

Essay®

A Quarterly Publication of Sexaholics Anonymous, Incorporated

*God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
courage to change the things I can,
and wisdom to know the difference.*

Replacing Destructive Behaviors With Healthy Ones

The first recollections of my addiction are from the summer of 1961. I would be nine in August and I had just moved to a new subdivision. The only other boy in the neighborhood was four years older than I, and he was pretty lonely, since his parents both worked. We began to spend time with one another, and since he had a house all to himself, most of our time together was spent there. It was in the privacy of his house one day that he introduced me to pornography. The pictures were hidden in his father's dresser drawer and were very tame by today's standards, but they were very compelling to me; my heart raced and I tingled with excitement. Then he suggested that we remove our clothes and smoke cigarettes, the pictures took on a whole new dimension. I was hooked from the first viewing and longed for opportunities to get lost in this exciting new experience.

The escape was a welcome relief from my family life. My father had been given

an ultimatum by my mother when I was five to quit drinking or risk losing his family. He had begun to slip into periods of deep depression during which he would retreat to his bedroom and not speak to the family for several days. When he did speak, he would rage at my mother and threaten to leave the family. I developed a sixth sense that slowed me to gauge my father's moods the instant I walked into the house. I escaped from the tension and abuse at home by turning to the pleasure that the pictures provided. My friend soon explained how to masturbate to increase the sensations, and I would spend countless hours for the next 24 years trying to achieve the ultimate sensory experience. I knew instinctively that I needed to keep my discovery to myself and I began to live in a secret world protected by my ability to lie and deceive. My life began to revolve around the adrenaline rush of finding a way to feed this insatiable hunger. I dreamed of

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IN THE
NEXT ISSUE:

Story: "Welcome Home"
Theme: Steps 2– 3 are coming
in 2002 issues of *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.*

Your E, I, & H Here

Dear *Essay* Reader,

Thank you for reading this issue of *Essay*, our Fellowship's quarterly magazine. Our hope is that *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.

Now available, the first two volumes of **Quintessential *Essay*** can be ordered from SA International Central Office. These volumes contain, respectively, six Member Stories and five Practical Recovery Tools harvested from past issues of *Essay*. The cost is \$5.00 each. We believe you will find these useful additions to your SA library and toolbox. Other editions will follow in this series.

You can contact us at essay@sa.org or by mail at *Essay*, PO Box 111910, Nashville, TN 37222-1910.

Thank you for your support of *Essay*.

Sincerely,

Essay Editorial Committee

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 essay@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)

possessing the objects of my lust, even though I wasn't quite sure what I would do with them when I had them.

Over the years, I required more explicit pornography to maintain or increase the level of excitement. I connected with friends who had porno stashes of their own, who would take me to the R- and X-rated movies that offered the next plateau of excitement. My slow physical development and shame connected with my body prevented me from dating until college, and the pent-up demand for physical contact with a woman was almost overwhelming. My first objective upon entering a relationship was to progress physically as quickly as possible, and when I began having intercourse at age 21, masturbation was still my constant companion. I used it like a medication, when I was restless and wanted to sleep, when I was tired and wanted energy, when I was happy and deserved a treat, and when I was sad and needed a lift.

As I got older, I decided that what I wanted in a relationship was the ultimate private stash. She needed to be intelligent and personable but most importantly she had to have the right type of body and enjoy sex as much as I did. I married her in 1980 and threw away my porno stash because I didn't think I needed it anymore. After all, we would have sex whenever I wanted it, wouldn't we? At first, I masturbated only when she was having her period; I needed the release, I told myself. As the frequency of sex in our marriage decreased, I began to fill in the dry periods with masturbation. I looked forward to my private time when I could engage in my

addiction at my leisure, usually with the R-rated movies on cable.

My behavior started to change in 1982, when I began my search for God. I became aware of how much time I was wasting with my habit. I tried to change, I had cable removed, I started to go back to church, and I tried to cut back on the masturbation which I still kept secret from my wife. I had limited success. I could go for periods of time, but would always fall back on my old behavior and feel completely defeated by it.

The pieces began to fall into place in the spring of 1984, when by accident, I turned on a TV talk show. I realize now that this accident would be one of the many miracles that my God would work in my life. The program dealt with sexual addiction and featured a man sitting behind a screen describing his addictive behavior. He was telling my story. I felt sick; my worst fears were confirmed; I really was a low-life. I stopped masturbating immediately; I assumed that like the alcoholic, I couldn't indulge in my drug any longer. What I didn't know was that I could not do it alone. The next year was a blur that culminated in separation from my wife and near loss of my job. During the stress of these events I had returned to my drug and was convinced that while I needed to stop, I could not.

