

“Just keep coming back. God and your fellows will always be waiting there to greet you – with loving, open arms.”



How to Contact SA:

Sexaholics Anonymous	Phone:	615/331-6230
International Central Office	Fax:	615/331-6901
PO Box 111910	Web Site:	http://www.sa.org
Nashville, TN 37222-1910	E-mail:	saico@sa.org
USA		

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Essay®

A Quarterly Publication of Sexaholics Anonymous, Incorporated

GLIMPSES OF SANITY

Sobriety came in the summer of 1985 like an unexpected gift. Just about three weeks earlier I had learned that there were people who called themselves sex addicts and held meetings and worked the Twelve Steps. I had begun making a weekly 200-mile round trip to the closest meeting. I had read the SA manual twice, but – brain numbed by decades of sexual obsession – I didn't understand most of the basic principles there. I wanted sobriety, but the addicts I was meeting with didn't have a group definition of sobriety and preferred to talk about bottom lines.

What was my bottom line? What was sobriety for me? I kept questioning the other addicts, and I prayed that God would reveal His will for me. The understanding that came clear to me was that the mental obsession – the sexual fantasies – made me drunk and that sobriety for me required abstinence from sexual fantasy. I understood that to be sober I would need to let go of the fantasy hits one at a time as they came. But I saw that as a prescription for

failure. I had struggled for years in prayer and anguish to break away from that fantasy life, and I had always failed. I was addicted to fantasy. It was mainly with fantasy that I administered the drug to myself. To pick up a white chip and declare to those other addicts that I was going to give up fantasy was to embrace failure.

The wonderful thing is that I embraced failure. I embraced powerlessness. I picked up the chip, and from that day I have surrendered the fantasy hits one at a time. Instead of failure, God gave me the gift of sobriety. It came like a miracle because in late July, at the same time I was praying for God's will, I experienced four days of freedom from sexual impulses such as I had never believed possible. Four days of serenity and clarity of mind. At that time, I took it as a sign from my Higher Power that I should go ahead and pick up that chip.

Looking back now at that time in recovery, I see more than ever what a free and

(Continued on page 3)

IN THE
NEXT ISSUE:

Story: "Replacing Destructive Behaviors with Healthy Ones"
Theme: Steps 2-12 are coming in future issues of The Essay!

This is SA's meeting in print.
We need your group news, articles, and personal stories.

Sexaholics Anonymous...

is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover.

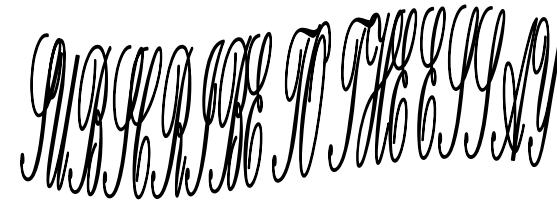
The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop lusting and become sexually sober. There are no dues or fees for SA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions.

SA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization, or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes.

Our primary purpose is to stay sexually sober and help others to achieve sexual sobriety.*

Sexaholics Anonymous is a recovery program based on the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous and received permission from AA to use its Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions in 1979.

**Adapted with permission from the AA Grapevine, Inc.*



Dear Essay Reader

Thank you for reading this issue of the Essay, our Fellowship's quarterly magazine. Our hope is that the Essay can increasingly reflect the breadth of sobriety and recovery in SA and also be a "meeting in print." Here we can share our experience, strength and hope with one another as part of our Twelfth Step work.

SA members can subscribe individually and through their groups. One year (four issues) costs \$10.00 US. A group subscription of 10 or more copies sent to the same address is \$8.00 US each. Payment can be by credit card, check or money order. An order form and return envelope are enclosed with this issue.

Recently we asked each Intergroup to help The Essay progress. We hope to have an Intergroup Representative to The Essay. We will invite Essay representatives to solicit ideas and materials for future issues of The Essay and also give them materials to help your local groups subscribe to The Essay. We also will ask the help of Intergroup Representatives with future issues of The Essay. You can contact us at essay@sa.org or by mail.

Thank you for your support of The Essay.

Sincerely,

The Essay Interim Editors

Essay Editorial Guidelines

The *Essay* is answerable to the fellowship as a whole. 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 SA International 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 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. We like to receive articles electronically for ease of editing. Send articles to the SA International Central Office, attention of the *Essay* editor. Email should be addressed to saico@sa.org. All articles need to be in English. All articles must contain an address, telephone number, or email address so that authenticity can be verified. This information will remain confidential. 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.

(Continued from page 1)

unexpected gift sobriety was, but I also see my recovery as a continuum. At the time, it seemed to come like a bolt from the blue, but now I see a Higher Power preparing me for that gift for ten years. Intermittently during that time I was experiencing glimpses of sanity. In other words, without knowing it I was experiencing the Second Step. That healing and gradual release from the insanity of addiction began before sobriety and, thank God, has continued until today.

