
Box 300

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IN THIS ISSUE

- Feedback from Members on the October *Essay* article entitled "SA and Sexual Abuse"
- "A New Beginning" — A challenge to the Fellowship, looking toward our Chicago Conference and assuming self-responsibility

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

- Roy K's paper, "Principles Corroborating SA's Interpretation of Sexual Sobriety," offering a rationale for SA's sobriety imperative and why SA should not validate or endorse "committed relationship" sexualizing in SA with either the same or opposite sex.
- Copy of Roy K's 13 May 1991 letter to all SA members in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut

FEEDBACK ON SUGGESTED POLICY FOR RESPONDING TO ABUSE DISCLOSED IN SA MEETINGS

[The following are all responses received by the Central Office to the article "SA and Sexual Abuse" on page 20 of the October 1990 issue of *Essay*. We hope no response was omitted; the CO was in transition due to Nan's leaving.—Ed.]

"What concerns me most about the policy is the seeming disregard for anonymity. . . . When I joined the [SA] group a little over two years ago, had it not been for the promise of anonymity and non-police involvement, the help I so desperately needed would not have been forthcoming, because I would not have joined without these assurances.

"I am now 56 years old and it was only a little over two years ago that I learned I am a sex addict. It is not that I was not aware I had a problem—I had been praying for over 40 years for deliverance of the problem—but it was only then that God answered me and showed me there was a solution. The solution of course for me is SA.

"I have been blessed by God with physical sobriety since two days after I entered the program, including being celibate and living with my wife the entire time. I do not say this to brag or to project the wrong image of myself. I only state it to let you know that by the grace of God I am sober today and cannot guarantee tomorrow.

"A part of my addiction has been child abuse and incest. If your policy is adopted, these are some of the things that may happen to me: I will no longer be able to speak openly at meetings about my past. I will not be able to speak openly when I am tempted to act out again with a child. I will leave SA in fear that someone will interpret what I say or do as a reason to report me to the police. If I leave SA, all hope of recovery for me will be gone. . .

“It is unfortunate that our society looks at this abuse in terms of victim and perpetrator. For in this disease both are victims, there are no winners. It is also bad that our system demands retribution rather than help for those involved. Unless and until society removes the stigma of jail, we must be prepared to offer a safe haven to those involved where they can recover without fear of retribution.” **Anonymous**

Erie, PA: “We, as a group, unanimously oppose this policy. We believe this policy moves SA beyond its present purpose, Steps and Traditions.

“We do not condone sexual abuse in any form. . . . We believe that if this policy were endorsed by SA, we would have to make similar policies for every other sexual behavior that involves breaking the law. . . .

“We believe this policy undermines one of the key elements of SA: Trust. In our Big Book it states, ‘Experience has shown us that the public aspect of surrender is crucial. It seems surrender is never complete until it is brought out into the open, into the company of others. . . .’ A trust begins to develop as we see that *nothing is being held against us* and that others are just like we are” or worse off, etc. ‘This is the breakthrough entrance into the program that will open the way into the healing power of the Steps.’ We believe the tradition of anonymity would be totally undermined. . . .

“This policy led to much discussion. Our discussion was about program’ and not about emotional feelings or personal opinions. We looked at the overall picture of SA and seeing how this very painful and emotional issue could be taken by itself and out of the context of our purpose.” **T.S.**

Edmonton, Canada: “Our concern is that in making the suggested policy we would be violating the Traditions of our program. On our SA brochure, it states, ‘Anyone who turns to SA can be assured that his or her anonymity will be protected.’ Because our group finds this protection in the 12 Traditions of SA, we are not in favor of the suggested policy for sex offenders.”

Memphis, TN: “I believe, like AA policy, that SA should ‘take no stand on outside issues,’ which this most certainly is. SA is not here to police individuals. What would happen otherwise to the idea of ‘What you hear here, who you see here, stays here!’? The basic foundation of what the real 12 Step program is about begins to crumble. Some time ago it seemed right to many people that AA should take a stand on Prohibition. Thank God they didn’t. I understand we in SA are not here to ‘coddle perpetrators,’ neither should SA become a ‘victims’ group. I have been both (as many have) victim and perpetrator. Few people, if any, who claim to be sex addicts, are just one of these.

“The special nature of the 12-Step program calls for a law higher than man’s. . . . It is my belief, whether it ever becomes SA policy or not, that what goes on in the room, stays in the room.” L.H.

SUGGESTED POLICY FOR RESPONDING TO ABUSE DISCLOSED IN SA MEETINGS

[The following is a reprint of the key portion of Suggested Guidelines for Developing Policy in Response to Abuse Disclosed in SA Meetings from the October 1990 issue of *Essay*. Copies of the complete article are also available from the Central Office. —Ed.]

(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.

[Roy K. notes that his October 1990 article did not differentiate enough between newcomers to SA and established SA members who were currently molesting. —Ed.]

