength, and hope, usually without reference to a specific fellowship or recovery program.

"The letter published in ESSAY represents one participant's opinion. It does not reflect the expressed opinion of the majority of SA members who attended the retreat, and who look forward to future retreats. This retreat has been an opportunity for honest sharing and prayerful reflection. Most of us have found it to be helpful in our recovery.

"I am concerned that this letter was printed in ESSAY without any attempt to clarify its accuracy via any of the **Chicago** SA groups. The letter describes one person's experience of an event in which many SA members participated. Most readers will presume the letter to be more than just one person's opinion, despite the disclaimer to the contrary. This is a disservice to the experience of the majority of SA members who benefitted from this retreat. The fellowship is only aware of what is printed.

"I feel the editors of ESSAY have a responsibility to place one member's opinion of a local event in a fair context. If the editors cannot do this in a given situation, then the letter should not be published, in fairness to all.

"I am also concerned as to how a letter such as this is perceived by persons who are not yet committed to a specific fellowship. If we are to grow by attraction, it seems to me we must be careful about making statements that appear to judge another fellowship by the actions of a few. I am in SA because it works for me, and I have seen it working for others. I want other addicts to feel invited to learn more about what SA has to offer. Our common purpose is not served when we distribute a letter that points out weaknesses in members of other fellowships.

"The opinions expressed in ESSAY are always those of an individual member. However, I believe that a more careful selection must be made of which letters will receive international distribution via this newsletter.

"Thank you for listening. I have asked those members of SA who also worked in coordinating this retreat to sign this letter. I ask your consideration of the concerns that I have presented." **Bill, Jerry, Rick, Mary, and Mike**

## GROUP NEWS

**Wilmerding, PA:** "...Our Penn Hills Wednesday night group has varied between nine and twelve attenders the last couple of months. Thanks for being there." **L.H.**

**Los Angeles, CA:** "This is the donation from our downtown **Los Angeles** SA group. We're growing in attendance. What a wonderfully *honest*, humble group of human beings. Could you please tell the SA fellowship in the next **ESSAY** that we exist? It's a very convenient meeting for business people to get to on Mondays at the lunch hour." **J.H.**

**South Bend, IN:** "...We had four people at our last meeting and a couple more serious inquirers. Whoopie!" **J.P.**

**Oradel, NJ:** "We are about 15 members and meeting Saturday for a Step meeting and Sunday for a discussion meeting." **S.Z.**

**Port Orchard, WA:** "...The **Bremerton, WA** Wednesday night group has been slowly growing from two to three to six to seven sincere and dedicated members over the last year. The growth has really been exciting." **A.W.**

**Portland, OR:** "Over the past two months we've been averaging 25 in attendance (with two newcomers each time)! We're looking for another site for an additional Sunday night meeting. There are seven meetings a week in the **Portland** metro area. We're so glad for a Central Office like yours that provides for our needs. Thanks." **D.B.**

**Hillsboro, OR:** "We have been averaging 14-16 people with one newcomer, but they come and they go. I am doing okay myself with two and one-half years of sobriety. We have three of us with over two years' sobriety and two others with over one year." **E.G.**

**Paducah, KY:** "Our group is up to *seven* now!" **P.W.**



**Sydney, Australia:** "I am really pleased to be a member of SA and I'm now sober nine months. Miracles do happen. Thank God for SA....We are growing here in Australia. The city meeting last week was up to ten and the outer city meeting has a strong regular four to five. It really is amazing. The Higher Power certainly sends people to the right places and people. We do not promote SA and they come. Many thanks for being there." A.K.