The main agent of sanity for me was Alcoholics Anonymous – and I'm not even an alcoholic! In 1975, I discovered that I qualified as an Al-Anon and began going to meetings, but I soon found myself going to more AA meetings than Al-Anon. I certainly needed Al-Anon, but I felt more at home at AA than anywhere else in the world. I didn't know why, but I kept going back. My recall of those days is not so sharp, but I would guess that I attended three or four meetings a week, mostly open-discussion AA. I didn't take a sponsor (How, I asked myself, could I tell a sponsor that I lived in a fantasy world, masturbated compulsively, and molested children?), and I didn't work the steps. I just showed up again and again for five years. I soaked in the attention and the sense of self-worth that I got from the alcoholics and the Al-Anons, and I soaked in the sense of honesty around the tables. Emotional and literal honesty was something I had very little experience with because, in my mind, the truth about me was too terrible.

During the first five years, I saw lots of alcoholics walk in the door. Those who kept coming back and got sober became beautiful. That's the only way I could describe it. I saw it again and again, men and women, young and old, becoming beautiful. That

made an impression on me. I didn't know what it meant to be beautiful, but I wanted it for myself.

During that time – after considerable stalling, and still without a sponsor – I started working the Steps. As I worked the first three Steps and started to talk about the Steps and about my feelings at meetings, the experience of others that I had been hearing around those tables began to make sense to me. I began to understand what they meant by gratitude and acceptance and prayer – not praying for what I wanted, but praying for God's will for me.

1980 was quite a year. My first marriage broke up; I hit bottom sexually; I had a Second Step experience; and I worked the Fourth and Fifth Steps. I can't tell you what order they came in. I was drunk with obsession much of the time, and I don't have a clear memory of what happened when.

But I do remember something of how the Second Step came to me. I was sitting in an AA discussion meeting that I had attended religiously for four years. I don't remember the topic. It came to me – I didn't know where from – that all my life I had felt responsible for knowing how events around me were supposed to work and even for making it happen. In other words, sometime early in life I had put myself in the place of God. I had been to enough meetings by that time to understand the absurdity of my thinking. In a flash, I saw that I had a choice between, on the one hand, continuing to take responsibility for making things turn out right – through manipulation and my own personal anguish – or, on the other hand, letting go and letting God – acknowledging that there was a power greater than myself.

“Came to believe that a power greater

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than ourselves...” – now that part of the Second Step was more than a collection of words to me. It was a promise of release from a life of burden and misery. There I was, un-sober and numb much of the time, but I had nevertheless been given a glimpse of sanity.

It was another five years before I was ready for the gift of sobriety. Now I don't see that as lost time, but as a time of preparation. After I hit bottom in 1980, I went to more AA meetings than before. And I began telling my story to others, one on one, because I knew that Bill W. had stayed sober before he met Dr. Bob by finding drunks to tell his story to. Not expecting to find anyone else like me, I sought out a few people that I thought I could try to tell my story to, mainly sober alcoholics and members of my church. I was learning to bring the inside out. I molested no children, one day at a time.

But I was continuously drunk. Drinking with my eyes. Living in fantasy stories – and believing in them. Never going more than 36 hours without masturbating. Yes, I tried again and again to stop masturbating, and when I occasionally made it to 36 hours I would feel heroic, as if I had set an Olympic record. But then I would masturbate four or five times in the next eight hours to celebrate. I was a sick man, and I had no name for my sickness but “perversion.”

Yet God was preparing me. I remember (and

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“Our stories disclose in a general way...”

Most articles in the *Essay* are sent in by members and by SA groups. We are always interested in short articles on how we apply the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts in our daily life and service to others, our families, and the Fellowship.

The *Essay* is our meeting in print. Your contribution on working the Steps and Traditions and the impact of your recovery on family, finances and friends are always of interest. The *Essay* also has themes from time to time, such as on our sexaholic experience with the internet. Deadline for submissions for the next issue is February 1, 2002. Here's how to contact us:

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The Twelve Traditions of Sexaholics Anonymous

The Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics 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 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.
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 purpose.
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The Twelve Steps of Sexaholics Anonymous

The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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. |
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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.

(Continued from page 4)

this is clearer in my memory) a weekly prayer meeting that a friend and I had at his service station, a two-man prayer meeting. I was learning to bring the inside out. I had shared my story with my friend, and we shared our spiritual journeys week by week. I remember telling him more times than once that my craziness always started in my head with a fantasy. Nobody taught me that, and I didn't figure it out; it was an understanding that came to me from somewhere else, sick as I was.

That's why in 1985 I was willing to pick up a white chip and let go of the fantasy starts one day, one hour, one minute at a time. But now I see that I didn't get sober in four days or in three weeks. For me, the gift of sobriety was a miracle, alright, but it was a miracle of the educational variety. For ten years God was preparing me so that, by the time I learned of this fellowship of sex addicts, I was ready to be sober.

Now I'm beautiful! That's right, I'm beautiful – not perfect, but worthy of God's love and of your love and able to love you. I used to think I was incapable of love. Now I know that when I surrender my will to God's, I can be a blessing to others.

