

Essay

June 2008



The Road to Happy Destiny

A quarterly publication of Sexaholics Anonymous

The Twelve Steps of Sexaholics Anonymous

1. We admitted that 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.

Essay is the quarterly publication of Sexaholics Anonymous

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June 2008



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.

—Adapted with permission from the AA Grapevine Inc.

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

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Newcomers: Contact SA by telephone toll-free at 866-424-8777; outside North America call 615-370-6062; email at saico@sa.org; or SA website at www.sa.org.

My Travel Toolbox



I first came to SA in October 2004—the same date I started consulting for my current employer. My work requires me to travel to China. My start in SA kept me sexually sober for the next two years, while travelling to China every five weeks, for about two weeks at a time. As I started this new work cycle, my family was falling apart. It all accelerated when I was separated from my wife and children. Financial problems mounted. In my first year of sobriety, every aspect of my personal life became complicated, tangled, and completely unmanageable.

My work was going fairly well as a consultant, but most of my customers required me to travel to China. I was trying my best to avoid certain people, places, and things to protect my sobriety. I avoided things like alcohol and TV, as well as places such as Chinese entertainment (lust) clubs, where companies entertain their guests. This boundary didn't come easily. At first, my coworkers insisted that this was part of the job, in order to "connect" with our Chinese partners. But because of my strong desire to stay sober, I was able to stand up for myself and tell my superior that this form of entertainment was not good for me. This led me to develop

other forms of bonding with the Chinese businessmen, such as playing badminton. These activities yielded reciprocal respect.

I believed that I had a good spiritual connection, but my self-willed control eventually broke down. After two years of sobriety and working the Steps, I embarked on a series of relapses. I had loosened my boundaries and was resting on my laurels. The real problem was not the environment or its triggers. It was my poor foundation in Step One. I felt that I was a victim of all the circumstances of my life: my wife and children who were gone, my near bankruptcy, and my superhuman efforts at making financial repair by working around the clock on multiple continents. I didn't accept my disease. Despite some sobriety, I had not truly accepted life on life's terms. I had been working the program to show my wife how much I loved her, instead of allowing my Higher Power to work in me.

Fortunately for my recovery (and unfortunately for all who have been affected), my personal problems kept increasing. My health started to suffer from overwork and depression. But little by little, I surrendered. First, I

surrendered my freelance status and took a full-time job with my major customer. Then I surrendered my obsession for my wife. I stopped trying to make the impossible financial amends. Finally, I surrendered to the fact that I am powerless over my disease, and that my life is unmanageable.

I had to surrender and stop beating myself up with the shame that came from the expression of my disease symptoms. I became willing to do whatever was necessary to protect my newfound sobriety. So I developed a toolbox for maintaining sobriety while in China. My toolbox consists of specific actions that I must take to stay sober:

1. Read and/or listen to program literature. I downloaded program literature and audio files onto my phone and computer. These files include *Alcoholics Anonymous*, *Sexaholics Anonymous*, conference audio files, recovery pod casts, and uplifting music. Easy access on my phone provides a healthy escape when



disturbances mount. I can access these files almost anywhere without taking out a book. Sometimes, reading for a minute brings me back to the solution while I am sitting in a car with coworkers on the way across town. These files also help me avoid boredom. My disease likes boredom.

2. Maintain a fit spiritual connection. I once heard an AA talk entitled "The Spiritual Life is Not a Theory." This talk has reminded me that the most important aspect of sobriety is the maintenance of my spiritual connection. I pray as soon as my eyes open in the morning. I pray when I am awake in the middle of the night. I use a recovery Bible. I take advantage of sanctuaries and chapels, wherever I find them, to stop, pray, and meditate. Most airports have chapels.

3. Stay connected to the program. I call my sponsor using Skype on my computer. I call SA members, particularly those on the West Coast of the U.S. Their schedule works best for both of us. I read the literature, even if only a little some days. I work the Steps, sending my work by email, and reading my sponsor's feedback. Sometimes I travel through Hong Kong, where I can attend an AA meeting. I do service work even while on the road, such as maintaining meeting phone list updates. When I'm back home, I try to attend as many meetings as possible.

4. Participate in daily sobriety renewals. I've had the "Daily Sobriety Renewals" format for a long time,

but I never worked with it until I was ready to do whatever was necessary to stay sober. As I made the effort to take more actions, I called SAICO and gave my name as a loner while in China. A guy in Taiwan contacted me to make phone calls. I had a friend for whom the renewals had worked, so I suggested this to my new friend in Taiwan. The renewals are like medicine for me. I have to take my pills. I have to receive or make the call at a given time. It's a commitment to my own recovery, and I am accountable to another person. When I need to do something for my recovery, I bookend with him. I continue to do the renewal even when in the U.S.

5. Exercise. I exercise while I travel. I walk. It's difficult for me to not be self-conscious walking in the streets of China. As a foreigner, I draw attention from men and women alike. Girls smile at me. I'm learning it's not about me. It's not sex they want. They want to speak English. They're curious. Since there are many, many young smiling girls, at times I cannot look away. They're everywhere, including in my head.



6. Carry my 24-hour chip. I started carrying my chip during my walks. One day, as I was overwhelmed with embarrassment,

I reached for the chip and stared at it as one looks at a pocket watch. It read "24 hours." It helped. I did it again. I imagined having it mounted on top of a watch. Shortly thereafter, I found a compass in a stationery shop. I taped my chip onto the compass, blotting out the compass window. I now have a real compass for the addict I am. My compass is this program, and it's my Higher Power.

I remember hearing that unless a compass is properly calibrated, it will lead people astray. My Higher Power is like a well-tuned compass. I've also heard that a compass is like the beacon at the end of the runway. A pilot must trust it! So I follow the directions my compass gives me. I avoid getting the needle spinning. I stay on the beam!

7. Attend recovery events. If possible, I plan my activities and travel around recovery events. I will attend a men's retreat before leaving for my next trip to China. My coworkers insist on being home for their children's birthdays; I insist on being where I need to be to stay sober. Booking a ticket with a four-day stop at a con-

necting airport doesn't involve any additional cost in certain fare classes. I take advantage of these stopovers.

7. Plan activities for my return home. The constant travel in my life puts me on a continuous emotional roller coaster. Travel is exciting. It's a change, and change is a distraction. Distractions are medicative. Upon arrival, I find myself high. But the high is always followed by a low. When I experience the down, I get very emotional. That's when danger lurks.

The worst part is coming back home. In addition to the jet lag of travel to China plus the jet lag of the return, I experience the down of coming back home to the wreckage. It takes me about ten days to recover from this emotional roller coaster. Being tired and depressed is a dangerous situation. I've found that planning a special activity before I return helps me deal with this roller coaster of

emotions. I need to avoid the jigsaw variations of my brain's neurotransmitters. That is the sense of "Easy does it" for me.

9. Leave the house clean. A clean house is nicer to come home to, plus it makes my life easier when I return.

Today, my problems are still with me. But I don't let them beat me up. I don't let my disease beat me up. Today I have a toolbox for dealing with the challenges of travel and for living life on life's terms. By accepting and surrendering all aspects of my life, I am now willing to do whatever is necessary to protect my sobriety. I understand the concept of "giving yourself to the program." The SA program of recovery is a way of life, not a self-improvement temporary fix. Lust is still there, but today I trust that I will find serenity if I stay the course.