**Syracuse, NY:** "Please accept this donation from Syracuse SA. We are all very grateful for your work at the Central Office. Recently, on Easter Sunday, our fellowship was unable to get into the building where we usually meet. So we went out to a park across the street, and we had a Sexaholics Anonymous meeting outside! This was right in the heart of downtown Syracuse. Obviously, we were very careful about anonymity, and because it was a Sunday, there weren't many people (if any) around. Just having the courage to go on with the meeting outdoors was special. And it turned out to be a very good meeting...Other components of the program must be in place to stay sober, but the vital importance of many meetings and phone calls, *the fellowship* hit me even stronger. I have become even more committed to the fellowship, to involvement in the program. Meetings, meetings, meetings, phone calls, phone calls, phone calls, etc. And, of course, Twelve Step work as well. It really sparked me the way it was said, 'It is so important for sexaholics not to isolate.' I have truly been blessed and just thank God." J.B.

**Rio de Janiero, Brazil:** "Today is a beautiful sun day with a lovely blue sky. We want to share with your our tropical weather. We are so grateful for the help you are giving to us, and say thank you (merci) for the French translation. It's great!!! We made the translation to Portuguese and we send it to you. Perhaps it will be useful for you to have it there. We are going little by little whittling our difficulties, with God's help and your assistance. Our group is still small, but **Lelso, Ebner, Oscar, and I (Lucia)** are making progress and we are very close to our 'Poder Superior' (Higher Power). Thanks once more and 24 hours of serenity." L.



**Encinitas, CA:** "We now have an ongoing **San Diego** intergroup and an SA meeting every night of the week. **San Diego** is so large that a person may need to drive a little." **L.M.**

**Apple Valley, CA:** "We've had four meetings with three to four at each meeting." **D.K.**

**Akron, OH:** "The **Akron** group continues to grow in both members and sobriety. It is a real joy to be able to share ourselves openly and freely." **P.H.**

**Bemidji, MN:** "I was surprised that anyone would try and use me as a contact for Northern Minnesota but happily a fellow SAer out of **Chicago** will be vacationing up here and will be attending our meeting! This program is truly a *moment by moment* program of surrender, just like my sickness was a moment by moment choice to lust. I'm so grateful to my Higher Power, Jesus, for SA and the power to go on a different path." **B.C.**

**Antioch, TN:** "I am enclosing funds collected from our Saturday night meeting in **Nashville**. This meeting started out with a struggle with sometimes only one person showing up. It has grown steadily until now we are averaging about ten people a week. I am proud to say we are now in position that we can pay rent to the church and also send funds to the home office. We are renting a van that will carry about 15 people to the conference in **Baltimore**. Many more are flying or driving themselves. Needless to say, we are looking forward to it, and **Nashville** will be well represented." **J.S.**

**Sonyear, NY:** [We have reports from Groveland, NY that some incarcerated men in sex offender groups have reached out to the Rochester SA groups for sponsorship and help. One group includes Vietnam Veteran Offenders.] "We are very grateful to SA. We already have one copy of the SA 'Big Book' and are in desperate need of as many books and other material you can send. I look forward to your response." **J.S.**

**Baltimore, MD:** “Our fellowship continues to grow. We are averaging between 20 to 25 a meeting. By God’s grace there’s a lot of healthy recovery with many over one year of sobriety. God is changing lives slowly but surely. I have almost ten months of sobriety—Praise God! I’m struggling somewhat right now, but I am using prayer and the program to get back on track.” M.R.

**Cleveland, OH:** “Our Cleveland Friday night ‘New Beginnings’ group continues to grow, with more and better sobriety. We are considering emulating the outreach programs that the Pittsburgh group has written about.” G.N.

**Galveston, TX:** “Contact with the professional community is growing, but acceptance as a *primary* resource in recovery is not yet a reality here; hence referrals are few.” C.D.

**Redlands, CA:** “Our Sunday meeting is very simple, very basic, but the growth in sobriety is truly astounding. We have been averaging between 10-15 per meeting and have four members with over two years sobriety. Several newcomers have joined the group late last year and early this year have been sober between 60 days to six months. For some reason, it appears sobriety is the rule in our group, and it humbles me to be part of it. When over half of a group’s members have over 60 days, it makes it easier to ‘go along for the ride’ towards that so-called happy destiny.” S.M.