Today, life is good, but it's not easy. Although the compulsion to masturbate has been removed from me, I still want the fantasy. I still want that first drink. There have been times when I've felt like I'm hanging on to my sobriety by my fingernails, and only repeated prayers for surrender and lots of phone calls can bring reprieve. I call another addict and say, "There's a fantasy that keeps coming into my head, and right now I want it more than I want sobriety" – and the action of making the call opens the door to surrender. Or I say, "I really don't want to make this call, but I'm in the damned habit!" I acknowledge my powerlessness to the other,

and I'm freed for the time being.

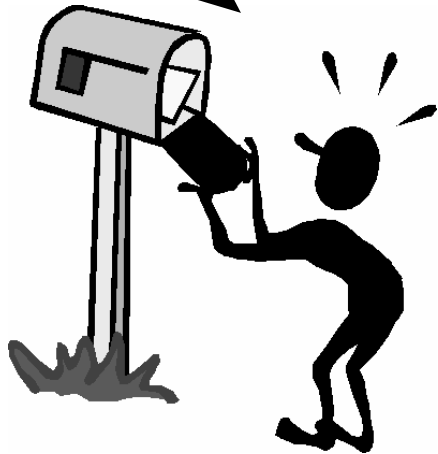
I continue to experience periods of powerlessness over my ego and fear. My wife can tell you that I'm not an easy person to live with. But, we have a good marriage. My wife works her program and I work mine. We don't try to sponsor each other; but, we do share our hopes and fears. I'm able to listen to her pretty well without trying to fix her (Well, not too often, anyway), and when I'm not capable of listening, I tell her that. God gives her and me the patience to work through the daily give and take of child-rearing, job pressures, and our individual bumps and rough spots.

I have more patience with myself as well. Most days I am able to accept my powerlessness and to experience gratitude for the healing and the sanity God has given me. I didn't used to be patient. Giving up my former role as the Higher Power has been a very slow process. When I first started working with my sponsor, we had quite a struggle with that. I was still trying to figure a lot of things out. I wanted to know what was driving me to do the things I did, what was driving others to do the things they did, what I should do to make things come out right. I wanted to know "what the issues are behind all this," as a caller said to me recently. I thought it was my responsibility to reason things through and come up with answers, with solutions – the quicker, the better. Now I know that reason never got me to the truth. The truth comes as a gift from a power greater than myself.

"When it's time for you to start thinking," my sponsor told me back then, "I'll let you know." He hasn't given me the go-ahead yet, and today I'm not in a hurry.

LETTERS & FEEDBACK

My favorite part!



Stopping Versus Slowing Down

Have you reached the point where you can admit that stopping lusting might be possible, but you cannot slow down? When I first started going to SA, I just wanted to slow down. I was so deep into the lust world that I did not see lust as a problem. I just wanted to stop masturbating compulsively and have a real relationship with a woman.

I did not realize I would have to stop lusting; that lust was the real problem. It took a lot of meetings and relapse to come to the realization that it was just one day at a time.

If I stay connected to my SA program, get a sponsor, and work the steps around anger, fear, and guilt, then the chances are I will not set myself up to lust one day at a time.

I can't, God can, so I'll let Him. It's too hard to try to stay sober from lust on my own. Without my Higher Power, the group, literature and tapes, using the telephone, getting honest, and SA functions, I don't have a chance.

Lust is powerful, cunning and baffling. Without God's help it's too much for me.

Will L., Denver, CO



From Cape Girardeau, Missouri

By the way our Saturday meeting at La Croix United Methodist is doing well. We have about eight people who come, the most we've had at one time is six and it seems to fluctuate. Two weeks ago I was the only one there and last week there were four of us. I think we've been going for two years now? If you don't give up they will come!

Blessings, Ken S.

Calendar of Events

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

May 2002, SA / S-Anon Retreat, Battle Lake Camp, AB, Canada, sponsored by Edmonton Intergroup. Contact intergroup at 780/988-4411.

Upcoming International Conventions

January 11 – 1, 2002, SA / S-Anon International Conference, College Park, GA, sponsored by Georgia State Intergroup. Theme: Courage to Change. Contacts are SA at 678/717-2637, S-Anon at 678/717-2638, or email to courageconf2002sa@earthlink.net.

July 14– 14, 2002, SA / S-Anon International Convention, Portland, OR, sponsored by Portland area SA / S-Anon groups. Theme: Discovery. Contact Intergroup at 503/224-9840 or send email to discovery_portland@email.com.

January 2003, to be determined.

July 2003, SA / S-Anon International Convention, Chicago, IL, sponsored by Chicago Intergroup. Contact Intergroup at 630/415-0341.

[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.]

