

Essay®

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Fall 1999

After Steps 1 - 11, Step 12 Takes You

(The following is taken from a talk by Michael J. at the SA International Conference in Cleveland, OH, on July 10, 1999. Copies of this tape, and other SA tapes, are available at 1-800-257-TAPE.)

My name is Michael and I'm a sexaholic.

It feels weird to say that in front of several hundred people. It's not something we can be very proud about in front of the normal public, but it's something I can say here with confidence that it won't go beyond the doors. Back in 1940 or so it would be awfully strange to say to a crowd this size that you were an "alcoholic." This is a very strange disease, and it has a lot of shame to it. What's wonderful is to be able to be in a crowd this size and know that when I talk about how awkward I used to feel and how wonderful I feel now, there's a bunch of people out there who know

what I'm talking about.

I am very, very grateful to be here at the conference. I'm extremely grateful for my sobriety, which has given me my brain back. My sobriety has given me back a relationship with God, a religion, a relationship with my son, self respect; it has given me an awful lot. It is only through the grace of God, the Fellowship, and the Steps of Sexaholics Anonymous and the fact that I was so low and in so much pain that I was willing to do anything you folks told me to, that I am sober here today and have been since July 16, 1991, and for that I'm sure I can never be grateful enough.

I am also grateful to the Cleveland Intergroup for allowing me the opportunity to speak here this evening. I have to be honest with you, they did not seek me out, I volunteered for this. It's not that I'm some well-known speaker where I

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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]*

September 17 – 19, 1999, SA Pacific Northwest Retreat, Camp Don Bosco, Carnation, WA, sponsored by Puget Sound IG. Contact Don L. at 360/371-2276.

September 18, 1999, Autumn 1999 SA / S-Anon Conference, Wexford, PA, sponsored by Pittsburgh SA. Theme: Taking the Actions: How Much Can I Change? Contact Larry H. at 724/733-5156.

October 8 – 10, 1999, Fall Unity Conference, Orange, CA, sponsored by Southern California Area Intergroup. Contact Gary W. at 909/865-1645.

October 15—17, 1999, Chicago SA Retreat, Plano, IL, sponsored by Chicagoland IG. Contacts are SA Chicago at 630/415-0341 or 847/352-3119.

October 16, 1999, Toronto SA / S-Anon Marathon, sponsored by SA Toronto. Theme: We Were Making the Real Connection. We Were Home. Contacts are Brian H. at 416/431-0038 or Ken T. at 905/889-2882.

October 22 – 24, 1999, SA Family Reunion Retreat, Wichita, KS, sponsored by Essay OKC IG. Theme: Our Common Welfare. Contacts are SA Wichita at 316/266-8125 or Jack F. at 405/799-5003.

October 22—24, 1999, SA/ S-Anon Autumn Convention, Waterford, Ireland, sponsored by SA Ireland. Theme: Thy Will Be Done. Contacts are Dara M. at 353 042 9667958 or Tom C. at 353 051 371053.

October 23, 1999, One Day Marathon, Sacramento, CA, sponsored by Central Valley IG. Theme: The Happiest People in the World. Contact Mark K. at 530/893-3594.



Calendar of Events

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October 24, 1999, One Day Marathon, sponsored by SA Long Island Intergroup.
Theme: Facing Ourselves. Contact Ron F. at 516/353-8257.

November 6, 1999, One Day Conference, Cranford NJ, sponsored by New Jersey /
Eastern PA Intergroup. Theme: Speaking from the Heart...Listening with the Heart.
Speaker: Roy K. Contact Tom A. at 908/351-3870 or Leon M. at 908/756-4827

November 19—21, 1999, German Speaking Convention, Teisendorf, Germany, spon-
sored by AS Deutschland. Theme: It Works If You Work It. Contact 0931 663437.

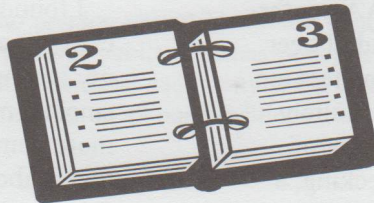
January 7 – 9, 2000, SA / S-Anon International Conference, Nashville, TN, sponsored
by Nashville Intergroup. Theme: Together 2000.
Contacts are Jerry at 615/563-1026 or Neil at 615/673-8806.

July 7 – 9, 2000, SA / S-Anon International Conference, Detroit, MI, sponsored by De-
troit area SA / S-Anon groups. Theme: Practice These Principles in All Our Affairs.
Contacts are Gary at 810/756-4793 or SA Detroit at 810/997-7518.

January 2001, SA / S-Anon International Conference, Los Angeles, CA, sponsored by
SCAI. Contact Southern California Area Intergroup at 213/480-1096.

July 2001, SA / S-Anon International Conference, Washington DC, sponsored by MD/
DC/VA. Contact Intergroup at 703/866-6929.

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



(“Step 12” continued from page 1)

come from, I’m just another sex-drunk, but when they put on the registration form, “Would you like to speak?” I said to myself, “Definitely.” Because this is an opportunity to say, in front of this many people, that this program works if you work it.

I am very happy to be sober and relatively joyous and free compared to what I was eight years ago. Eight years ago, I was ready to die. I don’t think I was ready to overtly commit suicide, but I was ready to die. I had my priorities. I was an addict, and I had my priorities, and my priority was my addiction. My friend told me a joke about addiction and priorities, so I thought I’d share it with you. Hope you don’t mind. I was standing on a street corner in Atlantic City in front of a casino. A hobo walked up to me and said, “Excuse me, sir, but I’m saving up money for my mother’s kidney operation. Can I have a quarter?” I said, “You can’t fool me. You’re going to take that quarter and go inside this casino and gamble it away, aren’t you?” And he said, “No, no, I’ve *got* gambling money!” [Laughter]

I had my priorities, too. I lusted from the age of eight, actively, until I was in my teens, when I learned about acting out, and I acted out a lot. Details aren’t important. I don’t think at an AA conference they talk about what brand of beer they drank. I don’t think that matters too much, but I acted out a lot. I definitely qualify: a lot of pornography, a lot of masturbation, a lot of rubbernecking, a lot of flirting, a lot of head-turning. I thought about sex all day long, and did-

n’t know why. That will really create quite a personal hell. I don’t think people around me knew what a hell I was going through, and I’m sure many of you can relate to just how private our hell is. It’s so powerful, and so private, and I was just ready to die. I just didn’t belong. We talk about feeling “inadequate, unworthy, alone and afraid.” I was all those. I just knew that you all had something in common and I didn’t. I knew that when you spoke to each other there was some magic going on, that you guys understood each other, and I didn’t. That bothered me. I felt very, very different. I used to have a fantasy that everybody was on earth for my benefit, that all of you were like scientists, social workers and sociologists and psychologists—all of you were there for the purpose of studying me. Like a perfect self-obsession fantasy. In high school, I can remember standing on the street and a bus would go by and I would say, “Yeah, yeah, yeah, I’m here, yeah, this is me...” And I used to have that fantasy so much that I believe that one day something would have clicked and it would have become my reality. I truly feel that if I had continued acting out I would be in a mental institution or have committed suicide. I’m absolutely positive of that. This program has given me my life.

I found that in high school and especially in college, chemicals really helped my lusting. When I drank beer and smoked marijuana, I could flirt a lot more comfortably. And that’s what all this is about, isn’t it?—feeling more comfortable. I never felt comfortable with myself or with others. The Steps are

a substitute for the chemicals. The Steps help me to feel comfortable.

