

Essay®

A Quarterly Publication of Sexaholics Anonymous, Incorporated

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How I Deal with Romantic Lust

When I first got sober I made a firm commitment not to date for at least a year. Every day I had lived expecting the woman of my dreams to show up and magically change my reality. Once I found her I would no longer suffer from inadequacy, pain or loneliness. The world I hated so much would turn into a paradise. Everything would be different from then on.

Needless to say, this calendar commitment was one of the causes of the severe three-and-a-half months' withdrawal I went through when I got sober. Three and a half months of hell where I could not see the way out of my emotional, and even physical pain. I couldn't imagine life without sex and romance. I couldn't imagine life without lusting, sexually and romantically, after women. Women, or rather, the image my lust created of them, were my real higher power.

Knowing I would not date for a while helped me not to fantasize about possible romance partners -- at least for the near future. I was looking forward to the end of the year when I could date and have a "healthy relationship" with a woman, any woman. Theoretically, I turned this matter over to God. Meanwhile I kept looking at the calendar.

Regarding sexual desire, I didn't play games. I immediately answered any image or any other trigger with prayer. I knew that allowing that image to lodge in my mind would mean that sooner or later I would lose my sobriety.

Nevertheless, regarding two other issues, things were not so clear. One was the issue of "beauty" lust, or my "need" to take visual drinks where instead of alcohol I "drank" some woman's beauty. I could see that the more I looked, the more I wanted to look. The more I became obsessed, the more I burrowed into myself. God's presence vanished and with it my serenity and emotional balance. My life was unmanageable again. Until I gave up that "drug" and reconciled myself to God, my life would remain unmanageable.

I learned I needed something more than an emergency and last-hour contact with God. As my eyes turned to women more than I wished, I started to pray before the woman came by. Things were much better, but not enough. Besides praying for her, praying for other people -- program members, co-workers, relatives, passersby -- developing a giving attitude rather than a taking one was what helped me most to overcome this problem.

Then I could see clearly my romance layer, my lust for romantic love, my trying to get a woman to fill the void inside myself that only God can fill.

What had I seen? That deep down I had not surrendered that area of my life, that I was still holding onto a relationship.

I know, at least intellectually, that I didn't know, and still don't, what's good for me, that my best ideas brought me

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Self-supporting through our own contributions?

Our Seventh Tradition -- "Every SA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions" -- is part of our meeting format. Yet it was discussed at a fellowship meeting at a recent conference that we are not fully self-supporting through our contributions. Only about half of our income comes from group contributions. Our other principle source of support is from selling three-dollar books for 10 dollars, many to newcomers, and other literature sales at three times or more of their cost.

This year is the twentieth birthday of our founding. The dollar bill we put in the basket 20 years ago was cut in half by inflation and cut in half again. So our dollar bill today is only twenty-five cents. What this low level of support has meant is that the International Central Office does not have the money it needs to carry the message adequately. There is a strong feeling that the *Essay* newsletter should be free to each person on the group mailing list. Prisoners need help with literature.

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ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

TV Abstinence
The Message Got Through
SA/S-Anon Corner

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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

March 15, 1997, SA/S-Anon Marathon, Glen Ellyn, IL, by Chicago Area SA and S-Anon Intergroups.

Theme: Serenity, Courage, Wisdom. Contact Cory A. at 630/665-9514.

April 12, 1997, SA/S-Anon Marathon, Cleveland, OH. Theme: Spring into Sobriety, with Sylvia and Gene J.

Contact Bonnie D. at 216/428-8835.

April 25 - 27, 1997, Australia Conference, Camp Discovery, Yackandandah, VIC. Contact SA Melbourne at 61(3)9506 6719.

April 26 - 27, 1997. Unity North Regional Conference, Sacramento. Theme: Working With Others.

Contact Steve D. at 916/756-2840.

June 13-15, 1997, SA Summer Retreat, Lattendales, English Lake District, by SA UK. Theme: Hope for Freedom.

Contact Nicholas S. at 1 768-893379.

1997 International Conference Announcements

January 11 - 13, 1997, SA/S-Anon International Conference, Oklahoma City, OK. Theme: Recovery Continues.

Contact Dave T., (SA) at 405-353-4710 or Gene J., (S-Anon) at 405-751-3832.

July 11 - 13, 1997, SA/S-Anon International Conference, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada. Theme: The Promises

Contact Francis H. (SA) at 306/543-5999 or Carla J. (S-Anon) at 306/949-2417.

Essay Editorial Guidelines

The *Essay* editorial function is answerable to the fellowship as a whole. Just as our SA group meetings follow guidelines designed to keep meetings on track, the following guidelines apply to the *Essay*.

* Articles from SA members and SA groups or intergroups are invited, although no payment is made, and material is not returned.

* The Central Office provides *Essay* editor with copies of letters and other materials of potential use in the newsletter.

* Submissions, selected by the editor, are subject to correction of spelling and grammar (*The Chicago Manual of Style* is the standard) and may be condensed to accommodate space limitations. Selections may be edited for style and clarity.

* The principles of SA's Twelve Traditions guide editorial philosophy.

* Articles are not intended to serve as statements of SA policy, nor does publication imply endorsement by either SA or the *Essay*.

* SA's sobriety definition is not debated, since it distinguishes

SA from other sex addiction fellowships. *Essay* is not a forum for non-SA sobriety and non-SA principles.