Seventh Tradition

Third Quarter Donations July - September 2001

Akron, OH	70.00	Fremont, CA	53.00	San Francisco, CA	100.00
Albuquerque, NM	10.00	Fremont CFC	26.00	San Jose, CA	34.40
Anaheim, CA	180.00	Ft Lauderdale, FL	1.85	San Jose CFC	68.80
Annapolis, MD	20.00	Asheville, NC	30.00	Savannah, GA	154.00
		Georgia IG	499.65	Seattle, WA	620.00
Atlanta, GA	172.76	Glen Ellyn, IL	350.00	Seattle CFC	240.00
Baltimore, MD	24.00	Glen Ellyn CFC	200.00	Silver Spring, MD	189.25
Australian Conference	50.00	Grand Rapids, MI	100.00	Silver Spring SACC	57.50
Bannockburn, IL	110.00	Idaho Falls, ID	62.00	Somerville, MA	96.50
Barrie, ON, Canada	100.00	Langhorne, PA	33.00	Somerville CFC	48.00
Bellevue, WA	93.65	Leesburg, VA	277.00	So Barrington, IL	230.00
Billings, MT	10.00	Lincoln, NE	115.00	So Barrington CFC	120.00
Binghamton, NY	42.50	Lincoln CFC	40.00	Springfield, VA	100.00
Birmingham, AL	60.22	London England	75.00	St Louis, MO CFC	100.00
Bozeman, MT	100.00	Long Island, NY	81.55	Syracuse, NY	200.00
Brooklyn, NY	174.00	Los Altos, CA	100.00	Syracuse CFC	200.00
Brooklyn CFC	22.17	Los Angeles, CA	40.00	Timonium, MD	194.81
Calgary, AB, Canada	223.06	Modesto, CA	3.86	Toledo, OH	50.00
Camarillo, CA	53.00	Montreal QC Canada	66.00	Towson, MD	14.00
Camarillo CFC	17.00	Mt Rainier, MD	21.00	Trenton, MI	106.00
Cambridge, MA	195.00	Nashville, TN	667.00	Troy, MI	300.00
Cedar Rapids, IA	13.05	New Jersey IG	50.00	Tukwila, WA	15.00
Chicago IG	338.00	Newberg, OR	149.05	Tukwila CFC	15.00
Chicago IG CFC	262.50	NYC	300.00	Twin Cities, MN	240.00
Chino, CA	100.00	NYC CFC	200.00	Twin Cities CFC	20.00
Cleveland, OH	50.00	Oakland, CA	60.00	Vancouver, WA	32.59
Cochise, AZ	31.00	Oakland CFC	78.00	Vienna, VA	150.00
Crystal City VA	186.00	Odyssey Conference CFC	1124.85	Vienna CFC	50.00
Crystal Lake, IL	80.00	Ogden, UT	80.00	Washington, DC	347.28
Dallas, TX	150.00	OKC Intergroup, OK	10.00	Washington DC CFC	53.00
Darien, IL	70.00	Palm Desert, CA	125.00	Wheeling, WV	119.00
Darien CFC	40.00	Penn Hills, PA CFC Wed	82.50	Wheeling/Steubenville IG	60.00
Daytona Beach, FL	17.94	Penn Hills, PA CFC Fri	32.76	Wheeling/Steubenville Rtr	150.00
Daytona CFC	17.94	Philadelphia, PA IG	1400.00	Woodbridge, VA	95.20
Delmar, NY	50.00	Phoenix, AZ	82.00	Woodbridge CFC	40.80
Denver, CO	120.00	Pittsburgh, PA	25.00	Woodstock, IL	60.00
Erie, PA	129.68	Pittsburgh CFC	25.00	Yonkers, NY	26.00
Escondido, CA	45.00	Portland, OR	197.00	Yorba Linda, CA	238.00
Essington, PA	64.00	Provo Orem, UT	65.00	York, PA	25.00
Fairbanks, AK	100.00	Rochester, NY	523.48		
Fairfax, VA	304.00	Rockford, IL	75.00		
Fairfax CFC	16.00	Rockland County, NY	80.00	Group Total	15,260.39
Federal Way, WA	70.10	Roswell, GA	108.00	SA CFC Total	2,137.96
Federal Way CFC	46.73	Salt Lake City, UT	80.00		
Frederick, MD	42.00	Sand Diego, CA	93.45	Grand Total	17,398.35

Get a Sponsor!

I spent the first several months foun-
dering about. I “knew” from AA that I
would need a sponsor. I am not proud that
I waited so long to ask someone to be my
sponsor, and I do not recommend the de-
lay unless you *really, really* enjoy pain,
isolation, and misery. *To date, I have
never known or even heard of a person
recovering without the aid of a sponsor.*
If you think you might be the first, go for
it. But be warned that many of these
“Lone Rangers” end up dying of the dis-
ease. Delay is dangerous; rebellion may
be fatal.

Bill S., South Carolina

Updated SA Website Comment

Hi. I noticed today that you've up-
dated the SA website. I last visited the site
on or around Oct. 1 when it was the old
version. Today I went to the site to reread
parts of it, but I found the new version
considerably stripped down.

Why did you remove the definition of
the Problem and the Solution? Before I
found a meeting where I could get a pam-
phlet it was helpful for me to have my
wife read those sections when I first told
her about my sex addiction, but if I were
to go to the site today I wouldn't have had
those same resources.

I'm sure there are thoughtful, consider-
ate reasons for the changes, but I wanted
to let you know how I was able to use the
old site.