I learned about SA in July 1985 through another miracle of God and stopped masturbating one day at a time on July 31, 1985, one week before my first meeting. I came to my first meeting scared, alone, embarrassed, and knowing what I needed and wanted to stop doing. I was com-

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pletely in the dark about how to go about it. I shared my story and heard others share theirs. The relief was indescribable, but the temptation to masturbate didn't disappear. I needed the Steps, to pray, and to use the telephone when the urge overcame me. As I withdrew from my habit, I learned that every aspect of my life was influenced by my addiction. Slowly, I began to replace the destructive behaviors with healthy ones, as I became aware of them. My sobriety in this program has allowed me to begin to feel my feelings instead of covering them with my drug.

Today, I am a recovering sexaholic and I am reminded daily that I will be for the rest of my life. My addiction is never far from me. It may appear in the form of the flash of some past sexual encounter, but today I have the option of calling upon my God to take this uncomfortable memory away and connect with Him, the source of my life. I am reminded nearly every time I attend a meeting of where I could be today if He had not made Himself known to me. Through the fellowship of this program, I am learning to relate to others and let down the defenses that served me so well in my childhood but have been so destructive in my adult life. I am so grateful to my brothers and sisters in this program

(Continued on page 5)



“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.

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. *Essay* also has themes from time to time, such as on our sexaholic experience with the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. Deadline for submissions for the next issue is May 1, 2002.

Electronic files are greatly appreciated, but we will accept typed and handwritten manuscripts, as well. Just send them in. You write; we'll fix the punctuation.

Additional guidelines for submissions are found on page 22.

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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 <i>as we understood Him</i>. 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 <i>as we understood Him</i>, 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 <i>as we understood Him</i>. 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 <i>as we understood Him</i>, 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)

who have shared their lives with me and I might be freed from this terrible bondage.

The previous paragraphs were written ten years ago. I just reread them for the first time in many years. It is hard for me to believe where I was then and where I am now in my recovery. Four years of sobriety seemed like so many then. Now, ten years later I realized that I have so much more to learn.

Ten years ago I had been divorced for two years and had relocated to a new city because of my job. I had learned in my recovery to that point that my identity as a man needed to be affirmed by other men; not by the women that my lust told me that I needed. I found our fellowship to be a safe haven where I could learn to become emotionally intimate with other recovering men. I learned valuable lessons about seeing friendships with people who wanted the same recovery that I wanted and about letting go of acquaintances that were centered around how they looked on the outside. After some success with my male relationships, the fellowship provided an opportunity to become emotionally intimate with women, again in the safety of our fellowship bond.

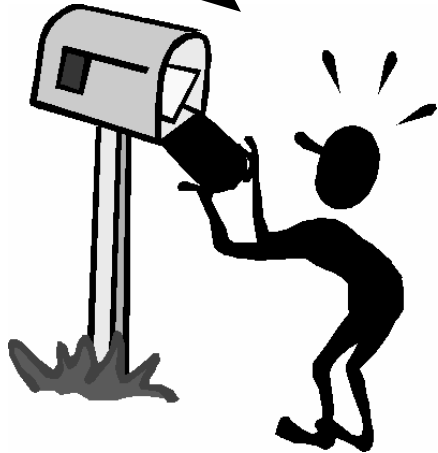
After four and one-half years of sobriety, I took the next step in my relationship recovery by asking a woman out on a date for dinner. During that first evening, as my mind contemplated spending a lifetime with this person, I could hear my sponsor's voice, also in my head, reminding me that this was about dinner! A lifetime relationship is built on the solid foundation of emotional intimacy . . . and that takes a lot of time and patience.

My dating experience ebbed and flowed over the next six years. It was only after I had come to peace with the fact that my life was doing just fine as a single man and that I could live the remainder of my life by myself, that it happened. I met the woman who was to become my wife. My new found peace gave me the freedom to risk letting her know who I really was. Not about my addiction at first, but about what I thought and what I felt. The honesty was like a clear shining light to her. While my desire to refrain from any physical contact with her was somewhat confusing at first, she felt encouraged enough to continue. Once she learned about my recovery, many questions were answered. New ones replaced them, such as, discussing the appropriate amount of physical contact for an engaged couple. With the support of my sponsor and others in the program who had preceded me in dating and marriage in sobriety, our courtship and engagement were a wonderful time of preparation for, and anticipation of, our new life together. My wife continues to support my recovery and words cannot express the joy that she has brought into my life.