I've met an awful lot of you this past day or so and I'm just so grateful. I shake your hand and say to myself, "I know that you know what's going on in my head." I feel uncomfortable, you feel uncomfortable, but we're working the Steps, and we're getting along. The Steps are a great substitute, unbelievable tools, perfect, divinely inspired. I'm a big Step fan. Some of my sponsees call me a "Step-nazi", and I proudly wear that patch. [Laughter]

I drank alcoholicly from the beginning and five years later found myself at my chemical bottom. I just felt ready to chuck it all in. I think what saved my life is lust. Let me explain. I believe that I used lust and masturbation as a crutch, and I think that's what held me together, loosely of course, but held me together. I think I would have imploded or exploded back then. That was 16 years ago next week. I didn't work the Steps very well in AA. I wasn't a very good AA member. I went to meetings and kind of worked the Steps, had a sponsor and such, but the next eight years in AA progressively just made me feel terrible about myself. I would share this with some of my sponsors and tell them, "I'm masturbating a lot. What's wrong with me?" And they would say, "Sounds good to me. Go ahead. You're coming to meetings, aren't you?" "Yes," I would say. "OK, what's your complaint?" I hear that a lot from guys who get sober. Their psychologists say, "Well, what's wrong? Go ahead." But I still felt "wrong." I always felt

"wrong," that something was "wrong" with me. I asked myself that question daily: "What's wrong with me?" I think about lust from the moment I wake up to the moment I go to sleep. What's wrong with me? I didn't know. I was going to meetings, but something was still wrong. I didn't get it, and I almost died from it. I'm an alcoholic and a sexaholic and I would do anything for my drugs, and I'm a grateful, lucky person to be here.

I went along in AA for a while, but things got progressively worse. I was married, and things got worse and worse at home, louder and louder. I isolated more and more. I like to tell people, "my natural state is not to be standing and talking about recovery in front of people." This is Michael in his natural state [makes gestures of using remote control while watching TV]. See that thumb muscle? Hundreds and thousands of channels. One through 99 and back, one through 99 and back, one through 99 and back. I see people relating. It's a miracle of this program that we can relate to each other. [Laughter]

This went on and on and I had no relationship with my wife. I pressured her for sex and she declined and I would pout, and I would flip through channels all evening. My son wouldn't think about asking his father to play; his father was an extension of the couch. You don't ask the lamp to play, why should I ask that man to play? Things got bad enough and I was an SOB enough and I lusted enough that I was going through a real hell. We talk about in How it Works that "we thought we could find an easier,

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softer way, but we could not.” This *is* the easiest, softest way. There is no easier, softer way. We’re here. This is it. It may be difficult; it may be challenging; but I will take this any day of the week and twice on Sunday over what I was going through. That was a hell, and I never want to go through that again.

Things got bad enough and I was willing to do what it took, anything it took, and so I called up my company’s health maintenance organization and asked for an appointment with a psychologist, and for the first time in my life, I told someone what was going on. I said “I’ve been doing a, b, c, d, and e, for *years*.” I said, “This feels *just* like beer. What’s wrong with me?” He said, “Well, we’re about out of time; you’re a sexaholic, go find SA and I’ll see you next week.” That’s a true story. I said, “Are you serious?” He said, “Absolutely. This *is* just like beer. Absolutely, *just like beer*. You have hit the nail on the head. Go find SA, they’re in the phone book. See ya.”

That was July 15, 1991, and the next day I was at my first meeting. And I cried, and cried, and cried, that whole first week. Why did I cry? I cried because I was home. I felt at home. I felt that I had found a bunch of people who knew how bad I felt. People would say, “OK, Michael, you’re the new person at the meeting, would you please read “How it Works,” and I couldn’t even read it without crying. It was a cry of relief, and I am so grateful to be here.

I got a sponsor that night. Great guy. I

had a year and a half of sobriety, and that sounded like forever, a year and a half. I asked him to be my sponsor and he said, “You bet, give me your phone number, here’s mine, call me tomorrow.” I called him the next day and said, “What do we do now.” And he said, “Let’s work the Steps.” He said there are two terms that are used frequently in the Fellowship. One is “Fellowship,” and the other is “Program.” “Fellowship,” he said, “refers to the conversations one-on-one, the meetings, the telephone calls.” But “Program” refers to the 12 Steps. That’s why we’re here, to work the 12 Steps. Are you ready to work the Steps?” I said, “I’ll do anything you say. You tell me to jump, I’ll say how high.”

I was really, really ready. So he said, “We meet once a week, on Sunday mornings. You’ll get a workbook, and we’ll work Steps One through Twelve.” He said I needed to work Steps One through Eleven, formally, with him, in order, efficiently, thoroughly, without delay, because we need to work on Step Twelve. He said, “That’s why you’re here. That’s why I’m here. Step Twelve is the reason we’re here.” I found the essence of Step Twelve once on a church marquee. I was walking in Morristown, New Jersey, and on a church marquee, right outside of an AA meeting, it said, “God does not comfort us to make us comfortable, but to be comforters.” That is the essence of Step Twelve for me. To work Steps One through Eleven, thoroughly, efficiently, and without delay. And so I would work on Step One, and

I'd write it out, and I would call him (he said to call and ask questions), and we would get together on Sunday morning (there were two oldtimers and two newcomers) and I would read my First Step and they would say, "OK, start on Step Two, see ya next Sunday." No pats on the back, no jumping up on the shoulders, it was, "Yep, yep, you sound like a sexaholic, come on back next Sunday." And I was so grateful for that.

I'm not only addicted to lust. I'm addicted to resentment and I'm addicted to chemicals, but I'm also addicted to *your* approval, "you" meaning the human race. I'll do anything. Just as recently as 10 minutes before I came up here to speak somebody gave me a look that was not 100 percent approval and I obsessed about that person for the next 10 minutes. And I thought to myself, "This is just so silly." I give it up to Him.

I have to tell you that these Steps work so well, and they work through anything. They work through adversity, they work through success, they work through all challenges of life. I use the Steps every day, in all my affairs, because they are tools for living. I don't know how to live life on life's terms. I'm not comfortable living life on life's terms. I don't know how to deal with people. I'm socially disabled. I'm a sexaholic! It's my natural state for me to be sitting in front of the boob tube, but the Steps give me a way out. One defect at a time, one occasion at a time, I don't have to act out on any of my defects. I am far from perfect. I am such an isolating person it is still very challenging for me to deal with people, but that's okay,

because I'm sure a lot better than I used to be.

God has given me so much strength in sobriety, and I want to give you an example of that. I'm going through a divorce, and if there's ever been a time when I needed fellowship and the Steps, it has been through this divorce. I don't want to take her inventory, but I do want to stress with you that this has not been a pleasant time. Back in September she mentioned that she wanted a divorce and so I said I would work with her on that, and things felt very odd at home; something was wrong. And then in November I confronted her and said, "I'm really sensing that there's somebody else." And she said, "Yes, there is." My head was about to explode, I didn't know how to deal with this, and I just couldn't finish a sentence. I was just staring at the wall, and didn't know how to react, and she said, "Are you done yet? I have to go." This has not been a very pleasant seven months since then. Things have gotten loud, lots of threats. She is not in recovery, and that's okay. That's her choice. I just had to leave. That very week I had to leave. I went to my son, and I said, "Remember I said that your mom and I weren't getting along very well and that there might be a chance that we might have to live in separate houses?" I said, "This is very, very awkward for me, but trust me, if there was any other way, I would do it, but please trust me when I tell you that I just have to leave this week. Some day you may understand, but I have to leave this week." I could not live in a house like

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that, and he said, "I understand."

