

Essay®

A Quarterly Publication of Sexaholics Anonymous, Incorporated

PO Box 111910
Nashville, TN 37222

June 1998

Gift of SA Recovery

This evening I feel I'm a very lucky man. God has given me an opportunity to live a joyful life. I celebrated my 40th birthday on the weekend. My wife, children, my Dad and Mom, brothers and sisters and their children were all there sharing this big day with me. The previous week, my wife and I went on a quiet drive through Nova Scotia where we shared the fresh air, spring flowers and lovely countryside. These times are special moments to cherish.

Nine years ago I had no hope for my marriage. I hit rock bottom and I was dying inside. My wife was devastated. She realized her dreams for a happy marriage was not going to happen. She was married to a sexaholic. I had no solution despite many years of trying to find one. At that time we had one child. I read the Dear Abby Column in May 1989 and for the first time I got a glimpse of the problem. I identified with the message and quickly contacted SA Central Office. They sent me SA literature and told me that I wasn't alone and that there was a solution.

Eventually I started to bring the inside out and told the SA members that I was married and that my acting out thinking and behavior was with the same sex. I deceived my wife into marriage and now my marriage was falling apart. I told them that I was powerless over having promiscuous sex with men,

sex with objects, buying gay pornography, intrigued with the gay culture, powerless over gawking and taking lust images, frequenting bathhouses and public washrooms, involved in bestiality, voyeurism and fantasy.

SA members said to me things like this:

- This is a one day at a time program. Don't worry about the future.
- Stop lusting and go to meetings. The fog will clear and the answers will come.
- Sex was optional. This was fantastic news. I knew I could get along without having sex with my wife, but how could I get through a day without acting out with another man? I wanted this to be true. I trusted these people because I had no where else to go.
- Victory over lust is not going to happen overnight. Take small steps.
- You are a love cripple. You don't love your wife because you don't know how to love.
- For starters you are insane, sick and perverted. Practice the principles of SA.
- Instead of taking the actions of lust, take the actions of love. *(continued on page 4)*

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Calendar of Events

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

June 12 - 14, 1998, SA UK Step Study Retreat, English Lake District, sponsored by SA UK. Contact Nicholas at 44 1768 863 379.

June 20, 1998, One Day Marathon, Perrysburg, OH, sponsored by SA Toledo.
Theme: Are These Extravagant Promises? We Think Not!
Contact Tim B. at 416/697-1499.

July 10 - 12, 1998, SA/S-Anon International Conference, Newark, NJ, sponsored by SA/S-Anon New Jersey - Eastern Pennsylvania Intergroup.
Theme: The HOPE Conference. PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF HOTEL.
Hilton Gateway, Raymond Blvd and McCarte, 973/622-5000.
SA contacts: Tom A., 908/351-3870; S-Anon, Madeline at 732/776-6339.

July 24 - 27, 1998, SA Irish Convention, Dundalk, Ireland, sponsored by SA Ireland.
Contact Dara at 353 42 67958.

August 28 - 30, 1998, SA/S-Anon UK Summer Convention, Ammerdown, Somerset, sponsored by SA UK. Contact Indrei at 44 1373 466 555.

September 11 - 13, 1998, SA/S-Anon Retreat, Hoechstebach/Westerwald, sponsored by AS Deutschland. Contact Ruth P. at 49 0931 663437.

September 19, 1998, SA Pittsburgh Marathon, sponsored by Tri-State Intergroup.
Theme: A Program For Life: New Habits, New Possibilities. Wexford, PA.
Contact Aaron at 724/532-6767 or Larry at 412/733-5156.

How to contact SA

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***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.

How to improve *Essay* circulation

Every group should have a subscription to *Essay* for the members to read, share and pass around. The *Essay* Committee.

Subscribe to *Essay*

A one year subscription costs \$10.00. Group subscriptions of 10 or more sent to the same address are \$8.00 each. Payment can be by check, money order, or credit card, MasterCard or Visa. Send subscription requests to SAICO, PO Box 111910, Nashville, TN 37222-1910.