**Chanute, KS:** “We have grown from three regulars to five most Monday nights. We have the desire to stay sexually sober and we just keep coming back because it works. Thank you for your wonderful 12-Step program. Because of it, my husband is having to take one day at a time.” B.S.

**Combermere, Ontario:** “We have had our first meeting using the new books that you sent. We can’t thank you enough and we know that we truly are on an exciting work toward recovery. One of the most wonderful signs of what sobriety is doing to the other member is to hear her say to me ‘One day maybe I will be able to reach out to others.’ She is even shocked at even suggesting that it might be possible for her.” E.S.

**Message from Switzerland:** "Our groups SA and S-Anon in Frauenfeld have existed since spring 1988. They grow up very slowly. Our meetings are every Friday. Once a month on the first Friday we have our meeting together with S-Anon. For interested members, we also have rooms in our homes that we will make available to visitors for lodging. For information, call Gisela at 011-54-22-31-34 or write SA, Postfach 867, 8501 Frauenfeld 1, Switzerland. Many greetings for all of you." U.

**Cambridge, MA:** "The group is doing well and has a healthy balance of new members as well as 'older' ones. There is talk of another meeting starting in **Boston**, although nothing definite yet. C.A.

"These books are for the **Boston-Cambridge** group which has grown steadily in the past year and numbers 18-20 members. New members seem to arrive weekly." C.G.

**Chicago, IL:** "We're here, growing and glowing. Thanks for the national support." G.R.

"Our number has grown slightly in recent months. That is added encouragement to those who have remained committed to the meeting through some 'lean' months." B.T.



[The following article is from a member in a large metropolitan area.—Ed.]

## ARE WE IN THIS AREA REALLY PART OF SA?

The autonomy of individual SA groups (Tradition Four) does not extend to matters affecting the fellowship as a whole. Nothing is more basic to the SA fellowship as a whole than what has come to be known as the SA sobriety imperative. The sobriety imperative is *the* thing which makes SA unique among several 12 Step programs dealing with sexual addiction. The SA sobriety imperative may be summarized as follows:

(1) Sexual sobriety is the essential foundation for any true and lasting recovery.

(2) Bottom line sexual sobriety is defined by the group conscience of the entire SA fellowship, not by individual members or groups.

(3) Bottom line sexual sobriety, for members of SA, means freedom from any form of sex with oneself or with partners other than the spouse.

A group that unilaterally departs from these tenets is not necessarily wrong, but it is no longer an SA group, no matter what it may call itself.

SA does not claim that its sobriety definition is the only route to recovery for every sexual addict—it apparently is not, hence the other 12 Step programs that allow individual members to define their own bottom line sexual sobriety. For some lust addicts (including me), however, the SA sobriety imperative is essential to recovery. We do not impose the SA sobriety definition on anyone who is unable or unwilling to accept it, but we do seek to preserve it in SA for ourselves.

I am concerned that sobriety has become more of an option than an imperative in our area. With the tacit approval of their groups, many who regularly attend our meetings either ignore the SA sobriety imperative, or “interpret” the SA sobriety definition to suit their own particular circumstances. The most common situations are members who claim sexual sobriety even though they are sexually active in so-called “committed” relationships, but I have also seen attempts to justify masturbation and sex in admittedly uncommitted relationships as consistent with SA sobriety. What results are 12 Step groups in which individual members are defining

their own bottom line sexual sobriety, but which curiously insist on calling themselves SA.

I have been hesitant to openly raise this issue in the past, partly out of a codependent fear of confrontation, but also out of my desire to preserve SA unity. (Tradition One: "Our *common* welfare comes first, personal recovery depends on SA unity.") But if a group does not adhere to the SA sobriety imperative, it has no SA unity. It may have unity of some sort, but not SA unity. Knowingly or not, such a group has separated itself from the larger SA fellowship and has created disunity for those of us who require the SA sobriety imperative as part of our recovery.