Things can be, and have been, semi-pleasant between his mother and I. We have been trying to work things out through a mediator. So let me tell you how this program works. It became very adversarial one week, and we were sitting in the mediator's office talking, and the tension was very thick. I just closed my eyes, and I said, "You're here; You're right here with me." And I felt calm, and then I was able to look at her. Not only do I need approval, but I really need approval from women, and I desperately need approval from angry women. I'm working on it with a therapist, with my sponsor, and all. I'm an addict and I've got lots of issues. My mother was very loud, but it doesn't matter, it's okay, I'm sober, and I'm here. I've got the Steps to lean on, I've got my meetings, I've got the church, I've got a therapist, and I've got prayer.

If I can leave a message this evening, it would just be simply that the Program works if you work it. I'm only telling you these things that I've been through because I desperately want you to know how much this program works. I am going through such challenges. Here I am almost eight years sober and life doesn't necessarily get easier, but if I work the Steps, if I keep coming to meetings, if I keep doing what you told me and my sponsor told me, if I keep staying on that path, things are very, very do-able. I find this to be such an opportunity for growth. One of my sponsees has a challenging marriage, and I said, "How were things this past weekend with so-and-so," and

he said, "I had a lot of opportunity for growth." [Laughter]. I said, "Phew, I know what you mean." I love that feeling. A lot of opportunity for growth.

I get to sponsor people now, and I'm thrilled about that. I also have been allowed to do a lot of service, and I'm very grateful for that. You see, one of the miracles about Step Twelve is that when you do the One through Eleven formally, without delay, efficiently, thoroughly, with you sponsor, when you do get to Twelve, it's like it just takes you. You have to tell people, so one of the forms of service I love and I almost get selfish with is answering the phones back home. There's a bunch of guys who love to answer the phones, but I always want to answer it more.

I also get a chance to set up the literature at my home group, and that's something I treasure as well. I tell people, "You're certainly welcome to come early to the meeting, but I'm going to be there with you, you can't take the job away from me." You know how the White Book says you start to feel a part of instead of apart from. That's really important. I like to feel like I'm the host at my home group, and say, "Hi, how're you doing, come on in, sit down, let's talk." So my sponsor told me, "Lay out all the books in a really nice fashion. Make it look very professional, because when a newcomer walks in the door, you want the newcomer to think, "Wow, these guys have their act together." I would say to him, "Why can't we just take this and Xerox it? It's cheaper." He said, "No, no, it looks so much more professional when it's printed nicely. That's why it's

printed; that's why we buy it, and we're not allowed to Xerox it." That's why eight years ago when I called and they had that nice professional sound on the answering message, I started crying. I thought, "Wow, these are not only people who understand me, these are people who have their act together. They can help me, because they have their act together."

I'm so grateful for the gifts that God has given me through the Fellowship and the program. A lot of friends. A lot of people who have inspired me to be there for the newcomer. There is one opportunity in particular that I wanted to share, and that was starting a meeting. There's a whole bunch of guys over here who all have started meetings. Everyone wants to start meetings in our part of the country, and it's so nice to see, because we're in the suburbs—pretty small towns, but everyone's wanting to start meetings, and S-Anon has started, too. It's a miracle.

I want to wrap up with my very favorite story about recovery, and that has to do with my son, [who's 11]. It's one of the best gifts of recovery. My son has been such a blessing. He's a lot further along than I was when I was his age. My parents were active alcoholics for most of my upbringing, and their parents, and their parents—lots and lots of isolation and mental illness and overeating and sexaholism—a normal addictive family. [Laughter] It almost feels that, perhaps, the cycle is being broken, and I really hope that that is the case. [My son] is able to say things like, "My feelings are hurt, and here's why." "Dad, you made

me angry." Or he can hold up his hand in front of his teacher and say, "This isn't fair." He's assertive, he's got self confidence, he's the star of the baseball team, he's a great, great guy.

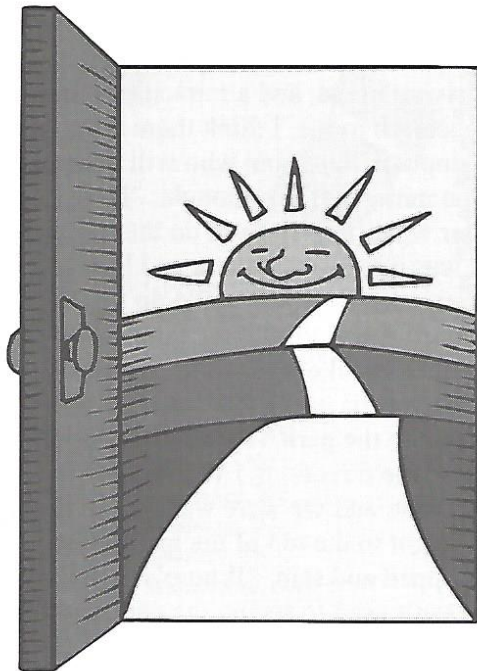
But it wasn't like that before. The first three years of his life, I really was a piece of furniture. About three months into sobriety, the "miracle of withdrawal" started to subside, and those of you who have been through withdrawal know that wonderful feeling with the fog is just about starting to clear and you say, "Ah, this is a *life* out here." There are people out here! And if you haven't been through withdrawal yet, please be patient. Every single one of those promises, every single one, will happen in your life. You need to do what your sponsor says, keep coming back and working the Steps.

But about three months in, I picked [my son] up at the babysitter. We were driving home, and a miraculous thought occurred to me. I think there are a lot of people in this room who will understand the miracle of this thought: "Hey, I wonder what [*he*] wants to do this evening?" I was just driving along and I said, "Hey son, what do you want to do this evening?" I was thinking, "I don't know what kids like!" He said, "Do you want to go to the park?" So I said sure, and we went to the park. (He actually had to give me directions.) We stopped the car, got out, and we were walking up the hill. We got to the top of the hill and he stopped and said, "Where's mom?" He wasn't used to seeing the park without his Mom. And I said, "Tonight's differ-

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ent. Tonight, it’s just you and me.” And he said, “OK.” And we went down and we played frisbee and we played ball and we swung on the swings and played on the teeter-totter, and that was the first of many many nights, and I am so grateful that God has given me my son, and that my son does not have to see his father off in the distance, mentally, sitting on the couch. That he has a real dad, so that in two years when he does change, and kids at school will offer him cigarettes, or a magazine, or beer, that he will know just how much I love him, and how much I want this cycle to stop.

I want to thank the Cleveland Inter-group one more time for allowing me to tell this many people that the Program works if you work it. God bless you all.



Conference attendees were asked to write some of their thoughts and experiences on the conference theme—Honesty, Open Mindedness and Willingness—for sharing with the Fellowship at large. The conference organizers and the Essay wish to thank those who shared. Following is a selection from almost 150 submissions.

Honesty

"I cannot develop a relationship with my Higher Power as long as there are known defects of character in my life that I haven't surrendered. Honesty is absolutely necessary for true recovery."
Unsigned.

"Through getting honest with myself about my fears of being in social situations, I was able to surrender this fear to God. He lifted the fear enough to allow me to step out and meet other SAs. I gained so much from the one-on-one conversations with people I had never met before. I am truly grateful that God lifted the fear and granted me this opportunity."
Hank P., Rochester, NY.

"What I have received at the HOW conference is a deep sense of the importance of honesty. The ability to 'tell on my addict' and to keep 'telling on my addict' is a foundation of my program. The other thing I heard is that the only way I can be honest is through the grace of God in my life. I can do nothing in the program but through Him."
Mike B., Philadelphia, Pa.