Calendar of Events

[Events listed here are presented solely as a service to readers, not as an endorsement by Essay or SAICO]

- September 26, 1998**, SA Toronto Marathon, sponsored by SA Toronto.
Theme: Into a Whole New Way of Life. Contact Toronto at 416/410-7622.
- October 9 - 11, 1998**, SA Convention, Waterford, Ireland, sponsored by SA Ireland.
Grace Dieu Retreat House. Contact Tom C. 353 51 858 771.
- October 30 - November 1, 1998**, SA/S-Anon Southern California Unity Conference.
Sponsored by S California Intergroup. Contact Gary W. at 909/865-1645.
- October 30 - November 1, 1998**, SA/S-Anon Family Untion Retreat, sponsored by
Wichita, KS. Contact SA Wichita at 316/266-8125.
- November 13 - 15, 1998**, SA Convention, Stuttgart, Germany, sponsored by
AS Deutschland. German speaking Autumn SA Convention.
Contact Ruth P. at 49 0931 663437.
- January 8 - 10, 1999**, SA/S-Anon International Conference, Sacramento, CA,
sponsored by Northern California Intergroup. Theme: Living Sober.
Contact Sacramento SA at 916/491-1772.

[Please note that telephone contacts are listed as local phone numbers. Check with your telephone Operator for International Calling Codes.]

SA Recovery *(continued from page 1)*

I stopped lusting. I went to meetings. I worked the Steps and I began to take the actions of love. I began to love my wife. Today we have four children and our lives are rich with intimacy. Today, I choose God rather than lust. My sobriety and my family are very precious gifts and I owe it all to SA. Nine years ago, I had no idea I could have SA sobriety. I am so grateful that you gave me the chance to work for SA sobriety. There have been times when I slipped back into old

Thank you, SA members, for sharing your experience, strength and hope and for giving me this opportunity to live this wonderful way of life.

thinking but God and the fellowship prevailed and I got back into working my program. If I was told there was an easier, softer way I would have taken it. If I had been told that I was gay and that same sex recovery was an option, I would have taken it. However my group and Central Office never gave me an indication that I could not have SA sobriety. Thank you, SA members, for sharing your experience, strength and hope and for giving me this opportunity to live this wonderful way of life.

Anonymous

When the God-Connection Started to Work

I'm Paul H., a grateful sexaholic, sober since December 1996. The nature of my disease is lusting, wanting to be lusted after, compulsive masturbation, use of pornography, dependency relationships, and anonymous encounters.

It felt good not long ago to reach an anniversary. It's been a long journey. I started sexual recovery 15 years ago. It's been quite a journey and still is. I want to be quite profound in sharing but all I'm doing is quoting what has been so freely passed on to me.

The year 1983 was when I first identified as a sex addict. At the time I had just had a traumatic

split with a man. I recalled him talking a former partner of his who had left his sexually addicted lifestyle in his late 30s to train for the priesthood. I made contact with this man in Canada and found he was on a similar path to me. From 1983-86 he was the only other person I knew in the world in sexual recovery B he in Canada, me in Australia.

In 1986, I became involved with a Church group dealing with people leaving the same-sex lifestyle. I was the only member not of their faith, but they gave me a lot of role models and many of

the principles I was to hear later in SA. The problem there was that as I would not subscribe to their theology. From 1989 to '92, I was involved in other S groups, but found I could not find the support I needed for sobriety. Virtually no one there could comprehend my goal of sobriety. Because I was sexually attracted to men and had no real attraction to women they could not comprehend my sobriety definition that excluded homosexual behavior.

My original SA group was founded in '92 by three people, including myself, whose background was almost entirely same-sex. We left the other S-program specifically because the SA sobriety definition ruled out any same sex behavior as sober. We needed that firm clear bottom line. I needed it. In SA I finally found a place that was solidly behind sobriety and that didn't try to convert me religiously. I'd been wanting this sobriety for a long time.

The layers of denial and lies have been many. What worked for me has been meetings, tapes, phone calls and the Steps. When we first started meetings in Melbourne in December '92, none of us were sober. We started off with two meetings per week, even though there was only three of us. We looked at each other and said we have to get sobriety from somewhere, so we read from the literature. I wanted sobriety but didn't want to do

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 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 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 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 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.)

the work. I knew I needed sobriety but feared I couldn't achieve it. I think I spent the first two years of meetings in solid fear of other members and fear that the meeting would disappear. Then I heard about fear inventories and the God connection really started to work for me. I had (and still have) so much rubbish running around in my head and I had to start getting it out or I could never connect with the love of God. Then I remembered I had heard somewhere that the opposite of love is not hate, but fear. I had to surrender the fear, and still do. In committing myself to my meengs I found I started to belong.