Can you imagine the result if a group of us so-called SA hardliners joined one of the other programs and insisted that everyone in those meetings adhere to our bottom line sobriety definition? I would consider that an improper affront to that group's unity. But in SA the same thing is happening the other way around. It is precisely because the SA sobriety imperative is essential to my recovery that I choose to attend SA meetings and to work the SA program, rather than one of the others. I therefore feel justified in openly asking: Are the meetings I attend SA meetings, or are they something else masquerading under the SA name?

I am not saying the SA sobriety definition may never be changed or reinterpreted, only that individual members and groups may not properly bypass the fellowship-wide group conscience in doing so. The SA sobriety definition is not for everyone—It "will and *should* discourage many inquirers." For those of us who need it, however, the SA sobriety imperative is the essential lifeboat that is carrying us away from the sinking ship of our sexaholism. The typical lifeboat is not an ideal ocean-going vessel, but those fortunate enough to be rescued from the Titanic did not tread water while trying to arrange for a more comfortable means of transport. If you want to get into the SA lifeboat, you are welcome. We can discuss its seaworthiness once you are safely aboard. If you prefer a different means of rescue, that is fine too. But please don't remain in the water, pulling at the sides of our raft, rocking it, and potentially tipping it over. For some of us, the SA lifeboat is the only alternative. **Anonymous**



## MEMBER NEWS

**Claremore, OK:** "I feel compelled to write this letter to share my experience, strength, and hope. I write this as much for me as I do for others in the fellowship. I want to share a message. A message I have learned the hard way.

"For four and one-half years I did not masturbate or have sex with another person. I had sexual sobriety through the SA program. I struggle with whether this was true sobriety because after four and one-half years, I relapsed in March. I relapsed again in May. Right now I'm having a difficult time and that is part of the reason for this letter. I've learned a lot from these relapses and I want to share that with others in the program. I wish I wasn't so grandiose that I have to always learn by experience. I pray that someday I will have enough humility that I will believe and accept what others who have gone that way before are saying.

"After I relapsed, I began to take certain steps that I didn't take in the past. One was to read my SA Big Book daily during my prayer and meditation. As I began reading, I began to see things that I know I've heard 100 times but somehow didn't connect with me. I always took pride on working the Steps.

"When I got into the program in 1985, I helped start a group. It was me and two other people. The husband had seven years of recovery and sobriety. I owe my life to him. He taught me how to work the Steps. After a couple years in the program, he and his wife dropped out. I have no contact with them today and I miss him. He was the fellowship I connected to. You see, after I relapsed I figured out that I work all the Steps except Step Zero: "We participated in the fellowship of the program." And that's what I want to share. I can't stay sober in isolation working the 12 Steps with my invisible God. I tried and it didn't work. I eventually relapsed. Oh, I continued to go to meetings. Most of the time one meeting per week. Sometimes going three weeks without a meeting. And when I was in meetings I had a difficult time being rigorously honest.

"Another thing that has jumped out at me by continuing to read the Big Book is that I can't stay sober without an underlying attitude change. I still held on to my underlying negative attitudes and kept them secret from the group. I kept up a false image and would not let people see my anger and



resentment. I share this in hopes to help others in the program to not make the same mistakes I made. Achieving sexual sobriety is difficult after relapse. It is also dangerous. My disease is continuing to progress. I can't afford to continue to relapse.

"Another part about this whole process for me . . . is that I've been single the whole time in the program and I've been in a steady relationship for three years. I relapsed during a time that the relationship was broken up. You see, my motives for sexual sobriety were so that I could have this 'good relationship so I could have sex in marriage' and once that motive collapsed so did my sobriety. Today I struggle with relationships. I'm a sex addict, and lust takes on many disguises. It disguised itself for three years in this relationship.