Our marriage has been unbelievably blessed by God. One of the many proofs is our two-month-old son who is lying in a crib in the next room. When I shared the good news of our pregnancy and the discovery that we were going to have a son with my sister, her response was that the cycle was coming full circle. I was being given a chance by God to pass on a new legacy of sobriety and recovery to my son, one that he could pass on to his children. I am deeply humbled by the grace of God that I have found in this fellowship and I plan to keep coming back, one day at a

LETTERS & FEEDBACK

My favorite part!



Letter to the Essay:

I have been a member of SA since 1993. I receive a tremendous boost in my recovery by attending open AA meetings. In fact, I attend more AA meetings than SA meetings. Part of that is because of two particular differences between AA and SA: length of meetings, and stating length of sobriety.

The book "Sexaholics Anonymous" suggests that meetings be an hour and one-half long (p.177). The AA meetings I attend are only one hour long. I find that SA meetings longer than one hour

tend to stay too much in the problem, and go off beyond today's realities.

The book also suggests stating length of sobriety at each meeting (p.197). I hear AA's "re-introduce" when there's been a slip, but I only hear of length of sobriety when there's a sobriety anniversary, or in a member's sharing or lead. By stating my length of sobriety at every SA meeting and hearing others, I set myself up for grandiosity, or for heaping more negativity on my already low self-esteem.

The 12-step program of recovery shows me a new way of living. Meetings are very important and integral to my recovery. If the SA program of recovery is based on the principles of AA, I suggest we apply those AA principals at the meeting level as well.

Fran G.

Ed. Note: In many areas there are a mix of 1 hour and 1½ hour SA meetings. There is variation among meetings on stating one's length of sobriety, too.



SA Financial Snapshot

2001 Year End

Contributions	74,349.61
SACFC	9593.75
Conventions	10,634.12
Literature Sales	88,316.95
Discounts	-14,162.66
Refunds	.00
Interest	4,688.39
Essay	4,105.20

Total Revenues 177,525.36

Bank Charges	4.00
Credit Card Fees	1,854.63
Conference Fees	1,055.00
Depreciation	1,726.70
Interest Expense	29.00
Liability Insurance	444.00
Legal	20,548.56
Accounting	3,862.00
Literature expense	18,299.00
Payroll	63,737.44
Payroll Tax	4,940.01
Pension	5,452.59
Postage & Freight	15,381.07
Office Expense	3,896.92
Printing	334.05
Rent	7,492.00
Maintenance	894.62
Supplies	1,598.85
Sales Tax	1,181.35
Taxes & Licenses	100.24
Telephone	16,778.08
Travel	14,508.00

Total Expenses 184,118.11

2002 Budget

Contributions	81,000.00
SACFC	9,400.00
Conventions	10,000.00
Literature Sales	6,000.00
Discounts	.00
Refunds	.00
Interest	5,000.00
Essay	7,000.00
Prudent Reserve	24,500.00

Total Revenues 142,900.00

Bank Charges	100.00
Credit Card Fees	100.00
Conference Fees	4,400.00
Depreciation	1,600.00
Interest Expense	0.00
Liability Insurance	2,500.00
Legal	1,500.00
Accounting	4,000.00
Literature Expense	5,000.00
Payroll	65,300.00
Payroll Tax	5,900.00
Pension	4,600.00
Postage & Freight	4,500.00
Office Expense	2,000.00
Printing	5,000.00
Rent	7,800.00
Maintenance	900.00
Supplies	1,500.00
Sales Tax	500.00
Taxes & Licenses	200.00
Telephone	8,500.00
Travel	17,000.00