"HOW am I doing it? When I'm honest—telling the truth for the first time in my life. When I'm open-minded—listening to others who have been there who show me how to do it. When I'm willing—realizing I can't do it after all, and admit I'm not doing it—*God is doing it for me.*" Unsigned.

"Honesty for me is like a self-cleaning oven for the soul."

Michael B., Toronto, Can.

Open Mindedness

"In a breakout session, I found myself falling into my habit of judging other members of the group, deciding who was the most sincere, who was the most sober, who was the better speaker, etc. I would rank myself and feed my insatiable ego. But at this session, one member shared that he saw God in each of his fellows. Knowing the truth in this, I realized I'd been judging and comparing God's work—the height of arrogance. Instead of ranking, I decided I ought to be participating in recovery, both theirs and mine. I had not been open to hearing God speak." Unsigned.

"The honesty of those who shared, the willingness of so many to go to any lengths to be here, the many years of collective sobriety here, has been a great source of encouragement to me to stay on the path of recovery. Connecting with so many other women has helped me to feel connected again to SA as a whole."

Kathy B.

"I realized at the conference that I was feeling resentment because I was moving to North America to live here for the first time. I thought I deserved to be able to check out all the sexual possibilities this continent had to offer before committing myself to sobriety here. But the conference put me in touch with hundreds of people who are willing to be in recovery.

"At first I was scared of the total revolution in my life that seemed to be demanded, but I have also been wonderfully encouraged by the enthusiasm of so many speakers, and the stories of the promises coming true in people's lives. And even more importantly, *seeing* the promises alive in their lives. I'm strengthened once more to keep coming back." **Robin.**
(Australia, now Toronto, Can.)

Willingness

"There must be a part of me that still refuses to let go because the willingness part of the HOW really appeals to me. Seeing so many people gathered in one place that are 'willing to go to any lengths' to achieve sobriety is a very powerful reminder that recovery is possible if I am willing to let God do for me what I can't do for myself." **Peter B.**

"I have been in continual emotional pain for most of this conference, which is no exception from my emotional state for years. What is different is that during these three days I've heard a lot of stories that give me courage to 'stay the course' in the SA program in the hope that serenity will one day become my experience."

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A Safe Haven?

Despite having a strong SA community in my region, the Fellowship here is facing a serious problem that I believe could one day lead to disaster.

For over six years we've had a member who says he has a psychiatric disorder that requires psychiatric and pharmacological care. However, he has told us he has not received adequate professional care for many years. His displays of rage, including threats of physical violence, have increased to a point where he is literally holding hostage the SA Fellowship in this area. To be in a meeting when he has an outburst of rage is a truly frightening experience. He has even threatened some members with physical harm.

This member's behavior poses two problems. The first is obvious: this behavior clearly destroys the safe haven the meeting is supposed to provide. The second is not so obvious, but even more frustrating—trying to find a practical, fair solution in an atmosphere where other members come to the "rageaholic's" defense. At a group conscience called immediately after the rageaholic used highly offensive language and threatened the physical well-being of a member during a regularly scheduled meeting, another member said the rageaholic was within his right to share as he wished as long as it helped keep him sober!

Share!? Sober!?

The rageaholic, who has not stayed sober for more than a couple of months at a time in years, is harming not only the group, but the regional Fellowship.

Tradition One says: "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon S.A. unity." One interpretation reads: "... our individual sobriety depends on the group. The group depends on us. We soon learn that unless we curb our individual desires, impulses and ambitions, we can damage the group." (The Twelve and Twelve Illustrated, Copyright 1971. AA World Services Literature.)

The AA publication continues: "Our brother the noisy drunk affords the simplest illustration of this tradition. If he insists on disrupting the meeting, we 'invite' him to leave, and we bring him back when he is in a better shape to hear the message of recovery. We are putting the common welfare first. But it is his welfare, too; if he is ever going to get sober, the group must go on functioning ready for him."

In fact, the real loving and caring SA approach should not be one of enabling. It is precisely one of those cases we learn about in the press every day when it is already too late.

—*Names withheld by request.*

Sobriety and the Sea of Relativism

By Roy K.

Today the world is adrift on a sea of rapidly shifting mores. Change is accelerating at an unprecedented rate. The last eighty years have surpassed the rate of change of the last eight thousand, and the last thirty have probably surpassed it all. Every aspect of our lives and sexual thinking is affected. Thousands of voices clamor for attention, preaching new "freedoms" of every kind. Was it not but a few years ago that "shacking up"—what the courts called "cohabitation"—was thought to be abnormal? Today it is called a "meaningful relationship" or having a "significant other." And witness the new movement to legalize incest.

Look closely at any of the sexual trends in the last few decades; there is something more than mere reversal of attitudes or even revolution here. There is a dissolution of the entire fabric holding couples and families together.

Such forces as the Pill, the Bomb, the technological revolution, world war, the population explosion, and especially the media, are all facilitating changes in the attitudes and beliefs of men and women towards sexual thinking and expression at a rate never before experienced in the history of the human race. And we are trapped within this flux.

One historian called it the "Sexual Wilderness," but it is deeper than merely being lost in a wild land. The problem seems to be spiritual. There is rebellion here—against authority, against God. There is movement toward destruction here, sexual victimization has broadened to damage every aspect of life. There is connection with a larger spiritual darkness here.

We sexaholics, victims of our own attitudes and actions, are nevertheless children of our times. Not only did we let those forces into our own lives, we helped give them free reign in the world at large. As a result, we found ourselves not only adrift, but drowning in this sea of relativism, with nothing to anchor our frail lives against the storm of change without and the storm within. Enslaved to the darkness, we were

powerless to save ourselves.

Most of the voices we hear today on the beguiling windsong playing about us offer the easier softer way. They appeal to the lower instead of the higher, to our weakness instead of our best, to the transitory instead of the lasting. As angels of light offering new and glorious "freedom," they pander to our lust. To have and indulge. Their cry is "DO IT!" rather than "I can do without it." "Here and now!" rather than "Thy will be done." Theirs is based on a deception, the primacy of the physical and emotional instead of the spiritual. And God is not there.

The best among these voices would settle for the "good." But as Bill W. of AA used to say, the good is often the enemy of the best. And if SA has anything unique to offer, it is the best—sexual sobriety. Sobriety as we have come to see it. To the world at large, we have nothing to say except to bear witness to the truth of our experience. But to the storm-tossed suffering sexaholics—and only to sexaholics—who want survival and freedom from the bondage of their "freedom," this program offers an island in the storm, an anchor for the soul, a Connection with the unchanging, the real, and the true.

First published in SA loose literature in March, 1982, this piece seems to become even more relevant with the passing of time. The changes that have taken place in our world in the 15 years since the article was last revised—the growth of the Internet, the fragmentation of the culture, etc.—not to mention their impact on sexaholics, only further illustrate the writer's point.

The work of a patient and loving God in the SA Fellowship during the same time period is also evident. God surely is doing for SA unity what we could not do for ourselves. The presence of a Higher Power at the recent Cleveland business meeting became clear as delegates and trustees broke through seemingly insurmountable obstacles to unity to forge a simple interpretation of the SA sobriety definition that was accepted by all. (See SA Around the Globe.) In the wake of the unanimous vote, many of us present had a "coming of age" experience, a spiritual awakening, and a deeper fellowship than any human power could have produced. A loving God had again established SA as an island in the Sea of Relativism for storm-tossed sexaholics. —Ed.

("H.O.W." continued from page 11)

Dave H., Ontario, Can.