"Thanks for allowing me to express myself and look at the truth. Today I must be sober for me. Because I love myself enough to be sober. This is difficult but by the grace of God and *the fellowship of this program* I am sober today.

"A couple more things I need to share. Surrender for me today is surrender to the fellowship. My surrender all along was surrender to the invisible God. But God has revealed to me that I find Him in the fellowship. So today surrender means making calls and working Step Zero." T.B.

**Milwaukee, WI:** "Good news! As of April 27th, I now have more than two years sobriety. I have put much work into my spiritual recovery as well and both need constant vigilance and much effort. I am most grateful for my brothers and sisters in both the Monday and Wednesday groups and all SA members everywhere for the binding support we share." A.S.

**Clark, MO:** "Once again, thank you. Recently I wrote and asked for the name of someone who might prepare tapes from SA conferences. By return mail, I received notification of the conference in Nashville, Courage to Change. Subsequently, I ordered the tapes—all eight of them, and I have feasted on sharing. My cup is truly full. I have gained strength and courage. I have recently completed writing my First Step, painfully, and with much anger. My 16 years of sobriety in AA seem insignificant compared to the sobriety I am now attempting. I cannot demean my previous sobriety as I would not be alive today if I had continued drinking. But, all along, I felt

there was something missing. Now I know that I have surely been sober (alcohol-wise) by God's grace. Surely he could not get close to me as I kept him separate by using 'god-myself' to ease the pains of life. This past week has been one of pain, excruciating pain, as I have attempted to gain sexual sobriety. I am grateful for my one week. This has been a lonely journey. Gratefully, I called SA in Nashville (thank goodness for their number in the directory), talked with a woman there who gave me names of someone in St. Louis area, 125 miles from my home. . . . Meantime I have devoured the SA 'white' book, have read the blue book, identify with everything I read, and am also looking into S-Anon. My late husband and later my other partner have all qualified for this program. Surely every pot finds its own lid!!!

"Thank you for sharing your stories, both in the books and at the conference. As a result, I too am experiencing the beginning of sobriety. Please pray for me." S.P.

**Nashville, TN:** "God truly is doing for me what I could not do for others. Thank you for being a vessel for God to use to bring us all into the light through SA." A.C.

**Saskatoon, Sask.:** "Thank you for your helpful response to the article appearing in 'Regina Committee on Sexual Abuse.' Yesterday I met with 'The Sexual Harrassement' committee of the United Church of Canada Saskatchewan Conference. I met as a minister of the church although they also know of my connection with SA.

"The response to the Regina Sask. article was very helpful in helping them understand the function of the SA group in the community. We cannot be expected to classify anyone as ready to return to his work as a minister, yet his attendance may be of use if he wants to find help in his struggle with lust." B.J.

**Saskatoon, Sask.:** "Thanks for your letter of July 20 and the copy of your letter of July to the Regina Committee on Sexual Abuse. We appreciated the very reasoned and complete response to the concerns of the committee. I'm grateful for the Central Office. A reply from afar, I feel, will have greater weight than one from the locals. Thanks, also, for sending a copy of the SA book to the R.C.O.S.A. This could be the beginning of a better

understanding of what SA stands for. Thanks again, Roy. D.A. [Roy's Suggested Guidelines, sent to R.C.O.S.A., is included with this issue of *Essay*. Your comments, based on group experiences, are welcome.—Ed.]

**Alexandria, VA:** “Looked at from the outside, nothing appears wierder than SA. When I first heard of it, I laughed out loud. When I heard they were against masturbation and sex before marriage, I just felt sorry for them. (Much like the way I felt at the references to God in the AA Big Book three years earlier.)

“But when I saw it from the inside, when I realized I was powerless over lust, and that under the spell of lust I was outside the whole context of what was right and wrong, then I saw the sobriety definition in a completely different light. At the time I was in a committed relationship. that meant I had to give up sex. But that was no big deal because sex wasn't my drug. It was like having to take off your hat when you enter a Church. . . .” L.M.