—Anonymous



¡Feliz 24 Horas!

My name is Neal (aka "Pepe" in Spanish). I'm a grateful recovering sexaholic.

This past year, my work sent me to Spain for seven months, and then to Zambia and Malawi for another month. These have been challenging assignments, and it is nothing short of a miracle that my Higher Power has kept me sober during this time. I'm

grateful to those who have written to me at my home in Spain.

By the grace of God and the miracle of this program, today I have been sexually sober for six months and nine days. Today, I'm grateful for the light to see that my most important task is to open myself to the grace of God so that tomorrow I might be able to say that I've been sober for six months and 10 days.

I absolutely hate the words of

Alcoholics Anonymous (85): “We are not cured. . . What we have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition.”

Because I hate those words so much, I need to have them tattooed onto the inside of both eyelids and the palms of both hands!

I’ve been in SA since December 1991. Before now, the longest I had been sober was less than five months. I thought I might be one of those who is “constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves.” But I have kept coming back all of this time. I am so very grateful for the program.

The main thing I find in SA is an unconditional love and acceptance I thought I would never know. A therapist once told me to be careful in SA because some have experienced it as a shaming program. In fact, at times I have felt shame at meetings—when I have not been sober. But what I have found most often is great compassion for the addict who still suffers.

For a long time, whenever I introduced myself, I wanted others to understand how special I was. When speaking, I would give a long introduction so people might get a better picture. I suffer from a desire for “terminal uniqueness.” But my SA meeting discourages this type of thinking. After a member presents a Step One to our group, at least one

group member will say, “You sound like a run-of-the-mill sexaholic!” Today, it gives me great joy to proclaim to the world, “I am nobody special!”

Several years ago, I flew to an SA International Convention in California. On the flight, I was quite jealous of the many individuals who were surfing the net on their laptop computers. I thought, “I can’t do that because of my disease. Poor me!”

Not 24 hours later, I found my way to an SA meeting near Los Angeles. I was surrounded by my closest friends in the world—none of whom I had ever met! This helped me see the awesome blessing of the fellowship of SA. I realized that those people on the plane don’t have this fellowship, and that, in fact, I am one of the luckiest people in the world!

The God of my understanding is constantly blowing my mind. The second tattoo I need to have inscribed in at least a couple of prominent places is, “We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us.” (AA, 164)

Today, I know some joy and peace—and I want to do everything I can to live in the present such as it is. The last 16 1/2 years are meaningless, the last six months are meaningless, and tomorrow is an eternity away. I can never be sufficiently



grateful for the patience, kindness, and mercy of my Higher Power and His agents who have been my brothers and sisters in SA.

Because of my travel schedule, it has not been possible for me to make an SA meeting in the six months that I’ve been sober. I’ve had to use other tools. In the absence of meetings, the most important program tools for me have been prayer and meditation. Silent time for these is absolutely necessary for me. But the great religious traditions teach us that there are many forms of prayer.

Besides praying alone in silence, I’ve prayed with the phone. I called people and received calls from other SA members while in Spain. *Alcoholics Anonymous* (100) says, “If we are spiritually fit, we can do all sorts of things alcoholics are not supposed to do.” Part of that spiritual fitness is finding a way to bring my struggles to the light. I remember a helpful line from *Alcoholics Anonymous* (69), “We all have sex problems. We’d hardly be human if we didn’t.” I don’t share everything with everyone; but if I’m spiritually fit, I can trust my intuitions about how much and with whom to share.

Amazingly, I have also prayed on the Internet. There was a time when Internet porn was such a temptation

that I had to stay away from computers. But lately I’ve shared Step work by email and have used email for giving and receiving sponsorship. I still must be very careful with the Internet—I must stay within boundaries and regularly check in with others about my time on the computer.

I am very much looking forward to a regular schedule of SA meetings upon my return in June. My very closest friends are my SA brothers and sisters—and now I have a good number of them living in Spain!

Alcoholics Anonymous (17) talks about the joy and camaraderie of people who have been saved from shipwreck. I feel that I have been through a spiritual awakening of the “educational variety” (AA, 567). My best thinking has kept me from enjoying the blessings, the joy, and the freedom of sobriety.

Sobriety is a wonderful and mysterious gift. My Higher Power gave me a brain, which I have often misused to enable and cover up my acting out. I have to ask Him to help me to use that brain for good purposes, to be creative, that I might find any and every possible tool to keep me sober.

As we say in Spain, ¡Feliz 24 horas!—Happy 24 hours ahead.

—*Yours in the fellowship, Neal*



"Welcome Home" Song

Akron, OH July 11-13, 2008



In late December 2007, I received a flyer along with my copy of *Essay*, announcing the July 2008 International Convention to be held in Akron, Ohio. The flyer identified the Convention theme as "Welcome Home." Somehow that phrase—"Welcome Home"—hit me with a strong emotional force. A song started forming in my mind. I picked up my guitar and note pad. The song seemed to write itself. I took the first draft upstairs and played it for my wife. She said, "That's a good song!" Her words encouraged me to continue to work it through, finding just the right lyrics and music to express my experience of truly feeling "at home" here in SA.

In a way the song is a retelling of the Prodigal Son, who has lost his way and returns home expecting to be judged and condemned, but instead is welcomed with open, loving arms by his Father. The words and music also carry the emotional signature of my story. Before coming to SA, I was extremely lonely and fright-

ened. No one else seemed to have a clue about the kind of inner world that I inhabited, nor how lusting and acting out were my "solution" to this relentless torture. In 1987, I met with two men who had recovered from sexual addiction. They were smiling! They actually seemed happy to meet me! I finally felt that there were people who understood, who would neither judge nor try to fix me—because they were just like me on the inside. For the first time ever in my life I truly felt at home! Although it was nine more years before I would come in from the cold—when I was ready, I remembered there was a place I could return to and be welcomed home!

I plan to perform "Welcome Home" in Akron at the convention this July. Here are the lyrics. I hope you enjoy them.

—Jayson W. San Diego, CA

Attention Convention Attendees:

Please describe how attending the International Convention been helpful to your recovery.

Submit your thoughts to Essay@sa.org

Welcome Home

Welcome home ... welcome home
Let your hair down, you're not alone

You'd go anywhere ... try anything
Come up empty-handed ... having lost everything
Never fit in ... never took part
Looking for something to fill in your heart

Came to the last house on the block
Saw a light shining from within
Gave the door a timid knock
It swung wide open to let you in ...

Welcome home ... welcome home
Let your hair down, you're not alone
Welcome home ... welcome home
Put your hand out friend, you're not alone anymore

When you're tired of living ... in sorrow and grief
Ready for real change ... not just relief
Open your eyes .. you'll see that it's true
Something much better is waiting for you

Come to the last house on the block
See the light shining from within
Give the door a timid knock
It swings wide open to let you in ...