"I have an underlying *unwillingness* in my life. I don't want to work this program. I have to get this out into the light so that I don't have to live another double life. But I can live this program for another day, today. God help me to be willing." **Dave W.**

"Working with my sponsor has taught me to trust God and make decisions. My sponsor has simply shown me the choices, I must do the work."

Tom C., Rochester, NY.

"I need to pray for willingness to do my Fifth Step, and to formally settle on a sponsor, even if I don't feel like it. I need to keep on moving forward in this program of recovery. I don't want to slip or relapse." **Joe D.**, Vancouver, Can.

"An interesting concept expressed in one of the sessions, and very helpful to me, was that I need to surrender each character defect, one by one, for all time, not just till the next time. In other words, this (anger, resentment, codependency) is not an option in my life anymore. I am now renewing the spirit of Steps Six and Seven, and giving up my right to resent any of the speedy, daring drivers around me." Unsigned.

"I need to do prison work and other service work to stay sober. I realize I need to get out of myself and help others. Especially if I am struggling, I need to carry the message, as Bill W. did to Dr.

Bob." **Steve A.**, St. Louis, Mo.

Willingness, honesty and open mindedness are the essentials of recovery. But these are indispensable.

AA Big Book, p. 570.

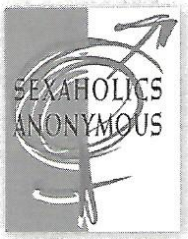


Group News

Cape Girardeau, Mo.—I had just decided to give up and I cut off the SA phone line. The day after, I got some calls. I now have six people, including myself, who want to start a group.

I talked to a pastor at a church in Cape Girardeau and he agreed to let us use a room in their church. We have all agreed to have our meetings on Saturday mornings at 10:00 a.m. The first meeting was on September 11.

I'm really excited about this because I totally gave up on the whole thing, cancelled the extra phone line, which is now working again, at 573 264-0095, and gave it up to God. I said to Him: "I give this meeting thing to you. If you don't want one here, fine, I'll just drive to St. Louis." Within two days I got two calls and now there are six interested. God can do it better than I can. Thanks a bunch. I'll probably be needing more books, etc. later, but I've got some to start with. Let me know when the next international conference is, too. **Ken S.**, Cape Girardeau, Mo.



SA Around the Globe



A Promise Fulfilled

A few months ago I began sponsoring a man whose enthusiasm and personality are contagious! His disease landed him in jail for two months plus a few months of "work release," and a whole lot of years under restrictions and the watchful eye of state officials.

When his wife called and invited me to visit him during his first few weeks in jail, I jumped at the chance. A few years ago another sponsee spent a number of months in prison and I never visited him. Considerable guilt and disappointment about neglecting him motivated my promise to my Higher Power that I would commit to visiting any future sponsees that ended up incarcerated. Last Saturday the opportunity came, but not without considerable challenges.

Two Saturdays previously, a jail official gave me directions to the jail that is about one and a half hours from my home. As she detailed the information, I clarified one point because it seemed inaccurate to me. She assured me the instructions I had were correct. Nevertheless, I ended up many, many

miles south of my destination on the first day of my scheduled visit. Strike one.

So, this directionally challenged sexaholic attempted another visit after clarifying the directions through the use of a road map (what a concept—more is being revealed!). I left my home earlier to ensure a timely arrival but ended up getting lost once again. This time I found the town (progress) but the jail officials denied my visit because I arrived a half-hour late (not perfection).

It didn't help that this emotionally unsober sexaholic announced his visit in an angry, loud, demanding and *authoritative* manner: "My name is Michael R, and I'm here to see Mr. E!" In an unimpressed tone of voice the jail official responded, "Step away from the microphone, Mr. R. Just a moment." After a few minutes, he said through the loudspeaker, "My sergeant has denied your visit because you are half an hour late." My insentient plea for mercy failed and all I could muster in response was a meek "O.K."

It took me all day to recover from

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Seventh Tradition

Donations for Second Quarter

Akron, OH	106.90	Glen Ellyn, IL	260.00	Salt Lake City, UT	28.81
Albuquerque, NM	175.00	Grand Junction, CO	100.00	San Diego IG, CA	40.00
Alhambra, CA	40.00	Grand Rapids, MI	50.00	San Diego SACC	150.00
Arlington Hts, IL	40.00	Grand Rapids SACC	50.00	Seattle, WA	81.48
Atlanta, GA	242.00	Green Bay, WI	150.00	Seattle SACC WA	349.59
Bannockburn, IL	225.00	Hacienda Hts, CA	50.00	So Barrington, IL	100.00
Barrie, ON, Canada	100.00	Houston, TX	7.25	So Barrington SACC	100.00
Beaver, PA	104.56	Idaho Falls, ID	85.00	Springfield, VA	311.00
Beltsville, MD	53.00	Irvine, CA	50.00	Springfield SACC	48.00
Birmingham, AL	77.00	Jersey City, NJ	35.00	St. Charles, IL	25.00
Boston, MA	32.00	Kirkland, WA	50.00	St Louis, MO	54.57
Bozeman, MT	41.25	Knoxville, TN	30.00	Stafford, VA	93.00
Bryn Athyn, PA	383.50	LA Olympic, CA	52.00	Steubenville, OH	9.00
Camarillo, CA	60.00	Lake Mary, FL	25.00	Steubenville/Wheeling IG	17.00
Canoga Park, CA	20.00	Lexington, KY	27.75	Tacoma, WA	22.00
Canoga Park SACC	106.00	Little Falls, NJ	25.00	Timonium, MD	113.00
Carolina IG, NC	200.00	Long Beach, CA	216.88	Titusville, FL	8.00
Central VA IG	150.00	Long Island IG, NY	335.00	Troy, MI	260.00
Centreville, VA	120.00	McLean, VA	120.00	Tukwila, WA	35.00
Cerritos, CA	50.00	Menlo Park, CA	50.00	Tukwila SACC	35.00
Chicago IG	303.00	Millvale, PEI, Canada	50.00	Twin Cities IG, MN	100.00
Chicago IG SACC	369.00	Milwaukee, WI	118.00	Twin Falls ID	15.00
Chino, CA	65.00	Montreal, PQ, Canada	133.72	Tyson's Corners, VA	157.00
Chula Vista, CA	85.12	Mountain View, CA	120.00	Vancouver, WA	18.00
Cochise, AZ	10.25	Nashville, TN	777.75	Vienna, VA	368.00
Colorado Spgs, CO	510.00	Nashville IG, TN	1,120.00	Villa Park, IL	10.00
Columbus, OH	176.50	Newberg, OR	75.00	Waldorf, MD	60.00
Corona, CA	40.00	North Hollywood, CA	145.20	Washington, DC	429.60
Corona, CA SACC	60.00	Northern CA IG	1,500.00	Washington DC SACC	15.00
Dallas, TX	60.00	Painesville, OH	50.00	West LA, CA	111.90
Darien, IL	40.00	Palm Desert, CA	50.00	Wheeling, WV	31.00
Darien, IL SACC	20.00	Penn Hills, PA	100.00	Wheeling/Steubenville Retr	40.00
Daytona Beach, FL	96.00	Philadelphia IG SACC	55.00	Wichita '98 Conference	725.17
Denver, CO	150.00	Phoenix, AZ	49.00	Willow Creek, IL	290.00
Eden Prairie, MN	37.00	Pittsburgh IG SACC	25.00	Willow Creek SACC	149.00
Edmonton, AB, Canada	32.50	Pittsburgh Southside PA	137.47	Woodstock, IL	50.00
Elk Grove Village, IL	364.00	Portland, OR	218.40	Yardley, PA	55.00
Erie, PA	64.20	Portland IG, OR	240.38	Yorba Linda, CA	50.00
Essington, PA	74.00	QCSA Davenport, IA	50.00		
Fairfax, VA	81.00	Regina, SK, Canada	23.00	Group Total	15,640.34
Falls Church, VA	200.00	Rochester, NY	373.96	SACC Total	1,568.59
Falls Church SACC	21.00	Rockford, IL	50.00	SA Internet Total	10.00
Fernandina Bch, FL	50.00	Salem, OR	16.00	Individual Total	417.50
Fredericksburg, VA	87.00	Salem SACC	16.00		
Fremont, CA	50.00			Grand Total	17,636.43
Georgia Intergroup	139.47				

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disappointment over unrealized expectations. I expressed rage and angry words towards my Higher Power, and felt shame and disappointment for not being able to see my sponsee and fulfill my promise to my Higher Power. Telephone calls and a meeting nursed my wounds later that day. Strike two.