Total Expenses 142,900.00

Seventh Tradition

Fourth Quarter Donations Janay - September 2001

Akron, OH	75.00	Essen, Germany	60.00	Pearl River, NY	100.00
Albuquerque, NM	141.00	Essington, PA	41.50	Pleasanton, CA	282.00
Anaheim, CA	60.00	Fairbanks, AK	400.00	Portland, OR	280.00
Ann Arbor, MI	125.00	Fairfax, VA	79.00	Redondo Beach, CA	200.00
Annapolis, MD	50.00	Fairfax CFC	8.00	Rochester, NY	75.41
Arlington, VA CFC	76.00	Ferndale, MI	675.00	Rockford, IL	50.00
Arlington Hgts, IL	480.00	Florence, AL	75.00	Rockford CFC	25.00
Arlington Hgts CFC	20.00	Franklin, TN	35.00	Rockland County, NY	80.00
AS Deutschland	430.00	Fredericksburg, VA CFC	33.00	Sacramento, CA	1,200.00
Asheville, NC	30.00	Ft Collins, CO	50.00	Salt Lake City, UT	55.00
Atlanta, GA	91.53	Gaithersburg, MD	100.00	San Diego, CA	82.25
Baltimore, MD	24.00	Glen Ellyn, IL CFC	200.00	Seattle, WA	49.75
Barrie ON Canada	200.00	Grand Rapids, MI	250.00	Seattle CFC	5.00
Bellevue, WA	60.00	Lake Mary, FL	25.00	Silver Spring, MD	598.34
Beltsville, MD	136.32	Lakewood, WA	85.00	Silver Spring CFC	44.00
Bethesda, MD	25.00	Leesburg, VA	277.00	Somerville, MA	40.00
Birmingham, AL	65.00	Lexington, KY	149.50	Somerville CFC	48.00
Brooklyn, NY CFC	35.00	Lincoln, NE	16.00	So Barrington, IL	595.00
Bryn Athyn, PA	360.00	Long Beach, CA	15.00	So Barrington CFC	255.00
Bryn Athyn CFC	120.00	Longwood, FL	75.00	Steubenville, OH	41.00
Camarillo, CA	39.00	Los Altos, CA	100.00	Trenton, MI	101.00
Centreville, VA	69.00	Madison Hgts, MI	146.14	Tukwila, WA	20.00
Chicago, IL IG	1,257.40	Manassas, VA	200.00	Tukwila CFC	20.00
Chicago IG CFC	174.80	Manchester, NH	50.00	Twin Cities, MN	66.00
Chico, CA	100.00	McLean, VA	191.70	Twin Cities CFC	264.00
Colorado Spgs, CO	20.00	McLean CFC	12.30	Vancouver BC CFC	50.00
Columbus, OH	150.00	Midvale, UT	200.00	Vancouver, WA	48.90
Crystal City, VA	297.50	Milwaukee, WI	176.00	Vienna, VA	74.00
Crystal City CFC	31.00	Montreal QC Canada	67.08	Vienna CFC	25.00
Crystal Lake, IL	100.00	Mt Rainier, MD	41.75	Washington, DC	614.71
Dallas, TX	150.00	Mt Rainier CFC	9.00	Washington DC CFC	88.00
Darien, IL CFC	29.00	Nashville, TN	1,132.00	Wheeling, WV	37.00
Davenport, IA	50.00	New York City IG	500.00	Wichita, KS Retreat	365.14
Daytona Beach, FL	78.76	North Canton, OH	30.00	Woodbridge, VA	69.70
Daytona Beach CFC	78.76	North Hollywood, CA	176.80	Woodbridge CFC	12.30
Delmar, NY	60.00	Northern CA IG	1,175.00	Woodstock, IL	59.00
Denver, CO	120.00	Oklahoma IG, OK	1,000.00	Yonkers, NY	22.00
Downers Grove, IL	60.00	Omaha, NE CFC	37.00		
Edmonton AB Canada	155.09	Painesville, OH	50.00	Group Total	18,806.27
Elk Grove Village, IL	80.00	Painesville CFC	25.00	Individual	1,127.50
				SA CFC Total	1,129.16

Dear Essay,

I was pleasantly surprised to see my letter under SACFC news in your 2001 Issue Four. It's an odd feeling to read about one's foibles and mistakes in concert with one's growth and healing, but the two are intrinsically linked: without one there is no other.

I have come to regard life's hardships and obstacles as the greatest opportunity for both psychological and spiritual growth. My life has taught me that when faced with such challenges, I have three choices.

One, I can become immobilized; never to progress any further. The obstacle always remains, blocking any further evolution of my being.

Two, I can run. In which case, the obstacle or life lesson will only return or materialize in some other way.

Or three, I can find the courage to trust and depend on the enlightened perspective of faith – a form of surrender, really. I can face my fears knowing that I will be given the tools and capacity to overcome what looms before me.

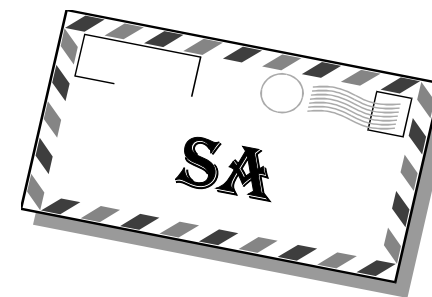
Life is all about those choices.

P.S. Our second prison SA group, with twenty new members, is up and running. Thank you so much for your support
Matt F.

Letter to the Essay

I wish the Essay would come more often. Thanks for the efforts – it's a vital link to us loners. It would be great to see "Loners and how they stay sober" as a theme. Ditto for trying to find someone to sponsor you when one is a loner! I've just hooked up with the "Inmate Correspondence Service" and feel some of their approach, guidelines, emphasis and model 1st letter would greatly benefit loners and maybe save much hassle and heartache.

