

Essay®

A Quarterly Publication of Sexaholics Anonymous, Incorporated

P.O. Box 111910
Nashville, TN 37222

September 1998

Gratitude for Service Work

I had always heard, "Service work helps you work your program," but never believed it until I did service work! Now I say that slogan to others. I try to keep two jobs of service work going to help my own program.

About two years ago a position as Intergroup Treasurer became available and I met the sobriety requirements, volunteered and was accepted to do the job. As part of the job, I had to check the mailbox, sort mail, get items to the Secretary, and pay bills. For one-and-a-half years, the mailbox was at a downtown Post Office that closed at 6:00 p.m. After I got a \$100 parking ticket and a \$50 parking ticket — "Oh, I'll just park here quickly and run in" — I began a lesson in acceptance. I work about 35 miles from the city, so getting the mail meant driving through highway traffic, thick downtown traffic, and usually a 15 to 30 minute hunt for a parking spot, followed often by a lengthy walk to the Post Office. I remember one day making the journey and getting a parking place to find only one piece of mail. Nevertheless, my negative attitude passed

when I walked back to find my car ticket-free!

From that day I was more at peace when traffic was hectic on the highway or wild in the city. Acceptance became a comfort and a practice in doing my part of the program. Sometimes the box was crammed with mail, sometimes empty, but it was being checked and the work was being done. I gained a measure of humility as I came to realize I did the work of managing the money while the group conscience of Intergroup made the money decisions. If I thought "we" ought to do something, I brought it up for "our" decision. The submission to the Higher Power and his presence in the group conscience gave me a trust in the Traditions that I had not had in my program before.

About a year ago I accepted the responsibility of being Secretary of my home meeting. I had been arriving late and I knew service work would make me be on time. I had spent the last year surrendering over

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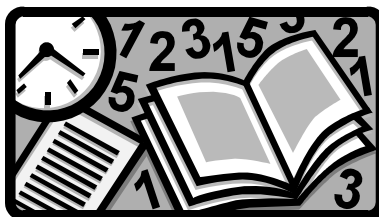
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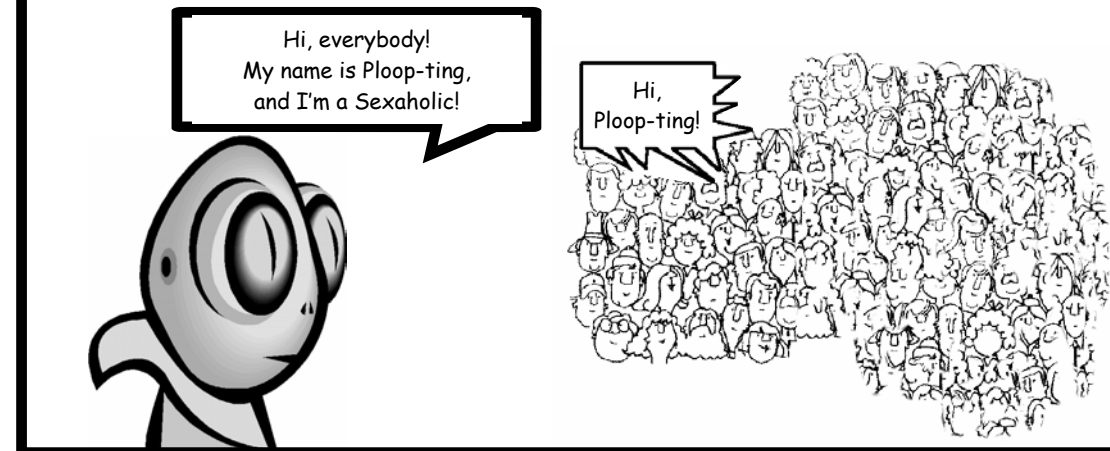
*[Events listed here are presented solely as a service to readers,
not as an endorsement by Essay or SAICO]*