## WELCOME TO THE FOLLOWING NEW GROUPS

Adrian, MI  
Apple Valley, CA  
Belgium  
Chattanooga, TN  
Iowa City, IA  
London, Ont., Canada  
Metarie, LA

Michigan City, IN  
Rehoboth Beach, DE  
Simi Valley, CA  
South Bend, IN  
Switzerland  
Vienna, Austria



## SA AND SEXUAL ABUSE

The following paper represents a first-attempt at dialogue on the issue of SA and sexual abuse. This paper, and cover letter, were sent from the SA Central Office to the Regina Committee on Sexual Abuse in Saskatchewan in July. In one of its publications, the Regina Committee on Sexual Abuse had criticized SA for its lack of policy in the area of sexual abuse perpetrated by SA members. We include this exploratory paper in this issue of *Essay* for your information and to stimulate discussion and feedback toward possible formulation of SA policy. That this may be a highly controversial subject goes without saying. Also, the question of What *is* SA? is raised. Please read carefully; the way certain terms or expressions are used is crucial. Remember: SA has *no* policy on this issue yet; the following paper lists suggested guidelines for *developing* future policy. The cover letter and paper follow. [Note comments by local SAs under Member News, in this issue.—Ed.]

July 23, 1990

Regina Committee on Sexual Abuse

Dear Committee Members:

The RCOSA position paper on Sexual Abuse appearing in the June, 1990 issue of *The Saskatchewan Social Worker* has come to our attention. . . . In the spirit of open dialogue solicited in this paper, I would like to comment as a member of SA connected with our Central Office.

Much of what the paper says may stem from possible confusion of SA with one or more of the other sex addiction recovery programs . . . affiliated with the therapeutic community from the outset. SA has never been a "treatment resource" for anyone, much less sex offenders, as your article implies. SA is not a support group for sex offenders; it is simply a *fellowship* "for those who want to stop their [sexually] self-destructive thinking and behavior."

SA cannot help it if certain therapists, social workers, clinics, or authorities have begun to use SA as a "treatment resource." We understand the pressure to do this but resist this misuse of our fellowship. Your statement that "The [SA] program developed in the U.S. is most often used as an adjunct to therapy provided by a recognized clinical facility" has no basis in fact. Our Sixth Tradition reads in part, "While an SA group may cooperate with anyone, such cooperation ought never to go so far as affiliation or endorsement, actual or implied." Therapists, social workers, and the courts should not consider SA "an adjunct to therapy." SA is only for those whose own enlightened self-interest compels them to stop (*Sexaholics Anonymous*, page 4).

Sexaholics Anonymous, unlike one or more of the other Twelve Step programs, offers no opinion on individual therapy for its members. Individuals are free to resort or not to resort to professional help of any kind they choose. No recommendations or opinions are offered by SA; individuals are free to make their own.

Individual SA groups are free to have "open" meetings where non-sexaholics may attend. Most SA meetings at this time are "closed" to all but sexaholics. With many professionals as members, including clergy, therapists, and doctors, most groups feel that at this time it serves personal recovery better to have closed meetings.

Sex offenders *do* appear in SA, and we have begun to wrestle with the serious moral issues raised in your position paper. We appreciate your deep concern. Enclosed is a paper . . . that articulates some of our emerging dialogue on this issue. I hope it will help give some perspective.

I want to personally thank you for your concern for the victims of sexual abuse. Even though the social worker's and therapist's tasks are different from ours, the two overlap in the moral sphere. There is no recovery for us in SA unless we are willing to take full responsibility and accountability for all our actions and attitudes.

Very truly yours,

Roy K.

P.S. We are enclosing a complimentary copy of our brochure and book, *Sexaholics Anonymous*.



## SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING POLICY IN RESPONSE TO ABUSE DISCLOSED IN SA MEETINGS

We in SA should be guided by the highest moral, ethical, and spiritual principles in such a matter. It is better for me to suffer than inflict my harm on others by covering over my wrong. We are told there is no recovery without rigorous honesty. Those who do not recover "are incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty." (Chapter 5, AA Big Book) To cover and hide our wrongs is to deny ourselves the healing light of God and the fellowship.

If such an action is tolerated by the group and the member is unwilling to take responsibility for his/her own actions and turn themselves in, that abuse stays in the group. Its poison and evil invisibly affect the spiritual quality of meetings. Also, the poison stays within the individual. Without intervening on himself, the member seals himself into a mind-set that lets him believe he can get away with it, whereas the Program teaches us that we can't get away with *anything* we do in harming others.

If no intervention is made on the member, his/her malady will continue to progress, and unwittingly, we as other members, keep supporting his illness and become co-perpetrators, enabling his and other abuses. Our experience shows that regardless of the SA member involved, this malady of ours *does* progress. There is no recovery without sobriety. Without amending such an act, I shut out God, sobriety, and recovery and confirm myself in self-blindness. "I'm as sick as my secrets."

I must put myself in the shoes of the victim also. It is difficult for us as sexaholics to see the reality of our evil from the victim's point of view. The law of love is our example here: Do to others what we would have them do to us. I have to look into that terrified face and imagine that's *me* as a child being victimized sexually. If I could only have received the right kind of help after being victimized, it might have helped defuse my trauma. Without intervention, I as victim seal it over, and if a child, begin to think there's something wrong with *me*. We *can* do something to help the victim!

This kind of firm, clear position taken by a group has the effect of a deterrence. This is "tough love." It makes for a no-nonsense Program that commands the respect of the erring member, ourselves, and outside authorities. *We do not coddle or enable perpetrators!*



We can assume that when a person tells on themselves in a meeting they are in their own way asking for help. So, how can we help? We can help them cover their wrong—and bear the consequences ourselves—or we can help them face and deal with it responsibly, as we amend all wrongs in the Program.

## SUGGESTED POLICY

(1) Develop a climate and ongoing tradition of personal accountability and responsibility in meetings based on true recovery and closeness of fellowship. Current models would seem to include SA groups effectively using the concept of “group sponsorship.”

(2) When a person in SA tells of having currently victimized someone sexually or such information is disclosed, two or more SA members will get with the person, make sure of the facts, and support that member into assuming responsibility for and amending their actions. In appropriate cases, this will mean the person turns himself or herself in. The intervening members and the group will continue supporting the person all the way, through to victory, healing, and recovery. SA members have been known to be this responsible. It is the honorable Program way.

(3) The erring member and their SA group will also take appropriate steps to try to amend any trauma or damage done to the victim.

(4) If the member will not turn themselves in, the concerned members will, by group conscience, try again, *as a group*, to get them to turn themselves in. If they fail in this, they can seek an appropriate way to proceed. This might be done by asking an appropriate non-SA third party to intervene. In one case in SA, a priest agreed to take the necessary actions.

(5) In the case where a member tells us they are about to victimize someone, or there is a good chance of that happening, the group of concerned members will intervene in some appropriate way to help prevent it and help the member come through to victory and healing. They advise the member that if he or she does the wrong, they will be turned in.

(6) In cases where the member is intransigent, refusing and thwarting all intervention of the group or others, the member should be asked to leave

SA until he or she has a change of attitude. Individual SA members would then be free to act as their conscience directed to prevent further victimization. Other SA groups the person might join can be advised of the problem.

## THE GREAT SA FALLACY

**Newcomer comes into the Program:** Sees the light. Goes to meetings. Stops acting out. A change takes place, and he or she knows it. Something's different. There's a sense of impending joy. There's recovery in the air, and they get caught up in it. Maybe there's a way out after all! Starts talking the talk.

