



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.

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www.sa.org

ESSAY®

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A Quarterly Publication of Sexaholics Anonymous, Incorporated



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The Twelve Steps of Sexaholics Anonymous

1. We admitted we were powerless over lust—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to sexaholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Steps and Traditions are reprinted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. ("A.A.W.S.") Permission to reprint and adapt the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions does not mean that AAWS has approved the contents of this publication, nor that AAWS 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, or in any other non-AA context, does not imply otherwise.

The Twelve Traditions of Sexaholics Anonymous

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon SA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for SA 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, films, and television.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.



Essay Editorial Guidelines



Essay is the international publication of Sexaholics Anonymous. It is known as SA's "Meeting in Print," and submissions reflect the experience, strength, and hope of our members. Articles are invited from SA Members and SA groups, although no payment is made and material may not be returned. Opinions expressed in this publication are not to be attributed to Sexaholics Anonymous as a whole, nor does publication of any article imply endorsement by SA or by *Essay*. Articles submitted to *Essay* are assumed intended for publication and are subject to editing. The principles of SA's Twelve Traditions guide editorial philosophy. In submitting articles, please remember that 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. *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. E-mail should be addressed to saico@sa.org. All articles need to be in English. All articles must contain an address, telephone number, or e-mail 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.



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A Home for My Spirit

How did I—a nice, self-respecting recovering alcoholic with more than 14 years of sobriety—find myself sitting in a meeting with a bunch of lowly sexaholics? After all, I had worked the Steps many times. I sponsored several men. I had never lied to my AA sponsors. I had in fact discussed my sexual acting out in detail. I was advised to keep coming back and to continue praying to God, and eventually these character defects would be removed, in God's time. I was asked to speak at AA meetings and conventions throughout the world. I was in fact a legend in my own mind! Yet now here I was stuck in SA with these lower companions, and seriously entertaining thoughts of drinking and suicide. How could this be?

The truth was that I had been an untreated sexaholic since I was six years old, when a friend said, "Let's play doctor." After that I initiated the same game with other friends, as often as possible. Sexual acting out in some form would continue throughout my life.

Both of my parents were alcoholics and there was shouting, incest, and violence in my home. My mother divorced my father when I was four. I did not see him again until I was 10, and then only eight or nine times after that. Rejection and abandonment were huge issues in my teen years and into adulthood. As a teen, I was small in every aspect and the high school locker room was a place of great shame and embarrassment. Later that would drive me to take great risks to

prove I was a man.

In college I discovered alcohol and it became my savior. Under its influence I learned to socialize, to dance, to become a part of, to fit in. I could be whoever I wanted to be. I had only two dates in high school, but in college—thanks to booze—I was dating every weekend. But no matter how much I drank I never felt adequate. For that reason I never tried to make sexual advances toward my dates. So masturbation became my constant companion, and my introduction to fantasies of being a sexual conquistador.

I was 22 when I had sexual intercourse for the first time. It was with a prostitute and it was a humiliating experience. But drinking took away the pain and shame, as usual. I did not perceive alcohol as a problem; it was my friend, my protector. I learned to chug beer; I could chug better than anyone on campus. I had arrived, I was a somebody. Yet beneath all of that I knew I was not a man. When I was 20 I saw my first porn film. Then I knew what a real man was and that I was not one.

In my Senior year, I got drunk one more time and a friend talked me into joining the Navy and becoming a carrier pilot. What a paradise for a drunk and a sex addict! I traveled all over Asia and drank and sexed my way through every port to prove I was a real Navy Pilot, a real man. I was 28 when I got married and 32 when my daughter was born. I am still married to the same incredible

Current Committee Assignments for Trustees and Delegates

Delegates

Jerry L.	Literature, Chair Delegate Assembly
Mike S.	Site Selection
Bob A.	Finance, CFC
Andrew S.	Nominations, H & I, Vice-Chair Delegate Assembly
Betty M.	Literature
Hans L.	International
Larry H.	Structure
Chuck P.	H & I, COMC, Site
Tom A.	CFC, Site
Larry H.	RAC
Mike F.	RAC
Mike J.	Finance, Literature
Nicholas S.	Loners, Internet
Judy C.	Loners [or any committee where Phone meetings & Women in SA are assigned]

Alternates

Steve S.	COMC, H & I
Dave Mc	RAC, Finance
Tom V.	Loners, CFC

Trustees

Luc	Chair, Board of Trustees, Internet
Lawrence	Literature, International
John	COMC, CFC
Gene	Finance
Sean	Finance

From time to time, Committees make their needs known in Essay. If you have questions about any of these committees, or you are feeling the desire to serve beyond the local level, you would be welcome to inquire through SAICO about service on any SA committee. Some committees have special requirements or need expertise. Some committees just need a caring heart and the willingness to serve.

Please address your questions to SAICO, PO Box 3565, Brentwood, TN 37024-3565 or send email to saico@sa.org.

General Delegate Assembly

Delegates	Alternates
Southwest Region Jerry L. Mike S.	Richard G.
Northwest Region Judy C.	Yvon L.
South Midwest Region Betty M.	Andy P.
North Midwest Region Andrew S. Bob A.	
Southeast Region Chuck P. Mike J.	Steve S. Dave Mc.
MidAtlantic Region Larry H. Tom A.	Brian S.
Northeast Region Mike F.	Tom V.
International Delegates Nicholas S. Hans-Friedrich L.	SA UK / Ireland AS Deutschland
Chair. Delegate Assembly	Jerry L.

All General Assembly Delegates can be reached at SAICO,
or email can be sent to saico@sa.org.

woman after 38 years! Yet that never fixed me. So I volunteered for Vietnam and flew several hundred combat missions and received numerous awards for heroism—and even that didn’t fix me. I was now a mid-grade officer. I was 32 years old, and I was being told I was on a “fast track” for promotion. What the Navy didn’t know was that my drinking was out of control.