- September 11 - 13, 1998**, SA/S-Anon Retreat, Hoechstebach/Westerwald, sponsored by AS Deutschland. Theme: Courage to Change the Things I Can. Contact Ruth P. at 49 228 356713.
- 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 724/733-5156.
- September 25 - 27, 1998**, Couples Weekend, Greensboro, NC, sponsored by The Carolinas Intergroup and S-Anon. Contact Terry M. or Robin M. at 336/333-1565
- September 26, 1998**, SA Toronto Marathon, Toronto, Canada, sponsored by SA Toronto. Theme: Into a Whole New Way of Life. Contact SA Toronto at 416/410-7622
- October 9 - 11, 1998**, SA Convention, Grace Dieu Retreat House, Waterford, Ireland, sponsored by SA Eire. Contact Tom C/ at 353 (0) 51 858 771.
- October 9 - 11, 1998**, SA/S-Anon NW Retreat, Toledo, WA, sponsored by Portland Intergroup. Theme: Making Our Connections Real. Contact Alex at 503/581-8576.
- October 17, 1998**, 14th Annual Washington-Baltimore Marathon. Theme: Stepping Into the Light. Contacts Lawrence M. (SA) and Marsha M. (S-Anon) 703-503-0162
- October 24, 1998**, SA/S-Anon Marathon, sponsored by Cleveland SA. Theme: New Freedom. Contact Peg V. at 216/731-4030
- October 25, 1998**, SA One Day Conference, Manhasset, LI NY, sponsored by SA LI Intrgp. Theme: Stepping into the Light. Contact SA LI Intergroup at 516/733-0002.
- October 30 - November 1, 1998**, SA/S-Anon Southern California Unity Conference, sponsored by SCAI and S-Anon. Contact Gary W. at 909/865-1645.
- October 30 - November 1, 1998**, SA/S-Anon Family Reunion, Wichita, KS, sponsored by South Midwest Region. Contact Wichita SA at 316/266-8125.



Rule #62

SA Intergalactic Conference
Year: 2298
Planet: Meepjorp



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. Also, consider group donations of *Essay* subscriptions to members celebrating SA sobriety anniversaries.

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]*

November 7, 1998, SA/S-Anon 5th Annual One-Day Conference, Metuchen, NJ, sponsored by NJ/Eastern PA Intergroup. Theme: 12 Steps Into Gratitude! Contact NJ/Eastern PA Intergroup at 732-886-2142.

November 7, 1998, SA/S-Anon One Day Marathon, Milwaukee, WI, sponsored by Milwaukee SA. Theme: Walking in the Light. Contact Milwaukee SA at 414/259-9792.

November 13 – 15, 1998, SA Convention, Stuttgart, Germany, sponsored by AS Deutschland. Theme: The Path to Freedom. Contact AS Stuttgart, Michael 49-711-847391.

January 8 – 10, 1999, SA/S-Anon International Conference, Sacramento, CA, sponsored by Northern CA Intergroup SA and S-Anon. Theme: Stepping into Recovery. Contact Flyers for the Sacramento Conference are included with this issue.

July 9 – 11, 1999, Sa/S-Anon International Conference, Cleveland, OH. Theme: How It Works. Contact Ed N. at 216/371-2206 or Peg V. at 216/731-4030. Special Note: How it all began. Akron, OH, the home of Dr. Bob is only 25 miles away. Dr. Bob's home is a museum open daily for tours with no admission charge. This home and other sites in Akron where AA (and all Twelve Step programs) began can be toured.

[Please note: Since international calling codes differ from country to country, we include only the country codes, area code, and local number for all contacts. Please call your local operator for guidance on making international calls.]

In Memoriam -- Peter M.

Peter came to SA because he wasn't happy with his sobriety in another S-fellowship. In SA, Peter enjoyed eight years of sexual sobriety. His gratitude for his sobriety and new life, and his dedication to SA showed in his wonderful commitment to service work at the group and national level. He spoke and chaired frequent public information meetings in a 12-Step clinic in the area, and in other parts of the country. He was in charge of SA literature for the whole of German-speaking SA for two-and-a-half years. For the last two years, he was responsible for the German language phone line. Peter is survived by his wife, who is pregnant with their third child, and two children.

Peter left us far too soon due to an accident. He will be deeply missed by all whose lives he touched in SA, especially by his home groups in Wuerzburg and Bad Mergentheim. We thank God for his life, his sobriety and the road we traveled together. **Ruth P.**, Bonn, Ger.

and over judgements and criticisms about our last Secretary. In the job, I realized this role had much more to it than I imagined. Reality tempered all my opinions of the previous Secretary. There have been many lessons and challenges to practice the program in this role.

I would like to share the gifts, or graces, if you will. As I said, I felt that taking on the job would make me come to the meeting on time, and it did! Due to my health condition, I need to have a meal between my work and a meeting. What I found was I would put the meeting first. So when I left work, all my choices about eating were subordinate to the meeting.

I have been in the rooms for eleven years and sober for the past four. It seems that in the role of Secretary, I have been graced with being able to listen in a whole new way. It's like I can click myself off, and by that I mean not be distracted by self-needs and worries and thoughts. I can focus instead on a member's share, all of it. I can really pay attention. In part, I have to pay attention as the Secretary, but being Secretary gives me so much more. I want to take this ability home with me and it will come in time and with God's help.