Welcome home ... welcome home
Let your hair down, you're not alone
Welcome home ... welcome home
Put your hand out friend, you're not alone anymore

Ahh Welcome Home ...
Everyone who's lost
Ahh Welcome Home ...
You've paid the dearest cost
Ahh Welcome Home ...
To finally find your way
Ahh Welcome Home ...
You're welcome here to stay!!
Welcome Home!



Music and lyrics by Jayson W.

Long Journey to Sobriety



Recently, I celebrated one year of SA sobriety—after more than 11 years in this program. I turned 62 last week, and I’m still married after 36 years. But today, when I reflect on my powerlessness and the unmanageability of my life over the past 50 years, I can see that my own efforts to stay sober have been doomed to failure. Today I know that my only hope is to rely on God to work this program and to give me the grace to stay sober.

Most of my life I have felt that I was close to God. So each time I acted out, I would feel tremendous shame, ask God for forgiveness, and make solemn promises to stop. But I was unable to keep my promises.

During high school and college, I was shy and never dated much. To cover up my feelings of inadequacy, I visited adult book stores and masturbated to pornographic movies. After college, I got a job as a computer programmer, and I visited the local strip clubs after work. I also joined my church’s adult singles group, where I met my future wife. We never had actual intercourse before marriage, but it was exciting for me to be sexually intimate with a woman rather than living vicariously with pornography or strip clubs.

During the “honeymoon phase” of our marriage we were blessed with three wonderful children. The

responsibilities associated with my new family and job kept me busy, and I don’t remember acting out during the first 10 years of marriage.

But my dormant disease eventually became active. We moved to a new city, where I worked as a high school teacher. I remember working very late one night preparing students’ final grades. This was quite stressful, and to relieve the stress, I visited a strip club afterwards. Then I returned home and snuck into bed.

When I was 40, I switched jobs and got back into the computer industry. I was making more money and had more unaccountable time. I would act out during my lunch hours at strip clubs and bookstores. Eventually progressed to massage parlors and then Internet pornography.

To finance my habit, I took money out of the ATM, went without lunch, and spent as little as possible on other things. Sometimes my wife asked me where the money had gone. I would say, “I had to fill up my gas tank,” or “They were collecting money at work,” or some other lie.

Once I hocked my extra wedding ring at a pawnshop so I could act out at an adult bookstore. The ring had been a replacement for my original ring, which I had lost but later found. Today, I see this as a symbol of the

depths of my insanity: I traded something that represented our marriage union for a few dollars to act out in a seedy bookstore.

During my 40s, I sought professional help. I went to a psychiatrist who prescribed an anti-depressant to dampen my impulses to act out. This worked phenomenally. I felt liberated! I went to my first SA meeting at the prompting of my counselor. During the orientation and group sharing, I heard my story over and over again. I was a sexaholic! But I didn’t need meetings. I had my drugs.

Then I had to apply for a top-secret clearance at work. I thought the anti-depressant might be detected in the drug test, and I’d be declared crazy. So I stopped taking it for awhile. When I later resumed the drug, it didn’t work as well. In fact, my disease got worse. I became more daring, asking for more and more to satisfy my fantasies.

As I approached my 50th birthday and the upcoming renewal of our wedding vows to celebrate our 25th wedding anniversary, I was determined to end my unfaithfulness to my wife. Soon after the renewal of the vows, however, my motivation dwindled, and I slipped back into acting out with a vengeance. My guilt and shame intensified. I felt alienated from God and completely without value.

The acting out culminated one night after I walked out of a massage parlor. As I left, I realized something

was different. In the past, after acting out, I would feel guilt and shame, and tell myself I would not do this again. But this time I began to fantasize about what more I could do, and I wanted to return to that massage parlor. It dawned on me that I had no resolve to stop. I had no hope of reconciling what I was doing with my faith in God. I felt doomed to be forever alienated from the God I had known for 50 years.

As I pondered my condition, I decided to go to an SA meeting. I got a sponsor, went to 30 meetings in 30 days, began working the Steps, and was able to stay sober. And if that were the end of my story, today I would be celebrating 11½ years of sobriety. But that was not to be.

During the first three years of my sobriety, I continued to struggle with pornography, but I worked closely with my sponsor and got involved in meetings. I began making amends. I was able, with the support of others, to

have the courage to finally tell my wife the exact nature of my harms to her. I felt liberated. My wife knew what I had done, and she decided to stay with me and work

on our relationship.

Then my sponsor moved away, and I did not get another one. I thought that after three years of sobriety, it wasn’t necessary. But for me it was always about technical sobriety, not recovery—and I was interpret-



ing the definition of “sex with self” as “masturbating to climax.” My so-called sobriety continued for two more years, while my bouts with pornography, masturbation without climax, and voyeurism continued.

In reality, I was not in recovery and certainly not sober. A member suggested that I was only fooling myself, and after some discussions with him and others, I reluctantly reset my sobriety time from five years to zero. Then, a voice inside me said, “Since you no longer have your precious five years of sobriety, you might as well get the full benefits of having no sobriety and act out all the way.”

This led to six years of painfully intermittent sobriety. I got a new sponsor, but I struggled. I was missing something. I tried to do the right things, but I never felt the urgency of complete commitment to the program, and I did not see any need for recovery along with sobriety.

My acting out intensified. I crossed new boundaries. I was crossing the border to act out in more risky situations. The logistics of financing, time management, and concealment were devouring me.

Then, about a year ago, I received a wake up call. My older brother was diagnosed with AIDS. He revealed to his wife that he had had sexual relations with someone they both knew. She and their six grown children were devas-

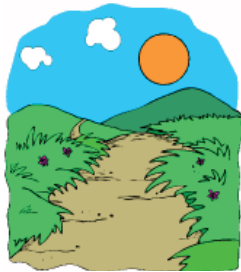
tated. His oldest daughter’s wedding was a month away, and he was in the hospital being treated for AIDS. This caused tremendous stress, bewilderment, anger, and grief in his family. Several of his children shunned him.

My brother’s wife wanted to keep this a secret from the extended family for the sake of her daughter’s wedding, but she reached out to my wife. When my wife heard the news, she began to wonder about *me*, because she knew of my past activities and some of my current struggles.

My wife started making comments like, “You had better not be doing anything like this.” I told my sponsor that my wife would be demanding answers to her suspicions, and I wasn’t sure what to tell her. My sponsor advised me to be cautious and not just dump everything without considering the consequences. I waited for an appropriate opportunity.

After a couple of weeks of trying to process what was happening in my brother’s marriage and what might be happening in ours, my wife asked me whether I had done anything that she should be concerned about. I prayed for guidance, and God gave me the courage to tell her

in general terms what I had done. I told her I was sorry. I said that I had just been tested for STDs and that the tests were negative. She decided to stay.



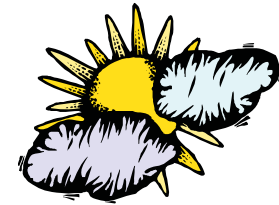
I know that the process of making amends to my wife will take me the rest of my life and will never be complete. But ever since that day, I have been determined to do all I can to keep myself from falling back into my disease. I went to a psychiatrist and he doubled the dosage of my antidepressant. This seems to make the lust hits less severe. I told my pastor about my struggles and that I don’t want to be a hypocrite any longer. That conversation has helped me feel more comfortable in my skin. I started calling my sponsor more regularly and began working the Steps again. I volunteered for a service position and have led a couple of topic meetings—two things I had not done for seven years.