Once I was back in the States, I stopped the sexual acting out with women but the masturbation continued. I felt this was an improvement, but my outsides and my insides were miles apart. I intuitively knew something was wrong but I had no idea what it was. I was a decorated pilot and on the outside I looked terrific, but on the inside I felt separate, different, lonely, and afraid. I was suicidal and was pointing a loaded pistol at my head.

When I was 43, I took command of a jet pilot training squadron and my drinking became completely out of control. Because I was such a great performer, no one said anything. But no matter what compliments, awards, or promotions I received, I secretly felt that I did not measure up. I feared that if others learned the truth about me, I would be rejected or shamed.

During this time I obtained a Masters in Counseling and was certified as a Navy Substance Abuse Prevention Counselor. I thought this would look good in my service record, but I did not see that God’s hand was in this. I would continue drinking for two more years. I also discovered porn shops—an adrenaline rush beyond description. This obsession would take me to my lowest level of

powerlessness, hopelessness, and shame. I knew something was terribly wrong but had no idea what it was.

In 1985, because of my educational background, I was assigned to lead the Navy’s Alcoholism Treatment Program. It was there that I realized I was a full-blown alcoholic. I got an AA sponsor, attended meetings, and worked the Steps, and my life changed dramatically. My alcoholism and sexaholism appeared to be solved. For almost five years I felt that my sexual acting out had stopped, but I continued to masturbate, which I thought was normal. I discussed all of my sexual hang-ups with my sponsor, and he kept saying that these things would be addressed in God’s time. But my sexual addiction began to escalate; the Internet became my new playground, and this led to a return to porn shops.

In 1999, at 12 years sober in AA, my use of porn was out of control. In December 1999, I participated in a men’s spiritual retreat, where I disclosed that I was a sex addict, was close to drinking, and was having suicidal thoughts. A fellow retreatant disclosed that he was a member of SA. He took me to my first SA meeting the following Tuesday. It was with great trepidation that I arrived and, much to my amazement, found a room filled with 47 men and women. Later I discovered they were doctors, counselors, clergy, teachers, businessmen and women, housewives, firemen, plumbers, carpenters, etc. I was home. I obtained a sponsor and started working the Steps.

However, I was educated beyond my intelligence in Twelve Step programs. In

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

my opinion the SA community was not doing it right. After all, I already had 14 years of sobriety in AA. My arrogance kept me dry for 11 ½ months, but then I had a big fall in a porn shop. When I called my sponsor he said “Why don’t you try our program and leave your AA program at the door?”

Since coming into SA I have had several periods of sobriety: 11 months, 11 ½ months, 2 ½ years etc. In December 2006 I had another slip and came to realize that, unlike my recovery from alcohol, I had never accepted the fact that I am truly powerless over lust and sexual addiction, for the rest of my life. Not just today, not just tomorrow, but for the rest of my life. I have finally conceded to my innermost self that I am a sexaholic. As *Alcoholics Anonymous* says, this is the first step in recovery. Today there is only one unequivocal truth: I am a sexaholic. Denial will not change the truth.

Today I have come to a place of acceptance and have achieved an inner peace that I have never known before. My AA sponsor was right; in God’s time I would discover the truth about me. My wife and my daughter fully support me and love me as I continue my journey of truth and recovery in SA and AA. The men and women in SA are *not* lower companions; they are in fact my source of inspiration for recovery.

I am ever so grateful that I have a loving, gentle, compassionate, and patient God in my life who kept me sober long enough in AA so that I could find my way to SA and to healing. I have found a fellowship of men and women who

speak my language, based on our common struggles and experiences—and it is here that I have finally found a home for my spirit.

Graphic Artists Wanted

We are seeking artists with computer graphics experience to provide cover art for one or more upcoming issues of *Essay*. *Essay* is published four times a year.

Please note this is a volunteer service position. We are unable to provide financial compensation at this time.

Preferred qualifications include:

- Proficiency in computer graphics
- Ability to submit artwork electronically
- Familiarity with publishing processes
- Experience with SA
- Experience with PageMaker 7.0 a plus

If interested, please provide a brief summary (one page or less) of your qualifications, plus two or three examples of your computer-generated artwork, to saico@sa.org.

All submissions will be reviewed by *Essay*’s editorial committee, and artists will be chosen by group conscience. Materials submitted will not be published or distributed without your express permission.

The Twelve Concepts in Action

News from the Board of Trustees and the General Delegate Assembly

In recent meetings by the Board of Trustees and the General Delegate Assembly, the Budget for this year was passed. A copy of the budget for 2007 is included with this issue in the Financial information insert. In order to have the Budget for next year approved and in place before the beginning of 2008, the budget process will start earlier in 2007. The goal is to have a draft budget the Trustees can consider at their July meeting in Adelphi, MD at the *Live and Let Go* convention. After Trustee approval, the budget will be forwarded to the Delegates for Assembly consideration and approval.

In other news, both the Trustees and the Delegates approved the next section of *A Twelve & Twelve for SA*, currently known as *Step into Action*. To join *Step into Action One Two Three*, there will be *Step into Action Four Five Six Seven*. The final spelling and comma checks are being done. *Step into Action Four Five Six Seven* is being published as a “work in progress.” That is a publishing term for a project that is not finished. What is needed to complete the project is your input. This book is for you. It does not become the work of the fellowship until you give something to it, or take something from it. We are trying to reach the largest possible audience of readers and writers for this project. Here are some ways you can help the Literature Committee finish the work remaining on this project:

Buy a copy of the book and use it with your sponsor or your sponsees.

Use it in your meetings.