* The *Essay* is not a fund-raising mechanism, although from time to time SA's needs may be made known.

* General Guidelines for Submissions:

Where possible, articles submitted for publication should be typed and double-spaced. If articles are submitted on disk, check with Central Office for software compatibility. Send articles to the SA Central Office, attention of the *Essay* editor. When an article speaks for a group or intergroup, it should have the prior approval of that group or intergroup. Articles should observe common standards of friendliness and good taste. Discussions involving therapy or religion are discouraged.

Submissions for March 1997 *Essay* need to be received at Central Office by February 15, 1997.

Are We Self-Supporting?

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Most important, we could sell the SA White Book for three dollars, making it much more tempting for newcomers to buy and for us to give away.

This discussion took place at the International SA Conference in Los Angeles in Jan. 1995. The tape of that conference -- "Carrying the Message" -- is available from Glenn K. It ended up with a vote taken at the meeting. This vote was with money, rather than a show of hands. The recommendation that came from the discussion was that we should at least match inflation and contribute a five-dollar bill at each meeting and a 20-dollar bill at conferences when the basket is passed. The vote of the 110 attending was 99 voting "yes" with 20-dollar bills up to a check for \$250. Eleven voted "no" with our old standby, the dollar bill.

Now that you know of the discussion, you know why five-dollar bills have been showing up in the basket at some of your meetings. And you know why the level of contributions went up immediately, helping to carry the message to more of those who are still suffering. We all had expensive addictions. The new contributions show our gratitude for having a daily reprieve from our addiction.

P.S. Since Jan. 1995 our donations have increased nicely but there are many new needs for more literature.
Jesse L.

Deal with Romantic Lust

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here. I did what I was told: "Turn your relationships over to God. Stop looking for a relationship. When you are ready, if God sees it's right for you, He will put somebody into your path. Stop fighting. Surrender."

And that's what I did -- on the surface. Deep down I had never surrendered the old idea of having a special friend who would turn into my fiance and then would become my wife. I kept thinking I knew what was good for me. I still wanted to tell God what he was supposed to do for me.

The moment of truth came when I became more and more interested in a woman at another 12-Step meeting. I started to get obsessed. I prayed for her. Sometimes it worked wonderfully and other times her image didn't go away and romantic fantasies kept coming. I admitted my powerlessness and prayed, "May I find in You what I try to find in her," and got the same result.

While my romance lust crept back cunningly and subtly, my sexual lust would erupt in a threatening and violent way. I had to be more alert, more aware, but that wasn't all. I was missing something, but what was it?

I needed the deep and unconditional giving up which is at the core of the Sixth Step -- "Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character." The Sixth Step tells me to be willing to have God remove all my character defects. Being willing means that I accept living without them, that I can picture my life without pride, self-pity, self-centeredness, etc. We give up deep down, in our heart and in our soul. More difficult than it seems at first sight, on the Sixth Step our job is giving up. The Seventh Step -- "Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings" -- is asking, not demanding -- that's what *humbly*

means. God's job is doing the rest, in His own time and way, not our's.

That was my problem. I needed to give up the woman every time I was tempted romantically-- not just for today, but for good. I'm an expert in hiding my cards while waiting for the woman to change her mind. I needed to repeat again and again: "I accept living without this woman for the rest of my life." No matter how painful or how deprived I felt inside. And immediately I had to bring God's presence into my temptation and ask Him to fill the void inside. The Real Connection. But if I wanted to keep God's presence and to have Him really fill my void, I needed somehow to prolong and deepen such a wonderful Connection. *It was then that I learned how desperately I needed to love, and that the solution was practicing the actions of love.* I had to give, to pray for somebody, to do something for someone else, to give my attention and affection away. Helping newcomers is most useful; the results will surprise you.

To overcome romantic lust, that insidious form of "egotatry" and perversion of another person's reality, I had to give up my "golden calf," to bring God into my soul and to give, to love. Only God's love to others through me can get me free from the fantasies my ego uses to imprison me. The best antidote to romantic "love" is real love. When the latter is present the former vanishes because they are incompatible. *If there is something opposed to romance it is real love.*
J.R.

The Twelve Steps of Sexaholics Anonymous

1. We admitted we were powerless over lust—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to sexaholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Traditions of Sexaholics Anonymous

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon SA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop lusting and become sexually sober.
4. Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups or Sexaholics Anonymous as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the sexaholic who still suffers.
6. A SA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the SA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary spiritual purpose.
7. Every SA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Sexaholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. SA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Sexaholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the SA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity, at the level of press, radio, TV, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

THE TWELVE STEPS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS:

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable. 2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. 3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him. 4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. 5. Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs. 6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character. 7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings. 8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all. 9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others. 10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it. 11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out. 12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS:

1. Our common welfare should come first, personal recovery depends upon AA unity. 2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern. 3. The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking. 4. Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole. 5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers. 6. An AA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the AA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary spiritual purpose. 7. Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions. 8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers. 9. AA, as such, ought never be organized but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve. 10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the AA name ought never be drawn into public controversy. 11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV, and films. 12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

(The Twelve Steps and Traditions are reprinted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Permission to reprint and adapt the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions does not mean that AA has approved the contents of this work, nor that AA agrees with the views expressed herein. AA is a program of recovery from alcoholism only. Use of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions in connection with programs which are patterned after AA but which address other problems does not imply otherwise.)