Today I know that I’m afflicted with a forgetting disease. Reflecting on my story is helpful because I never want to go back to where I was. Today, after a year of real sobriety plus some work toward recovery, my life is a whole lot better.

Without the clouds of guilt and shame that hung over me when I was acting out, I feel more worthy and able to enjoy the love of friends and family. Life makes more sense. I am much more able to relax when interacting with others. I am more optimistic that my life will continue to get better as I work this program of recovery. I thank God for not giving up on me and for allowing me to regain the life I had lost.

I still get down on myself at times, but overall I have much more peace in my life. I am more accepting of my failures because I see more clearly how powerless I really am. I am more willing to look at my character defects and less fearful of owning them. I have more motivation to work on those aspects of my life that need improvement.

Most of all, I now see clearly how slippery the path of life is, and that helps me to keep in closer communication with God. I have a deeper desire to turn over



all aspects of my life—my actions, thoughts, and emotions—to God’s care. Seeing God work in me despite my failures has given me a greater sense of hope.

Today, I know that I need God to give me the grace to work the Steps and maintain a fit spiritual condition. I need to make use of the tools of the program when my lust surfaces. I need to stop trying to control my own life, and allow God to take over. I want to be a better husband, better father, better grandfather, better friend, and better member of SA. These goals seem lofty to me, but I believe in the Promises and I know they will materialize if I work for them.

—Anonymous



Greetings from Colombia!

Dear SAICO and the SA fellowship:

Our group would like to express our sincere appreciation for the services you all provide on a global level to those who require help from SA. Your help has been a tremendous blessing to us as well as to me personally. Our group has approximately eight members. We meet three times a week: Mondays and Wednesdays at 7 p.m. and Saturdays at 2 p.m.

We started our group on September 11, 1999. Although it has been somewhat difficult for us to achieve consistent sobriety, we remain open to all who desire help from SA. We have one member with 10 months of sobriety, another with 9 months, and another with 5.5 months.

—God bless you all, Fran C., los SA del Grupo Despertar de: Cali - Colombia [Translated from Spanish by Todd K.]

Man Falls into a Hole

This guy is walking down the street when he falls into a hole. The walls are so steep he can't get out.

A doctor passes by, and the guy shouts up, "Hey you, can you help me out?" The doctor writes a prescription, throws it down in the hole, and moves on.

A priest comes along and the guy shouts up, "Father, I'm down in this hole. Can you help me out?" The priest writes out a prayer, throws it down in the hole, and moves on.

Then a program friend walks by. "Hey, Joe, it's me. Can you help me out?" And the friend jumps in the hole. Our guy says, "Are you stupid? Now we're both down here." Joe says, "Yeah, but I've been down here before and I know the way out."

—old AA saying



Tools of the Program

How I Found Serenity at Business Meetings and at Home

Tradition Two: For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience."

I'm the type of sexaholic who likes to do everything by myself. I started my own business, did my own accounting, and wrote my own contracts. When I play music, I only want to play *my* music. I don't want or need any help because I can do it all by myself!



feared might exist. I needed to trust that my sponsor, my group, and my God knew better than I did about running my life.

I might try to explain that I'm doing these things to save money, to "learn," or any other perfectly logical (but completely deceptive) rationalization. But the reality is that I'm completely selfish and self-centered and this is, to my own demise, the only way of life that I know.

Through a series of events that started with a question—"Why can't I stop looking at porn?"—and ended with a lost marriage, home, and ego, I muttered the four-letter word that saved me: "Help." With more pain, that word turned into a whelping cry, "HELP!!!"

After admitting I needed help, my old way of life began to change. I came to realize that what I needed was help from a Power greater than myself—something that I had always

That led me to a happy and joyous freedom that I would otherwise have never known. Now I have friends galore, my marriage has come together with an unimaginable strength, and I can happily delegate my plan out to those who are willing to help . . . hmm. . . my plan?

Nothing could so easily put a wrench in my gut like a good, old-fashioned, heated SA business meeting. It became a ritual that I would reach out to my sponsor after each of those meetings. People said things that scared me. I thought that if I let these people have their way, they would ruin a perfectly good program of recovery. So I participated in heated arguments and left the meetings feeling restless, irritable, and discontent. I was certain I'd have to battle continuously to save the fellowship.

Lo and behold, the fellowship didn't deteriorate! What did they do before I got there? I had a feeling in my gut that business meetings

weren't supposed to be like that.

What I learned, from the wisdom of Tradition Two (AA, 563), is that business meetings don't have to be like that *for me*. Our Second Tradition (the only Tradition whose long form is shorter than the short form) states: "*For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.*"

In many places in our literature, this group conscience is expanded to "informed" group conscience.

This is quite a concept! My purpose is not to save the fellowship or control the outcome of the meetings. Both of those things are up to God.

Here is God's role at a business meeting:

Express Himself, usually in the form of decisions made through the group conscience.

Here are my roles in a business meeting:

(1) *Inform the other participants of what I think is relevant, and*
(2) *allow God to work through me by giving my vote to Him.*

That's it! There's no need for me to get into a heated argument with anyone! I simply state what I know in order to inform the group and then keep quiet unless I remember something else that is relevant.

Even when I am personally opposed to a measure, I will happily present information that may support it. Why? Because during the discussion my single goal is to inform.

When I dropped *my* plan and started doing this informing, something entirely new happened. I saw the wisdom of God as He expresses Himself. I began to look forward to business meetings so I could witness God's decisions using our group vote. I became convinced that this is why our fellowship survives and continues. No person is in charge! Control goes to a loving God instead. My experience has been that His plan is much better than any I could come up with.



Like most things I learn from the program, this principle applies to more areas of my life than I expected. My newly restored home followed the same pattern as the business meetings in the area of decisions. I would enter into a discussion with the intention of persuading my wife to see things my way. This led to arguments which, in turn, convinced me to become even more conniving the next time.

What if I stopped trying to control the decisions of my household and instead gave them to God? I began to approach our decisions with the intent of informing and nothing

else. The serenity this gave me was contagious, much like recovery: my wife began to take the same approach.

I now look forward to the decision-making process. I have a new appreciation for my wife and for God's work in our home. Our decisions are better, and we are both much happier.

If this is all foreign to you, I implore you to try it. It fulfills yet another promise found in *Alcoholics Anonymous* (68):

Making a Decision

Step Three: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

For me, lust is an attitude. It begins with a desire to covet. It is a desire to take (even if only mentally) something that is not mine to take. My acting out always begins with lust. Why? Because I am powerless over lust. I do not have the ability to control it. It's kind of like learning how a tornado forms in the hopes that I can somehow stop it from happening. If lust is going to be removed from my life, it is God who must do the removing.