Send your comments, additions, and corrections to saico@sa.org.

Note: *Step into Action One Two Three* is still open for comments.

Your Board of Trustees 2007

Luc B.
Lawrence M.
John C.
Sean R.
Gene J., non-sexaholic

All Trustees can be reached at SAICO,
or email can be sent to saico@sa.org

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.*

WOMEN IN SA (WISA)

WiSA unites women in fellowship and recovery, helping women to ease into the predominantly male fellowship.

We want every woman to find help, support, and encouragement. We offer phone meetings and e-mail support.

For more information, call (toll free), 888-802-5376, visit our website at www.womeninsa.org, or send e-mail to womeninsa@yahoo.com

My Amends to My Dad

Step 9: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when do so would injure them or others.

Last Tuesday, my Dad passed away. Sigh.

In the last four years, I have made my peace, made amends, and gained a Dad. I went from not being able to be around him to staying with him on Friday nights so I could give my Mom a break. I could sit with him, laugh with him, help him, and love him. He was a friend, a confidant, and an inspiration.

I won't write a litany of all the fantasy stuff my head said that he did to me. He was a man doing the best that he could raising six little egos who fought him tooth and nail the whole way. He tried to make us be responsible, contributing members of society. We tried to get everything we could possibly get with as little effort as we could get away with.

I can remember that, as I finished my Fifth Step, my sponsor asked me if I loved my Dad. I tried to cop out and said, "I don't know." He pushed and said that it wasn't an "I don't know" answer, so I said, "No."

Two weeks later, my Dad was my first amends. I said what my sponsor told me to say, "I didn't show the respect that you deserved when I was growing up." His response wasn't spectacular, but that's not what it was about. It was about me getting right with my Dad. My amends needed to put an end to all of my prejudices against my Dad. We were on the same plane, the same planet. I could talk with him; he could talk to me.

I could be there for him. He had been there for me.

For the past twelve years my Dad has been a paraplegic with Multiple Sclerosis, unable even to feed himself. My wife took care of him every Friday and Sunday night, right up to the end (he died in bed during his afternoon nap). I would stay in his room on Friday nights and sleep on a pull-out couch. My Mom could turn off the monitor and get herself a good night's sleep. This was part of my living amends.

I was fine sitting with him and watching football on a Sunday afternoon. We could talk and I could ask for his opinion. At times he used that tone of voice that could make the hair on the back of my neck stand up, but I didn't have to lash out or run. I was able to see that something was bothering him, and I could help him if he needed help.

He was a man, a strong man. An illness took his legs, his hands, his back, his neck, and his heart, but it never took his spirit. He still managed the house finances, scanned the ads for deals on groceries, worshipped his God by TV, and did his level best to be the best he could be. He never gave up, never quit—and he showed me just how strong a man can be.

I was able to stand up in front of friends, family, and a great group of God's kids to give his eulogy. Five years ago, I would have been tortured, resentful, shameful, and guilty; now I just get to love him and feel sad. I miss him.

Thank you to the program that saved and changed my life. I could never have done it myself.

Paul B.

WITHDRAWAL

A newcomer recently asked how long withdrawal from lust could possibly last, and I want to share my personal experience, strength, and hope on that topic from my current vantage point of one year sober. There are two points that seem really important to me:

1. It's really bad!!!
2. It ends!!!

There is no way I would still be in SA if I continued to feel the intense withdrawal that I had at 10 hours or 10 days sober. When I got sober I couldn't sleep. I'd wake up some nights every hour; my hands shook; I got a muscle twitch under my eye that I'd been free of since I gave up narcotics in 1994. I cried hard every day; I felt suicidal, and I wanted to use all my old addictions.

I remember telling my sponsor that I felt like a cocaine addict whose own body and brain were covered in cocaine packets—constant craving and availability!

A lot of my acting out had been on the computer, and I still had to deal with a computer five days a week at work. Ads triggered me; walking triggered me; being alone triggered me; being with people triggered me; showering triggered me; life triggered me. I thought I was going to claw my own skin off.

This only lasted three weeks!

In the year since, I've felt bad—angry, scared, triggered, lusting, etc.—but I have never felt as bad as those first three weeks of physical, emotional, and social withdrawal from the lust drug. What helped me most to deal with withdrawal was contact with other SAs who told me what worked for them. I talked to my sponsor every day, usually for an hour in the morning and an hour in the evening. I went to a meeting most days. After the worst of withdrawal wore off, I went to 90 in 90. I wore ski gloves to sleep which had strong elastic around the wrists. This stopped me from acting out, and it also gave me peace of mind so I could sleep a little. I prayed before bed and asked for freedom from lust and disturbing dreams. I exercised. I covered the mirrors in my house (to prevent objectifying myself). I changed the clothes I wore. I took long hot baths with lavender oil every night. I cried—A LOT! Every time I wanted to act out, I called my sponsor. I walked around with my one day chip in my hand.

For those three weeks I wondered if this was the supposed “miracle of recovery” that members of SA were promising me. It wasn't; that came after the worst of the withdrawal symptoms and hangover phase wore off, and I began to feel the blessed freedom from lust and serenity that my Higher Power intended me to have.

Calendar of Events

September 7 - 9, 2007, Unity Conference, Anaheim, CA, sponsored by San Diego and Southern California Intergroups.

Theme: A Design for Living. Information available at the websites: www.sasocal.org and www.sasandiego.org

October 13, 2007, Writing Workshop on the Steps, La Habra, CA, sponsored by Southern California Area Intergroup. Information at www.sasocal.org

October 19 - 21, 2007, Northwest SA / S-Anon Fall Retreat, Ross Point, Post Falls, ID, sponsored by Inland Northwest Intergroup. For information check the local website at www.sanorthwest.org.