Group News

Baltimore/Washington--Recently I helped organize the one-day Baltimore-Washington SA/S-Anon Marathon, held this year in Crystal City, Va. on Oct. 19. The theme was "Honesty, Open-mindedness and Willingness." The meeting consisted of two joint speaker meetings, breakout meetings, couples meetings with a total of 96 members attending.

This was the most moving experience I have had since coming into SA. It was the 13th month of my sobriety. It was the first anniversary of graduating from a sexual addiction treatment program and I had been asked to speak on my favorite subject, honesty. All the speakers delivered very powerful messages; the breakout meetings were really on the mark and the fellowship was outstanding. The most powerful experience for me was a joint breakout meeting. It was truly a spiritual experience to share with members of S-Anon. So many members of both fellowships voiced a desire for future joint meetings that we scheduled a group conscience to talk about future meetings. J.W.

Toronto, Canada--Toronto hosted its first SA/S-Anon Marathon Oct. 19. Wow! I was blown away by the honesty I heard and I was uplifted by the strength and hope. I had misgivings going into the day because it was the first time my wife was participating in the program and the first time I was attending a joint SA/S-Anon conference. But by the end of the day, my misgivings had been washed away by a deep sense of gratitude and thanksgiving. Truly "my cup was running over."

In all, 60 members attended, including members from Rochester and Detroit, and one member from Australia. Some 19 members attended the S-Anon meetings. God willing, this will be an annual affair. Thank

God for a program that works. J.L.

Chicago, IL--The Chicago Area Retreat Committee and the Chicago Area Intergroup recently hosted their Second Annual Spiritual Retreat for SA members entitled "Pathways to Peace," based on the theme "The Promises." The retreat lasted for three days. It was a wonderful chance to spend a recovery-filled weekend with members of the regional fellowship.

There were 39 people in attendance, including members from Iowa, Wisconsin, and Indiana, who traveled many hours to attend. It was inspiring to see the lengths people go to get the message of recovery.

We are blessed to have a wonderfully maintained retreat center campus in northwestern Illinois where we could spend the weekend together. Meals were included. We look forward to being able to meet again next year and extend an invitation to anyone interested in attending. E.S.

Annapolis, MD--It has taken two years, but our meeting has begun to grow. What started off as two or three of us in the basement of a church in the shadow of the Naval Academy has grown to six to eight committed members. We use a modified book study format and it seems to be working well. We would be interested in hearing from anyone from Southern Maryland or the Maryland Eastern Shore who is looking for a meeting. We can be contacted through the Baltimore area hotline. P.T.

Long Island, NY--Our 5th annual one-day conference was great as usual. Our theme was "Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path." So our day was filled with trying to lay out the path. The keynote speaker had a terrific message of love, hope and wisdom. The S-Anon keynote had a great

message of hope for S-Anons -- "Got to be in it to win it." J.J.

Manchester, MO--I am the treasurer of the Wednesday meeting and I am writing for a group subscription to the *Essay* and to give you an updated "where and when" of St. Louis meetings. The Wednesday group is very vital with approximately 25 names on our phone list and attendance around 10 per meeting. Sobriety is so very precious in SA. I am forever grateful for the SA program and also AA, the Steps, the meetings, a good sponsor and the literature. These give me the knowledge that I am not alone. My Higher Power can do it when I can't. M.M.

Grand Prairie, AB, Canada

Enclosed is a subscription form and money order for the *Essay* newsletter. We are a new group and would like to keep informed on what is happening in SA and events that members might be interested in attending. Since registering our group with the International Central Office last March, we now have three core members. There have been other people who have come to one meeting and maybe will be back some other time. We are also in touch with other groups in Edmonton, Alberta, and Prince George. L.L.

Grand Junction, CO--We are doing well in Western Colorado. We continue to have five regular members and are getting inquiries now and then from others. We are not cured by any means, but we are experiencing the best days of our lives because of God's help flowing to us through the program. Paradoxically, we also experience some of the most frightening and painful changes at the same time. But we have each other and God to see us through. M. H.

Member News

I want to express my gratitude and excitement for the "White Book," Sexaholics Anonymous. It confirms so much of my experience in what works for me in recovery.

I was in a Christian mind-control cult for years. The experience led me to relinquish calling myself a Christian. Twelve-Step recovery gave me God back in a way I never had. But because of my familiarity with the Bible, finding Biblical phrases sprinkled throughout the White Book made it come alive to me even more.

The White Book also cites passages from the AA Big Book and Twelve and Twelve that are the same passages that work for me in sexual recovery. It is so comforting to have my experience validated, to find out that other people are strengthened in sobriety by the same parts of the AA book.

I love the way the White Book talks about connectedness and misconnections; how it describes surrender and letting go. I got so excited about this because that's how I experienced it. The passages on pp. 86-87, 102, and 145-146 really jumped out at me, especially the part about how sobriety is a positive thing and "dry" is a "not."

The other sex fellowship group that I go to doesn't have much sobriety -- not to be taking their inventory -- but I felt so alone here at times because people didn't understand what I was talking about. More than anything, SA got me sexually sober, by the grace of God, of course.

I've only got seven months of solid sexual sobriety and I'm so grateful to find this book to confirm my experience. The early parts of the book with descriptions of kinds of denial really made me squirm. It was humbling and I believe that those passages have helped me to face my

powerlessness even more. I can see where they'll help me to avoid relapses because it described some of my thoughts there.