I stopped (one day at a time) acting out with others in March '94. Almost lost that a few times when I didn't surrender fear. I called myself sober from that date for almost two years before I got honest about "wandering hands" in the middle of the night while "asleep." I knew for sure there was something wrong when I could hear myself thinking, "you'd better keep your eyes shut so you don't have to call this a bust." I finally got a sponsor (and a long distance phone bill!) and started being more honest. Another year of busts "in the middle of the night" and the sick patterns of my thinking started to emerge.

I was going to bed unsundered and when I stirred in the middle of the night it was not God I was reaching out for. As I started to do the daily inventories at the end of the day I began to find God in my sleep and in my semi-sleep life. I heard an S-Anon speaker say, "my head is not a safe neighborhood and I don't like to go there alone." I needed you people and the God of my limited understanding to get me out of my head. So for the last four years I've averaged an SA conference tape per day and spoken to at least two members per day. My thinking was so distorted that I just had to get my sanity from somewhere and someone else.

In October-November '96, I did a six-week SA tour of the USA, Canada, UK and Ireland. I met many members who I had heard on conference tapes. Although I had only two weeks of sobriety when I started that trip, I was made welcome wherever I went. At times I was so fearful I

couldn't speak, at other times so fearful I couldn't shut up. And what I got back was acceptance. During that trip I phoned back to Australia on average every day. I needed to stay connected.

Then a few weeks after I returned I busted again with starting the big M "in the middle of the night." Complacency and grandiosity had set in again. So here I am over a year later, over a year sober. The SA Internet meeting has helped a lot. It's kept me focussed on recovery during each day. There have been a couple of close calls. On those occasions I did what I had been shown to do B inventory it, pray about it and talk about it. Service has been a blessing, getting me out of my head. Gratitude has been a great tool B it brings me up when I'm down and down when I'm up. It gets me out of my head and into the God connection.

Recently I had been thinking I was "all done." Through sad experience I've learned to surrender that particular thought when it arises. I know when I surrender the slightest hint of lust I have freedom. When I take the second look/thought or the prolonged first look/thought the freedom and serenity start to go. I'm still very susceptible to lust. There have been a number of rewards of sobriety and recovery. I'm learning to listen more. I've discovered real intimacy with men in the program; better than the counterfeit intimacy I had before. Also there is a growing ability to see reality more clearly than I ever have. The unreality of my thinking astounds me at times.

So thank you all for helping me stay sober today, getting progressively sober over the last five years and for this last year of full sobriety. Please keep coming back. Every time you share you give me your trust and honesty. That's a precious gift that helps me to be more trusting and honest. Keep surrendering B What else is there?

SA Around the Globe

Report on the Fourth Australian SA Conference

Over the weekend April 24-26 the 4th Australian SA conference was held at Camp Cottermouth, Canberra, the national capital. 28 members from around Australia attended. The theme for this year's conference was "The Real Connection."

The Friday meeting was a time where all members shared their stories and where each one was in their life's journey. The following morning my wife and I shared on "The Real Connection in Marriage." I shared how my sexaholism had turned me into a very disconnected, isolated rageaholic. The extent of my disconnection was such that I preferred to masturbate rather than have sex with my wife. I also talked about how I abused my wife in different ways in our marriage. As a result of working the Steps, going for meetings and staying connected with people in the program I felt more connected with myself and my family and God. My wife said that she lived in fear in the marriage. She shared her struggles of having to live with a sexaholic B the anger, the mood swings, the blame, the criticism and the fear. However, she added that when I started working the Steps she began to see real changes in me. She said that the fights began to decrease and the periods of silence became less and that I began to take responsibility for my actions and apologized quickly. Communication improved and honesty in the relationship helped usher in intimacy. This she added, attracted her to the program and led her to her own recovery.

Following our sharing there was time for questions and answers. Various members asked questions and some shared their experiences, too. This was the first time in SA Australia that a couple had shared about recovery and real connectedness in marriage. Remark on this an

old-timer commented "SA Australia has come of age."

This conference also saw more members than last year with one or more years of sobriety. It was encouraging to see more people staying sober. One of the meetings had "My Favorite Step" as the topic. Some members shared how they were making good use of the conference call facility by connecting with up to five and six members from different states by phone.