Thanks for reading,
Matt R.

*Ed. Note: The copyright holder in mid-
October revoked SA's permission to use
these materials on our web site.*

Don't Quit!

As I sit here on the New York City
subway, I have seven years in the program
and one day of sexual sobriety. Triggers
of every kind surround me and it seems
impossible for me not to lust. Add this all
up, and it equals just one thought in my
mind – FAILURE!!! And that is exactly
what my disease (my addict, the devil,
whatever I call it) wants me to believe.

A good friend in the program once told
me after a meeting (where I had just
shared that I was totally dejected after yet
another slip) that it's not God who wants
me to feel that way. God doesn't give up,
and neither should I. “Don't quit before
the miracle” is a slogan that I heard in my
early recovery that has helped me to keep
coming back – again and again.

When I first began the program I was a
professional actor and had to go on a na-

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(Continued from page 7)

tional tour. How was I possibly going to stay sober out there, in my former playground? A member (who later became my sponsor) told me to attend as many meetings as possible. “If you can’t find an SA meeting”, he told me, “go to an open AA meeting. Tell them you’re an addict, sit there, and listen.”

My first stop was Mobile, Alabama – about as far and different from New York City as I can get. I called the local AA intergroup, called a cab, and in a half-hour was at a meeting. As I walked nervously into the old clubhouse, there hanging over the door was the sign, “KEEP COMING BACK”. I knew I was home – that I was going to be all right. (Since that first meeting in Mobile I have attended meetings all over the country and as far around the globe as Hong Kong.)

It is miraculous that God has always kept me coming back - mostly out of fear of the disease and knowing that the inevitable progression will lead me to physical, emotional, and spiritual death. But I have to remind myself of this every day. And when I don’t – when I think I’m “cured” or in the clear – that it’s “no big deal” or I can handle it – that’s when I am in trouble.

Slipping is an unfortunate fact for many of us. It’s not “OK “ to slip. It’s never OK. I know from all I have learned from my fellow SA’s and the trust that I have in God (as imperfect as it may be) that sobriety is the only way for me. So when I fall I have to get up again. To stay down would be the end. It’s very hard starting over again, but I

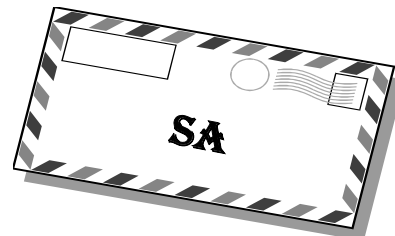
have to. I have no other choice. And while some may conclude that all this slipping in our program means there is something wrong in SA, to keep coming back is still the difference between life and death.

And so it is my prayer today to stay sober today – with all the other addicts and SAs that I know and those I do not know. We all have to stay sober for the same 24 hours. Today is no different if it’s day 1 or day 2001. It’s a day at a time; it’s easy does it; it’s keep it simple. It’s go to a meeting; it’s work the steps. No matter what happens, no matter how low you feel, it’s don’t quit and keep coming back.

So to all my fellow addicts who are struggling today to stay sober, I say that although you may feel alone (which I often do) there are others who are struggling exactly the same way you are. You are NOT alone. And no matter how down you may feel, you are NOT a failure. God does not want you to feel that way. He loves you and wants you to be happy.

So no matter what happens, please, don’t quit. Just keep coming back. God and your fellows will always be waiting there to greet you – with loving, open arms.

Mike C., NYC / Long Island, NY



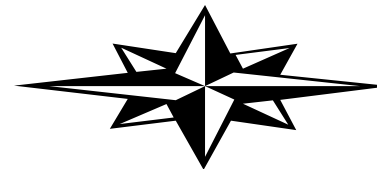
a father. But God has placed in my heart the understanding that if I return each stroke she delivers out of pain and fear with love and hope, we will both be healed.

Having lost a small fortune, I’ve come to realize how little such things matter. Winning the rat-race is no victory at all. The real treasures are those of the heart. The twinkle in a loved one’s eyes, the smile on a child’s face, the tears that flow from reconciliation and forgiveness are the true treasure of this life — and the next.

In our meetings, I am surrounded by men who are no longer blinded by their egos. They have faced their own corruption, and understand what Hope, Faith, and Love really mean.

Many people think that hate is the opposite of love. It is not. Fear is the enemy of love. Fear keeps a person from knowing him or her self, from knowing others, and especially from knowing God. Examine your fears in humble courage and you will find your greatest revelations—and your greatest peace.

Sincerely,
Mark F., Michigan

A decorative border with a repeating geometric pattern. Inside the border, at the top, is an illustration of several balloons (black, white, and grey) and hearts, tied together with a ribbon.

New Meetings!

- ◆ Harrisburg, PA
- ◆ Jonesboro, AR
- ◆ Topeka, KS

SACFC NEWS

SA CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES COMMITTEE

Dear Essay,

I am one of the twenty-five inmates, here at Adrian, MI, that Keith S. wrote about in your last issue. Thank you, Keith, for so many things.