The White Book made me realize that I have much to learn about sobriety and how to rely on and relate to God. It cut my ego down to size just when I was getting cocky. Thank you! I think it would be a blessing if I could be penpals with somebody from SA. Maybe I could be helpful to them if there is somebody interested in fellowship-by-mail. D.M.

Abstaining from Media: Back to the Present

I have been working a program with a few other members of SA from different parts of the country on abstinence from TV and movies. I have been abstinent from these media since June 1, 1996. This has not been an easy surrender. Even though God has removed what was an overwhelming compulsion to utilize these media, I still experience an intense pull from them. When the lust for TV or movies comes up, I am able to pray each time -- just as I do with sexual lust -- and God has, one impulse at a time, given me the willingness to turn away.

My withdrawal from TV and movies was blatant and subtle. In obvious ways I was pulled to the screens whenever they were in my line of vision and when confronted with a life situation I found not to my liking. The impulse to lose myself in the media was tremendous.

The subtle withdrawal was much more profound. My 11th Step has me attempting to improve my conscious contact with God. Part of this practice is to remain present, conscious of the blessed moment given to me by my gracious God. Meditation, involving watching the flow of my thoughts, has

been a useful tool.

However, at times in meditation or when I am attempting to commune with God's creation, such as enjoy nature, a movie flashback or climactic scene will emerge in my mind and I will lock on to that image or feeling state. My meditation and appreciation and concentration on the present is lost, obliterated. I now must pray when this happens, and it happens often, "God, whatever it is I am seeking in that movie flashback, may I please find it in You." When I earnestly say this prayer I get the same relief as when I use the prayer on sexual lust and food lust. God does return me to sanity; that is, he returns me to the present.

In my morning prayers I always tell God that I want to be sober from lust today and have progressive victory over lust. I also say that I want to be free from the influence of media today -- that means no TV, movies or passive listening to music. There is a subtle difference in the language of these two prayers. In my prayer to be lust free I speak from the place of surrender. I have accepted that I cannot lust without dire consequences and have given up my right to lust or the expectation that I can ever lust with impunity.

But with media the language still reflects a delicate voice saying maybe someday I will be able to utilize media without their debilitating influence over me. I may still want to control and enjoy it, but for today, thanks to a loving and caring God who is my best friend, I have abstained from the use of TV and movies and have experienced again a day of creative productivity in the present that God has given me. S.W.



The Message Finally Got Through

It was in a porn magazine, ironically, that I first learned of SA. This new group for sex addicts was mentioned in a short article of the ha-ha-guess-what variety. I did not laugh; it sent a chill down my spine. Two months later a local newspaper carried the famous "Dear Abby" column, and I was one of the multitude who wrote to Simi Valley. I received the SA brochure and a letter inviting me to write again if I wanted further information. I did not write. The brochure confirmed for me that I was a sexaholic, but I was afraid, proud and unwilling. I kept the brochure, carrying it around for years in the back section of my briefcase, and re-reading it from time to time. But it would be 11 years before I entered an SA group and started working the program.

I had been hooked on masturbation since puberty. To my daily "drug," as I often thought of it, I eventually added pornography, fantasizing, sex with objects, and fetishes, especially women's undergarments. I had also indulged in voyeurism and exhibitionism, and lusting after girls and women. I sometimes lusted for men as well and in my twenties experienced sex with men a couple of times.

By the time I read the SA brochure, my addiction had grown into complete promiscuity. I was married but had started going out with prostitutes whenever possible, using stashed money taken from our household cash. Finances were tight then and I knew I was stealing from my family to have illicit sex, but I did it anyway. I needed more money so I began using corporation money with the intention of paying it back. But I was spending it too fast to pay it back and gradually began submitting falsified expense accounts. I spent money on strippers, phone sex, women's lingerie (which by

then I was wearing regularly under my clothing), and an increasing flow of pornography. By this point I had also had my first extramarital affair.

At the time of the affair, my wife and I were married for 12 years and had four of our five children. The affair was a large and painful crisis for both my wife and I, but it passed. I think we both just suppressed our individual pain and tried to keep up our image as a good family. We were and still are, thank God, a good family and people told us so, but such praise had a bitter after-taste for me because of the hidden life I was leading.

I had been raised in a religious atmosphere but I was breaking every moral precept I had ever learned. After high school, I spent four years in a religious community for men. Three of those years I lived under a vow of chastity but was only able to live this vow for a month at a time at most. In my adult years I stayed with my church, even taking on parish leadership roles, while my private life would have been a scandal had it ever come to light.

During the affair and after it I continued seeing prostitutes and began placing and answering ads in sex magazines. This led to encounters, mostly with men, and to more shame. I had long prided myself on my ability to balance my two lives: the upright public life and the secret promiscuous life. By the time I read the SA brochure, I was losing my balance. On the surface, my main reason for not writing back to SA in 1981 was that I wanted to keep my new found sexual freedom. As I look back, however, that was also the time when I was contemplating suicide.

I had made the decision that the only way to escape my sexual compulsions and to avoid bringing public shame on my family was to kill

myself. I had begun looking for the right method, one which would be easy to apply and sure to succeed. God's grace led me to a retreat house, where a spiritual director intervened and over a few days, helped me to choose life rather than death.