A NEW BEGINNING

In but a few weeks it will be ten years from the time Box 300 was first opened (June of 1981) and that first wave of desperate letters started pouring in asking for help. When the Chicago conference rolls around in July, it will have been ten years from the historic meeting in our garage where SAs from over the U.S. joined together for the first time and came to one mind and spirit in formulating the principles of our SA Program.

So very much has happened since that first marvelous meeting together! Today there are thousands of SA members in some two dozen countries with SA groups in some sixteen. More importantly, there are men and women in whose lives a continuing miracle is taking place. There is victory over sexual lust and the misconnection, and people are increasingly experiencing the real Connection. *This* is the real miracle! God *has* been doing for us together what we could not do for ourselves alone.

Today we stand at the threshold of a new beginning. Having gone through trial-by-fire, we have emerged united around an incredible proposition, an extraordinary energy; united about a principle that flies in the face of everything about us in today's world, a principle increasingly lost and alien to the human race—our Sobriety Imperative. This is the Great Fact for us; not that we simply believe and hold to this statement of sobriety for ourselves, but that any human beings are actually experiencing it. And with great joy! In the words of our AA founders, lives are recovering "from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body." For this we thank God, the Author and Finisher of this our common aspiration.

Today we stand at a crossroads: Looking at our increasing world services opportunities, we can on the one hand create an organizational apparatus that will do the work for us or, on the other hand, we can band together as a spiritual entity in the joyous upward calling of carrying *this* message to those still suffering who want it. It is my hope and prayer that members of the rank and file, those unequivocally committed to SA's revalidated sobriety interpretation, men and women who are living it in their lives, will become this spiritual entity and discover the life-giving joy of service.

For years, SA at the national level has been run on an increasingly professional basis. For example, in addition to routine jobs such as referring

inquirers, filling literature orders, and general bookkeeping, non-sexaholic workers at CO and myself have been providing virtually the sole assistance to fledgling groups and new members and safeguarding our Traditions on an increasing number of fronts. The wrong that is more and more apparent to me is twofold: We are placing an unfair (and increasingly impossible) burden on these people, and we are depriving the Fellowship of sacred opportunities for growth that only come with carrying our own message of recovery.

The essence of service is protecting and enhancing what we have by sharing it with others. "Life gives birth to life," we say in our SA book. "We *want* others to recover. Another paradox in the spiritual realm is that if we don't give it away, we can't keep it" (page 145).

Nan's leaving in January forced me back into the day-to-day operations of the Central Office, and this experience has been calling some things to my attention in a very forceful way. The Central Office (CO) is carrying out some responsibilities that more properly should be fulfilled by the Fellowship. Tasks that slowly evolved and grew up naturally and inevitably within the CO operation should now be shared in the Fellowship at large.

Let me present in broad-brush and very rudimentary form the needs as I see them today as issuing from our Twelve Traditions, and ask that at the Chicago Conference in July the Fellowship set about finding ways to begin providing for those needs.

A Spiritual Foundations Service The idea, taken from the words in our Twelfth Tradition, is for *SA members themselves* to safeguard, perpetuate, and enhance the spiritual principles of our program.

This Service rests on two imperatives: the newly revalidated interpretation of SA's sobriety definition—SA's sobriety imperative—and the Twelfth Step imperative. *Without unity of purpose in our concept of sobriety, we have no true unity or foundation for service.*

And what is the Twelfth Step imperative? It is the spiritual principle that we receive life by sharing our life with others. "Carrying the message" is a personal, individual transaction between one sexaholic and another, between one group and the outside world, where sober recovering sexaholics reach out to those who still suffer. The Twelfth seems increasingly to be the "lost Step" in the Twelve-Step movement today. But without it, there is no truly recovering individual or fellowship.

The needs here include:

- Safeguarding our SA unity and “principles before personalities” per Traditions One and Twelve.
- Helping the fellowship implement the above two imperatives per Traditions Three and Five.
- Assessing SA meeting quality with a view toward recommending changes. The aim is to deal with problems created by such things as the “slipper syndrome,” large influx of newcomers, no influx of newcomers, too much “drunk-talk” or supporting the illness, not enough sobriety or sponsorship, non-SA approaches or literature being used that weaken our program and recovery, breaking the Traditions, etc. Perhaps consider testing the Philadelphia model.
- Taking the spiritual pulse of SA against the Twelve Traditions, ever mindful of preserving Tradition Four group autonomy. This would include assessing SA’s fulfillment of its Twelfth Step/Fifth Tradition mission. This Service would help SA implement and maintain this vision and primacy of purpose.

An important contribution of such a Service would be finding ways the fellowship can become closer, more intimate at the group level, such as: making connections with rest of the fellowship; inter-group speaker/sharing swaps in adjoining regions; joint Twelfth Step work; looking into home circles, retreats, Step Studies, Step Study families; praying together for the fellowship, groups, slippers, sexaholics who still suffer, and how to reach them; etc.