Peter M.
Slovenia



Tightrope Act

If I think about it, life is kind of like walking a tightrope. It's not easy. It can be dangerous. Still, if I practice, if I use a balance pole, if I have a safety net – it can be done without causing undue harm either to myself or to others.

I was so sure of my abilities that I chose to walk the tightrope of life without the benefit of either balance pole or safety net. As my sexaholism progressed, I took ever-greater risks. I convinced myself that I possessed abilities (and needs) that my commoner brethren simply did not have. I congratulated myself on each new success, each new conquest. In my secret world I gloried in my triumphs. Sexual intensity and its consummation was the single scale by which I measured my accomplishments and my satisfaction.

Because my acting out required secrecy and spiritual blindness, I had to supply my own applause. And so I did. Each time I secretly crossed the tightrope from one station to the other, I felt thrilled and excited for having gotten away with an act that I considered “forbidden” – whether it was or not. In this way, I entered into my addiction. I became addicted to my own special kinds of thrills and excitement. These were my drugs. They gave me relief from life's stresses – from having to face my own imperfections and insecurities. They seemed special to me because they were either explicitly sexual or possessed sexual overtones and they always combined the elements of secrecy and the forbidden.

True, there may have been times when, after having acted out, I felt hung-over or depressed, but by now – it was too late. I had lost the power to control my acting out – it now controlled me! While I may not have completely lost touch with those around me, I was increasingly isolated in my thoughts and deeds. Worse, because I was building a tolerance for my drug, I was adding ever more extreme behaviors to my act in order to supply the thrills and excitement to which I was addicted. My act had become more complicated.

The signs of my impending doom had been there all along. The tightrope across which I scurried was becoming frayed and worn. Each time I managed to catch myself before falling completely. But I was so blinded by my addiction, so in need of my next “fix”, that I ignored these signs. I had entered the last phase of my disease – and time was running out on me.

The inevitable finally became painful, if not devastating, reality. Perhaps I tried to cross that frayed rope one too many times and it simply broke. Whatever the details, the outcome was the same. *I did fall!!* And there was no safety net beneath me. I simply came crashing down. Now there were real injuries and terrible consequences.

Of course, there had been injuries and consequences all along – it's just that I had been in denial about them until now. But finally - with this fall - even I who had been the king of denial could no longer deny the reality of my situation. That's how I came into the program. And when I first came

Calendar of Events

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

- April 6, 2002**, 3rd Annual SA / S-Anon Marathon, Langhorne, PA, sponsored by Philadelphia Intergroup. Theme: “Came to Believe in a Positive Recovery.” Contact Philadelphia IG at 215/564-3272.
- April 20, 2002**, Mountain Spring, Asheville, NC, sponsored by Asheville area groups. Contact John B. at 828/749-9537 or 828/749-4950.
- April 20, 2002**, SA Marathon, Greensburg, OH, sponsored by Akron area groups. Theme: “SA Recovery in a Stress-filled World.” Call Rich at 330/328-3972.
- April 21, 2002**, SA / S-Anon Spring Conference, sponsored by New York City areas groups. Theme: “Surrender to Win.” Contact Leslie W. at 718/253-9035.
- May 3 - 5, 2002**, 33rd German Speaking SA Convention, Eisenach, Germany, sponsored by AS Deutschland. Contact Wulf at 49 40 826333.
- May 6, 2002**, SA / S-Anon Annual Retreat, sponsored by Wheeling / Steubenville IG. Contact intergroup at 740/342-0828.
- May 24 - 26, 2002**, Spring retreat, Battle Lake, Alberta, Canada, sponsored by Edmonton Intergroup. Theme: “The Real Connection II.” Contact Edmonton IG at 780/988-4411, or send email to essayedmonton@yahoo.com
- July 12 - 14, 2002**, SA / S-Anon International Convention, Portland, OR, sponsored by Portland area SA / S-Anon groups. Theme: “Discovery.” Contact Scott F. at 503/970-3191 or send email to discovery_portland@email.com. Download registration form at www.saportlandmetro.org
- January 10 - 12, 2003**, SA / S-Anon International Convention, Newark, NJ, sponsored by NJ / NY area SA / s-Anon groups. Theme: “Whatever It Takes.” Contact IG at 732/886-2142.
- July 11 - 13, 2003**, SA / S-Anon International Convention, Chicago, IL, sponsored by Chicago Intergroup. Contact IG at 630/415-0341 or Tom G., 773/274-1088..