The best grace and biggest surprise is the gift of humility. I had observed several fellow SA's take an ego ride on leading meetings and I knew I would be up to the same. But it has not been an ego thing. I have had to surrender my ego. I have also been able to draw on good experiences of other SA's I respect and their examples of leading meetings. I have a sense of serving others when I read the meeting format. In spite of my shyness or my being unsure if the unfamiliar face is a newcomer, I can speak up and ask.

If I am unsure what the procedure is, I have the humility to ask the group. They keep me on track. I do not have to be Mr. Know-It-All, and the humility is quite nice.

It is such a gift to be able to serve and dispense with the fears of authority. I have to take charge at times, but as a servant, I can be peaceful and yet set limits. God is helping me and gracing me. All these gains from service work have only deepened my program and my working the Steps. I am grateful for service work!

Andrew O., Arlington, Va.

Praying for Each Other

Recently the idea came to me that the mem-



bers of our SA group might pray for each other. Our group has been growing, and praying for each other can be a way of supporting and strengthening each other. At each meeting, we pray for SA members yet to come when we have a moment of silence. How else can I pray for others?

There are probably multitudes of ways. I have heard it said that "every good thought is a prayer." Here are some ways I have been practicing the 11th Step, specifically by praying for other members.

For a few years now, I have been saying a prayer morning and evening, and at meals. It goes like this: "May we have sobriety, sanity, serenity today." Then I list a few words for sexual sobriety, such as "continence and chastity," and finish with "freedom, safety and kindness." I pray for those things for all SA members, and indeed for all people. The "we" connects me with a worldwide community of seekers. "May we" reminds me that it is a "we" program, and that I have a lot of company on this quest.

Another prayer practice I do every day is a form of prayer that is a lot like meditation. For a half hour every day, I simply sit in

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. An 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.)

silence and gratitude. Those who teach this type of prayer say that when you "open yourself to God's presence and action," you are really praying for all of creation, even if you are not thinking of anyone in particular.

Another kind of prayer I can do anytime of the day is what I call "dedication." I like to dedicate some positive action I am doing to someone who crosses my mind — in this case, to SA members. For example, I like to walk, so I often dedicate my walk to others with the intention that they will share the happiness I derive from my walk as well. Often I feel I cannot appreciate enough the positive things in my life. My attention wanders before I can give them the attention they deserve. Therefore I "wish" the benefits of these things into a spiritual "pool" from which anyone who needs may take. (It is said that we're saved to serve. I believe we are also "saved to savor." As AA's Big Book says, "We absolutely insist on enjoying life." By means of my "dedications," I feel that my savoring can also be serving.)

Some say that, in the spiritual life, intention is of the essence. What we wish is a powerful spiritual force.

I sometimes request prayers by phone from groups whose main occupation is to pray for people and situations. Some of these groups pray daily for a certain number of days, for a specific request. I feel it is good for me to take advantage of these networks, joining them in good will, and bearing in mind that "there are things wrought by prayer that this world dreams of."

I try to remember, when I feel I cannot do enough, or serve enough, that even a small amount of prayer is of inestimable value. Spiritual energy partakes of the infinite, and so a little can go a long way. My prayers need not be dramatic to be powerful, and my spiritual actions need not be momentous to be healing, to ourselves and others.

Praying for other SA members can be a way for me to give expression to my gratitude for being alive and in recovery. It has been my experience that I need to give expression to my gratitude and to my defects, or I become forgetful of my blessings, and feel stale or bored, or even discouraged and despondent. Expressing my gratitude through prayer for others lets my blessings overflow the narrow boundaries of my life, and keeps my spiritual channel open and free flowing. Thus, it helps me to "live in grateful contemplation of the One who cares for us all."

Breaking Through the Bondage of Self

I was two weeks sober in SA, lying in bed in the middle of the day in a hotel room 1,000 miles from home, watching television. It will come as no surprise to anyone in our fel-



lowship that I was consumed by lust and trying to talk myself out of acting out. "Look, Michael," I said to myself, "nobody in SA expects you to stay sober right away. If you masturbate, you can always go back to the meetings and tell everybody about it, and

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nobody is going to be disappointed in you. And besides, you can always put together a couple of weeks again!"

As I lay there, talking to my addict, I thought about my prior 14 days of sobriety. It had been two weeks of grinding pain — withdrawal — but it had also been two

weeks of freedom from masturbation and a feeling of integrity and restored self-worth.

