

Essay

June 2010



Walking in the Sunshine

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.

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June 2010



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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New To SA? Call toll-free at 866-424-8777 or outside North America call 615-370-6062; email us at saico@sa.org; or visit SA website at www.sa.org.

Walking in the Sunshine

My name is Debbie. I'm a recovering sexaholic, sober since November 1, 2006.

Because of the fellowship of SA, I've learned to live happy, joyous, and free today, as described in the AA Big Book (AA, 133). I've experienced progressive victory over lust and my other character defects as I've learned to surrender them to God. I've seen this same progress in other SA members, including a female friend who comes to meetings smiling all the time. She is recovering and has her family back. Another friend—who lost his family because of his addiction—also comes to meetings smiling and has a new outlook on life. I even see this new happiness in members who have served time in prison.

The people I know in SA are my friends. I love being around them because I can trust them. They

love and accept me as I am, even though they know my worst failures and secrets. I no longer spend time with my old friends. I don't tolerate people who try to abuse me physically, sexually, or emotionally. I feel like a whole person now. I'm able to walk in the sunshine and not in the shadows of secrets and shame.

Before joining SA, I didn't want to live. I attempted suicide once and fought depression and suicidal thoughts for 30 years. I was in counseling for almost that long with three different psychologists.

I had secrets that I never wanted to tell anyone, not even my counselors: I had been sexually abused by my mother, aunt, and grandmother since I was three years old. Later in life, I was also molested by three different male pastors. I didn't trust anyone and felt much shame and self-reproach over these incidents. I was unable to mention the abuse to any counselor



until I had spent six or seven years in therapy with that counselor.

I was also raised being told, “Men only want one thing—sex—and then they are done with you.” I believed that all men regarded me as an object to be used and not loved. Because of my experiences, anything related to sex seemed disgusting to me. I considered myself to be an “it.” I didn’t want to be female or male. My life was controlled by fear.

I kept most people at arm’s length, screaming inside, “*Stay away from me!*” Thus began my complete avoidance of sexual intimacy. That doesn’t mean I never thought about sex. I thought about sex a lot: how to avoid it and how horrible it was.

My childhood was difficult and painful. I’m a twin and my sister came home from the hospital four weeks before I did. I was always told how much better things were before I came home. I believed that the bonding had already been set between my mom and sister before I arrived.

My mom was also emotionally abusive. My sister was always better than I was. I tried in vain to win my mom’s approval by going to nurse’s training and to a Bible college. I earned several college degrees, but this did not seem good enough.

My deeper secret was that I was obsessed with masturbation from

about the age of nine. It was the only thing that gave me moments of relief from the emotional pain. As I grew older, the masturbation increased. It was a tension reliever, my sleeping pill, my escape, and a friend who I could always count on. I knew I couldn’t count on anyone or anything else in my life.

Even though masturbation brought me emotional relief from pain, afterward I felt the much greater pain of shame, self-hatred, and self-reproach. I would masturbate to images of the specific abuse I had suffered as a child. By reliving fantasies of the abuse in this way, I abused myself even more than my relatives had. Thoughts of sex and of trying to avoid sex and masturbation were constantly in the forefront of my mind. These thoughts affected all of my relationships. I didn’t trust anyone.

I was engaged at 29 but I didn’t want to have anything to do with sex. I was terrified of the intimacy of sex, of being out of control and under another’s control, once again an object to be used. I broke off the engagement a month before the wedding for other reasons, but this reinforced my beliefs that I could not trust a man. I decided I would never marry even though I had wanted children. I decided I could always adopt.

Four years ago, because of my age, my doctor scheduled a

routine medical procedure for me that brought back memories of my specific type of abuse. This experience threw me into a severe panic attack. My psychologist began more intense therapy with me, and somehow I was finally able to tell him my secret and thus release the shame and anger. I was also able to tell him my fear that I might be a sex addict.

The psychologist referred me to SA. He told me to try six meetings before making any decisions about whether to continue. I thought I should do whatever he said because I desperately wanted to get well. After almost 30 years of counseling I still wasn't well. But I was also scared to death to go to SA. I thought sex addicts were only men and that only men masturbated, thus increasing my shame. I also thought that only rapists and pedophiles would attend the meeting. I was terrified.