November 9 - 11, 2007, Northern California SA Men's Retreat, Ben Lomond, CA, sponsored by Northern California SA Intergroup. More information will be posted on the web site at www.sabayarea.org

Upcoming International Conventions

July 6 - 8, 2007, SA International Convention, Adelphi, MD, sponsored by MD/DC/NoVA Intergroup. Theme: Live and Let Go. More information at www.liveandletgo2007.com or call 703/866-6929.

2008

January 2008, Newark, NJ More information soon.

July 2008, Akron, OH come to the home of Dr. Bob

[Please note: Since international calling protocols differ from country to country, we include only the country codes, area code, and number given by the local contacts. Please consult an international operator for guidance on making international calls.]

Please send in your event to be listed in *Essay*. Events taking place from July 2007 and onward will be listed in the next edition. Deadline for sending information to SAICO is June 1, 2007. Please submit the following information: dates, theme, place, cost, and points of contact. A flyer for your event is very helpful. Often someone calls in and asks what events are available. Send that information to saico@sa.org.

Calendar of Events

[Events listed here are presented solely as a service
and are not endorsed by Essay or SAICO]

March 31, 2007, Sixth Annual SA / S-Anon Spring Marathon, Greensburg, OH, sponsored by Discovery Group, Akron, OH. Theme: Forgiveness without Forgetting. Contact Rich at 330-620-6742.

April 7, 2007, Writing Workshop on the Steps, La Habra, CA, sponsored by Southern California Area Intergroup. See www.sasocal.org

April 13 - 15, 2007. Spring Retreat, White Rock, BC, Canada, sponsored by SA Vancouver BC Intergroup. Theme: A Change of Heart. For more information, call 604-290-9643 or send email to intergroup@canada.com

April 21, 2007, Fifth Annual Sa / S-Anon Marathon, Asheville, NC, sponsored By SA Asheville. Theme: Renewing Our Recovery. For more information, contact Clyde B. (828) 628-7821.

April 28, 2007, Fourteenth Annual Retreat, Sharing of the Fellowship, Warwood, WV, sponsored by Wheeling, WV / Steubenville, OH SA / S-Anon. More information available by calling 740-342-0828.

May 25 - 27, 2007, SA & S-Anon Spring Retreat, Central Alberta, Canada, Sponsored by Edmonton SA. Theme: A Vision for You. Information available by calling Intergroup at 780-988-4411, or send email inquiry to essayedmonton@yahoo.ca.

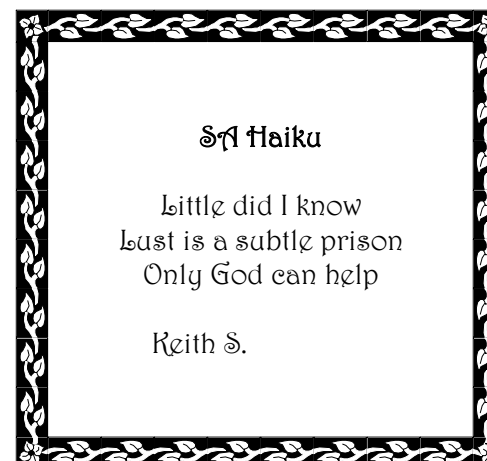
May 25 - 27, 2007, SA Ontario Retreat, Wildfire, Wyevale, ON, sponsored by SA Ontario Intergroup. Theme: Time for a Spring Cleaning. For more information, call SA Barrie at 705-739-4376 or send email to mat.sa@sympatico.ca.

June 1 - 3, 2007, SA Men's Retreat, Big Bear Lake, CA, sponsored by SA San Diego. Theme: There Is a Solution. More information on the website at www.sasandiego.org.

July 14, 2007, Writing Workshop on the Steps, La Habra, CA, sponsored by Southern California Area Intergroup. See www.sasocal.org

I'm so incredibly grateful to have made it through withdrawal. I don't know if I could do it again. There is a Twelve Step saying: "I know I have another relapse in me, but I don't know if I have another recovery in me." Just for today, I don't want to do that research!

Anonymous SA Woman



How to Tell Your Story

The Editors of the *Essay* would like to hear from members about your experience, strength, and hope in the fellowship.

What is your story? Everyone has a story and every story can offer hope to others. If you don't know where to start, answer these questions:

What was it like?
How did you find SA?
What tools of the programs do you use in your recovery?
What is it like now?

Share some hope with a member who isn't in the room. Please send your story to us at:

SAICO — ESSAY
PO Box 3565
Brentwood, TN 37024-3565
U.S.A.

Electronic files received at saico@sa.org
With anticipation, gratitude, and thanks,
The *Essay* Committee,
March 2007

Are you a woman in SA? We would love to hear your story!

Essay is seeking articles from women who would like to share their experience, strength, and hope. Your story, your experience working the steps, or any other aspect of your recovery can be a tremendous encouragement to other men and women in this program. If you have any questions or would like to submit an article, please contact saico@sa.org, or mail to SAICO, PO Box 3565, Brentwood, TN 37024-3565.

Working the Steps

In college, I took a weightlifting class. I spent a great deal of time reading the textbook and understanding the techniques, but for some reason, I never got much bigger.

Duh! You can't gain muscle mass by reading a book on weightlifting.

When I entered SA, history repeated itself. I kept reading the Twelve Steps and affirming that I agreed with them.

Admit I'm powerless; okay, I admit it.

Believe there is One Who can help; okay, I believe.

Decide to turn my life over to the care of my Higher Power; okay, I decided.

“What a relief! I just worked the first three Steps.”

Oddly enough, no matter how many times I read the Twelve Steps, it didn't keep me sober.

Duh! You can't build spiritual strength simply by reading the instructions. Boy, did I feel stupid. I kept imagining reading a recipe for making a cake over and over and then wondering why I wasn't eating cake.