I couldn't hold out any longer. I was powerless and I was going to give in to lust. I told myself that I would be able to show my face back in SA if I was able to say I had at least tried to call my sponsor. So, heart pounding in anticipation of acting out, I picked up the phone and dialed my sponsor. "Please don't be in," I pleaded. I called from 1,000 miles away, but dang, he answered.

I don't remember all of what he said, but I do remember him telling me to get dressed and get to an S meeting or AA, as there was no SA available where I was. I did as I was told, and last week I was able to celebrate my two-year anniversary.

As I recount this story, a couple of things become clear:

It is very likely I would not be sober today if I acted out 720 days ago. At the time, my two weeks of sobriety seemed pretty insignificant. "I can always put together two weeks. Two weeks is no big deal." Now two weeks is a very big deal — it's miraculous. A day of sobriety is precious. In retrospect, marking two weeks was a more dramatic achievement than celebrating two years! I thank God that I can — one day at a time — surrender my powerlessness over lust to my fellow SA's and to my God.

Michael R. N.V.

The Benefits of Giving My Sobriety Date

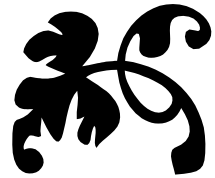
I came to SA having been sober in AA for 17 years. In AA, I never celebrated my anniversary. I felt that the "numbers" would distract me from being aware of what is really happening with me — my inner thoughts and feelings.

When I came to SA I adopted the practice of giving my sobriety date at every meeting because I thought it would help to let other members know what state I was in regarding abstinence. I also thought it would help me to feel accountable to others and give me a simple way to focus on the common goal of abstinence.

The sobriety date has proven to be very helpful. For one thing, when I got to SA and read the White Book, I found I needed to set new boundaries regarding sex with self. I thought I had been free from masturbation for two to three years prior to coming to SA, but I found I needed to firm up those boundaries.

There were times in the past two years when the quickest deterrent to thoughts of acting out was the thought that I would have to change my sobriety date if I did. Being accountable to the group was helpful, because not acting out sometimes came more from a desire to save face than a desire for the inherent benefits of abstinence. But in all cases, the desire for sexual sobriety was the underlying basis for my abstinence, even if I couldn't always bring that desire to mind as quickly as I could the sobriety date.

So I'm grateful for the practice of telling my sobriety date, and celebrating anniversaries. I found that, after I received my one-year chip, occasional feelings of panic and fear that "I don't think I can do this" entirely



groups and Intergroups are setting up ways to contribute regularly to the work of the SACC.

- The SACC has fulfilled literature requests from 80 inmates.

SACC Correspondence

One inmate wrote that he spoke to the substance abuse counselor at his facility about the need for an SA group. The counselor listened with "great interest and sincerity" and later announced to both the Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous meetings that an SA group was being formed. Twelve inmates came to the first meeting and they have sent in a request for literature.

Another inmate wrote that he recently learned about SA through a meeting held at his facility. He requested that SA literature be sent to his home address in Eastern Europe where he will be deported on his release. He hopes these materials will benefit "new members of SA in Eastern Europe."

Recently we received a letter from a 20-year old sex addict who has been incarcerated since he was 16 by a state youth authority. The 12-Step approach was recently incorporated into his treatment program. He writes: "I have found it to be beneficial to admitting my addiction, starting and now learning to maintain recovery. I accept that I cannot do this on my own and when I leave this institution, I will need help in continuing my recovery."

Looking Ahead

Recently a representative of our committee met with the person in charge of the prison service desk for AA. Drawing on AA's many years of carrying its message into prisons, this person provided our fellowship with helpful information and literature about how to approach this vital 12-Step work. AA has about 2,400 groups with over 62,000 members pursuing their recovery behind bars. Upon their release, they

will be met at the prison gates by members who will take them to their first AA meeting on the outside. The goal of the SACC is to do likewise. We know that faith without works is dead.

If you would like to join us in our work, please consider coming to the SA International Conference in Sacramento, California, Jan. 9 - 11, 1999. There the SACC will hold a workshop about correction service work. If you would like more information about our work in the meantime, write us at SACC, P.O. Box 283, Bellevue, WA, 98004.

You may also E-mail us at SACC@sa.org, or call us at (U.S.) 425-644-1597.



New Groups

Ann Arbor, MI

Cocoa, FL

Columbus, OH (2nd meeting)

Essington, PA

Hanford, CA

Lincoln, ME

Littleton, CO

Melbourne, F:

Winston-Salem, NC

Personally I talked about the details of my daily acting out for six years and could never find any relief from lust and compulsive sex. Now I try to focus on what turns up as I work the Steps. Sharing about how I am wrong or weak today keeps my ego in check much more than talking about how I acted out ever did.