[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.]

they have started a second meeting. Forty-seven inmate members now attend these two meetings. Some SA members on the outside who live within driving distance attend these meetings regularly.

Facts

- Since we started keeping a database in 1997, we have communicated with inmates and/or prison officials from 46 states in the U.S.
- We now have four correctional facilities in different states where the staff is willing to speak to the other facilities about the value of making SA meetings available to interested inmates.

Respectfully submitted,
William R.
Correctional Facilities Coordinator

Chip On His Shoulder To Chip In His Pocket

I want to share a story with you, just to make the point of how a group like this can change or encourage others. One guy started in our prison group at the second meeting, almost six months ago. He came into the group with a huge chip on his shoulder, and he made it clear to all of us that he didn't care how anyone felt about

him. He was just doing this for himself and no one else. In other words, he was warning us all not to expect him to contribute anything which might help anyone else.

The amazing thing is that over time I've watched this guy's attitude and demeanor change within the group and outside the group. Before, outside the group, he avoided people and would talk to hardly anyone. He had a snarl on his face most of the time. Now, he comes into the meetings with a huge smile, acknowledges all of us individually, and goes out of his way to talk to people outside the meetings. The snarl is gone, and it has been replaced by the content look from a man who seems at peace.

He credits God if course, but also the group for changing his life and his attitude. Many of us thought that this guy was going to be a huge pain, but we remained patient and allowed him to progress at his own pace. Sure enough, he now contributes many positive comments during our meeting and makes a point to talk to us outside the meetings, I've seen similar effects on other group members, but not at the high level this guy has experienced.

From a member in prison

into the program, I probably still didn't know the true seriousness of my situation. I came into the program as a way to atone for the injuries caused by my fall, but my plan was to stay just long enough to get things quieted down – and then to get back out there and “get on with life”.

That may have been my plan – it just did not turn out that way. Somehow, in my soul's barren soil, the miracle of the program took root and began to grow. I began to work the Steps and the Steps began to work in me. I got back up on the tightrope of life. But now I had a balance pole – it was my sobriety. Without it, I could not stay balanced. And now there was a safety net below me – it was our fellowship.

In the beginning, I still tried to do things the old way. I thought I could get by without my balance pole – my sobriety. But I found I could not. I kept falling. Thankfully the fellowship was there to catch me – it helped spare my already battered relationships, if they still existed, from receiving the full force of these new falls. In time I came to realize and accept my limitations. I could not stay on the tightrope of life without my sobriety.

I came to another realization as well. I had a purpose – a simple purpose. I was actually meant to be one more part of the safety net of the fellowship into which I had been falling. When someone who was close to me in the fellowship fell, I felt the force of their fall more than others who were not so close. But

never did I have to bear the full force of my compatriot's fall alone.

It is perhaps at this point in my progress that I begin to appreciate more fully one of the truly spiritual aspects of the program. That a person such as I, flawed and broken as I am, can join together and do much good makes me pause and reflect on the fact that I have become a part of something greater than myself. I certainly could not do such good by myself. By myself, I have a frustrating tendency to goof things up. But I am no longer the center of the universe – I no longer want the position. Call it God, call it a Higher Power – whatever it is - it is greater than I am and for that I am thankful. I have come home.

D. T.

How to Contact SA

SA International Central Office
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

Lust versus Love in the Marriage

I recently had a major awakening about lust in my marriage. It happened one morning after a night during which I had wanted to be sexual with my wife. In the past, my desire would quickly turn to lust. I would feel as if I was about to explode if I did not have her. Sex was not optional. That night had been different. As I wrote in my journal about it the next morning, I understood why.

I wrote in my journal "sexual desire for my wife is a natural instinct but lust is a perversion of that instinct". I must be cognizant of the difference. For much of my marriage, I lusted after my wife. She would tell me that she did not feel that I was there for her and that she felt like a sex object. I had no idea what she meant and she had no idea that I was living a double life. I was out of control. *Lust consumed love.*

For me, lust is about taking control and possessing someone or something. It is self-centered. It cares for no one. Lust is insatiable. There can be no true joy or pleasure in lust. It destroys everything it touches including its bearer. That is why it has no place in a marriage. Lust is about taking. Love is about giving and receiving.

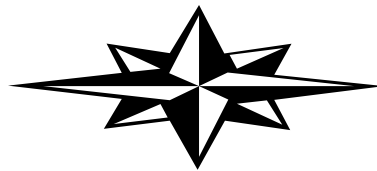
Living in lust I was living a self-centered life. Everything was about my wants. There was no room in my life for relationship. No

room for receiving joy through satisfying another's needs. No room for empathy. No room for supporting my partner. My wife's intuition was correct. I was *not* there for her and she *was* being used.