The thought of suicide faded, but I was no further ahead in dealing with my addiction. During our marriage, my wife would often confront me, and after reacting angrily, I would remorsefully apologize, promise not to do it again and then throw out or burn the magazines, the lingerie or whatever. Then I would break my promise. Every year, I returned to the retreat house and in prayer I would rededicate myself to my marriage and to God and promise to stop what I was doing. Then after one or two or three weeks I would masturbate and all my good intentions would evaporate. I would also stop praying: it seemed pointless when I felt out of favor with God.

I have often given thanks to God that somehow, in spite of my lustfulness, I was never sexually attracted to my children, and never made any sexual advances toward them. That does not mean they have been unaffected by my addiction. Each of them, at some point while growing up, has entered a room unexpectedly and found me acting out. They also received verbal abuse and sometimes physical blows as a result of my uncontrolled outbursts of anger.

A few years ago my wife and I both began seeing therapists individually and a third therapist together for marriage counseling. At the same time, my acting out moved to a new frantic level of intensity. I also got into another affair. This time the affair was with a married woman. Two months into the relationship she became

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pregnant. There was little doubt that I was the father. The affair and the pregnancy caused more pain to my wife and older children. For a long time separation and divorce were talked about frequently. We look back on this unhappy period as the "three years in hell." The other woman and her family went through hell, too. Divorce left her a single mother with four children.

Therapy helped my wife and I to talk to each other. Friends supported us. We stayed together by making short-term commitments. My wife forgave me again, but warned me that another affair would mean she and I were finished. I can handle that, I thought: no more affairs. I stepped up my use of strip bars, pornography, sex toys. I also cruised sex ads and telepersonals, which led to sexual liaisons with men. I got heavily involved in a cross-dressing club. I spent thousands of dollars on clothing, make-up and other accessories and would skip work to spend time "dressed-up" at the club. I was aware that I was getting involved with some very peculiar people and getting into situations that could even be physically dangerous.

I was becoming less able to hide what I was doing. My wife discovered my cross-dressing activities and so did two of my children. My oldest son found out about my sexual liaison with a man. My fantasies were moving into violent and abusive scenarios and I feared I would eventually act them out. My constant daily companion, masturbation, had me enslaved. I could never say no.

In Jan. 1992, my wife said to me: "I've tried to understand and to live with all this. I've forgiven you a lot and I can forgive a lot more. But you'll have to make some decisions or I'll have to make some decisions."

A few days later I found a book on sex addiction. I bought it, read it rapidly, identified with much of what I read and began, I think, the process of surrender. I felt weak, tired, worn down, out of control and in need of help. Back home, I pulled out the old SA brochure I had kept for years. I read it one more time. Then I phoned the "Self Help Clearing House." There was no SA phone number then, but they gave me an SA address and I immediately wrote a letter.

The same day my wife and I went to a mall to buy wallpaper. In the car she told me she wondered if we should bother buying anything for the house since things seemed likely to come to an end between us. I showed her the letter to SA that I had in my pocket, ready to mail. She cried, I cried and since then she has supported me in my program and in the time and work I put into SA.

I attended my first meeting in April of 1992. I had a honeymoon period of sobriety for three weeks, slipped, and was on a roller coaster for 10 months. As I write, I am, through the grace of God and the fellowship of SA, sober for more than three years. The change came, sobriety took hold and recovery really began when I was able to make the shift from working the program on my own terms to turning my will and life over to God. This meant, for example, being quite serious about getting to all the meetings. It meant I had to stop trying to "understand" and "psychologize" the program. I just had to do the simple yet sometimes difficult things it says to do. I had to find a sponsor, follow his directions and start carefully working each step.

One of the most powerful sources of strength in my life today is prayer -- not my old pray-only-when-I-feel-in-control type of prayer, but prayer in which I just try to acknowledge the presence of God, a presence that I now know has always been there no matter

what. I started with 15 minutes each morning, but now I give it a minimum of half an hour. Praying for serenity at the beginning of the day makes it possible to pray for it again and again during the day. In any situation of difficulty, anxiety, stress -- any condition that can lead to lust -- I do a mini-inventory: "What is here that I need to accept? Grant me the serenity to do so. What can be changed? Give me the courage to do it. And give me your wisdom to know the difference and to discern rightly."

Staying in the present is important for me too. My addiction to fantasy covered more than sexual fantasy. I need to have goals and dreams, but I have to test them against reality. I am discovering my feelings and how to share them appropriately with others. One of my first discoveries in the program was honesty and I have been able to give up my compulsive lying. Desiring to move always toward the truth, I have been able to speak with each of my five children about the past, about their pain and mine, about the affair, about my need for a group to help me with my sexual compulsions. I have asked for, and received, their forgiveness. I thank God I came to my senses and have been able to know this closeness with them before it was too late.

As for my sixth child, my daughter through the affair, I am now regularly in touch with her. We knew that she would inevitably need to know who I am and this has just begun to happen. She is now eight years old. I cannot be a father to her in the same way as I am to my other children, but I would like her to know my love and acceptance as much as possible, rather than rejection. My wife and children offered me the possibility of her visiting our home, and we have all now enjoyed her presence there.

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God prepared this. I could never have asked or hoped for it.

I have experienced a most amazing change in my relationships with friends and colleagues. I never before realized the degree to which lust had clouded my contacts with others and prevented true closeness. Now I am learning every day the joy of being with other people and reaching out to give instead of to take.