That's why Step Three is so important to me. I make a decision to turn my life (actions) and will (attitudes) over to the care of God. Or as the author of "Acceptance Was the

"For we are now on a different basis, the basis of trusting and relying upon God. We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves. We are in the world to play the role He assigns. Just to the extent that we do as we think He would have us, and humbly rely on Him, does He enable us to match calamity with serenity."

—David S., Rochester

Answer" (AA, 407) said, "I'll pedal, God will steer." Step Three is purely academic until I put it into action by working Steps Four through Nine. Step Three is a stepping-off point. It is the first Step in which I commit to *doing* something, rather than just *thinking* about something.



Here is a good example I heard: I make a "decision" to go on a trip to a beautiful place. How far into the trip am I at this point? I haven't begun the trip. To put it another way, I haven't really taken the Step. Now, I begin packing. I make a list of what I will bring and what I will leave behind. I check my car. I make the necessary repairs. I choose things that I want to see along the way (or want to

avoid). I load my car, get in, turn the key, and drive away from my starting point (this is what I'm doing in Steps Four through Nine). Only now have I actually made that "decision" real. In effect, Steps Four through Nine are where Step Three becomes real. Until



Thoughts on Meditation

Step Eleven: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him...

About five years ago, my sponsor in another fellowship talked with me about Step Eleven. This was before I found SA, and I was busy imposing my self-will on the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. I was the epitome of "half measures availed us nothing"—nothing except for maybe a check mark on Steps One through Ten, indicating I had completed them. But Step Eleven is different, because I have found that when I use it in my life on a consistent basis, it brings everything together.

My sponsor said two things about Step Eleven. First, he said that it's not prayer *or* meditation, it's prayer *and* meditation. This means I am supposed to practice both. He also said it's not prayer and maybe I'll meditate when I get around to it, or when I'm bored, or when I've got nothing else to do. It is prayer *and* meditation. Then, he explained that he couldn't tell me what meditation is, but he could tell me what it's not.

then, it's an unfinished Step.

What I have found also is that the Steps have helped change the question from "Why?" to "What action do I take next?"

—Gerard F.

Meditation is not going outside in the morning and having a cigarette and thinking about what I have to do that day. Meditation is not walking my dogs and thinking about why I'm pissed off at my boss. Meditation is not thinking about how I'm going to counter every argument my girlfriend brings up during our next fight. Meditation is not about me. It's about getting rid of "me" in my head and making some space for God to reside.

That was my sponsor's analysis of Step Eleven, and I promptly disregarded what he said, checked it off my list, and went on to Step Twelve. Now that I have come into SA and discovered how diligent I need to be in working the Steps, I have found Step Eleven to be a godsend.

The simple practice—and it really is a practice—of sitting down and trying to clear out my head has been quite beneficial because it gives me a feeling of peace throughout the day. I call it my Teflon mind. As I go

through the day, things come up that normally I would have obsessed over and rehashed in my head. But with just a few minutes of meditating—of trying to slow things down and clear things out—I am much calmer and issues sort of slide out of my area of focus. Even lust, which is my most feared enemy, is not as prevalent. Triggers are everywhere, but my head isn't flying around as much, so it's easier to surrender lust right away.

What I learned is to start slowly. At first, I would sit for no more than one minute each morning. Keeping it to 60 seconds prevented my all-or-nothing thinking, in which I decide I'm going to meditate for two hours every day, try to dive in, then fail to realize my expectations and get frustrated. But I figured that if in my disease I could spend six hours in front of a computer watching porn or cruising for prostitutes, I could find 60 seconds in my day for recovery.

The next thing I did was just try to watch my thoughts go by. This actually worked. The problem was that as soon as one thought left, another would pop in. I would start thinking about that one, and then remember I need to let it go, and then—boom!—another would appear.

When I started to extend the time past 60 seconds, I would notice a tiny space between the

thoughts. Just a miniscule silence would pass before another thought would barge in, but those little bits of quiet did wonders for me. As I got up to five minutes (currently I try to meditate for 5 to 10 minutes each morning), those fractions of a second became longer. I was getting more emptiness in my noggin—and to be honest, in working the Steps in SA, I have found that less of me and more of my Higher Power is a very good thing.

The final gift of meditating is that by slowing down for a few minutes in the morning, I have found it much easier to connect with my Higher Power during the day. Often when I leave the house for work, I'm off and running in my head and don't even think to acknowledge God or have any sort of spiritual awareness for the rest of the day. Meditating has allowed me to at least be aware of God and sometimes say the serenity prayer and even a few thank yous.

So I am grateful that by slowing down my head and clearing out the junk, I can make a little room for God. That helps guide me and bring peace to my day. As I have learned the hard way over the past two years, without God, there is no sobriety, no recovery, no sanity, and no progressive victory over lust.

—Gavin C., Portland, OR



Relapse Prevention Plan



At the beginning of *Sexaholics Anonymous* (15), the narrator says in part: “Then one night *out of nowhere* a prostitute jumped into my car . . .” (emphasis added). I used to think that my own behaviors occurred “out of nowhere.” I ignored the reality that a whole lot of my own choices put me in a situation and in the state of mind and spirit that brought about a lust-related experience. It was never “out of nowhere.”

Last October, I led a workshop on relapse prevention at a Chicago SA-sponsored retreat. The workshop focused on recognizing early warning signs of relapse and on taking immediate remedial action in order to stay sober and make progress in recovery.

During the session, we shared our experiences, and I made lists of the members’ input. Afterward, I wrote up the work product to circulate among participants and other members of SA. This has been a useful tool for me and for my sponsees.

I would like to share the group’s work product with others in the fellowship who might be interested. Following is a partial list of our findings. If you would a copy of the complete work product, please contact me at gary-iowa@juno.com.

—*Thanks for letting me share,*
Gary L.

I. Early Warning Signs of Relapse



Not bringing things into the light—keeping secrets
Becoming complacent—feeling of being in control
Staring, taking second looks, rubber-necking
Inappropriate self-touching
Positioning self to “enhance the view”
Engaging in flirting, intrigue
Preparation “just in case”
Cruising non-porn: catalogs, ads, art books, etc.
Getting into sobriety-definition debates
“I can handle this” attitude—not asking for help
Justifying little things as unimportant
Engaging in negative self-talk
Playing the victim
Voyeurism of self
Keeping small things hidden
Blaming others—not accepting responsibility

Dishonesty
Taking credit for my recovery
Resorting to half-truths
Distancing myself from Higher Power / God
Not avoiding slippery places or situations
Breaking boundaries—using shortcuts
Not making sobriety a priority

II. Preventive Measures When Discovering Early Warning Signs

Tell someone now
Talk to sponsor, in detail
Get to a meeting as soon as possible, including open AA meetings if needed
Journal—write about what is bothering me
Ask God in
Practice rigorous honesty
Remember past pain and loss
Surrender
Do what I don’t want to do—take the action and the feelings will follow
Take action: “Turn your head, move your feet”
Run the reel through to the end
Stay in the present
Do an act of kindness
“Bookend” risky situations
Always have a plan and use it
Make a gratitude list
Take directions from sponsor or recovering person
Use positive self-talk
Take an action of love

III. Intensive Care Plan

In addition to the above measures, our local group has devised the idea of an Intensive Care Plan (based on the medical model) for those who are having trouble staying sober. Some of us have found this idea helpful, so at the conference, we included it in our list of preventive measures. The plan includes items such as a daily calendar listing all daily activities; boundary check list to be used on a daily basis; list of positive sobriety actions with a checklist for each day showing which were used that day; prayer journal; and other aspects as necessary to a particular situation. The plan is shared with a sponsor or with an intensive care accountability partner. It is used for at least 30 days, and extended as necessary.