There was a lot of fun and laughter as members got together and talked about their experiences B things that had bound them up with deep shame but as they had been in recovery, the power of shame had been broken and they were able to talk about it and laugh. The miracle of recovery! The conference also provided the opportunity for some members to do their First Step. It was a great time to catch up with old friends and to make new friends. Though everyone there was at different stages in their recovery we were all united in the fact that we were all powerless over lust and that we all shared a common solution. The conference was a meeting place for SA's from all over Australia to meet each other, share our experience, strength and hope and hear others do the same as we "trudge the road of Happy Destiny."

Jude M., Canberra

Report on the First Annual European Convention

Over 40 SAs and S-Anons from all over Europe gathered at Mill Hill, just north of London, for the first European SA/S-Anon Convention over the weekend of March 27-29. The theme was "Freedom", progressing through the Steps with successive sessions entitled: "Freedom from Obsession"; "Were Entirely Ready"; Pathway to Peace", and "Of Myself I Am Nothing." Saturday afternoon was devoted to sessions for couples,

Intergroups for literature to prisoners. This vital Twelfth Step work to those who still suffer in prison can continue because of your generosity, kindness and support.

Many requests come to Central Office and the SACC like the following:

"I am a sex offender serving 12 - 27 years. After serving 15 years in prison, I have just come to find SA at my new prison. I am honored to have the privilege to attend SA meetings twice a month here at the prison. It gives me a chance to share my experience, strength and hope with the group members and vice versa.

In doing so, it would be helpful for me to obtain a White Book and a sponsor, as I am eager to continue strongly in my SA recovery. Any and all help that you could provide me with would be greatly appreciated." **Neal F.**

SACC can now provide literature. There is still a need for members to write to inmates and to sponsor members on the inside. SACC wants to have a representative from each Intergroup on the Committee to facilitate this important outreach. Interested members should talk to their sponsors about this. Inquiries can be addressed to sacc@sa.org
SACC, PO Box 283, Bellevue, WA 98004
Phone: 425/644-1597

Donations Received through May

Individual	1635.00
Darien, IL	7.00
Daytona Intergroup	500.00
Portland	316.00
Seattle	62.51
S California Intergroup	595.80

Total 3116.31

Literature Requests filled 48

Loners Committee

The Loners Committee consists of members who live in isolated areas or where they cannot attend a

meeting as often as they would like. They write or call each other. This service is considered a lifeline to those who use it.

There is a need for a new Chair for this Committee. This member receives the requests of members to be added to the list, sends out the Welcome Letter with the list, revises the list from time to time, and writes many of those on the lists. Deep and lasting friendships have developed through this process.

Interested members can write to SAICO, PO Box 111910, Nashville TN 37222.

Notes from SAICO

Has your address changed?

Did you get a new phone number?

Do you have a new area code?

Did you remember your address or zip code change on your *Essay* renewal?

Has your local, group, or Intergroup contact changed?

Are you sponsoring a marathon, retreat, assembly, or special meeting?

Do you have experience, strength and hope to share? A good story? A funny one? An inspiring one?

Did you notify Central Office?

Material for September issue of *Essay* should arrive in Central Office by August 1.

Tuesday night Step meeting. During this meeting we take a 30-minute session for each person to do individual Step work, which is then shared with the group. I have found it necessary to return to Step Two and I thought I would share on that Step in order to make my "taking" of that Step more real to me

The Step reads: "Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity." What do I see and understand in this Step?

"Came" -- to have taken a journey, traveled a course;

"Came to" -- to have awakened, to become aware of;

"Came to believe" -- to know at depth, realize and accept.

What is this Power?

It is greater than me. It is a creative, loving being. The Lord and giver of life. A Power that is willing to be available to me. A source of healing and restoration.

What is to restore? To re-establish what was or what was intended to be. To fix, repair. To renew to original condition.

What is sanity? The ability to know and accept reality. A sense of healthy self-respect as one having been created by God. Being whole, wholeness, holiness. Being the sacred self, the soul-bearer.

AA's Twelve and Twelve says Step Two requires only acceptance. What is it Step Two calls me to accept? That my life is a journey which has awakened me to the knowledge that a great and loving God is willing to renew me, restoring me to the fullness of life in spirit, mind and body.

Can I accept this? Not can I, but will I? I tell myself, no, I cannot, but why can't I? Is it only so that I can hold onto my old, self-destructive ways? So I can avoid accountability? If God will do this for me then I am going to choose to let Him. Why spurn a gift so great?