I decided to go to three meetings a week for two weeks so that my six meetings would be over quickly, thus fulfilling my counselor's requirement. Then I would tell him that I had tried, but decided not to continue. But I sobbed through the entire six meetings. What I felt was the truth of "The Solution" (SA, 61): I had found the real Connection. I was home.

I got a temporary sponsor

right away who later became my permanent sponsor: a man with 20 years of sobriety. I know that our program does not encourage opposite-sex sponsors, but there were no other women in the group at the time so I had no choice. He was and is a great sponsor. He listened, cared, and encouraged me. He gave me assignments, which I did. He had me do my Fourth Step inventory and my Fifth Step of giving it away to him within two months of my entering the program.

I felt like I was walking on cloud nine after sharing my inventory with my sponsor. The weight was lifted from me and I felt like a totally new person. After I shared, he didn't shame me or tell me that I was a horrible person. In fact, he thanked me for trusting him and giving him the opportunity to be of service. He hugged me, then offered suggestions to help me recognize my character defects. These defects are what kept leading me into situations that fed my fears, anger, and emotional pain—and the emotions are what led me to want to escape, to medicate.

Since reading my Fifth Step, the obsession of my disease has been lifted. I haven't acted out since. That doesn't mean the desire is gone, but that working the Steps and using the tools I have been taught in this program have helped

me stay sober.

After completing my Fourth and Fifth Steps, I told my sponsor about other Twelve Step programs I had previously participated in, and asked him whether I could now go back to one of those instead of SA. I still wanted to escape association with SA because of the social stigma of SA that I felt from some people. This stigma does not seem to exist in other Twelve Step programs.

But I also told my sponsor that I really did not feel at home at those meetings as I do in SA. He told me that it didn't matter which program I attended, because each addiction is just a different form of medicating. He said we all have the same inner disease, pain, and fears that we are trying to medicate. He told me to just pick one program and stick with it, because they all use the same Twelve Steps.

Once my sobbing stopped, I decided to stick with SA, because I feel at home with what SA offers. If we can talk about our sexual addiction here, then there is nothing we can't talk about. SA is the only place I know where I can be truly open and honest about my feelings and know that I will be understood and accepted. That, to me, is true intimacy. This is something we

adults all crave: to be known by another—secrets and all—and still be accepted and loved. That also means being open to feedback from those I have come to trust regarding areas of my life that I need to work on and change.



In the past I was told that I intimidate others. I never knew how I did that, so I was afraid and unsure about how to talk to people without scaring them away.

In SA, members have encouraged me to reach out, telling me that SA is a place where I can practice communication. If I make a mistake, I will still be accepted. I can always make amends, I won't be kicked out, and others will help me learn how to say or do things better.

I have come to love all the guys in our group. I see them all as my brothers and have learned to trust them. I have learned that the men are as vulnerable as I am and that we all have common fears and insecurities. It has taken me longer to learn that I could also trust women because I haven't had as much experience with women in our group. However, my experience with the men, going to meetings, staying in contact with my sponsor, and doing my assignments have all helped me to

grow and overcome my character defects. Learning to live the Twelve Steps as a way of life, I have come to love and like myself.

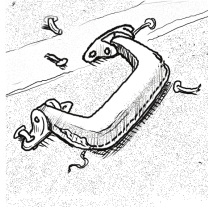
I now accept myself as someone my Higher Power loves and wants the best for. I am learning more and more how to set boundaries, something I didn't handle well before. I am learning to trust myself, to treat myself with respect, to believe that I am someone of value who has something to offer to others.

Before I came to SA, I would overcompensate and try to outdo others just to feel equal with them—but no more. Today I know that I am good enough, and if someone doesn't like or accept me, I am still

able to accept myself. I am a loyal friend, give people a chance, am empathetic, and laugh a lot. I'm fun to be around. My inner child comes out to play a lot and we have fun—something I never knew how to do before I came to SA.

By the way, I am now happily married (for the first time), and my fear and avoidance of sexual intimacy has been lifted. I haven't had any more suicidal desires or thoughts since entering SA three and a half years ago. I have so much to be thankful for and mostly it is due to SA.

—Debbie G.