My wife and I are approaching our 29th wedding anniversary, something that seemed impossible a few short years ago. I can honestly say that our relationship now is better than at any time in our marriage. I have learned that love is different than sex and that sex in marriage can be free of lust and the selfishness it brings with it. We went through a long abstinence period which helped me to discover two things: that sex is optional, a truth that opens the door to a new and fulfilling life of personal freedom; and that in a loving marriage, sex must be at the service of relationship, not the other way around.

Someone asked me recently if I thought I would have to stay in SA all my life. I said that even to answer that question would go against the one-day-at-a-time principle by which I try to guide my daily life. I think I have gone beyond the point where I "have to" be in SA. It is now just something that I do. As I do it, I try to share it with others. And I give thanks to God. Life continues to get better, but I need always to remember where I came from. I need to remember that I am not only powerless over my acting out, but over my recovery as well. My growing conscious contact with God has taught me this: that if I work on becoming "conscious," God will look after the "contact."

AA Is Not Group Therapy

[This article was originally published in the February 1994 issue of the AA Grapevine]

I have attended AA meetings for 15 years, but in the past few years I've left many meetings with an uncomfortable feeling. Why did I feel disturbed? What had happened? I unearthed the answer to those questions at a popular lunch meeting I had been urged to attend.

A woman at this standing-room-only meeting began to talk about her mother and the damage her mother had caused in her life. She wept and damned her mother and blamed her for all of her unhappiness. There was no talk of sobriety. No hint of gratitude. No reference to working the Steps. Then this woman left the meeting early. I wanted to stop her and bring her back and tell her to listen. She just might find the answer to her problems.

At that moment, I realized with disturbing clarity that this was group therapy, not an AA meeting. What I had just been part of was what I believe to be the subtle sabotage of the AA program. This woman was just one of many people who are misguidedly using meetings to dump all their feelings and resentments in the name of sharing.

My intention is not to minimize anyone's grief. I speak as one who grew up in an extremely abusive alcoholic family, as a man who is a Vietnam vet, a survivor of divorce and other traumatic losses. I have attended therapy at various times and found it quite useful. However, I don't confuse therapy with AA's Twelve Steps and am disturbed as I see people increasingly using AA meetings for free therapy, in order to "get in touch with their feelings." My own primary purpose at a meeting is to better learn to apply the AA Twelve Step philosophy to the problems of daily life.

This intrusion of therapy talk in meetings causes a loss of focus on what this program is all about. The basic principles of recovery, honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness are being replaced with self-absorption, attention-getting, and getting in touch with feelings. Instead of enlisting the principles of gratitude and acceptance, many are focusing on blaming in the name of sharing feelings. The Big Book states, "Acceptance is the answer to all of my problems today." [P. 449.] That simple principle, acceptance, is what we are neglecting when we allow meetings to become therapy.

I hear people who've been around the program for over a year still "working on" a problem and then blaming their unhappiness on this still-unresolved problem. People are blaming everything that's not going right in their lives on ex-spouses, lousy parents, the government, or their bosses. Less time needs to be spent on complaining about the problem and more time needs to be focused on solutions. The solutions live in the application of the Twelve Steps.

"Acceptance is the answer to all of my problems today." As long as people are blaming they're not working the Twelve Steps and as long as they're not working the Twelve Steps they will continue to use meetings as therapy. They will continue to dilute the higher purpose of this program, which is to share our experience, strength, and hope. Let's work the Steps and keep the therapy talk out. We know it works.

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February 1994 Grapevine
[The Spanish translation of this article appeared in the June 1995 AA Grapevine under the title "AA no es una terapia de grupo."]

Donations for the Third Quarter

Akron, OH	\$ 147.50	LA Olympic, CA	45.00	Tamuning, GU	25.00
Albuquerque, NM	7.00	Long Beach, CA	113.00	Toledo, OH	15.00
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Bozeman, MT	104.00	Menlo Park, CA	40.00	Washington, DC	150.00
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Calgary, AB, Canada	34.42	Montreal, PQ, Canada	69.56	Wauwatosa, WI	157.50
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Champaign, IL	3.00	N Hollywood, CA	187.00	Wheeling, WV	17.00
Chicago Conference	4,748.00	Nashville IG, TN	473.05	Wichita, KS	50.00
Chicago, IL	18.50	NE Ohio IG	40.00	Willow Creek, IL	325.50
Chino, CA	67.00	NJ/E PA Intergroup	400.00	Woodbridge, VA	8.00
Cleveland, OH	160.25	Norwalk, CA	50.00		
Columbus, OH	70.00	Omaha, NE	220.00	Group Total	16,125.19
Corona, CA	29.30	Painesville, OH	50.00	Individual Total	1,393.36
Crystal City, VA	350.00	Pasadena, CA	155.86		
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Knoxville, TN	100.00	Tacoma, WA	10.00		

SA/S-Anon Corner

I recently attended an open-mike SA/S-Anon meeting. I was looking forward to hearing experience, strength and hope from both groups. As I settled in to listen, however, an SA member approached the mike. He spoke about his childhood, his feelings of not fitting anywhere and his unhappiness with his life before recovery.

He then began to share in what felt to me to be a graphic way, some of his sexual compulsions and what he did to victimize others. I felt totally powerless in this meeting. I wanted him to stop sharing in such detail, and I was not sure of the appropriate thing to do.

I was told that SAs can raise their hand if the language and/or graphic details were a trigger for someone. I wasn't sure if that also applied to me as an S-Anon.