Any issue related to helping a minor sexaholic can be settled by group conscience. There are some practical measures that can help everyone. The group can discuss whether to allow a minor to attend. They could form a special meeting for the minor. If a minor needs a sponsor or someone to drive him to meetings, the group, by group conscience, needs to appoint members to those roles. Volunteers in this case are not the best candidates to help a minor. Whoever does help the minor might consider meeting with the juvenile's family or guardian.

There are some legal issues. It is illegal to discuss sexual issues with or in the presence of a minor in some states. Some of our members are not allowed by the courts to be in the presence of a minor.



A group could form a meeting for young people exclusively. One avenue for meetings for minors could be to hold the meetings in reform schools, jails, prisons, or treatment centers that have large programs for young people. One S-fellowship has been sending adults into institutions to chair meetings for juveniles. They report that the professionals who run the programs for youth have helped a great deal. The same fellowship wants to open those meetings to youths who have been released from treatment or correction and want to continue recovery. They also would like to make the meetings available to young people who have never

been in the institution where the meeting is held.

Most juveniles who are sex offenders of sexaholics do not have a place to go after they are released from treatment. Some can't afford to get professional help. Most do not have access to a meeting where they are comfortable. Submitted by **Gary W.**, SA representative at the IFF.

SA Corrections Committee Report

More inmates are learning about Sexaholics Anonymous, thanks to the efforts of our members to carry the SA message behind prison walls. Some members are corresponding with and sponsoring inmates. Some are contacting state and local correctional officials to see if they are open to informing inmates about our fellowship. Some are working with SA groups inside prisons and some are contributing to the SACC Literature Fund so that more inmates can read about the solution to sexaholism.

Here are some statistics about the work the SACC has been doing since the beginning of the year:

- We received about 90 letters from inmates requesting literature, someone to correspond with, or a sponsor.
- We received about 25 letters from correction officials making inquiries regarding our fellowship.
- We have been in contact with about 60 members who are interested in or are already involved in 12-Step work with inmates. These members are from the USA, Canada, Australia, Ireland and England.
- SA meetings are being held in eight correctional facilities in as many states. Over 50 inmates are attending these meetings.
- Contributions to the SACC Literature Fund have surpassed the \$4,000 mark. More

left me. I attribute this to the power of the group — my Higher Power speaking through the fellowship.

There are some things about the sobriety date, however, that I wish could be changed, or at least acknowledged more often. One is that the sobriety date relates to external acts only. If I am to be really lust free, I must be so in thought and word as well as in deed, and in emotion, imagination and intuition as well. The sobriety date measures only the deed.

This is understandable, because experience in the inner life is harder to measure than external, physical experience. The external deeds are easier to observe and count. But I need always to understand that abstinence is only a beginning. I need to use physical abstinence as an external shell to mold my inner thoughts, feelings, emotions and intuitions.

Only in this way will I grow spiritually. Physical abstinence, as valuable as it is, is not an end in itself. It is only a means to a total healing of the whole person, and a total growth in honesty and love. If I forget that, then focus on the sobriety date might sometimes indeed be the distraction from awareness of the inner life, which I feared.

I heard the phrase "technical sobriety" at an SA conference. This I take it is a term that describes only the external aspect of sobriety — the aspect the sobriety date measures. In order to avoid lapsing into "technical sobriety," I need to always remember that the issue for me is lust. And the sobriety date does not, cannot really, measure lust, and so falls short of being a complete measure of sobriety.

Our sobriety definition includes "progressive victory over lust." But how can one measure lust in units that can be counted? I need always be aware that counting sober days, meaningful and helpful as it is, is only a token of my sobriety. It says

nothing definite about my inner life, though it may suggest something about it.

For the sobriety date to really do its duty, I must use it as a mere beginning. As *Recovery Continues* says, "Abstinence is about stopping. Recovery is about starting."

What do I start? Being honest and harmless. In thought, word and deed, emotion and intuition. That's a good beginning, which will take me a long way.

Kim L., Omaha, NE

I'm an ACOA and SA!

I hear many people at meetings introduce themselves like this, or in a similar way. Sometimes I hear, "I'm AA, Al-Anon, OA, SA and ACOA." What kind of secret language is this? Why do we have to express ourselves in such a complicated manner? Why do we have to name a number of groups to introduce ourselves as people? What is this introduction good for?



Step One, powerlessness, and surrender are discussed in the texts of anonymous fellowships. Again and again it is emphasized

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how important it is to voice how I feel and to introduce myself with my symptoms. What is my symptom? SA? But SA is a group. Why do we have to define ourselves by using a group to introduce ourselves?