That morning, as I wrote in my journal, I felt a great sadness over the state of lust I had been in for so many years of my marriage. I also felt a great joy that, in my SA sobriety, the veil of darkness was being lifted from me. Today, my sexual desire for her is a natural offspring of my love for her. I can be with her while being sensitive to her needs. My

satisfaction comes from my connection to her in our love for each other. I am totally present in the moment, consumed by an intensive feeling of love. My joy comes from giving and receiving love. It is much more than a physical act. It is a spiritual act. Sex without love is lust. Sex is indeed optional. It is love that is not optional. It is the *Real Connection*. I could feel tears streaming down my cheeks that morning. Tears of Happiness!

Mitch M.



SACFC NEWS

SA CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES COMMITTEE

SA Correctional Facilities Committee 2001 Report

Committee Members:

Buddy S., Chair, Mid-Atlantic; Earl H., Southeast; Allen L., North Midwest; John C., Northeast; Keith S., North Midwest; William R., CFC Coordinator.

Sponsor-by-Mail Service

- Keith S., MI, the coordinator of this service, reports that there are currently 177 inmates from 30 states that are being sponsored by 49 SA members. The number of inmates participating in the service has almost doubled since the end of June 2001.
- We encourage local members and groups to consider carrying the SA message by sponsoring an inmate by mail. We can send them the Sponsor-By-Mail packet that offers a simple guideline for working the steps.

Literature Service

- In 2000, SAICO mailed 316 SA handbooks to inmates and correctional officials in the U.S. This represented a 35% increase over the previous year (1999). In 2001,

SAICO mailed out 422 SA handbooks, a 34% increase over 2000.

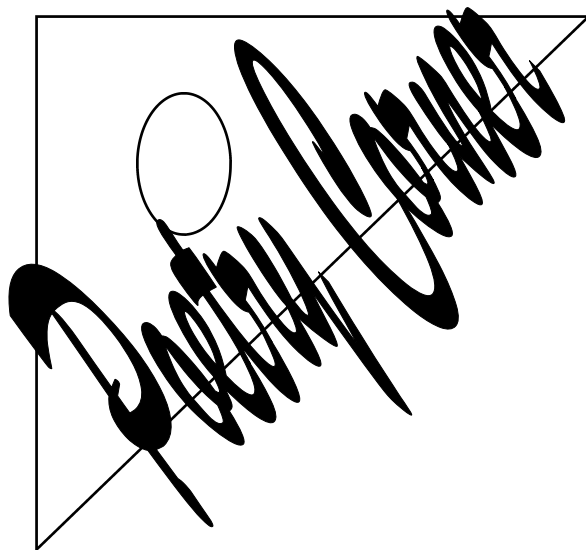
- We are now ordering SA handbooks for inmates through SA Publications. SA Publications has agreed to follow the same arrangements our committee previously had with SAICO. This allows us to purchase the books at cost and pay for the postage.

CFC Fund

- This year members contributed \$7,242 towards our work. We thank all of our members and groups for their generous contributions to our work. In 2000, members contributed \$10,296, so giving has dropped off by about 30 per cent. We are a self-supporting fellowship, so we hope this next year we can come closer to being financially self-sufficient as a committee.

Newsletter Articles

- In the last several issues of the ES-SAY there have been articles about an SA meeting that was started in a prison in Adrian Michigan. The meeting has been so successful that



THE LAST PAGE

A book stands in the corner
It glows with shimmering light
I'm drawn to look upon it
For the story of my life

I read each page with interest
I laugh, sometimes I cry
The book is so compelling
Pure truth without a lie

The book goes by so quickly
The pages of joy too few
One page of hurts too many
But several are reviewed

One page is all that's left now
No writing has appeared
A pen sits by within my grasp
My words to choose, so dear

God fills my heart with love for all
His page means he is near
With pen in hand I start to write
Dear Lord, I have no fear...

Mark F.

THE TEST

I said to God, "Look how
much I've grown."
Then I waited for His reply.
A man came up to talk to me,
And I spoke of how I was better than he.
But when he was gone,
in my heart I knew,
I had failed God's test for humility.

Mark F.

GENERAL DELEGATE ASSEMBLY A REPORT FROM ATLANTA 2002

BRIEF SUMMARY and MAIN MOTIONS PASSED: That this Delegate Assembly directs the Trustees to direct the Literature Committee to resume work on Member Stories.

That this Delegate Assembly approves the inclusion and publication in SA approved literature, the wording "in SA's sobriety definition the word 'spouse' refers to one's partner in a marriage between a man and a woman." That this Delegate Assembly directs the Trustees to direct the Literature Committee to resume work on "A Twelve and Twelve for SA," not compromising quality for completion within a time limit.