“Can anyone explain what we mean when we keep saying 'work the Steps'?”, I asked at my next meeting. Someone said, “Well, the first thing you'll need is a sponsor.” Now I felt dumber than before. Ten months into the program and I had not chosen a sponsor. Everyone was either too nice, too strict, too young in sobriety, too this, or too that. Bottom line, I was enjoying my freedom from accountability and didn't want anyone telling what to do. But why couldn't I

stay sober? You can't stay sober by reading about sobriety without going to any length to achieve that sobriety.

“Okay. Let's say I get a sponsor. Then what?” I asked further. “Then you start working the Steps,” someone explained. There were those mysterious three words again: “working the Steps.” Fortunately for me, I'm persistent. “What does it mean to *work* the steps?” I repeated, emphasizing the word “work” and hoping someone would understand what I was asking. Most of the people in the room stared at me in confusion. I'm sure they were wondering why I was so dumb. Then one guy pointed to a notebook, and speaking slowly, as you do to a child, he said, “I just use my sponsor's guidance and my workbook.”

A bright light clicked on in my head: Why not use a workbook to do “work”?

“For example,” he continued in his explanation, “after understanding the conceptual basis of Step One, I had to work through an inventory of the ways that I am powerless in order to understand the full extent of my powerlessness.” The light got brighter! What an amazing concept! Suddenly I began to understand why it had been so hard to stay sober.

I decided to get ready to head to the sobriety gym. The first thing I did was get a trainer, and I picked the toughest one I could find. If I wanted to be a world champion boxer, I would need someone who would make me run 20 miles every day.

MEDITATIONS

Frustration I Know

“Nobody knows the trouble I've seen . . .”

This sexaholic is quite grateful for being shown the road to recovery in SA. The examples and sharing of others have shown me that I didn't have to remain the person I was: I could be rebuilt. That is why I have printed on my checks: “Please be patient, God isn't finished with me yet.” I am not too old to change my attitude. Let me give you an example.

I had been working in the crawl space under my daughter's house for over a month, sometimes in single digit temperatures. I had been planning on getting home for lunch after completing the last task. I only had to hang the 16” high x 34” wide door, but one thing after another kept not working. I had to keep crawling out for another modification, only to realize that still another obstacle existed. My bad leg hurt, I was **very** frustrated, and could just feel that old urge to swear building up.

But my Higher Power had a different plan for me. After reminding me of how I had given in to bad impulses when things did not work out as I wanted, He allowed me to choose. I could stubbornly insist on my way, or I could ask for help. Instead of swearing in anger, I took a deep breath, laid back, and started praying. As I calmed down, I resumed working while continuing my prayers.

Although I wound up getting home late for supper, I was content. The job was finished, the temptation vanquished, and I remained thankful for my compassionate Higher Power.

God, help me with the frustrations and temptations of this life.

MEDITATIONS

Our Lives Had Become Unmanageable

“We admitted we were powerless over lust . . .”

This phrase defines my life prior to sobriety and in fact describes it since then as well: my life is unmanageable. Prior to sobriety, I had experienced many, many attempts at controlling my lust myself. These took the forms of confession of my sin, crying out to God to help me keep from acting out, strong resolve to “do better,” and a myriad of other “tricks” that I really thought would work. From the time I was 12 years old until today, I have had lustful thoughts that I have followed into many different ways of acting out, ranging from self-gratification, to porn books, to topless bars, to internet porn, to massage. Each time I would feel terrible with guilt and shame and each time I would apply the band-aid of the day—only to resort back to the cycle of acting out to make me feel better followed by guilt and shame. I would try to patch my guilt by other means: eating, smoking cigars, and playing the lottery. When my wife confronted me the third time, I knew that none of my schemes had worked and that I needed help to find some manageability in my life. Today, through the SA Twelve Step program, I am able to commit to sexual sobriety one day at a time. In essence, I now can see that my life is unmanageable and I am powerless over lust, but God is all-powerful and will prove His strength through my weakness. I am His and He is fighting the battle for me.

God, just for today, grant me Your power to stay sober.

Wanted

Members who meditate and write about it. Here are some suggested Topics needed for the SA Meditation Book: anger, depression, easy does it, fear, powerlessness, principles vs. personalities, ego, the promises, amends, selfishness, self-pity, guilt, remorse, honesty, live and let live, open-mindedness, service, tolerance, willingness.

They do not have to be in “perfect” English. The editor will repair all flaws. Please send any contributions by e-mail to saico@sa.org, or by land mail to

SAICO, P.O. Box 3565, Brentwood TN 37024-3565

Thank you, Jerry L., Sponsoring Editor, SA Literature Committee

The first thing my sponsor did was make me sign a sponsorship contract. That was tough. I was so used to floundering around reading through the Twelve Steps and attending a meeting every couple of months. Suddenly, I'm signing an agreement to work out daily.

Duh, sobriety is not an option for me; it's a life-long commitment.

Now I realize that I can't build a close relationship with my Higher Power by reading through the Steps, and I can't achieve it alone. I need a sponsor, and I have to listen to his guidance so I can “work the Steps.” I feel stronger already.



Daily Gratitude

My cell phone alarm alerts me daily at 12:12 noontime so that wherever I am, whatever I am doing, I can stop and thank God (my Higher Power) for the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions and for the gift of sobriety.

Ed R., Columbus, Georgia

New Groups

USA

Bluffton, SC
Cedar Rapids, IA
Cherry Hill, NJ
Doylestown, PA
Flagler Beach, FL
Grand Island, NE
Roanoke, VA
Tampa, FL
Titusville, FL
Winchester, VA
Youngstown, OH

Additional meeting
Cincinnati, OH

Please let us know about your new groups and additional meetings in your local area.