Right now I pray for the willingness to accept this gift of restoration from my God. In your presence I say yes, please God, do this for me. I accept that my God can and will restore me to sanity and all

that that means. **Gary L., Davenport, IA**

Welcome Home

This is my first post to the cyber meeting. I am only two months in the program and 21 days sober, but I have had an incredible awakening. Things are seeming to happen in my life from many different avenues. I received a "welcome home" greeting this morning when I was added to the e-mail list, which caused me to sit at my computer at work with tears streaming down my face. I can't explain it, but I know that God has gotten a hold of me somehow after all these years.

I am so grateful to God for bringing me to a group of people like SA who know me better than I know myself at this point. **J.R.W.**

women and "recovering entrepreneurs," which explored the lust-money-power connection. Saturday evening was devoted to the usual absurd quiz games, music, poetry and fun.

There were no visitors from outside Europe this time, but progress reports were made by members of the 21 groups currently meeting in various parts of the United Kingdom and Ireland, as well as reports from some of the 35 meetings in Germany, Austria, The Netherlands and Luxemburg, as well as France and Israel.

Next year's European Convention is planned for Germany in October, 1999, and rumor has it the Israelis will host it in 2000. Please watch the *Essay's* Calendar of Events for further details.

SA Europe now produces tapes of all UK and European events. These may be ordered from SA Tapes, PO Box 1914, Bristol, BS99, 2NE, UK. Tapes are available -- at 1.5 pounds Sterling per tape (postage will be added) for the following events: Ammerdown, Sept. 1996 (four tapes); Damascus House, March 1997 (five tapes); Ammerdown, August 1997 (five tapes); Damascus House, March 1998 (five tapes). Payment in Sterling only please, payable to SA Tapes.

Indrei R., UK.

New Groups

Titusville, FL
Ruston, LA
Lawrenceburg, TN
Desoto, TX

Brampton, ON, Canada

Feedback Corner

Dear Essay, Good job on The Interfellowship Forum. That was very well written and helpful to me, especially as a single male who struggles with homosexuality (but it is not my identity). Member story "Only a Deluge of Grace Could Free Me" was also well written, powerful and helpful to me. I really like your newsletters.

Bruce A., Norman OK.

I am two years into the SA 12-Step meetings in my area. I plan to spend some time in practice on the Internet learning how to keep and deepen the support I have in my progressive victory over lust. Actually, I found this [Internet] address in the current *Essay*, and I wanted to try it out. The new format is a radical major improvement! Congratulations. I particularly like the life story, and the Interfellowship Forum. It is important for me to know why the different groups would adopt different "sobriety" definitions.

Norman C.

Correction: A Member News submission in the March 1998 *Essay* entitled "When Waking Up Is the Pits" was incorrectly attributed. The author of the submission was Jo, an SA member from London, UK.

SA Corrections Committee

The SA Corrections Committee would like to gratefully acknowledge the many gifts and contributions from individuals, groups, and

Finding the Fellowship I Craved

During high school I was getting more and more confused. I would hitchhike and pick up

men for sex in exchange for money to buy drugs or impress my friends. My "friends" were druggies. I was surprised that good looking girls would hang around me. I was an egomaniac with an inferiority complex. I eventually had a girl friend. She was one of the best looking girls in school (and a sexaholic). I was hanging around the heavy drug users and bikers, and on the other side had close relationships with the gays in school, as well as a "gay lover" and my "girl friends." I was also president of the church youth group. I knew how to sell! A man I met hitchhiking . . . set me up with the porno film industry and prostitution.... This led me to Hollywood and new York. There, I met very powerful people who gave me a false sense of power and security. Lots of drugs and a very fast indulgence of whatever I wanted. I had a few girl friends, but not many. ...

At] 19 years old I moved back to the Bay Area, very despondent. I met a man in AA who said he met God . . . he told me what I needed to hear and I had a spiritual awakening of such magnitude that I was on a cloud for about two years. God's gift changed me, but I thought God took it all away. During that time, I really did have an experience where I didn't have sex, do drugs, and no withdrawals. Purely God's grace. When the bubble popped, so did I and all hell broke loose. I was overcome with all my sexual desire, defects reawakened, and spiritual warfare raging. I thought God had abandoned me.