Our weekly S. A. meetings are nothing short of inspirational. With little left to lose, those who attend our group do so in humility, courage, and a deep sense of need. Many, if not most, of us understand that Spirit-led self-examination is the key to finding the root of any addiction. Plans are being made for a second group as the word spreads of S.A.'s healing message and gentle effectiveness.

On a personal note: four years ago, I lived as a world-traveling executive who could wake up in Tokyo and go to sleep that night in Paris. One day, I surveyed my boat at the end of the dock I'd built, looked over my cars in the driveway, and slurped the super-sized vodka martini I'd just made. Sighing in quiet desperation, I painfully waited for my wife of eighteen months to come home from partying with her friends. In loneliness and resentment, I felt my heart open. From somewhere deep within, I asked the empty room, "Is this all there is to life?"

God, I am only just a tool, certainly. You must know how to use me. Can you use me, Lord?"

Six-months-later I was in prison.

Divorced, stripped of twenty-five years of hard honest work, I'd lost everything including my honor and self-respect. Obviously, I didn't know what I'd asked of God. He had no use for a pride-filled arrogant fool, so one of us had to change!

Now, four years, later, I find myself working on the things that really matter. Tempered in God's crucible of the soul, and guided by the Twelve Steps, I am chipping away at the walls of those "this fool" had hurt. Like a plow blade, I am cultivating the land of forgiveness which I am convinced is heaven's realm on earth. And one yearning soul at a time, I am planting the healing seeds of love and caring.

My estranged daughter of twenty-one-years is finally writing me, even though she still expresses her feelings of rejection and abandonment. I relish this information. All of my years of selfishness — caring only for my addiction — kept her from having

Dear Abby Article July 2, 2001: Sexaholics Anonymous can help man addicted to strip bars



Dear Abby is written by Pauline Phillips and daughter Jeanne Phillips. Write to Abby at P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Dear Abby: My wife and I have been married four years. I love her very much, and we have a good marriage. Years ago I became fascinated with strip bars. I even dated a couple of strippers in the past. My problem is I can't seem to stay away from these strip clubs. I go once or twice a week. My wife is very strait-laced. She would probably leave me if she found out. I have thought about joining a group for men with sexual addiction at our church to help me overcome this problem, but I'm afraid if I start attending weekly meetings she'll find out.

- Hooked in Portland

Dear Hooked: You have already taken an important step by admitting you have a problem with sexual addiction. Since you are concerned about issues of confidentiality if you join your church group, consider contacting Sexaholics Anonymous. The organization has chapters all across the United States. For more information about Sexaholics Anonymous, write: SA, P.O. Box 111910, Nashville, TN 37222-1910 or call 615-331-6230.

As seen in a DEAR ABBY column by Pauline Phillips and Jeanne Phillips.
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SA AND THE INTERNET

A Plan For Internet Heroin: Cybersex got me into SA.

For over 30 years I had pretty much controlled and enjoyed my acting out, or at least (in my pre-recovery, delusional thinking) thought I had. Nine quick and horrific months after gaining access to the Internet, I was in a sex-addiction therapy group and had become an active member of Sexaholics Anonymous.

Within the first month of joining the Fellowship, I was able to stop masturbating and interacting sexually with strangers over the Net, but I continued to struggle with Internet porn well into my second year of recovery. I had a "Safety Plan" which was designed to keep me sober on the computer. In addition to SA meetings, I was attending a closed meeting of "graduates" of the therapy group. After listening repeatedly to my weekly reports of how I had fudged on my Plan and had yet again gotten into trouble on the Internet, the most soft-spoken member of our group looked me in the eye and said, "You've convinced me that your Plan isn't working." Much as I didn't want to hear it, the truth of his comment was undeniable.

I revised my plan, and it has served me well ever since. The plan now consists of two primary parts: one that requires me to interact with another Sexaholic and one that I perform alone. I call a member of the Fellowship, tell them I'm planning to sign on, and commit to them *specifically* what I will and won't do while on-line. (I've learned that I'm much more likely to keep promises I make to other Sexaholics

than ones I make to myself.) I also promise then to read my "Reflection Card" before signing on. If I don't feel safe after reading it, I delay going on the net.

My Reflection Card contains truths, questions, reminders and prayers that I must contemplate with rigorous honesty if I'm to have any chance of staying sober on the internet.

The truths are:

- ◆ **I CAN'T STOP!** (Hi-lighted, and in red letters; my extensive research has proven this to be an irrefutable fact for me).
- ◆ **I am powerless over lust, pornography and the Internet.**
- ◆ **I am not safe on the Internet.**

The questions are:

- ◆ **What am I feeling right now?**
- ◆ **What are my motives for signing on?**

The reminders include:

- ◆ **I am not signing on: 1) to be sexual, 2) to have contact (including visual) with women, 3) to reward myself, or 4) to soothe or comfort my feelings.**
- ◆ **I am signing on: 1) to conduct business, or 2) to connect with friends and family.**
- ◆ **Call and Commit.** (If I haven't done this already, as described above. Sometimes I'll "bookend" by calling again after I've signed off. That second call is a great reward -- it's such a pleasure to report a success!)