Finally, remembering a sober friend's council, "It usually takes me about three times before I succeed in a new undertaking," I left home two hours before my scheduled visit, drove straight to the parking lot of the county courthouse and walked through the doors emotionally sober and spiritually available with 15 minutes of time to pray before seeing my sponsee. I didn't strike out because I kept coming back.

In the 45-minute encounter that followed, the presence of the Higher Power between my sponsee and I filled me with joy and peace—it was magical really. I saw through the thick glass that my sponsee was wearing prison garb and that he looked more peaceful and clear-eyed than I could recall. Through a jail telephone, he told me about a short stint in solitary confinement and cocky guards who tormented the inmates with piercing wake-up announcements through a loudspeaker.

He spoke of possible new S.A. recruits he'd carried the message to and of extended periods of time for prayer, reading and writing. He knew his Higher Power would take care of his problems and future. We shared our fears and concerns and never stopped looking at one another. Usually extended eye contact is difficult for me, but the Higher Power smoothed out any discomfort I had about this, as well as what to talk about and do while seeing my sponsee.

The visit seemed more like an hour and a half to me. Maybe it was the combination of seeing my sponsee in person, witnessing first-hand the frightening truth of institutions, overhearing the woman sitting next to me lamenting over her boyfriend's predicament, "They want to give him the maximum sentence; I might as well shoot myself now," and finally fulfilling the promise I made to my Higher Power.

I returned to my car and prayed and napped for a short time. I knew my past actions qualified me to be where my sponsee is today. Because of my Higher Power's constant grace and intervention in my life, and the friendships in and out of Sexaholics Anonymous, I was able to drive away from the courthouse complex

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and enjoy my lunch on a beautiful, sunny day. As Chuck C. from Alcoholics Anonymous said, "How fortunate can a man be?" **Michael R.**, Seattle, Wash.

Clarification of the Sobriety Definition

In Cleveland on 9 July 1999, the Delegate Assembly and the Board of Trustees unanimously approved a clarification of SA's sobriety definition. The approved statement of principle is as follows:

"In SA's sobriety definition, the term 'spouse' refers to one's partner in a marriage between a man and a woman."

The action came at the end of more than a year of controversy over whether a clarification was necessary and whether the membership wanted a clarification. In many ways, this resolution was a surprise, and especially surprising was the unanimity of the decision. Here's how it happened.

On the previous day, the Board of Trustees had approved and passed on to the delegates a three-paragraph proposal offered by the Southern California Area Intergroup and amended by Southwest Region delegates. In that proposal, the first para-

graph – the one that generated the most disagreement – was a longer, more complex statement of clarification than the one (above) that eventually passed; the second and third paragraphs listed foundational principles of the Fellowship and proposed a mechanism for changing them if the membership should desire that in the future.

After discussion and debate, the proposal passed by a vote of six to two, with one abstention. One of the delegates on the minority side invoked the "Right of Appeal," the right of a minority in a Twelve Step group conscience, even a very small minority, to ask for reconsideration of an issue. The other delegate on the minority side joined in that appeal. They said that they were not only against the idea of clarification but also against the particular language of the original proposal on the grounds that it was too complex and confusing. They offered to vote with the majority if the assembly would reconsider the original proposal and accept, as a substitute, a sentence that was shorter and simpler.

In response, delegates on the majority side voted for reconsideration. There followed a short break to allow the delegates and trustees (who were also present) to work on the substitute language; in the process, they decided

to remove the second and third paragraphs of the original proposal as containing separate issues that could best be addressed separately at a later time. Then, as a gesture toward unity, the delegates invited the Board of Trustees to join them in voting, and nine delegates and seven trustees voted in favor of the new language, with none voting against it.

There was a sense among the delegates and the trustees that the best course was to settle this issue in the hope that we as a Fellowship can return to focus on the solution and not the problem. That is why the delegates invited the trustees to join in the vote, and that is why both bodies expressed unanimity. *Submitted by the Delegate Assembly.*

Following are portions of two reports sent to SA-Net by Dorene S., chair of the delegate assembly, regarding the Cleveland "Statement of Principle" vote:

First I want to clarify what was actually voted at the Cleveland conference. It was this statement of principle: "In SA's sobriety definition, the term 'spouse' refers to one's partner in a marriage between a man and a woman." This statement was formulated and approved unanimously by nine delegates and seven

trustees during the last half-hour of our discussion.

Second, I want to give a timeline of events. Between the January 1999 Sacramento International Conference and the July 1999 Cleveland International Conference, I received conflicting opinions about the meaning of the January 1999 vote that we do not need to clarify the SA sobriety definition.

Many (probably most) were convinced this vote meant that we are already clear on the meaning of traditional SA sobriety and no further clarification is needed. Others were equally convinced this vote meant that "spouse" and "marriage" could be interpreted as understood by each member. Some were convinced that SA is afraid to "say what it means and mean what it says," so several groups and intergroups clarified the definition for themselves, calling it a "reaffirmation" of SA sobriety.

In addition, in January the assembly delegates directed the SA Literature Committee to work on original literature (such as Member Stories 2000) and literature that does not contain quotes from existing SA literature (the "White Book," "Recovery Continues," and the SA pamphlet with 20 questions). This was influenced by a recommenda-

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("Clarification" continued from page 19)
tion by the founder that no new literature be published until confusion over SA's sobriety definition was resolved.

As July drew near, there still seemed to be an impasse in resolving these matters. The delegates were experiencing unity, partly I think, because of more frequent contact, and partly because we were studying AA's Twelve Concepts for World Service, which enhanced our understanding of our "trusted servant" role. However, we seemed to have no solution to disunity about the sobriety definition, and the creation of new literature was still "on hold."

So in early May, I drafted a proposal to put on the agenda for Cleveland. That proposal underwent several revisions, and was finally submitted in this form to the delegates and trustees:

"Agenda item: SA sobriety and Fellowship-wide group conscience:

"A Resolution Offered by Southern California Area Intergroup, amended by Southwest Region delegates, request to be affirmed at the July 1999 Board of Trustees and Delegate Assembly meetings:

"BE IT RESOLVED: Regarding SA sobriety: In our sobriety definition, the interpretation of 'spouse'

and 'marriage' as marriage of a man and a woman in progressive victory over lust is clearly inherent and explicit in the entire scope of SA's origins, its reason for existence, its early failures, its history, and its literature.

"AND IT IS UNDERSTOOD: That neither the Twelve Steps of Sexaholics Anonymous, nor the Twelve Traditions of Sexaholics Anonymous, nor the understanding of SA sobriety as stated above, shall ever be changed or amended except by first asking the consent of the registered SA groups of the world. (This would include all SA groups known to SA International Central Office around the world.)