Inadequate, Unworthy, Alone, and Afraid



Often when I'm in an SA meeting, I'm not really listening to the words of the readings. I've probably heard the words "Many of us felt inadequate, unworthy, alone, and afraid . . ." (SA, "The Problem") a thousand times. But one day, the meaning of these words really hit me:

Inadequate. Something is wrong with me. I cannot control it. It controls me. I am powerless to stop. I feed my sexual frenzy by flirting, taking in the images, consuming porn, and acting out. All this fantasy activity takes away from my already limited mental resources. When I dedicate 30% of my mental activity to fantasy, I am 30% less adequate than those who don't.

Unworthy. Something is wrong with me. I cannot control it. It controls me. I'm powerless to stop. My disease is not a social disease. It's an isolating disease, whispered in the shadows. The disease is embarrassing. It speaks of the unspeakable. It shames me and makes me feel less than. I feel burdened and unclean. I feel unworthy.

Alone. Something is wrong with me. I cannot control it. It controls me. I am powerless to stop. I cannot connect with others because I feel I have

little to offer in any relationship. I retreat into my thoughts. My fantasies entertain me. I become lost in fantasy and withdraw further from those who love me. I am alone.

Afraid. Something is wrong with me. I cannot control it. It controls me. I am powerless to stop. I fear others will find out my secrets. The embarrassment and shame that would cause scares me half to death—not enough to make me stop but enough to keep me alone and isolated.

In my addiction, I lost my wife, my house, and my kids. I remarried and lost that wife, house, and kids. I was totally consumed by this disease. I was unbathed and unshaven. The refrigerator was empty. The shades were drawn tight and the grass outside was uncut. I was on a slow-moving train bound for hell. I was acting out with anyone with a pulse. I hated myself. I hated everything.

But apparently this is not God's will for me. God put people in my life to help influence my behaviors. I found SA and struggled at first, but I kept trying. I never gave up. I wanted what others had and was willing to go to any lengths to get it. Now, I have been in recovery long enough

to have a relationship with God. My sobriety date is August 17, 2000.

I've been in recovery long enough to realize that *I am Adequate*. In the past I wanted all or nothing. I lived at the extremes. If I could not do it well, then I did not want to do it at all. Now I live in the middle. I'm not at either extreme. I am comfortable in my own skin. I do not pretend I am all or know all. Failure will not cause me to drink or act out, because failure too comes and goes. Failing is what everybody in the middle does. I am adequate and that's fine with me.

I've been in recovery long enough to know that *I am Worthy*. In recovery I have found self-worth. I realize the value of having lived through my experiences. I realize I can share with others and they can benefit. If I can help just one person to stay out of the quagmire I was in, then I have great worth. I see how I fit in with others, and I know who I am and where I am going.

I've been in recovery long enough to know that *I am Not Alone*. Recovery has given me a greater connection than I ever imagined. I have a connection with my Higher Power. I have a connection with my wife that is beyond my wildest dreams. I am connected to every member of this recovery community—and for this I will forever be grateful.

I've been in the program

long enough to know that *I am Fearless*. The phone rings...is it her? My wife wants to go on my computer... so what? In the past I lived two lives and was in constant fear of being found out. Both worlds were bound to collide. I don't do that anymore. Today I'm transparent. What you see is all there is. I'm not in constant fear of being found out. All my closets are clean; there are no lingering skeletons. I am at peace with myself.

For the newcomer, the road ahead may seem long and perilous. As I had to learn myself, we are asked to replace something we know with something we have not learned about. We need faith to believe that if we do the right things, we will achieve the desired results.

For the old-timer, the road is still long. God did not give us sobriety and sanity only for our own good. I must help others. God spared me from the full consequences of my addictions so that I can help others avoid the pitfalls I fell into. I am God's mouthpiece.

Each of us has the skill, background, and experience to reach the newcomer who still suffers. Our individual skill sets reach individual newcomers. I am the only one who can reach certain people. Each of us is vital to this process.

—Paul D.





Constant Vigilance

Three Perspectives

Share #1

In one of the Harry Potter books, the defense against the Dark Arts teacher would shout, “Constant vigilance!” He meant, of course, that constant vigilance is necessary in order to stay safe from practitioners of the dark arts. When I read this, my first thought was “That’s how I have to be with my sexaholism.” When I forget that I’m a sexaholic, my addict takes over. And since this is a forgetting illness, it’s all too easy to get into that state of forgetfulness. It’s only constant vigilance that works.

Alcoholics Anonymous (84-88, Steps Ten and Eleven) provides a simple method for maintaining constant vigilance. These pages provide a clear set of actions to take in the morning and in the evening, and we are told to pause throughout the day when agitated or doubtful. This works quite well for me.

Personally, I can usually tell when my mental/emotional balance starts to go awry. And that’s the sign that I’m heading towards a slip. So I pause and analyze the situation. Usually it’s because something or someone is not going the way I want

it to go. When this happens, I tend to get irritated, anxious, and fearful. I then surrender the situation to the God of My Understanding and remind myself that God is running my life these days—so whatever happens is His will for me. And this is usually sufficient to get my thinking back on track.

—Chad C., sober for 2077 days

Share #2

Part of the process for me has been smashing the idea that I can lust like a normal person.

I too follow the “design for living” found in *Alcoholics Anonymous*, (84-88). It’s a gold mine! Each day I begin with the morning meditation and ask God how I can best serve Him today. His will, not mine, be done. I used to read this and think to myself, “What a pious platitude!” But I’ve found that this is precisely the point of the program—to become more useful to God and my fellows. This is the 180 degree turn.

I have the tools to deal with resentment, anger, self-pity, and all my other character defects: ask God to remove them, talk to someone about them immediately, and look for someone I can help. I’m fortunate that I have a family, because I’m never short of opportunities to be helpful.

In short, the way I maintain vigilance is to do what I’m supposed to be doing—what God wants me to be doing.

—Anonymous

Share #3

Some readings at last night’s SA meeting touched on why we must be vigilant and how we might maintain a “fit spiritual condition.”

Why be vigilant?

Alcoholics Anonymous (58) does not say: “Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was less than perfect until we let go absolutely.” It *does* say, “Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely.”

Page 59 does not say: “Half measures availed us half of the benefits of recovery.” It does say “Half measures availed us nothing.”

Page 83 does not say: “The spiritual life is a great theory. We have to learn as much about it as we can.” It does say, “The spiritual life is not a theory. We have to live it.”

Page 83 also does not say: “If we try to get to one meeting per week to listen to how others are recovering and read some posts online, we will be amazed before we are half way through.” [i.e., we will experience the Promises.] It does say, “If we are painstaking about this phase of

our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through.” [We will experience the Promises.]