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USA

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Serenity is something I never thought of until I got into the SA program. In retrospect, I see that I was trying to control my world. Whether it was work, relationships, school, or family I was always trying to make things go my way. If I had a bad day at work, I could stew on it and replay the scenarios in my head. If something went wrong at school or if my mother didn't see something my way, I could push it down and revisit it in my bed as I drifted off to sleep. I could argue in my head that these problems were entirely someone else's fault and wake up the next day feeling just as angry as I was the night before.

Serenity was not an option—especially if I was RIGHT!!! This kind of thinking led me back to my drug. I would inevitably act out.

My program and *Sexaholics Anonymous* taught me about serenity—about feeling at peace even when things are falling apart around me. I find now that illness, bad report cards, calls from schools, banks, etc. do not affect me the way that they once did. As the serenity prayer tells us, we learn to “accept the things we cannot change” and “change the things we can,” and we are given a new way to look at everyday situations. Instead of yelling because my child brings home bad marks, I can make a plan with that child to raise the marks for the next term. We can set up a contract including rewards and consequences, and get on with the business of living. Instead of resenting a family member for his or her actions, I can choose to accept that I have no control over that family member and leave any possible changes up to my Higher Power. These changes are brought about by a change in attitude inside of me, and as a benefit I feel more at peace.

I have found also that serenity can come from bad situations. We are currently dealing with a rather serious illness in our family, and this sometimes leads the ill family member to call me up to vent about things that are bothering her. In the past, I would have waited for her to stop talking and say, “Well, what on earth do you want ME to do about it?”

Now, I can just listen, knowing full well (as I did back then) that there is nothing I can do to fix the situation. The difference today is that I actually listen. She knows that I have no power to change the situation, and by not deflecting it back on her, I am not only doing her a service, I am also benefiting by being able to help her in a way that I had never thought possible—by just being there for someone other than myself. I am given a sense of peace and serenity in knowing that efforts to help others do not have to be grandiose, they just have to be.

John S.

MEDITATIONS

Humility

“When the student is ready, the teacher will appear...”

Over the past six years, my membership in SA has led me to learn many things about life, how to relate to people, how to love, how to share and care. However, I have not always found myself very open to the lessons being taught within the SA Program. All too often my ego and my pride get in the way, and a form of deafness, keeps me from hearing the message. Only when I have been humbled and am at my most vulnerable point, am I ready to listen, to learn, to grow.

As resilient as my ego is, it doesn't take much encouragement for it to start growing again...for it to block out the light of truth. So I need humility; otherwise recovery will turn out to be a long and painful process.

God, I pray for humility and the willingness to listen and to learn.



Lust

“True sobriety includes progressive victory over lust.”

For me, “lust” is the key. Lust for sex, for food, for “things,” for knowledge, for admiring glances, for honors—anything that would make me feel better about myself. While each of these “lust” objects often brought temporary pleasure, none of them would or could provide long-term satisfaction. I was never satisfied because none of these things could really make me feel good about myself. As long as I feel bad about who I am, how I look, or what I have done, then self-satisfaction will always elude me.

Lust is about wanting.
Addiction is all about taking.

Love is all about caring for others.
Recovery is all about giving.

God, please free me from the bondage of lust, so I can better care for others.

Overcoming Resentment

After my disclosure in 1988, my wife told me to get help or get out. I met with my pastor, went on a retreat, and started seeing a counselor who sent me to SA. I joined. Then my wife told our children that she was asking me to move out.

I was very resentful. I had done everything she asked and she still asked me to leave! Even worse, she did this the evening before we were to leave on a holiday trip, which we would still do. I couldn't see why, if she had to tell the children, she couldn't have done it either several days earlier or else after the trip.

Our youngest son ran crying from the room. I went after him and asked what he wanted me to say. He said, "I want you to say that it didn't happen." I couldn't. He then said, "I believe you still have enough good in you to leave." My heart was opened, allowing me to accept that their feelings took precedence over mine. I left.

We reunited two-and-a-half years later, and our family life is now better than it has ever been.



Freedom

SA's sobriety definition says "for the single sexaholic, sexual sobriety means *freedom* from sex of any kind." It does not say that we endure the endless torture of chastity. As a single sexaholic sobriety means freedom: freedom from the baggage that goes along with premarital sex, freedom from wondering if

I'll "get lucky" with a certain person, freedom from worrying about pregnancy or the spread of disease, freedom from the morning after (feeling obligated to now have strong feelings for the person or be committed to him). Also freedom from masturbation: the secrecy, the shame, and the mental torture of it never meeting my expectations.

In sobriety I am free to have a conversation with a person without flirtation, innuendo, or ulterior motives. I can have a dating relationship where my judgment is not clouded by sex or the expectation or anticipation of sex.



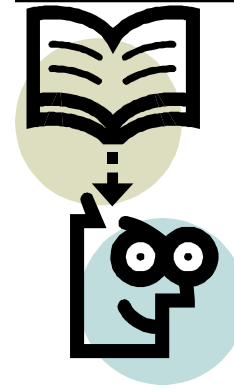
Fixing Others

I have a problem regarding what is my job and what is someone else's in a relationship. I am a champion fixer. Recently I realized there are situations I cannot fix: the sponsee who is facing jail time. I didn't cause it, can't control it, and can't cure it. I cannot help my Mother who is hiding the secret family sin, a secret she has kept hidden for decades. Avoiding forcing others to face their problems keeps me out of a morass of conflict. It allows me to live my own life.

Today I will detach from the pain of my family and friends.

God, help me see how these new truths can spill over into all areas of my life.

Step Study Group Success



The Rochester group would like to share our recent success following the adoption of a new Twelve Step group study format.