"These groups shall be suitably notified of any proposal for change and shall be allowed no less than six months for consideration thereof. And before any such action can be taken, there must first be received in writing within the time allotted the consent of at least three-quarters of all those registered groups who respond to such proposal. (Last two paragraphs adapted from The AA Service Manual, 1996-97 Edition, page S35.)

"This 'resolution' is for discussion in Cleveland. I hope it may provide a basis for unity in SA, and a method for change firmly grounded

in the openness and honesty of 12-Step tradition. I also hope it may help end the current stalemate in publishing new SA literature with quotes from prior SA literature."

When submitting this resolution, I hoped to spend a maximum of an hour and a half discussing it in the delegate assembly meeting. God had other plans. That Friday in Cleveland, I began by spending time alone with my Higher Power. I prayed for a quiet and gentle spirit. I did an inventory on my fear of division in SA. I admitted self-reliance had failed me. I committed my will and my life in SA to God's care. I asked God to remove my fear and direct my attention to what He would have me be.

In the afternoon when it was time to discuss the "resolution," we began by each delegate expressing his or her view. We then opened discussion to the floor. When the floor finished its input, the delegates voted. The result: six in favor of the resolution, two opposed, with one abstaining.

Then one of the "minority" vote requested an opportunity to rephrase the first paragraph so that he could also vote with the "majority." The other opposing delegate also supported rephrasing the first paragraph. So we took a 15-minute

break while an ad hoc committee went to work on that first paragraph.

The resulting revision was acceptable in its simplicity, except that several delegates felt it did not adequately exclude opposite sex committed relationships as being SA sober. The ad hoc committee tried unsuccessfully to figure how to add this wording without using the word "legal." But we were tired; it was 6 p.m. and time for dinner. We did not want to vote "yes" on the second two paragraphs until we were sure the first paragraph said everything intended.

So we voted on the one sentence we could all agree on. In a gesture of unity, the delegates invited the trustees to vote with us on the new wording. The result was total unanimity: nine delegates and seven trustees voted "yes" on that one sentence.

I feel strongly that God was at work in Cleveland. I don't think any of us expected what actually happened. Yet we all seemed satisfied with the outcome. I think God wanted us to know for sure that the results are in His hands, not ours.

Dorene S., July 18, 1999.

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*("Clarification" continued from page 21)
(Here is additional background information on the Cleveland "Statement of Principle" vote. I've outlined my understanding of the Concepts used in arriving at the vote.)*

First a brief overview of the three "legacies" of AA:

Recovery (for individuals): 12 Steps
Unity (for groups): 12 Traditions
Service (for the whole Fellowship):
12 Concepts for World Service.

The assembly delegates began a study of the 12 Concepts this last six months. In our discussions, we have used the AA Service Manual, two AA pamphlets (12 Traditions illustrated and 12 Concepts for World Service illustrated), and a set of tapes from Glenn K. (a panel discussion about AA's three legacies). We are coming to understand the 12 Concepts better. Of course there is room for improvement.

Concept I states that "final responsibility and ultimate authority" for world service lies in the "collective conscience of our whole Fellowship." Concept II states that the groups delegate their authority for the maintenance of world service to the Conference (in SA terms, to the Delegate Assembly in session).

Concept III gives the "Right of Decision" to each world service entity. Thus, "trusted servants" can "decide which problems they will dispose of themselves and upon which matters they will report, consult, or ask specific directions."

In the Cleveland vote, instead of first consulting the groups, the delegates exercised their "Right of Decision" under Concept III. The consensus was that the groups are tired of discussing the sobriety definition, and some expressed hope that settling the issue would enable groups to concentrate on their primary purpose—to carry their message to the sexaholic who still suffers.

To balance Concept III, there is Concept V, which grants a traditional "Right of Appeal." This assures "that minority opinion will be heard." "This 'Right of Appeal' recognizes that minorities frequently can be right; that even when they are in error they still perform a most valuable service when they compel a thorough-going debate on important issues. The well-heard minority, therefore, is our chief protection against an uninformed, misinformed, hasty or angry majority."

The Southern California Area Intergroup exercised its "Right of Appeal" when it asked delegates and trustees to affirm what it sees as a

founding principal of SA. In Cleveland, after the initial vote, a delegate exercised his "Right of Appeal" by requesting a chance to reword the first paragraph of the resolution.

In my understanding, the unanimous vote of the delegates and trustees can be appealed under Concept V, if members feel strongly that they have not been heard and wish the debate to continue.

Dorene S., July 19, 1999.

(Following are portions of an e-mail sent to SA-Net by Dorene S., chair of the delegate assembly, regarding SA sobriety and the Tenth Tradition issues)

Objections to the Cleveland "Statement of Principle" vote revolve mostly around its effect on sexaholic gays. Here's my view of how this relates to the Tenth Tradition: "Sexaholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the SA name ought never be drawn into public controversy."

Please remember I do not speak for SA; I am only a trusted servant in constant need of a Higher Power.

SA is a spiritual Fellowship for those who have a desire to stop lust-ing and become sexually sober. SA is the only S-fellowship that defines sexual sobriety. In doing so, SA speaks only for itself. SA has no

opinion about those who do not need SA sobriety. SA passes no judgment on those who do not need SA sobriety.

An appropriate response to those who object to SA sobriety is to simply say, "Maybe your case is different. Why don't you try something else?" (from *Twelve Concepts for World Service*, by Bill W., page 72). Arguing is not fruitful.

Please consider an analogy with AA sobriety. In AA, only complete abstinence from alcohol is considered AA sober. However, AA acknowledges that some do not need AA sobriety. The AA Big Book (pages 20-21) describes two other categories of people: (1) the "moderate drinker" who can "take it or leave it," and (2) the "hard drinker" whose habit may "impair him physically and mentally" but who with difficulty may learn to moderate his drinking. AA is not for the "moderate drinker" or "hard drinker." AA is for the "alcoholic" who is powerless over alcohol and must stop drinking or die.

In the same way, SA is for the sickest of the sick. Others may be healthier. There are other S-fellowships available for them. But for a sexaholic, the only safe sex is in a lust-free marriage between a man

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(“Clarification” continued from page 23)
and a woman. Everything else is toxic. (Yes, it's a difficult program for everyone.)

A sexaholic can be gay or straight, or maybe both, or like myself, neither gay nor straight (that's another subject). The strongest pleas for SA to remain true to its founding principles come from gay sexaholics. They have given up the struggle to moderate their gay sexuality, and need a Fellowship where others have done the same.



I see this as similar to my struggle with masturbation. Society and therapists told me my habit was "normal," that I was simply afraid of my sexuality. When, in another S-fellowship, I gave up my struggle to masturbate moderately, I was warned by other members that I might become sexually anorexic. In despair, I realized these friends might be healthier than me, and I grudgingly joined SA. In SA, I found what I desperately needed: a Fellowship where long-term abstinence from masturbation is encouraged. It is not helpful for me to sit in a meeting where someone shares his progress in becoming a moderate masturbator. I guess moderation is possible for some, but not for me.

Struggling sexaholic gays, whose "own enlightened self-interest" tells them they "have no other option but to stop," face the same dilemma I did. Society and therapists tell them they are "homophobic" and need to simply accept their sexuality. But like me, they desperately need a Fellowship where long-term abstinence is encouraged. It is not helpful for them to sit in a meeting where someone shares his progress in becoming a moderate homosexual. Apparently moderation is possible for some, but not for them.