After describing the great benefits of recovery (the Promises), page 84 does not say, “They are being fulfilled among us—sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we listen and read about how others are working the Steps.” It does say, “They are being fulfilled among us—sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.”

How am I vigilant?

Alcoholics Anonymous (85) warns us that “It is easy to let up on our spiritual program and rest on our



laurels,” but that we’re “headed for trouble if we do” In other words, we must be constantly vigilant! Our daily reprieve is “contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition.”

I have often engaged in discussions about how I can maintain my spiritual condition. I’ve done lots of philosophizing and analyses of what’s working and why it might be working.

Interestingly, I discovered just last night that Bill W. answers the question of how I can maintain my spiritual condition in the next few lines! (Sometimes it takes a while for things to click for me!) He says,

“Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God’s will into all of our activities. ‘How can I best serve Thee—Thy will (not mine) be done.’ These are thoughts which must go with us constantly” (AA, 85). And I realized that’s exactly what it does take for me. I need to learn to be conscious of God throughout the day. I need to become more aware of what He wants me to do and what

He wants me to think about—not in general, but in every circumstance in which I find myself all day long. Then I have to do it! And think it! I’ve heard this called “living before the face of God.” As usual, simple but not easy.

That’s what I need to ponder, anyway. No, I’m sorry—that’s what I need to *do*.

—*Your brother in recovery, Dana*

Overcoming Negative Self-Talk

How did my addiction to lust begin? There are many ways I could explain it: my childhood; my parents’ relationships with themselves, with me, and with others; genetic predisposition—it can be looked at from different angles. Today I believe that my addiction stems from my relationship with myself, from my unhealthy self-talk. Unfortunately, I have had a constant “hate session” with myself going on in my head most of my life.

What do I mean? Picture a jukebox, the type with vinyl records. Imagine that each record is a hate session song from me to myself, in different musical styles, such as jazz, classical, country, and rock. Each song has different lyrics meant just for me: “You’re not good at this”;



“You’re awful at that”; “you’re pathetic”; “You’re a sorry excuse for a human being.” Now imagine that all the vinyl records in that jukebox were animated like cartoon beings, fighting with each other to be heard.

It’s understandable that I would rather distract myself than listen to all those voices. I found many ways to distract myself: I could put my mind into a lust fantasy, engage in romantic intrigues, date inappropriate people, collect dangling relationships, give mixed messages to partners, or obsess.

How has SA helped? I first came to SA 13 years ago, but 10 years ago I came for keeps. Regularly attending SA meetings became a great resource in helping me become aware of the problem. First, I saw the problem in

other people in the rooms. “Wow,” I thought to myself, “some of these people really hate themselves.” Then I thought, “Could I be like them, hating myself that much?” It didn’t seem likely, but after awhile, with the distractions reduced, I saw the reality. I could reduce the obsessions in my thoughts long enough to hear the hate voices coming up.

Then I had to do something about the problem. Sharing my vulnerabilities in meetings and making phone calls have helped me let go of my shame. Doing service and helping others has helped me replace the hate voices with more positive messages. As the self-hate messages went away, I saw that meditating (Step Eleven) was something I could do rather than totally avoiding it.

This is just a bit of my lust re-

covery story. I needed to stop being addicted to the distractions that kept me from listening to the unpleasant messages I gave myself. Romance partners often gave me nice messages about myself, and I was addicted to collecting these suppliers of nice messages. My recovery has involved recognizing my addiction as neutralizing bad messages, and then working on the real problem: my self image.

Today’s way of living is better. It’s more a life of choice than a band-aid measure to mollify the loudest negative self-talk. Through SA I have learned to set healthy goals, have clean fun, and be less perfectionistic and less hard on myself. It’s a place to improve my character and make healthy friends. I’ve been in SA a long time and I plan to stay.

—*Thank you SA, Julie F.*

SA Members: Call for Articles!

When we share our experience, strength, and hope, we provide encouragement to other members and to the addict who still suffers. Suggested topics include:

- Your recovery story describing what you were like before, how you found SA, what works for you, and how your life is different today
- Your experience working the Steps or Traditions, and how this has helped your recovery
- Your thoughts on a particular topic (serenity, sponsorship, etc.)

When submitting articles, please include contact info, and indicate whether you would like to remain anonymous in print. Articles can be any length from approximately 400 words to 2,000 words (for a detailed member story). *Submit articles or ask questions at Essay@sa.org.*



Meditations for Addicts



I'm just an ordinary person, but special in the eyes of God. I've been involved with SA since 1993. It took me six years to be able to maintain any sort of sobriety. Until then I had not surrendered my "right to lust." In 1999, I finally made the choice to do just that and was able to stay sober. I chose to take back that right in 2004 and twice had "slips" (Acts of Self Destruction, or "ASDs"). My current sobriety date, by the grace of God, is December 15, 2004. I am not only committed to sobriety, but I am incredibly committed to recovery.

For a long time, I've had a strong desire to write for SA. As soon as I was aware that an SA meditation book was in the works, I've wanted to contribute. I've thought that writing down some of my thoughts as meditations would be a wonderful opportunity to share with others.

But I never took action on that desire until a year and a half ago, when I severely hurt my back. I was literally flattened, stopped dead in my tracks. I spent three months on the floor. I suddenly had lots of time on my hands. I don't think that my God "did this to me" so that I would finally write down the thoughts that come into my mind. However, I have used this time as an opportunity to listen

more closely and write more quickly. My hope is that as I slowly become more mobile, I will continue to respond to God's quiet voice. It is very easy to crowd out that voice.

When I write, I don't sit down and say, "I think I'll write today," then try to come up with something to write about. The meditations just "come" to me. It's as if God plants an idea in my mind and my job is to write it down. The important thing is to do just that: to take the time to sit down, that very day, and write. So many times in the past, I've jotted down short notes to myself with the intention of going back at a more convenient time and writing about them. Unfortunately, much more often than not, when I do go back I have no idea what my notes mean. Slowly, I'm learning to write, even if the time is not "right." I really don't see myself as a writer. It's more like I'm a scribe or someone taking dictation. I just write down what comes to me.

As part of my recovery, I make a renewal call every day to my sponsor. One of the things that I commit to is to place "goals before busyness" for the next 24 hours. It is so easy for me to get caught up in the busyness of the day and forget that my goal is to continue to grow in my relationship

with God. Part of that relationship is to act on the things that I think He is impressing on me to do. He has definitely been impressing on me the need to write down my thoughts for quite some time.

Following are two of the many meditations I've written. I hope to share more of these with the fellowship in the future.

—Nancy S., Dayton, OH

A Pearl

Oysters are craggy and rough looking on the outside. But inside, they often contain a pearl. This pearl forms when a tiny grain of sand enters the life of the oyster. Ever so slowly, shimmering layers coat this ever-present irritant. Were it not for the grain of sand, a pearl would never result.

My life often contains irritants that I would rather not have present. Circumstances, people, things or institutions may intrude in on me. I would rather be rid of them, or better yet, not ever experience them in the first place. However, my Higher Power may allow these irritants to remain.