Nearly two years ago, we held a steering committee meeting to discuss how we could improve our group. We felt that our meetings tended to focus more on problems than on solutions. We agreed that problems were better left for discussion with sponsors, and that working the Steps was the true solution. Therefore, our group conscience approved a Twelve Step meeting format.

Using the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, members read one paragraph at a time, from the Step we are working on that week. After each paragraph is read, members who have completed the Step are asked to comment on that paragraph. Then, members who have not completed the Step are free to ask questions. This all takes place during the normal sharing portion of the meeting (#9 under "SA Meeting Formats," *Sexaholics Anonymous*, p.197).

We started the new format at our Monday night meetings, which had suffered from low attendance for the past five years (averaging about 10 members per week). Using the new format, we completed all Twelve Steps in about 12 months, during which the Monday night meeting attendance steadily improved. Today, the group boasts 35 to 40 members each night. Our Wednesday night group has also grown to approximately 50 attendees each week.

We have seen the quality of our membership improve as well. Two years ago, only about five members had completed the Steps and could actively sponsor new members. Today, nearly 20 members have completed the Steps, regularly attend meetings, and are available to sponsor newcomers.



Accepting Myself

I'd like to thank a friend in the program who phoned me tonight, and I'd like to thank God for bringing our lives together. My friend and I have always connected by sharing who we are with each other; not who we should be, but who God created us to be.

Before entering this program, I had been trying to be someone else all my life. I ran away from people or pushed them out of my life, making my world so small that there was no room for anyone but me. I was unable to focus on anyone but myself. But focusing only on myself led to a life of dissatisfaction, emptiness, and pain.

I don't know how *not* to be me, how not to run my life around my will (*my* needs, wants, obsessions, and fears). I am truly powerless over who I am—a weak and imperfect human. Therefore, I have been *driven* into a relationship with God, because slowly I have seen that I have no other place to go.

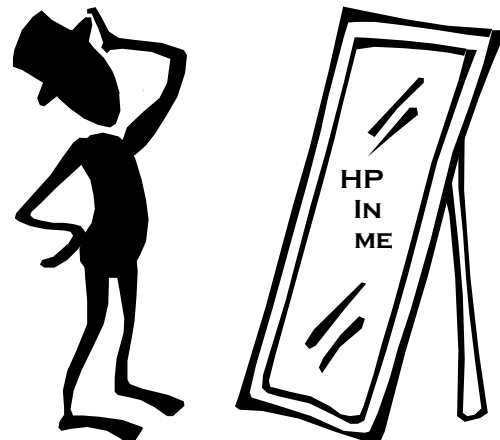
I don't try to do God's will with my own power. Instead, I give God my will and acknowledge my need for His will in that moment. By doing so countless times, I have built a relationship with God that brings peace into my life. I don't ask God to change me; I only acknowledge my need for a will other than my own, and by doing this, my life somehow has changed into something I could never have dreamed of.

God has given me the ability to accept who I am, and consequently to build relationships with others and with Himself. When I go beyond myself and inter-

act with God and others, I can better see myself, through each person that God brings into my life.

This is the ultimate paradox: Instead of needing to be "fixed," my hope lies in accepting myself for who I am. Instead of running away from myself, my hope lies in staying right where I am, falling to my knees, and thanking God for reminding me how much I need His will in my life. My imperfections and my addictions have become gifts, because they are the things that have driven me into a relationship with God—where I find peace in accepting myself just as I am.

I don't need to run anymore. By speaking about who I am with others, I find the peace and serenity that the Program talks about. I have not changed at all, but my life has changed into something far beyond my own will.



Poetry Page

My Fears

My fears cause me to make things
bigger
Than they are
I have doubts/second guesses/
fears, but
Still, a quiet assurance
Lurking lazily like
The dappled shadows
Under sunny boughs
Soothes the sores of my battered
soul

I will hold up, come through
Scathed but still alive
Trusting my fate to the path
Plodded truthfully
One foot-fall following the last
Looking only for the next
Best decision...God helping me.

Perfection

Like trying to grasp the world in a
mirror

Like believing what you see in oth-
ers is how you should feel in your-
self

Even when it feels like it is; it isn't
what you think.

When it feels like it's not; it is
what you think.

So smile and laugh and discover
amusement
in our perfect foibles.

Farewell Letter to An Old Friend

My Dear Friend Lust:

I am writing to you to finalize our relationship.

First, I want to thank you for all you have done for me over the years. You have brought me much pleasure and have helped me through many rough spots. You were my recreation, my escape, and my refuge from the storm, and I felt you were my best friend. It seemed that you always cared for me.

But you have also caused me great pain. You took away my ability to be intimate with anyone. You destroyed all three of my marriages. You took away my ability to practice my life's profession, a profession that I loved and worked my whole life to achieve and perfect. You cost me over \$2 million. You hurt many people in my life; especially those women who tried to love me. You hurt my children, my employees, those who would have been my friends. In fact you prevented me from having healthy friends. You took away my time, time that could have been spent with family, friends, music, the outdoors, reading a good book, or communing with God. You froze me in adolescence and took away my ability to grow. You tried to take my very soul.

People change. Times change. Places change. Attitudes change. I am now in a different place in my life. It is hard for me to say this; old relationships are comfortable and comforting. But I have to tell you that I no longer need nor want you in my life. I no longer want you for my friend.

You did the best you could. I know you are willing to continue to be my friend and to try to help me through life. But I now know that the "help" you have to offer me inhibits my growth as a human being. I know that sounds like psychological gobbledygook, but that is where I am today. I don't ask you to understand, but I do ask you to accept who I am today.

Please do not respond to this letter, try to contact me, or try to influence me in any way. I need to make a total and clean break.