The most important thing is to introduce myself with my symptom! I am co-

dependent. Belonging to a group is not my symptom. On the contrary, belonging to a group is my salvation, because going to meetings leads me to recovery.

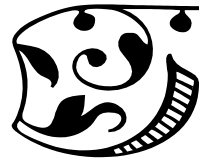
The mystery of Step One is the surrender, giving up my right to go on behaving in a sick way, and thus I get the freedom to behave in a healthy way. This freedom gives me more than anything else I have expected for my life up to now. Surrendering is like a warm stream that flows into my life, which was so dominated by coldness that I almost froze to death. So it is good to sit in a meeting and let my block of ice melt. And this happens simply by sitting in a meeting and listening to the experiences of others in working the program. Where there is experience and strength in a meeting, it is there that I find strength and energy for my recovery.

Step One is the beginning of my spiritual growth, which I experience more and more by working the Steps that come after. And for me it is essential to share with others the areas in which I am sick and give up my old secrecy about my symptoms. This is the public aspect of Step One. By sharing about my symptoms with others, they lose the power they have over me. For me that is the deeper meaning of introducing myself with my symptoms.

Derk S., Bonn, Ger.

(The following is a transcript of a talk given by Steve O. at the SA International Conference in Newark, NJ, on July 11, 1998. Cop-

ies of the all SA ordered at TAPE.) *tape, and of tapes, can be 1-800-257-*



A New Beginning

Let me begin with a clear and obvious announcement to you. I am sick. I am very sick. And I was terribly sick. Because of this illness I am with you in the great and wonderful, life-giving fellowship of SA. I'm delighted to be able to do this.

There is a microphone, and there is a podium. And that gives power, and it gives control. *[Laughter]*. For me, as an addict, it's like sending a kid into a candy store. I am from a normal, dysfunctional family. *[Laughter]*. No use lying. You know how you read in the newspapers about the "homeless." And they say such things as, "they're close to the streets, the curbs and gutters, the concrete, the litter, the sewer lids and fire hydrants and litter baskets and storefronts..." and I often say to myself, "That's awful! How could anybody do that?" But I was homeless. Lust sucked my spirit, my very soul from my body. I was like a shell, living but not alive. I was truly homeless.

Lust, as I experienced it, drugged me. It kept me in a trance. It kept me out of touch. Lust terrorized me. Yet I was fascinated by the intrigue, the tease, the forbidden. Lust abused me, violated me. Lust humiliated me with shame, and guilt. It seemed unbearable, but I went back for more. Lust stalked me; it was always waiting for me, always there, most dependable. And it kidnapped me. Like being held hostage, I had a reprieve upon occasion, because lust knew it could come back and get me again, and again, and again, and I went for it. Lust tortured me, and this torture killed me. It took my soul and left only my body. Lust left me blind, but most

Seventh Tradition

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Chicago Spg Marathon	340.00	Nashville, TN	84.00	Temecula SACC CA	12.00
Chicago, IL	523.00	New York SACC NY	15.00	Toronto, ON, Canada	89.01
Chino, CA	145.00	Newberg, OR	65.00	Tulsa, OK	27.00
China SACC CA	142.00	Norman, OK	10.00	Twin Falls, ID	15.00
Chula Vista, CA	50.00	North Canton, OH	60.00	Vienna, VA	122.40
Colorado Spgs, CO	528.00	North Hollywood, CA	248.00	Villa Park, IL	21.00
Corona, CA	65.00	N Hollywood SACC CA	97.00	Waldorf, MD	50.00
Corona SACC CA	35.00	NYC IG, NY	200.00	Warner Robins, GA	42.00
Crystal City VA	405.30	Oakland SACC CA	75.00	Washington, DC	804.58
Dallas, TX	60.00	Oklahoma State IG	1,700.00	W LA, CA	130.00
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Darien SACC IL	14.00	Pasadena, CA	70.00	Willow Creek, IL	175.00
Daytona Beach, FL	118.82	Pasadena SACC CA	81.30	Woodbridge, VA	90.95
Denver, CO	75.00	Penn Hills, PA	308.00	Woodstock, VA	30.00
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Elk Grove Village, IL	165.40	Pleasanton SACC CA	22.75		
Falls Church, VA	300.00	Portland IG SACC	335.50	Group Total	18,250.57
Fargo, ND	25.00	Portland, OR	311.40	Individual Total	1,380.00
Federal Way, WA	37.47	Puget Sound IG SACC	73.15	Grand Total	19,630.57
Fremont SACC CA	60.00	QCSA Davenport, IA	50.00		
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SA Around the Globe