During that pink cloud phase I had gotten married ... We were now getting a divorce, as she was four months pregnant. I felt mis-fitted, very darkly confused. So I went to what I thought was me. I went to a gay bath house every night, but I could not perform. So I began to drink and drug once again. That began to "help." I quickly met a man that I was to be "married to" for almost seven years. We had rings. ... I was beginning to embark on a journey of drug and sex addiction like I've never known. . . . I became very strung out, and God was beckoning me to stop. I didn't know how, or if I could. I broke up with this person, very coldly. It was devastating. I moved out and another sex drunk reluctantly became my drug again.

I was living my fantasies, hoping that they were reality, but my reality was becoming more of a nightmare. This new relationship was worse than before.... Now I had to have sex with someone every day, to satisfy my jealousy. The more I fed it, the more I wanted. "It" preoccupied everything in my life. The lust was the vacuum without satisfaction, ever seductive but never fulfilling, always seducing me by not fulfilling me. I would fistfight with this person... but I always returned, because "it" was a drug to me, "it" was my lover, "it" was my reality, and I could not stop it.

On a brief trip to Hawaii, I met a man from AA who told me a bit about sexual addiction and the impossibility of me doing the 1st Step... that the 1st Step is a gift of God. That God could restore me to a marriage that was heterosexual. He said I should be patient, but to continue to ask God to make me willing, no matter what I "thought" reality was. I didn't know that there was a traditional life for a freak like me, and that I had met my future wife, there in Hawaii. ...

I began attending AA, but I could not stay sober. I didn't want to give up sex. I had gotten married, in my pursuit of happiness, but I had a boyfriend in Los Angeles, and one in San Francisco. I would go in and out of recovery, because I could not stop the lust for men. All the while wanting out but having nowhere to go. I began to get this message from God: that I would be happy surrendering *everything*, or really, just making a decision to do so and trusting God to bring it to pass. Finally I agreed that I was at an impasse; after being beaten, run over, smashed day in and day out, crying all the time, terrified, [I wanted] to live in surrender, without my drug, "men." So now I made a decision in AA, that God wanted all of me... guess I got sober, with the drugs and alcohol.

I was able to abstain from homosexuality and the idea of having boy friends. God was proving to me that marriage was heterosexual, and I would be blessed beyond my dreams if I trusted Him for the truth. However, I did not go to SA, because I was afraid that men would pick me up there or that I would pick up something there. I didn't know about

SAICO

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March 1998

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Step Two Inventory

I just returned from our

Do I have any control over what I'm afraid of? (Note the value of the Serenity Prayer here.) Am I afraid that if I have no control I am going to die or be in great pain? Am I afraid that God is not in control?

Gratitude list: What do I have in my life that I am grateful for? What do I have in my life that I'm not grateful for -- and consider gifts anyway? What has God given me in the past and present to be grateful for? Do I have my health? My job? A place to live? God? Friends in the program? A program? Sobriety?

Do I feel thankful to be alive today rather than dead for my addiction? Am I making progress? Am I out of jail? Out of an institution? Am I learning from my mistakes instead of remaining in the insane behavior?

Am I learning to trust? To give and receive the actions of love? Make better decisions? A better quality of mistake? -- I love that one! Am I doing my Step work and staying connected to God and my sponsor and fellowship?

Typically, when I write down the things I'm afraid of, I see that many of them are not that scary. They aren't life threatening. I start to feel afraid of "what if" and project into the future. If I look at right here, right now, my life is rather good and I have nothing to fear. God is in control and taking care of me and everyone else.

The gratitude list helps me to see how God is working in my life and how wonderful my life is. It helps me to pinpoint what *is* working. It helps me get out of self-pity on the one hand and grandiosity on the other. It helps me to better see how many of my fears are opportunities to find gratitude. Even if the thing I'm afraid of does happen, I can still stay alive and be okay. I don't have to act out. I will not die and I can stay sober and sane through the pain as long as I'm working the Steps and trusting God.

Anna V.

From the Internet

Peter S. here, sober at the moment by the Grace of God. I have a mental disorder that qualifies me as one of those "who suffer from grave emotional and

mental disorders." It is simply a neurotransmitter imbalance in my brain that makes me incredibly susceptible to mood swings. Nothing has made that more apparent to me than just the weather here in Seattle yesterday and today. Yesterday was beautiful and I had the privilege and honor of going for a walk with my wife and son through the flowering beauty of the University of Washington Arboretum. As you can imagine it was a glorious experience; nothing but joy and gratitude.