Yours in Reality,
Don

Getting Past Discouragement

I recently heard a member express discouragement at reduced attendance, revolving-door membership, and a general lack of sobriety in the meetings he attends.

When I first started sexual addiction recovery in 1994, I was also angry because the program members in my city didn't have much sobriety. I thought that having others with long-term sobriety would help me with my own sobriety, and I was upset because a sober atmosphere did not exist in the meetings I attended.

Over time, I realized that I would have to stay sober and recover despite this lack. I could not base my recovery on the quality other people's programs. I'd just have to accept the fact that, at most of the SA meetings I attend, I'm the one with the most sexual sobriety. If I want a sober atmosphere, it may mean that I need to be the one to provide it.

I also took some practical steps. I have a long-distance sponsor with 20+ years of SA sobriety. I go to every international convention, where there are dozens of people with long-term sobriety. I am not an alcoholic, but I attend open AA meetings, where I can hear from people with decades of sobriety. And so far, it has worked. .

I work the SA program for my own selfish reasons. People come and people go—and I don't really pay much attention to it. There's always a fresh supply of sexaholics. Meetings wax and wane, then wax and wane again. New faces

show up then disappear. A few reappear. A handful remain constant over the years—some sober and some not. None of this matters. The important thing is that I'm sober for another day.

What I've just written is *important*. It may seem callous, but this mindset is crucial to my recovery.



Essay

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How I Learned to Trust My Higher Power

Step 2: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

A member wrote, “I’m looking for a miracle. I’ve been looking for a miracle for a long time. Recently I’ve thought that if I just work the Steps, I could then have the miracle I’ve been looking for.” Wow! This statement hit me pretty hard, because it reminded me so much of my own Step Two (which took something like five years for me to fully accomplish).

When I was about 12, I latched onto God as the solution for my problems. I became a Christian and tried very hard to be a good one. The problem was, nothing really changed and nothing got better. It was all willpower on my part. For example, I have a dark side when it comes to sexual stuff, and my response was to completely suppress my sexuality. I didn’t date, I didn’t flirt, I didn’t even know what masturbation was. So it was all white-knuckle willpower—but I could not control the sexual fantasies. As I learned later, it was my self-will that kept me disconnected from God.

When I was 19, I gave up on God. I admitted the whole Christian thing was not working for me, and I was just miserable. I still believed in God, but I chose to leave Him. I had lost any trust and faith that I’d had at the beginning. Within a year I had learned to masturbate, and was doing it compulsively. Fast-forward to 1996 (age 29). I had been back in church for about three years, and I started working the Steps

with a sponsor. I stalled on Step Two. It was that whole lack of trust thing. My sponsor gave me various assignments, and we had discussions for a while, but I couldn’t shake my mistrust of God in certain key areas of my life. These were areas in which I “needed” a miracle. We sort of gave up on Step Two and continued on, although I was under the belief that I’d really worked and completed the Step. Once again, I was disconnected from reality.

Things came to a head in the Step Four fear inventory. I discovered and wrote down a major fear of mine. When asked the question, “Am I willing to turn this fear over to God?” I quite honestly said, “No.” This was the start of more struggles over Step Two that lasted for years.

Approximately five years after I first started Step Two with my sponsor, I had the insight that allowed me to start trusting the God of my understanding. I’d gone through years of struggling, but the revelation came over me in a matter of minutes. I guess I had to experience every bit of those five years in order to be ready.

I realized I had been focusing my energy on areas of my life that I wanted to have fixed. My life was unmanageable, even without my sex addiction, and I was naturally looking at those areas and saying, “God, please fix them.” Or, to bring this around full circle, “God, I’m

looking for a miracle.” I was so fixated on these areas of my life that I was blind to God’s will for me. Simply put, God wanted me to focus on my spiritual fitness. Once I put my energy into that, He would take care of these other areas as He saw fit. But so long as I continued to focus my energy and willpower on those areas, He would let me go it alone. I had expectations of miracles, and that is not how the Twelve Steps teach me to relate to God. In Step Three, I unconditionally give my will and my life to the God of my understanding. Unconditionally. No expectations allowed.

It took about another year before I was able to get sober, as there was one significant area of my life that I was still trying to manage on my own. But this earlier realization made sobriety possible. Today I focus my energy and effort on God’s will rather than my own (which for me meant focusing on spiritual fitness). I let go of my expectations and let a loving Higher Power run my life as he sees fit. It’s so much better that way.

That’s what has worked for me.

Ceased Fighting Anything

“And we have ceased fighting anything or anyone - even alcohol.” (Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 84)

This is hard to explain unless you’ve experienced it. I don’t use willpower to fight my addiction any more. I know the addiction is more powerful than I am, and I’ve declared it to be the winner. I

still have to make the decision to not engage in lust, but I no longer fight it like I used to do. I’ve managed to stay sober anyway, mainly because I’ve opened a spiritual channel to the God of My Understanding by working the SA program. I haven’t reached that state of total neutrality mentioned in *Alcoholics Anonymous*, but I have increasing amounts of time where I don’t lust.

Recently I tried to explain my non-fighting attitude to someone after a meeting. He didn’t get it when I told him I no longer resisted my addiction, but I wasn’t explaining it correctly.

There are times when I can make the decision not to engage in lust, fantasy, or whatever. It is a (sometimes difficult) decision, not a mental battle of willpower. When it becomes a willpower thing, I promptly give up. That is what I mean by not fighting or resisting.

I remember walking down the hallway to my computer, knowing I was going to act out, and just going with it instead of resisting. That was the start of my non-fighting. What I was lacking then was the full Step One experience, where instead of resisting or giving in, I can acknowledge my inability to fight my addiction. Once I grasped that concept, I was able to turn it over to God and let *Him* do the fighting, and then I got sober.

Chad