The stories of numerous gay sexa-

holics indicate that for them, trying to become a moderate homosexual is as futile as trying to become a moderate masturbator. Many gays, and many sex and relationship addicts in out-of-wedlock opposite sex relationships, view SA as the only Fellowship where they find support (instead of controversy) in giving up their struggle for moderation. In Cleveland, the leadership said SA is still that Fellowship.

Dorene S., July 22, 1999.

Non-sexaholic Trustees

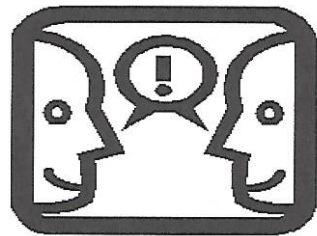
There is an opening on the Board of Trustees for a non-sexaholic trustee. If you or your group knows someone who would qualify, please notify the Nominations Committee via Central Office. An eligible candidate would be a friend of SA and able to fill the duties of Trustee. Interested parties should submit a service resume and a letter of recommendation from an SA member, group, or Intergroup. A questionnaire for candidates is available from Central Office.

Five of the Trustees are sexaholics, four are non-sexaholics. Every year one or two members finish a term of office and rotate to other duties. The Nominations Committee is charged with the responsibility of

maintaining a file of service resumes of potential candidates. From that file each year, the Committee selects a candidate who will best fill the needs of the Board.

The Trustees are the administrative arm of SA, carrying most of the daily business of the Fellowship through their work on and oversight of the committees of the Fellowship. A Trustee is a member with at least five years continuous SA sobriety. An interested candidate will submit a service resume and a letter of nomination from his Intergroup to the Nominations Committee via Central Office.

The General Delegate assembly elected the first four non-sexaholic members of the Board of Trustees at its January 1997 meeting. Non-sexaholic trustees have provided a unique perspective on SA operations. They are a legacy from AA, which says that their non-alcoholic Trustees provide a "window on the world."



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("SA Around the Globe" continued from page 25)

Committees

The work of the Fellowship is done in committees. A quick and easy way to service for SA at the national and international level is to volunteer to work on one of SA's many committees. Some of the current committees with specific needs are:

Literature Committee

The Literature Committee is busy with several projects and could use the help of SA members with expertise in the following areas:

- Reader of articles and stories under consideration for *Member Stories 2000*;
- Editors with a knowledge of English grammar and punctuation;
- Writers of at least three years continuous SA sobriety to submit their stories for consideration;
- Members to process taped talks into written manuscripts and disks
- Translators to translate SA Literature into their native language;
- Writers of short meditations for a proposed meditation book;
- Writers using one of the Twelve Steps or Traditions as the subject of a short article.
- Members with skills in these areas

should address a short letter to Literature Committee via Central Office.

Service Structure Committee

Work is beginning on the *SA Service Manual*. This will set out policies and procedures for the business and service work of the Fellowship. Writers are needed for this project. Interested members should apply to the Service Structure Committee via Central Office.

Loners

Write to isolated SA members around the globe;

SACC

Write to SA members in prison. Members who can help with an SA meeting on the inside;

Essay

- Members to contribute short articles of interest to the Fellowship. Suggested topics: what we used to be like, what happened, what we are like now; how it works, the Steps and Traditions.
- Transcribers to turn taped material into written manuscripts;
- Members to help distribute the *Essay*;
- Members to act as local reporters of news from their Intergroups

that would be of interest to the Fellowship as a whole;

- Member to help index old issues of *Essay*.

Legal

Member lawyers with expertise to help with legal questions when they arise. A new committee Chair is needed.

Site Selection

Members to help select the site of future International Conferences.

Regional Realignment

Members from each region to help with the current project to survey the Fellowship.

Interfellowship

Members to help coordinate the activities of the Interfellowship Forum. SA will host the Interfellowship Forum in November in Chicago.

International

Members to help foster and sponsor new groups in countries around the world.

Interested members should write to Central Office, PO Box 111910, Nashville TN 37222. Or send email to committee@sa.org

Internet

Member with technical skills in web site maintenance, especially the ability

to write PERL scripts.

Group News & Events **News from Down Under** **SA Australia**

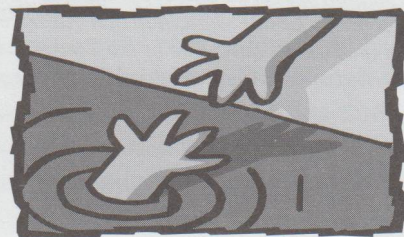
Auckland The first SA and S-Anon meetings have now started in New Zealand by a member who attended the January Conference in Sacramento. There is also a lone member in Wellington.

Sydney. 30 members from around Australia attended the 1999 SA Conference over the weekend of April 24-26. A tape of one meeting from the conference is available.

Adelaide Congratulations to a member who recently celebrated 4 years of sobriety.

Canberra Congratulations to 2 members with sobriety birthdays in April – 1 year and 2 years.

Melbourne. Congratulations to a member recently celebrating 1 year of sobriety.



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 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.
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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.

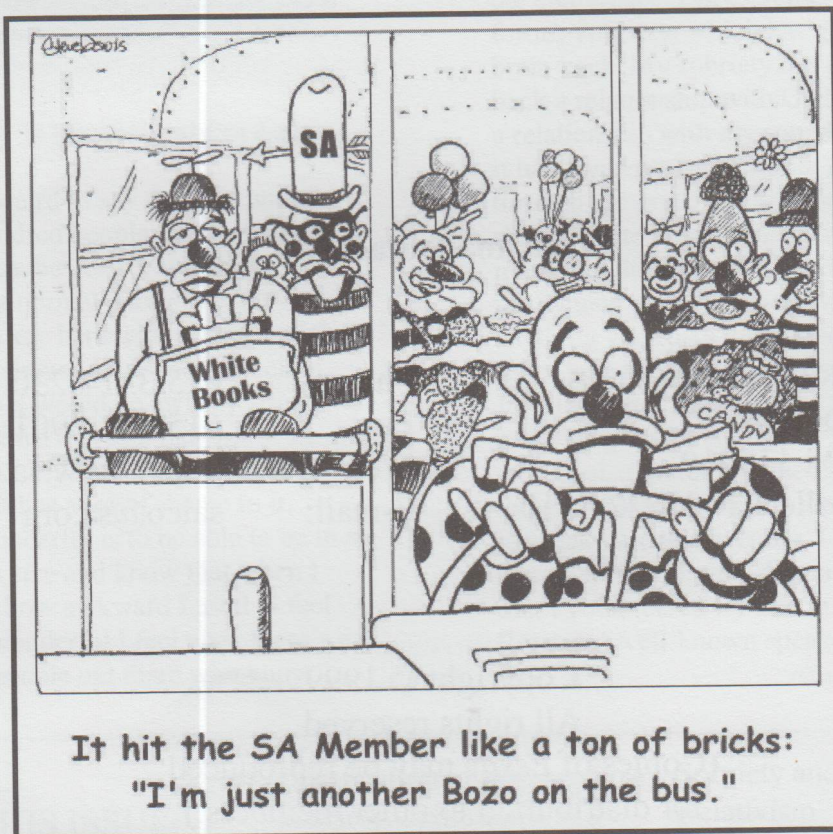
How to improve *Essay* circulation

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.



It hit the SA Member like a ton of bricks:
"I'm just another Bozo on the bus."

How to Contact SA

Sexaholics Anonymous,
Incorporated
PO Box 111910
Nashville, TN 37222-1910

Phone: 615/331-6230
Fax: 615/331-6901
Web Site: <http://www.sa.org>
E-mail: saico@sa.org

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