The Newark Motions

A good deal of discussion within the fellowship over the last several months has centered around the issue of whether or not the SA sobriety definition needs to be clarified. The SA sobriety statement reads: "In defining sobriety, we do not speak for those outside Sexaholics Anonymous. We can only speak for ourselves. Thus, for the married sexaholic, sexual sobriety means having no form of sex with self or with persons other than the spouse. For the unmarried sexaholic, sexual sobriety means freedom from sex of any kind. And for all of us, single and married alike, sexual sobriety also includes progressive victory over lust." (Sexaholics Anonymous, pages 191 - 192.)

Some believe that stating the definition in more specific terms would enhance SA unity, while others maintain SA unity is best served by the definition as it is currently stated. Regarding this issue, two motions were passed at a joint meeting of SA Board of Trustees and the Delegates at the SA International Conference in Newark in July.

1. Moved to accept the recommendation of the Board of Trustees to seek input from the fellowship, defined as regions, Intergroups, and groups, as to whether any clarification of the SA sobriety definition is needed. Delegates will communicate with each other about results two months and one month before the next International Conference.

2. Moved to affirm the SA sobriety definition as published in the 1989 edition of Sexaholics Anonymous. For information on plans to implement Motion # 1 in your area, please contact your Intergroup representative or regional delegate.

Working with Minors in Recovery from Sexaholism

At the Inter-Fellowship Forum (IFF), representatives of four of the sex addiction recovery programs met to promote a spirit of cooperation with the primary purpose of reaching the still suffering addict. One S-fellowship presented a draft of suggested guidelines for dealing with minors attending meetings of their fellowship. Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA) has some valuable experience with minors. Here are some of the suggestions that were offered by the participants:

Tradition Three of SA tells us that anyone who wants to stop lusting and become sexually sober may be a member. If a minor presents himself to a group and wants recovery, SA needs to find a way to help him. Tradition Five says the primary purpose of the group is to carry our message to the sexaholic who still suffers. I don't believe that meetings should be exclusive clubs or havens for me or any other sexaholic. Meetings are a vehicle for the group to reach out to any sexaholic who is in trouble. Regular members of a group have access to their sponsors, other sober members, and the program. I don't believe regular members should use meetings to resolve pressing issues. Meetings primarily are for the newcomer, even if he is under age, to find an answer to the problem of sexaholism.

Some members have expressed reluctance to speak openly about some of the details of their acting out in a meeting that includes minors. Why do we talk about the details of the past in meetings? The AA Big Book says we discuss "in a general way what we used to be like." Why aren't we telling the truth about our lives today?

of all it left me powerless. And I am powerless today over lust.

Then the pain struck from another direction. And then another, and lust would once again take over. I was operating not on reason, but on the demented impulse of my heart. My acting out replayed itself daily. My cruising, my anonymous sex at rest stops, porn places, gay sex clubs, whatever. One day I made out a list of how I acted out, and it looked like a telephone directory. My disease was an intoxicating habit. It kept me drugged, numb, and drunk 24 hours a day. I would sleep, but never rested. Or I rested, and never slept. I was always going, in my mind, in my fantasy life, I was constantly acting out. For me, once the river of addiction started flowing, it took on a life of its own, and I could not control the boat. The waves were too strong, and I would go with the flow. I would act out, as lust just grabbed me, held on to me, and then there were times when I went after it! Because I knew what it felt like. I knew there would be some relief there, from whatever I was feeling or from whatever I did not want to feel.

Being a good addict, I felt the need to punish myself with more addictive behavior. Who in their right mind would keep going back, and back, especially when lust would stalk, terrorize, and kidnap? And kill, which it did for me. My active addiction leads me to live a lie; and I was very good at it. I could manipulate, cheat, steal, connive, and always with the innocent look. "Who, me?" "What?" Yes, you. One time I was telling a friend about visiting a counselor, and he was talking about anger, and I was saying to myself, "You know, the poor guy sees so many people a day, he probably has me mixed up with someone else." [Laughter]. And I really felt badly for him, because it just couldn't be me he was talking about.

My sexual acting out, which was 24 hours a day for so many years... When did my act-

ing out begin? Who knows, but I really believe I was a sex addict pre-conception. My acting out brought with it a litany of loss and longing, guilt, and rage, and regret, because of so much deceit, and so much giving in to the power of lust, and to the addictive behavior. I always felt regret that I spent so much time in the charade. In the double life. And the double life took energy, and it took time. What did I say to this person, what did I say to that person, how can I lie about this or that, about not showing up here, or not showing up there, being late for this, or late for that.