Today, however, has been more like skunk cabbage. My plans were to ride my bike through the sunshine to go to school and have a great day getting things accomplished. When I woke up it was cloudy and raining! Put me in the toilet real fast, it did! I am amazed at how quickly my moods swing. If the sun is shining, I'm in a great mood, and if it is overcast and gray, I am the same way. I am such a wimp when it comes to the emotional roller coaster. So today, I'm on the pity pot, but I don't have to use it as an excuse to act out. I've made the call before the fall. It is as I've heard; this too shall pass.

Peter S.

the sobriety definition, or that I would be safe. I was staying sober from drugs and alcohol, but would slip often into homosexuality because I was not surrendering in a program for sex addiction. ...

My wife and I moved to Denver, and I was sober from substances, but would slip into my lust often. A situation happened that triggered my control issues. I thought I was losing control, and that fear launched me into a sex binge with strangers, and I was consumed with the intoxicating indulgence. I knew I would die, looked in the phone book, and found a Twelve - Step recovery program for sex addiction. I went to a meeting and there was no sobriety, many guys, and most of them were looking at their feet, filled with lust. I felt hopeless. They were holding on to their homosexual relationships, and filled with lust. So I looked in the phone book again and saw Sexaholics Anonymous. I called, and went to my first meeting. By the grace and power of a very mysterious God, I have been sober going on a year. My prayers from 25 years ago are being answered. And today, one day at a time, I'm learning how to love and give to my wife rather than take. I have never been happier, in all my days, change is every day. Thank you, SA, for being clear, and clearly being what I want.

Steve T., Denver, CO

From a Fourth Step Story

About a year ago I worked the Twelve Steps with my sponsor. I thought I was doing fine even though my sponsor left town. Then I noticed problems developing in my relationship. My wife noticed it too. She said, "Things were going better when you were working the Steps." So I decided to do another Fourth Step focused on my relationship. I got a new sponsor to work with me.

Here are the defects and fears I identified, followed by the way I have put what I've learned from this Step into practice in my life.

Self-Centered Conversation

I don't understand the art of conversation Bthe dance, the give-and-take. First give out something, then pause for the response, the other's contribution. Take it in, in a relaxed, open way without needing to pounce, to correct, to comment, to give a "relevant" example from my experience. This is a major problem in my communication with my wife B that I see most things she says as having something to do with me. It is especially confusing when she is talking about her reactions to me, but I must somehow let go of the defense and allow her the space. The purpose of our talking is not primarily to discuss my problems, but for her to feel heard. When she feels heard, then there is a good back-and-forth and my needs are met also. But I seem to be deaf to the cues. I get on a roll and she is not there B only my own concerns. She will say something about herself and I will see it as an expression of empathy, which is

true. But it doesn't stop there. I need to catch the signal that now she wants to talk,

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Fourth Step *(continued from page 9)*

and not fear that I won't have another chance. The fear involved has something to do with fear of being annihilated B the feeling is actually one of suffocating. The thing to do is to stay focused on powerlessness and gratitude B thy will, that is, love, not mine, which is isolation.

Aggressive Conversation

This happens when we are discussing some

external arrangement and I have a definite opinion. My wife will offer a different point of view or idea and I will run right over it with reasoning, justification, or overt discounting and an expression of

contempt. This is the intense form of self-centered conversation where any input from others, especially my wife, is construed as an attack and defense is the number one priority. It is the fear of space, the fear of making a mistake or being wrong, the fear of being taken over by another and thus becoming totally impotent and dependent. Here it is important to focus on her intention B which is to be heard, to share, to brainstorm, and most of all, to communicate in a loving way. It always returns to that if I surrender control. I am powerless over my wife B if I give up trying to control her and the conversation, the outcome is always positive.

Urgency

Perhaps the deepest and most pervasive defect, it drives everyone around me crazy: having to be early, not just on time; having to have things done in a certain way; rushing, rushing others, getting frantic over a letter or piece of e-mail and making a huge deal of responding faster than possible. It's an expression of the free-floating anxiety that bubbles up frequently with real or imagined stimulus B in this way it is like lust, though lust is partly a great distraction from this.

The deep-seated fear of life, of being wrong, of being attacked, discounted, invalidated, annihilated for the slightest misstep. And the compulsion to be better, faster, smarter, to control, direct, explain, and thereby prove my competence, which I don't believe in, which I fear exposing. To hide, to protect, to ward off life because of fear of death. The choice to die rather than live because of fear of death. Maybe not so much death itself as the process of being destroyed B fear of the pain of being annihilated more than the end result of annihilation. I am just now beginning to see that urgency and anxiety are also addictions, that it is possible to admit powerlessness over them and turn the over to God. Surrendering does not mean I won't act, but it offers

the possibility of action with clarity rather than negativity.