That this Delegate Assembly reaffirms that the "White Book" is approved literature and should be made available whenever members from all over the world are gathered in convention. That this Delegate Assembly directs the Trustees to request that the Literature Committee consider a pamphlet on same sex lust issues, and another one on [lust issues involving] internet porn and chat rooms.

TRUSTEE ELECTIONS:

That everyone who believes they may have a problem with lust is welcome to attend SA closed meetings and may consider themselves members if they say they have a desire to stop lusting and become sexually sober. Fr. Emmerich Vogt, Non-sexaholic Trustee from Portland, and Tricia S., Sexaholic Trustee from Oklahoma, were reaffirmed. Sylvia, Sexaholic Trustee from Oklahoma, rotated off the Board of Trustees because her term of service expired. The remaining Trustees resigned.

That this Delegate Assembly approves the "SA To the Newcomer" pamphlet, with addition of wording from the first and third motions above, pending review by Legal Committee for any copyright or legal ramifications. The following Sexaholic Trustees were elected: Carole L., from Edmonton - Alberta, Canada Priscilla C., from Nashville, TN Dorene S., from Washougal, WA Gary W., from Southern CA Bob S., from Auburn, CA

That this Delegate Assembly approves the "SA as a Resource for the Health and Helping Professional" pamphlet, with a recommendation to reformat it to allow for bulk mail capability and to include a statement that will not be misunderstood as an endorsement of therapy, treatment, or other programs. DELEGATE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS: Shirley S., Southern CA, will succeed Dorene as Chair of the General Delegate Assembly; Bill S., Southeast, is the new Alternate Chair. **Shirley S., Chair**

PRACTICAL TOOLS FOR RECOVERY:

Gratitude Lists

Our recovery calendar page today says "Gratitude turns problems into blessings, and the unexpected into gifts." I am grateful for the reminder how important gratitude lists have been to my recovery from sexaholism. During the first several months of sobriety I wrote gratitude lists daily. My sponsor told me to put twenty items on it per day. Some days, I wrote them down in one sitting. On other days, I kept an on-going list as my higher power provided the experiences.

When I was first told to write a gratitude list I was not at all sure what to put on it. Being just barely sober, I felt awful much of the time. I was shocked at how continuously I fantasized and sexualized women, body parts, places around town such as motels, conversations with women or men, and even objects in the room. I kept testing my limits by being in uncomfortable or even dangerous lust situations. As some sobriety developed, I saw how often I took drinks of lust from everyday situations and used sexual memories or anger to get drunk. These unpleasant experiences, I realized, were the material for my gratitude lists.

Although I was an atheist, I had heard enough at meetings to know that I needed a

Higher Power, and finally I had access to one. When I began to write the gratitude lists, I decided to begin each one with "Thank You" to my Higher Power. Then I would detail the sexualizing, limit testing, fantasizing or emotion which was disturbing me. My attitude with each gratitude was to thank my Higher Power for the opportunity to surrender whatever it was I could not handle. Over the past several years I have maintained the same attitude, except that now my Thank You is addressed to God as I understand Him. The need for the list is, however, unchanged.

Here are some of my typical gratitudes:

Thank You for the reminder that I am powerless over looking at [her body part].

Thank You for the desire to surrender my fear of intimacy to You.

Thank You for my willingness to say the Serenity Prayer when I am scared.

Thank You for my discomfort with the euphoric recall of acting out with [her].

Thank You for my panic when I have a lustful thought about [behavior].

Thank You for my need to call my sponsor when I am uncertain what to do next.

Thank You for my awareness of pushing my boundaries by talking to [name] and my desire to stay inside them.

Thank You for my shameful memory of [behavior] and surrendering my right to remember it to You.

Thank You for the fear I feel when I hear [name's] drunkalog and my awareness that I need You to stay sober.

My "positive" gratitudes (though they are actually all positive) are:

Thank You for One Day At A Time.

Thank You for my sobriety today.

The last one is the most important gratitude of all. I have no doubt after over thirty years of acting out that I cannot stay sober even one day. Any day I am sober and working the steps is due to my willingness to let God be in charge. As the Big Book says, if I trust God, clean house and help others, I will keep getting better. Gratitude lists have been an important part of that process, one day at a time.

§§§

New Groups

USA

Albany, GA
Athens, OH
Greenville, SC
Las Vegas, NV
Swarthmore, PA

Guatemala
Guatemala City

Israel
Haifa,

Nova Scotia
Halifax

United Kingdom
Oxford