The idea of sharing the shameful secrets I had written did not appeal to me. People in this fellowship speak of leading with their weakness. Where I grew up, revealing a weakness was like bleeding in front of a school of sharks. I was also afraid that after I shared some of the violent, abusive details of my acting out, I would be asked to leave. Had I thought that I could recover without the support of the group, I would have refused (or at least postponed) presenting this Step to the group. However, my fear of returning to my acting out was greater than my fear of how the group might respond.

The support and acceptance I received from the group as I shared my 1st Step broke through much of the fear and shame I was carrying. I began to believe that I was no longer alone; that I had found a group of people who understood my problem and welcomed me. Immediately after I finished sharing, a man who had come into the fellowship shortly after I did, told me that I had just told his story. Seeing the loving response of the group, he was less frightened to share his 1st Step. This reduction of shame, fear, and isolation is one of the greatest benefits of the 1st Step. Another is that if you are thorough in this effort, you will have written evidence of the nature and severity of your condition. You will begin to see the truth about yourself and your addiction.



SA Haiku

Surrender I must.
That simply means to
give up
My right to myself.

When lust enters in
Judgment flies out the
window.
Wisdom follows, too!

We work the 9th Step
And hope to be forgiven
As we forgive all.

--Keith S. MI

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trying to hold a conversation with a friend while being consumed with lust for the person across the room; etc.)

I was also told to make another list of examples of the unmanageability in my life, which were the *consequences* of my addiction. Sometimes I could identify a direct consequence of an episode from the first list and place it on the second. However, there were other consequences which were the cumulative result of years of pursuing lust. Areas to search for consequences included damaged relationships with family, lost friendships, missed opportunities in my career, legal scrapes, financial costs, time wasted in the pursuit of lust, and so on.

I tried to look at as many areas of my life as possible where my addiction had caused difficulty. The result was not pretty. There were some particularly painful consequences in relationships, especially with my wife and child. There were some losses, which I realized could never be regained. I refer to these heartbreaking examples as “silver bullets”. I still have the written list available. Whenever my disease tells me that lust will provide excitement, fun, or relief, I look at this list of what my pursuit of lust *really* brings. This is the written truth about my disease.

This Step will very likely bring up some uncomfortable feelings as you see the truth written before you. I have spent afternoons at my sponsor’s home writing my inventory while he worked in his yard or another room. Just having him close by gave me a sense of safety that allowed me to trudge through the pain, fear and shame. I have written other inventories at “workshops” where a group of recovering people have met at a picnic shelter in a local park and supported each other as we wrote about some really painful experiences. Church basements, private homes, or similar gathering places allow us to do together what we cannot do alone.

Do not be surprised if some of this work arouses or triggers lust. Lust was my reaction to *almost any* strong emotion for most of my life. If it happens to you, when you are writing on this or any of the later Steps, take a break and thank God for reminding you that you are a *real* sexaholic.

Once I had written these lists, I sat down with my sponsor to review them. He confronted me on some items where I seemed to be enjoying the “shock value” rather than seeing my powerlessness and unmanageability. He helped me word the examples in a way that told the truth, without embellishment or drama, and respected the feelings of the group members who would hear my 1st Step.

The prayers are:

- ◆ **God, please remove the urge to be sexual on the Internet today.**
- ◆ **God, please grant me the willingness and power to delete all unsolicited email, without opening it.**

The Card also lists the **Seemingly Irrelevant Decision** that has started me down the slope so often: namely, signing on without calling, committing, reflecting and praying first, and **The Big Lie** that I told myself countless times: that I would stop before the images.

I’m happy to report that following the revised Plan has worked every time I’ve worked it. I need to be honest and also report that when I neglect it, I’m just as powerless and vulnerable as ever. Several months ago, I signed on without following the procedures, and was typing pornographic words into a search engine when I received a call from a sponsee. Too drunk to save myself, I continued to play with fire (telling myself, of course, that I would “stop before the images”) until a *second* sponsee called! Only then did I recognize God’s efforts to keep me sober, and bailed out. Hopefully, that scared me enough that I’ll be willing to leave further “unprotected Internet” research to other people. Every time I hear their reports at meetings, I’m eternally grateful that God is relieving me of that job.

- Anonymous

Internet Recovery

I was a pornography addict working for an internet service provider who developed video over the internet. This was a blessing (if you ask my sponsor) and a curse (if you ask me).

Like a drunk who went from hard liquor to beer, I shifted from hard core to chats, from chats to personals, and then from personals to on-line games with chat capabilities. I thought I could control this insidious obsession which promised immediate relief from any emotional discomfort. This visual opium was killing my soul. After meeting in person someone I met on-line, acting out with her, becoming suicidal, spending a month in an in-patient treatment center, and facing a possible divorce, I conceded my defeat.

I changed careers to a job with very limited time in front of the computer. One of my boundaries has been to not get on the internet without “book-ending” it; in other words, calling another sexaholic at the beginning and the end of my browsing experience. The pain of having to do that quenched my desire to waste time surfing those perilous waters of the cyber world. I only got on the net when I really had to do it.