All the years I spent in the performing arts, my synapses were not getting the jump start they needed. The chemical switch in my head refused to click. The more I feared life, the more I retreated from it, and I became good at isolation, and very good at withdrawing. It was becoming clear to me



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that I had to change my medication. A miracle took place in my life. I was looking, and I knew that AA did this for alcoholics. I knew that this program did this for people... to whom could I go to speak about my sexaholism, my constant acting out? There was a great fear of that... there was nobody in the

late 1970s or early 1980s I believed I could speak to, but I knew I had to change.

One Sunday I was reading the newspaper, it might have been the Jersey Journal or the Star Ledger or the Bergen Record or the Daily News or the New York Times, but of all places, I found in the Daily News a front page spread in one of the weekend sections about Sexaholics Anonymous. And I wrote. It was in New York, and I went to my first SA meeting in March of 1985 at St. Francis, and I have been coming back ever since. After making that decision, or actually just before making that decision, I realized I really was no longer plagued by the sensation of falling, because I had reached bottom. I had a sense that just when the bottom of my life dropped out, just when I hit rock bottom, rock bottom was dropping out too. But something was telling me that I probably had to hit that bottom to figure out how to really enjoy life. So I had come to a fork in the road; a time of choosing. I must decide whether to remain where I am, dwelling in darkness, or to journey to the place of understanding, in our 12-Step fellowship of SA.

In coming to make the choice, it was like holding a jewel and a scorpion in the same hand. The challenge was, to get rid of the scorpion without losing the jewel, and without being stung. And I was able to do that with God's grace, and the grace of the fellowship. My brothers and sisters in the fellowship, although we are not brothers and sisters in blood, we are brothers and sisters in the heart. There was so much time I spent telling myself that I would really sell my soul to never have done the things I have done. Lying awake at night, sweating, promising the dark that if only something would make it all "unhappen," that I would never do anything like that again. And that's my prayer for today.

Today is a new day. Today is a new beginning, and I don't have to do that. There

are times when I hear people say in our meetings that they have had a "lust free day." I'm not so sure I ever recall a lust-free day. I know it's progressive victory over lust, but today I have the ability, with God's grace, to make a decision to choose, and that, for me, is the miracle I see in my recovery. That I can choose to go in a more positive route in recovery, and in sobriety. In all this process of the last 13 years, the growth in the program and the growth in recovery... it hurts, and it also precipitates change. And change for any one of us is frightening. And there were times in the early days when I would share in a meeting that maybe I was better off acting out, because I never knew I had these feelings. I never allowed them to come to the surface. The fear, the fear of failure, or any type of rejection.

In SA recovery, I am open to the fullness of existence. I have received my soul back, an aliveness that was missing. God calls me each moment to the fullness of existence, to this gift of life. When I came here 13 years ago, damaged in body and in soul, I had no hope that I would really change. I believe that I am a miracle. This is by God's grace, the fellowship, and all of you in SA. I am filled with gratitude and with hope...and I know that for me, it's one day at a time. Thank you for listening.

The
article
from
the



March 1998 issue of *Essay* "Only a Deluge of Grace Could Save Me" touched me very much. After reading it, I came to realize that sexual sobriety is a gift from a loving and compassionate God to one who admits the delusion and betrayal of lust, who is ready to call for help with a sincere desire to recover, and who is willing to do anything possible to work the 12-Step program as suggested and guided by a good sponsor.

Also I understood that recovery is a gradual, yet a very transforming process. It's an adventure of tapping buried feelings of guilt, discovering new horizons of friendships, getting into trusted responsibility, accepting one's physical, emotional and spiritual disease with dignity and sharing the blessings of sobriety to those whom God entrusts. Being a priest myself and also in this spiritual adventure of freedom, healing and grace, I can relate very well with what the author of the article wrote at the end, "... we are beloved of God. Always and everywhere, even in the depth of our insanity, we belong to that Love."

Part of my daily sobriety exercise is to spend at least 30 minutes of meditation before going to sleep. This meditation includes reading something from the AA Big Book,

the SA White Book, the Essay, or anything related to the 12-Step program. It helps me to examine where I am in sexual sobriety during the day and gives me the strength to say 'no' to possible temptations. Staying in touch with other SA members, if only by letter, is a good reprieve and a source of great support. Working with a newcomer as a loving act of giving back to others what God has given me is a wonderful way for me to maintain my sexual sobriety. **Bobby S.**

The Addict's Way