I felt I needed to take care of myself at that point, so I ended up walking out of the meeting. I discussed this with some other S-Anons and they felt the same way. They also found the descriptions to be too specific but were unsure what to do. Graphic descriptions of molestation of children, voyeurism, rape and other forms of acting out can be painful triggers for S-Anons. I hope that the sign of raising one's hand to signify discomfort with the sharing can be used as a universal tool for both programs. **B.J.**

Loners Committee

The Loners Committee is growing by leaps and bounds and we need your help! There are so many people around the world who are writing to get in touch with sober members. We've grown to the point where not just a few of us can do all the writing anymore.

The Loners Committee now represents 18 countries and 26 states. Loners are people who don't have access to the number of meetings many of us do. So please consider spending the 15 to 30 minutes a month it would take to stay in contact with a loner and help them grow in recovery. And it helps the writer just as much, if not more. It can be fun -- give it a try! Contact Michael J., Loners Committee, P.O. Box 322, Fairless Hills, Pa. 19030.

International Committee

The International Committee is seeking a new Chair. We are need of a member with an international flair, someone who is willing to "reach out and touch someone" a long distance away. Communications are currently handled by the Loner's Committee. This task is for someone who likes to lend a helping hand. Please call or write the Central Office with your suggestions.

New Groups

Albuquerque, NM,
Fresno, CA
Jacksonville, FL
Miami, FL
Monroe, LA
Pensacola, FL
Vacaville, CA

Grand Prairie, AB, Canada
Ottawa, ON, Canada
Toronto, ON, Canada

Guam

SAICO

SA INTERNATIONAL CENTRAL OFFICE

Notes From The General Delegate Assembly Chicago July 1996

Terms of Office

Terms of office were set for the first Delegate Assembly so that only half of the Assembly would be elected at any one time. Lots were drawn to decide whose term would be two years and whose term three years.

MOTION: That the Assembly Delegates present draw lots to determine whose term would end in 1998 and whose in 1999. Thereafter, the regular term of office for a General Assembly Delegate will be two years, with a possibility of being reelected for an additional two year term.

Terms of Office of the Original Assembly Delegates. Rotation begins in July 1998.

Bob	Southwest	1998
Terry	MidAtlantic	1999
Ed	Northwest	1999
Jessica	Northeast	1998
Sylvia	South Midwest	1999
Kirk	North Midwest	1999
Bill	Southeast	1998

MOTION: Each region should be encouraged to select an alternate Assembly Delegate, who will be able to fulfill the duties of the Delegate if he or she be unable to do so.

Officers of the General Delegate Assembly

MOTION: To avoid name confusion, the Regional Representative attends the Regional Assembly; the Assembly Delegate is a Regional Representative who has been elected to attend the General Delegate Assembly.

Michael B. Reviewed the General Service Structure from the local level to the International Level. (Revised document included)

MOTION: The term of office for an officer for the General Delegate Assembly is to be one year.

Terry Chair,
General Delegate Assembly

Jessica Vice Chair

Bob Secretary

Finance Committee

The 1990 IRS audit has been closed, with everything being accepted as is. It was closed without comment. Some issues remain open for 1991-1995. The Finance Committee will be ready to negotiate if and when the issue is raised again.

Composition of Committees

MOTION: That each SA Committee consist of one Trustee, one Delegate and as many other appointed members as deemed necessary to accomplish its task.

Central Office Management Committee is to study current literature pricing versus cost and report back to the Assembly in January in Oklahoma City.

All committees are reminded, if they have not done so, to submit through Central Office a mission statement and a budget for 1997 so that the budget for the entire fellowship can be considered at the January meeting. There are many worthwhile projects afloat and we need to allocate our resources wisely.



SERVICE STRUCTURE FOR SA FELLOWSHIP

Adopted by the 1994 International Conference in Rochester

January 15, 1994

(Revised Jan 1997)

In order to be more effective in the task of the Twelfth Step and First Tradition of carrying the message to the suffering sexaholic, the fellowship appointed the General Service Board committee in July 1991, during the Chicago International Conference Business Meeting, to recommend a service structure appropriate for Sexaholic Anonymous. Over the next two-and-one-half years, the writing of this service structure evolved through prayerful consultation and the study of service structures used by other 12 step fellowships. (Note: the General Service Board Committee was eventually renamed the Service Structure Study Committee) The resulting recommendation of that Committee was adopted at the business meeting held at the International Conference of Sexaholics Anonymous in Rochester, N.Y. on January 15, 1994 and is here presented for the information of the whole fellowship.

This structure has been designed with SA's unique purpose and requirements and is reflective of SA's current development. We recognize that as the SA Fellowship grows, we hope that the service structure will be flexible and yield to further growth and the changes it will bring. Toward that end, it is the responsibility of the Board of Trustees to oversee and inventory

the service structure every five years and recommend changes to the structure.

The individual SA Group is the basic unit of the Service Structure. Each SA Group sends an Intergroup Representative (IGR) to the local Intergroup meeting, which meets regularly (perhaps monthly).

An Intergroup is formed when there are several SA Groups in a geographic area. This Intergroup helps with the Intergroup service work, that is, establishes phone lines with answering service, develops 12 Step procedures, tabulates local meeting lists, provides communication and information on a local level, etc. Each Intergroup would select, among its Trusted Servants, one Regional Delegate (RD) to attend an Annual Regional Assembly.