With September 11 events, I justified my “need” to stay in touch with the latest news without book-ending my searches. “This is an emergency. I deserve to know what is happening in the world. Besides, I can handle this.” Pretty soon, I convinced myself that my recent five months of sobriety and hard work in recovery almost cured me of the internet addiction. Until one day when the stress of work, the struggle to save my marriage and ignoring HALTs lit up that old fire in my belly. That familiar call of the wild tried to sell me once more on a few megabytes of my favorite drug. The truth is, that a gazillion bytes would not quiet the silent scream of my soul, but God can. Today I am no longer willing to trade my life for the fantasy of the right picture.

In my powerlessness, I began using a web address accountability service. Everywhere I

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browse, at home or at work, two people I trust in recovery get a list of the sites I visit and the time I spend on them. On hard days, book-ending still works. At my wife's request, we got internet service at home through a family-targeted, filtered ISP that get filtered once more with special software residing on our computer. My wife is the only one who has the internet access password. If I tried I could beat any of these systems, but today, I choose not to. I don't know about tomorrow.

Ervin G.



The Final Straw

Although I had owned a computer since 1994, I never once ventured into the murky seas of lust-driven Internet surfing - not even through four years of graduate school during which I spent hours doing online research. Not until June this year. This proved to be the final straw that led to acting out after thirteen years of sobriety.

It started with searching "out of curiosity" for web sites that might carry the name of a young female co-worker whom I had been finding extremely triggery over the past year. It led to some serious cruising through lustful images of female celebrities, and, finally, the "standard" porno sites maintained by magazines. What followed for two days was a masturbation/lust binge that included acting out in front of the TV, buying my first porno magazine since 1988, and acting out in the car.

I threw myself back into the SA program and "quickly" racked up 51 sober days - out of sheer desperation. However, complacency, ego, and resentment took over and then I

sputtered and slipped off and on for two weeks.

This included a seven-day stretch of almost daily acting out in front of the TV and computer, during which my disease took off full-throttle. My fantasies included creating a "romantic/lustful" relationship with pictures of a popular female athlete. I would sneak out of the bedroom in the middle of the night, leaving my sleeping wife, and act out downstairs in front of the TV or upstairs in front of the computer.

What happened? I had virtually stopped praying or meditating, making phone calls, doing 10th step inventories, and sponsoring others. I attended a small meeting that included three people, one who constantly struggled with sobriety, the second, a newcomer who never attended other meetings, and me, an "old-timer" who didn't consistently work the steps.

With a pregnant wife, an energetic toddler, mounting pressure at work, late nights, and cessation of a formerly regular exercise routine, I was ripe for a fall. What kept me from acting out for months was a 13-year habit of NOT masturbating. I had reached the point where acting out felt unnatural. Yet, my system played around with lust, which often reared its head at work, in department stores, and in the marriage bed. Toward the end, I felt like a boxer who was being knocked around the ring but who stayed on his feet by leaning on the ropes, clinching, backpedaling, etc.

In the end, I simply tried to control my recovery and turned my back on God. Now I want him to take over again. I feel like a newcomer once again. I pray for God's guidance and saving grace. Truly, only God can save the sexaholic. God, oh God, please

help me. ●

PRACTICAL TOOLS FOR RECOVERY: STEP 1

Alcoholics Anonymous, Chapter 5 "How It Works" says, "Here are the steps we took which are suggested as a program of recovery." The recovery programs of AA and SA are the 12 Steps. Going to meetings is not working the program. Calling your sponsor is not working the program. Participating in the fellowship is not working the program. All these actions can strengthen our recovery, but unless you are actively taking the Steps, you are not working the SA program.

While our fellowship is just passing 20 years, AA is over 60 years old. Despite our relative youth, Sexaholics Anonymous has demonstrated that the spiritual program which has helped *millions* of alcoholics recover can also be equally successful with an addiction to lust.

The purpose of these articles is to share some very concrete and practical experience on how the set of spiritual tools we call the 12 Steps can be applied to your life so that you can join the thousands who are recovering from sexaholism. When I arrived at Sexaholics Anonymous, I saw people who had suffered from the same

slavery to lust that had driven me to despair. But these people were smiling, laughing and seemed to be building happy and useful lives. I knew that if I wanted what they had, I would have to do what they had done.

1. We admitted we were powerless over lust - that our lives had become unmanageable.

When I arrived at my first SA meeting, I was told that I needed to write out my 1st Step and share it with a group of SA members. Even though I had been in AA for several years, I had never heard of *writing* a 1st Step. I was told to make a list of examples of my powerlessness over lust: missing important events so I could act out; placing myself and others at risk of physical harm, arrest, or disease; sex with people I did not like; engaging in activities that disgusted and overwhelmed me with shame; and on it went. They said not to overlook the times that *lust* interfered with a precious relationship, even though that person was not the object of my lust (acting out with my sister's best friend thus harming my relationship with my sister;

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