A New Group (Tradition Five) Service SA itself (not the Central Office alone) should “carry its message to the sexaholic who still suffers.” The Fellowship should represent and transmit the essence of the spirit and program of SA to new members and groups.

- This Service would be advised by the CO of every new group or potential group that is formed, even if it be but one individual trying to start a group. The Service would provide immediate interim sponsorship, clarify SA’s interpretation of sobriety, give help in meeting structure and format and use of literature, provide ideas for Twelfth Step work, tell of our no-interview-with-the-media policy, get the group involved with conventions and retreats, and be helpful

all-around. Historically, this job has been done by the CO, but it belongs to the fellowship. We are not a professional outfit; *we* are responsible. And this work is part of our recovery program!

- This Service would also see to it that member correspondence the CO cannot or should not handle is responded to. For example, a member writes or calls in asking for advice on how to stay sober or how to run a meeting or how to work the Steps, special problems, etc.
- This Service might want to consider the Pittsburgh model of expansion: When new groups are formed in an area, the trusted servant leading that new group is an experienced member from the parent group, until such time as sobriety and leadership have sufficiently evolved in the new group. This procedure helps the new group avoid many pitfalls and difficulties and provides shared experience and support. Travel expenses can be shared.

A Prison Service The prison work has proven to be too vast for any one individual and too Twelve-Step oriented for the present Central Office; it needs a dedicated group of concerned SA members to handle inquiries and correspondence from the numerous prisons and hundreds of inmates. The need is for such a group to respond to inquiries from sexaholics in prison or newly released, and serves the same function for them as the New Group Service does for other groups and individuals.

A Tradition Six, Ten, and Eleven Service We need the Fellowship itself to watch over these very crucial Traditions Six, Ten, and Eleven today.

As but one example, help guard and protect SA from the pressure of forces trying to affiliate with and/or speak for SA or for SA itself moving toward other such forces. This is increasingly important, given the forceful and pervasive movement to integrate the Twelve Step Program with therapy and other institutions.

It is not uncommon for therapists to want to start an SA group, even though they themselves are not members. We've also had problems with groups affiliating with treatment centers or religious organizations. Many related requests and situations arise requiring individual attention and consistent policy. Close liaison of this Service with the CO is required, since the CO usually is first to learn of such situations.

This service could also see how we might be being diverted from our primary purpose through money, property, prestige, and anything else (Tradition Six).

A Central Office Oversight Service (Traditions Five, Seven, Eight, and Nine) This need was apparent in 1987 in Bozeman, where I asked for a committee of like name. We need it more than ever now. It would

- Serve as liaison or interface between CO and the fellowship. (The Central Office Advisory Committee has been doing some of this.)
- Make day-to-day decisions affecting CO operation that should not be made by the CO staff and need not be fellowship-wide decisions. This includes decisions concerning CO staff.
- Oversee the financial affairs of SA.
- Make sure CO is fully accountable for SA monies, services, archives, and records. Makes sure that the CO is maintained in a businesslike manner and that staff is functioning appropriately. Makes sure CO is operating efficiently.
- Safeguard integrity of SA literature and logo (trademark).
- Make sure the CO represents the “voice and spirit of SA” to the world.

A Conference Service (Ninth Tradition) We need to develop a set of guidelines that the SA International Conferences (and perhaps other conferences as well) would follow regarding matters relating to the conferences. This Service partially exists in very loose form, but has become cumbersome due to the fact that its membership is continually changing. With the new emphasis on self-responsibility I am proposing, such a responsibility takes on a whole new meaning and challenge.

The above is what SA needs today to become self-supporting according to the spirit of our Seventh Tradition and manage its own affairs.

Delegates

I think we'll need some sort of delegate structure the above Services would be accountable to, and Chicago may see fit to get something started here also. I see something like one delegate for every five or so groups, elected by their areas according to very specific criteria (not leaving it open like we

did before). Of course, members sharing in national Service would be subject to the same criteria. Such a delegate structure will take time, but I'm hoping we can get started on a plan and on our Service commitments at Chicago, even if it means a small beginning. New beginnings should probably be small and grow from the inside out, anyway.

Chicago

This gives you a very rough idea of what's on my heart. I may have more specific inputs and suggestions formulated by Chicago. I'm planning to speak on this on Friday July 12, at our Chicago Conference, and at that time, I hope we can start discussing it together. I'm hoping the Fellowship will take up the challenge and join me and others in Chicago in brainstorming ways the Fellowship can begin, from the inside out and in line with our newly revalidated sobriety imperative, to set about fulfilling self-responsibility. I'm sure that together we can come up with something better than any of us can do alone.

If the Fellowship agrees, Chicago will thus become An Invitation to Service in the Fellowship of SA.

In the meantime, I hope every member who wants true SA sobriety *as the Fellowship has reaffirmed* it will personally consider the above needs and start thinking of how we can *start* becoming self-responsible.

A small new beginning, if in the right direction with the right people, can move mountains!

See you in Chicago.

Roy K. 13 May 1991

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