**Same member some time later:** Something's wrong. "I still want to look and drink. Sometimes more than ever! I shouldn't be tempted like this. The craving to look or fantasize is so strong! I don't even know I'm doing it." Over time, this awareness may become more acute. The misconception here is, "I'm not supposed to be like this." So we try to shut it out. We try all the harder not to look or fantasize. We try not to have those feelings any more. Confusion sets in. But it's bravely covered over. And we keep on try try trying. . . .

This represents one of the most telling errors or misconceptions in SA; and it's not confined to newcomers: *"Now that I've turned around and am in the program, I shouldn't be tempted with those thoughts and actions I used to be tempted with. My problem should go away now; I should be 'fixed.'"*

This often leaves us with an erroneous one conclusion, whether we're aware of it or not: that we have to keep trying to fix ourselves. Deadly error!

With our sexaholic load of conditioning and memories, something would be wrong if we *weren't* tempted. Think about it. If I've spent a lifetime burning into my brain and very being the associations of lust, misconnection, or romance—a whole way of looking, thinking, and acting—how can I expect an immediate reversal of that conditioning? That's



why true sobriety includes *progressive* victory over these attitudes and behaviors.

*It's all right to be tempted.* I'm in denial if I think I should be immune to temptation. "I'M A SEXAHOLIC"—that's the watchword of our program. Any other attitude flies in the face of our First Step. What brings us here is admitting we *are* powerless over lust. I've been sober for a considerable time now, but I'm still powerless over lust—my lust and the lust of others. That doesn't mean there's no victory over lust, however. There is! There are power and love to deliver us *while being tempted*.

In early sobriety I labored under this great fallacy, feeling wrong about being tempted with feelings. I was in denial and didn't know it, and I think that contributed to my slip after a year and one-half. Now I know a better way. Actually, it's an easier way. Today, I begin every day by acknowledging to God that I am powerless over lust, that I have no resources against temptation and no power in my own strength to overcome. Today I do what I never would have dreamed of doing earlier (but should have!): As soon as I see that I'm being tempted, I bring Him in immediately. I say, "You know I want to lust after this person right now. You know my heart. Come in and be victorious over my lust." And marvel of marvels, the craving is lifted! While I'm voicing that surrender I may still feel the deprivation and usually do. But then come perfect release and life. And *I* didn't have to do it! I didn't deny my feeling, and I didn't try to shut it off or overcome in my own strength. I invited Him in, just as I am.

There's a great difference between wanting to lust and lusting. It's like the difference between feeling like wanting to jump off a cliff and actually jumping off. Let's not be afraid of the feelings.

For me, this whole experience is like someone standing at the door and knocking, seeking entrance. If I've got the door barricaded, he's not going to come in. I know of a house, the likes of which I'd never seen before. Over a lifetime, the occupant had accumulated possessions of every sort, so much so that through those huge rooms there was only the narrowest trail through which one had to carefully thread one's way. Mountains of stuff on either side. That large and spacious dwelling has crowded out its owner! All that was left not piled high was one small corner of the kitchen table, where this person spent most of her time.



What am I trying to say? I could not have gotten to the joy of being free to invite the Master of my house in with every temptation to lust or resentment or fear unless I had unblocked the door and gotten rid of all the junk that stood in His way. And what clears the way for me is working the Steps. That clears out the wreckage of the past and impediments of the present. There's a price to pay—ego-deflation at depth. But what a marvelous gift in return—Life. Freedom and joy are mine every time I invite Him in.

There's something else that encourages me to invite Him in at the very moment of temptation. I've come to know that He loves me *because* I'm tempted. Yes! He knows what I'm going through. This is the wonder of wonders that makes it all possible.

I don't know why so many of us fall into this great fallacy, but it's very common, almost universally so. In a way, I suppose it's natural for us—those who have all our lives tried so hard to be master of our own lives—to assume *we* have to do everything. I suppose it goes along with our playing God, too, our ego-lust.

Thank God, even though we've never known this new way before, it's there for each of us to discover in our own time and way. A faith that works.

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. . . .”

**Roy K., Simi Valley, CA**

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