Regions are established as follows:

Northeast Region:

AK, Yukon, NT, BC,
ALTA, WA, MT, OR, ID

Southwest Region:

CA, HI, NV, UT, AZ

North-Midwest Region:

SASK, MAN, ND, SD,
MN, WY, NE, IA, WI,
MI, IL

South-Midwest Region:

CO, KS, MO, NM, OK,
AR, TX, LA

Northeast Region:

QUE, ONT, NB, ME,
VT, NH, NY, CT, RI,
MA

Mid-Atlantic:

PA, DC, MD, NJ, OH,
VA, WV, DE

Southeast Region:

IN, KY, TN, NC, SC,
MS, AL, FL, PR, GA

International Region

All countries other than USA and Canada

The Regional Delegate's term of service would be established by the individual Intergroup, with a recommended term of two years minimum. The sobriety recommendation for a Regional Delegate is established at a minimum of two years SA sobriety. It was recommended that the Regional Delegate be elected by January 1995, and that an annual Regional Assembly meet at some time in 1995.

The Regional Delegates meet at least once a year in their Regions to discuss and deal with matters affecting the SA Groups and SA Fellowship in their Regions.

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They select one of their number as the Assembly Delegate (AD) to the General Delegate Assembly.

The General Delegate Assembly would consist, therefore, of the Regional Delegates from each of the Regions above. The International SA Fellowship could also send a Representative, selected through a process to be self determined, to the General Delegate Assembly.

The Assembly would concentrate on matters affecting the growth and functioning of the SA Fellowship as a whole. The first Assembly would also nominate and elect the first Board of Trustees (Board), consisting of nine Trustees: five Sexaholics and four nonsexaholics. One of the SA Trustees must be elected from the Nashville area because of proximity to the Central Office.

Note: AA experience has shown the desirability of non-sexaholic representation. This lends a broader perspective to the workings of the Board of Trustees and also allows representation of SA to the media without anonymity problems.

The sobriety requirement of Sexaholic members of the Board of Trustees is five years of SA sobriety.

The first group of Trustees would serve staggered terms of two to five years. Future General Delegate Assemblies would select replacements for the original group as their terms expire.

Replacements would serve for four years.

The Trustees would meet as a group three times each year. One meeting would be at each of the semi-annual International Conferences and another five or six day meeting at Nashville in conjunction with the General Delegate Assembly to be held in the Spring or Fall each year. The first General Delegate Assembly was held in 1996.

The Trustees will be responsible for the day to day operation of SA International Central Office through the Nashville trustee.

The Trustees will be charged with carrying out the agenda of the General Delegate Assembly.

The Trustees will elect their own officers, including a Chair, a Vice-Chair, Secretary(s) and a Treasurer. They will accomplish their work through a committee structure. Some of their committees might be the Central Office Management Committee, the Translations Committee, the Finance Committee, the Publications, Committee, and the Tapes Committee, etc.

Each Committee appointed or formed will consist of two Trustees, two Assembly Delegates and one local Nashville area SA member.

As the SA Fellowship grows and expands, additional Assembly Delegates might be added to the General Delegate Assembly and

the Board of Trustees might be increased.

As noted in the text of the SA Service Structure, there are specific time frames for development of the elements of the Service Structure. The first time reference in the text was January 1995, when a Regional Delegate was to be chosen by the local intergroups to attend the Annual Regional Assembly in 1995. Therefore, the first task was to form local intergroups, if not already formed. Each SA group and/or individual member (loner) should contact other SA groups in their area to arrange the formation of an Intergroup. For guidelines on forming Intergroups, please contact Central Office, P. O. 111910, Nashville, TN 37222. Then, it was to be the task of each Intergroup to contact the other Intergroups within their Region to plan the Annual Regional Assembly in 1995. For further information on existing Intergroups in your Region, contact Central Office in Nashville, TN.

With your involvement in forming this basic Service Structure, Sexaholics Anonymous can unify in carrying the message to the still suffering sexaholic.

SEXAHOLICS ANONYMOUS

P. O. Box 111910, Nashville, TN 37222

(615)331-6230 * FAX (615)331-6901

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 ____ Blank. If not indicated, blank will be sent}{____ \$8.00 Spanish -
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 {____ 30¢ Spanish} 1 ounce
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 {____ \$8.00 English}{____ \$2.00 Spanish - not hard bound} 8 ounces
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 Traditions {____ \$2.00 English - under revision}{____ \$2.00 Spanish -
 not hard bound} 4 ounces
Notes on Origin and Early Growth of SA {____ 50¢ English}{____ 50¢
 Spanish} 1 ounce
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Teléfono _____ (phone number)

(Si el pedido o donativo lo hace un grupo, le agradeceríamos que nos indicara el nombre del mismo)

Cantidad <i>Quantity</i>	Precio <i>Price ea</i>	Peso <i>Weight</i>	Título <i>Description</i>
_____	\$ 8.00	14 onzas	Sexólicos Anónimos
_____	\$.30	1 onza	Folleto de SA (<i>SA brochure</i>)
_____	\$ 2.00	4 onzas	Descubriendo los principios
_____	\$.50	1 onza	Notas sobre los comienzos de SA
_____	\$.25	1 onza	Algunas opiniones, médicas y personales, sobre la abstinencia sexual masculina
_____	\$6.00	10 onzas	La recuperación continua
_____	_____		Precio (<i>price</i>)
_____	\$ _____		Deducción del 20% (más de \$200)
Impuestos	\$ _____		(Residentes CA .0775%, FL .0700%, TN .0875%)
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