I can choose to respond with anger or resentment. Or I can choose to respond with acceptance and surrender. I can choose to believe that I would not have things otherwise even if I could. It is when I choose these attitudes that my God can work wondrous miracles. He can build a pearl in my life that would otherwise not be possible.

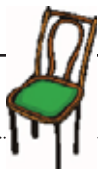


Ashes

A forest stands powerless before a fire. The fire rages, swiftly consuming all that stands in its path. It is out of control. What was once a forest is now burnt and barren. Nothing but ashes. Nothing untouched. Then, unbelievably, the ashes left behind enrich the soil. They become a bed for new growth. And after a time new life does appear. It is miraculous that something so destroyed can become beautiful again.

My life was destroyed by addiction. I was the fire. My choices had consumed everything in their wake. I was out of control. It seemed as if the only thing left was ash. But my Higher Power took those very ashes and began His work. I admitted utter powerlessness and through that admission God began to restore me. It is a process. It takes time for that new growth to appear. But as surely as a forest can be rebuilt after a fire, my life can be rebuilt as well. Unbelievably, my very weakness, my addiction, becomes the vehicle by which God draws me to Himself. Unbelievably, I am relieved of my bondage. God uses my past and my difficulties to bring others into recovery. I bear witness to God's power and His love. I have a new way of life.

A Note from the Delegate

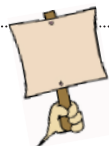


Dear Fellow SA Members:

I look forward to seeing many of you at the Convention July 11-13 in Akron, and I hope that you will attend the SA business meeting ("SA Today"), which will be held during the convention. Throughout the year, your Delegates and Trustees have participated in SA committees, teleconferences, and face-to-face meetings. We also have two or three days of working meetings prior to the July convention. In preparation for these meetings, the International committees provide the Trustees with written reports that summarize the past year's work. The Trustees approve these reports, and send them on to the General Delegate Assembly (GDA). The GDA considers all the issues, reasoning, and conclusions reached by the committees before voting to approve any actions. During the convention, "SA Today" gives the fellowship an opportunity to meet the Trustees and Delegates, to hear us report on our activities of the past year, and to ask questions. Please understand that there will not be enough time for us to present a polished report; however, we will present an overview of our services to the fellowship over the past year, and inform you of SA budget details, including how your donations are spent and why.

Hope to see you in Akron!

—*In service, Larry H., GDA Chair*



SAICO Announcements

Wanted: Sponsoring Editor for Meditation Book

The Literature Committee is seeking an Editor for SA's "Meditation Book." If interested, please contact SAICO@sa.org, or SAICO, P.O. Box 3565, Brentwood, TN 37024-3565.

New Groups

Philippines	USA
Makati	Clarksville,
	TN
Ukraine	Madison, AL
Odessa	Reno, NV
Canada	Westmont, NJ
Trenton, ON	



Articles for Essay should be submitted to Essay@sa.org.

Trustees and Delegates and Their Committee Assignments

Delegates			
Region	Delegate	Committees	Alternate
Mid-Atlantic	Larry H., <i>Chair</i>	RAC, Structure, Nominations	Brian S.
	Tom A. Will K.	SACFC, Conventions	
North Midwest	Marlene L. Gary L.	Nominations	Tony R.
Northwest	Judy C., <i>Alt Chair</i>	Nominations	Farley H.
Northeast	Mike F.	Literature, RAC	Tom V.
South Midwest	Glen J.		John W.
Southeast	Steve S.	COMC, H&I, Finance	Dave M. Gary D.
Southwest	Mike S. Jerold L.	Conventions, Agenda Translations	Richard G. Tom K.
UK, Ireland	Nicholas S.	International	
Germany, German speaking	Hans-Friedrich L.	International	

Trustees

Trustee	Committees
Luc B.	Internet
John C.	SACFC, COMC, RAC
Gene J., <i>Chair</i>	Finance, Nominations
Lawrence M., <i>Vice Chair</i>	Literature, Translations, International
Sean R.	Finance

Prayer after a Meeting Prior to Closing Prayer

My Lord, I thank you for again providing us the opportunity to come together, to share, to help and be helped. I offer myself as a tool for your works, asking that you guide my thoughts, words and actions. Please guide those who could benefit from this program to find their way here. Amen

—Larry H., Pittsburgh, PA

Trustees and Delegates can be reached at saico@sa.org

Calendar of Events



August 9 - 10, 2008, SA Nebraska Retreat. *Recovery, Service, and Unity.* St Benedict Retreat Center, Schuyler, NE. Contact: Bill G., 402-310-5014; www.sanebraska.org; or sanebraska@yahoo.com.

September 19-21, 2008, SA/S-Anon Regional Conference. *Clearing the Wreckage.* Irvine Marriott, Irvine, CA. Info at recoverystuff@gmail.com.

September 20, 2008, Central Illinois SA Marathon, Morton, IL. Contact 888-853-0258, www.solutionsandanswers.com, or info@solutionsandanswers.com.

September 26 - 28, 2008. 17th Annual SA / S-Anon Australian Conference.

Acceptance is the Key. Mt Evelyn Recreation Camp, Victoria. Phone: Scott (03)9738 0402.

November 7 - 9, 2008, 3rd Annual Veterans Day Weekend Workshop, Marietta, SC. *The Steps We Took.* Contact: David G., mybigdaddyskid@yahoo.com, or 864-642-5039.

November 14 - 16, 2008, Eighth Annual SA Fall Men's Retreat. *We Will Not Regret The Past.* Ben Lomond, CA. Contact: www.sabayarea.org.

March 6 - 9, 2009, SA and S-Anon Australia Conference. Greenhills Centre, at the Cotter in the ACT, Australia. Contact: jfsbrown@yahoo.com.au

Submit events to be listed in Essay to saico@sa.org

Submit info to be listed in September 2008 Essay by August 1, 2008.

Please submit dates, theme, place, and points of contact. Event flyers are helpful for responding to member questions.

Please contact an international operator for guidance on making international calls.

Upcoming International Conventions



July 11-13, 2008 Akron, OH
Welcome Home. www.welcomehomeakron.com.

January 9-11, 2009, Nashville, TN
We Absolutely Insist on Enjoying Life.
For more information call 615-251-7516.

July 2009, Denver, CO
Look for details in upcoming issues of Essay

Events are listed here solely as a service, not as an endorsement by Essay or SAICO.

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The Twelve Traditions of Sexaholics Anonymous

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on 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 SA 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. SA 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. SA 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 TV.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles above personalities.

Essay presents the experience, strength, and hope of SA members. Opinions expressed in Essay are not to be attributed to SA as a whole, nor does publication of any article imply endorsement by SA or by Essay. Manuscripts are invited, although no payment can be made. All articles submitted are assumed intended for publication and are subject to editing. All materials submitted become the property of Essay for copyright purposes. In submitting articles, please remember that SA's sobriety definition is not debated, since it distinguishes SA from other sex addiction fellowships. SA is not a forum for non-SA sobriety. In submissions, please do not reference unadjudicated illegal actions.

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

THIS IS
THE WAY
TO A FAITH
THAT
WORKS...