The Bumstead Phenomenon

Spacing out, dumbing myself down. Not hearing what my family says, or not understanding it. Bumbling around, taking a roundabout way of driving someplace. Slurring my words and nearly falling asleep as I read aloud to the family in the evening. Unable to concentrate, especially when talking with my wife. It is a way of escape B and very tricky, as it genuinely seems like a physical phenomenon over which I do not have direct control. I will try admitting powerlessness over this and praying for it to be taken away so that I can go on with my life and relationships. I like what one member said in a meeting recently; I ask God to take care of it for me so I can take care of my life.

Resentment

Resentment in general but especially toward my family. They are too slow or do things in inefficient and nonsensical ways. And they are always making demands on me. A lot of my time is spent warding them off. I assume an attitude of superiority and bestow condescending looks for the most innocent and genuine inquiries. I make it clear to them that what I am doing is more important than they are and that I do not want to be bothered. Resenting the slightest inconvenience or difficulty as an affront if not an outright attack or conspiracy against my peace of mind. Resentment about not having enough time. Everybody and everything is an obstacle to my well-being B and if only they would all go away, everything would be okay and I would finally be able to handle "life." Again, the fear is of being taken over and sucked dry. And again the solution can only be to admit powerlessness and turn it over. Here it is especially helpful to stay aware of what I have been given and to dwell in gratitude.

Escape Fantasies

When having a difficult time I dream of escape. When having an intense and difficult discussion with my wife, I think about being alone. I'll get my own place and find people to take care of my sexual needs and all my other needs without making all these demands on me. I'll have my fortress where I can write music and get involved with performers, and keep it all on a professional level. Sex will be just sex and not involve any commitment. I'll go to the gay resorts, I'll spend time at a nudist colony. Nothing is worth the pain I'm going through in this relationship. Fear of being exposed emotionally makes me want to hide out in physical exposure. I can't handle these fantasies B they're too powerful and draw me in too quickly and deeply. I'm powerless over them B the key is remembering this as they arise and surrendering my right to escape. I'm holding on very tightly to this "right" B the fear is very strong. I am powerless over the fear. I need to surrender the fear as well!

My Current Design for Living

At the suggestion of my sponsor, I came up with keywords for each of these defects. Then I made an acronym for each one, to make it more difficult to forget each one. Each day during my morning meditation, I focus in turn on each defect with this three-step process:

- 1 Acknowledge powerlessness over the defect. The beauty of powerlessness is that by acknowledging it I am released from blame. Thoughts, emotions, sensations arise all the time. Pleasant, unpleasant, virtuous, perverse. There's no way to control this arising just as there is no way to control the wind or the rain.
- 2 Recognize that I can't handle the thought or behavior, even a little bit. The idea that I can do anything with the thoughts or sensations, that I can control them, master them, use them, enjoy them, destroy them, is grandiose. Not only can't I do anything with them, I don't need to do anything about them.
- 3 Ask God to take care of it for me so I can stay

present and take care of my life. This is the relief I have always wanted. What He does with them is His business. Maybe He will take care of them so they're there when I need them (if I ever do). I don't need to destroy them or fight with them because He will take care of them if I just allow Him to. Then I can attend to what is needed right here and right now in the relationship or situation before me.

I try to spend enough time on each defect to actually feel my own powerlessness. I also do this with any other defects that may arise. If I am having a particularly strong emotion it may take some time on each of the three steps.

The unexpected bonus from doing this during my meditation session on a regular basis is that I can sometimes invoke the process during the day when self-centeredness and defects arise. It's not so verbal in this case. It's as though when I recognize the defect, it rises up and through me and into the waiting hands of God. Then I can go on with what I need to do. **Stan H., Seattle, Wa.**

Member News

Fear to Gratitude Lists

Some people have asked me about the fear list and gratitude list. I don't have a formula, but here's how I do them:

Fear List: What am I afraid of? Name all fears, no matter how little or big. Why am I feeling the fear? Usually, I think it's life threatening, or threatens my feeling of safety, security, stability or comfort.

Is the fear real or imagined? What if what I fear happens? I will still be alive. I will still have God. I will still have the program. I can live through it. I don't have to medicate any of my feelings.