Phone Resources for SA Women

Would you like to connect with women outside of your local area? Women in SA (WiSA) offers phone meetings and e-mail support, as well as a list of SA women who are willing to sponsor and/or receive calls. For information call 1-888-802-5376 (toll free), e-mail womeninsa@yahoo.com, or visit www.womeninsa.org.

Additionally, women (as well as men) can attend daily co-ed Sobriety Renewal phone calls. These calls are often attended by SA members from all over the world. For more information and to find the up-to-date phone number and meeting schedule, visit www.denversa.org or www.saphonemeeting.org.



Phone Sponsorship of Women in Other Countries

Women SA members who speak languages other than English are needed from time to time to serve as phone sponsors for women in non-English speaking countries. If interested contact saico@sa.org.

Every Second Counts

My life has been a succession of moments, the next one always building on the results of this one, this one having resulted from the fruits of the last one, good or bad. In the past, I failed to understand the impact my decisions would have on my attitudes, habits, cravings, and expectations. I also did not consider the effects of my decisions on others. I was not exempt from the spiritual laws of cause and effect, but in my arrogance I thought I was.

Time marched on, becoming little more than the measure of how long it had been since my self-centered craving was satisfied in some twisted way, and how long it would take until my craving demanded to be fed once more. Plans and fantasies of giving lust what it demanded burned away the energy I could have used to benefit others.

This all became clear to me one day, when the pain of my actions spilled over into the lives of those I claimed to love. It wasn't enough for lust to simply destroy me, it also sought to harm everyone I touched. That's the true nature of lust: it takes without caring, with a ravenous appetite that cannot be appeased. It seeks sex, security, and status—but

these things do not offer life or happiness. I was suddenly overcome by this awful awareness but felt helpless to do anything about it.



Once, when I could see no way to stop acting out, I put a gun in my mouth and informed God that if He would not stop me, I'd stop myself. He called my bluff. Apparently, God does not respond well to the coercion I used against other people. The addict in me was an absolutist, always seeing things in black or white. I knew that God wanted me to confess my crimes—that the act of revealing my past and present was the only way out. But my lust-filled brain rebelled at this idea.

Killing myself seemed a nice shortcut. The problem was that it would not really be an act of surrender, but rather my last attempt to control lust (which still would have won, had I died). I was blind to the fact that lust desired to consume my life. With my failed suicide attempt, I accepted what appeared to be my fate: a life of misery, harming others and myself, lost in despair.

Eventually, I had another moment of clarity and recognized the real culprit: my self-centered fear. "What will happen to me if I'm found out?"

I will be incarcerated. My wife will leave me. My children will hate me. I won't be respected. I'll be persecuted."

I had a disproportionate amount of concern for my own welfare as opposed to the welfare of those I was harming. No wonder lust kept having its way with me. Self-obsession obscured the big picture. The delusion that I was more important than the rest of the universe—instead of just another piece of it—was magnified and bolstered by the fears that ruled my thought life. Moment after moment, attitudes, habits, cravings, and expectations piled up on top of one another, covering the purity that my life was intended to express, and delaying any potential for compassion, kindness, and self-sacrifice. Gratefully, I became aware of this mess. My time had come to climb out of it.

At this point I encountered God (as I understood God) tucked away in my spirit. Change for the better began. My old attitudes, habits, cravings, and expectations began to be transformed into awareness, discipline, contentment, and acceptance. My life began to be restored and filled with a new purpose. I became aware of the wreckage I had created and discovered a solution, one that could keep me safe while also protecting

the safety of the ones I had the potential to harm.

All of this happened after I began asking God for help, instead of expecting God to meet my own demands. Having been introduced to SA some years before, I knew that my next step was to return. So, in March 2006, I walked into a meeting, looking for a miracle.

When I first revealed my crimes to my home group, the members did something so unexpected that it tore apart everything I believed about myself. They took me as I was and loved me. Their compassion

and empathy were so overwhelming that I found the faith to follow their suggestions. With these new friends—and a growing sense of connection with the God of my understanding—lust began to lose its power.

More amazing was the feeling that came over me the first time I was able to extend the same love and compassion to another addict who was still lost. Suddenly, everything made sense. Here is life at its most fundamental purpose: sharing myself with others, expecting nothing in return, yet being filled up to overflowing. I have learned from my home group that when I help others, my life is saved from the living hell of craving. Love



is all that endures.

With the help of those who had gone before, the path for me became obvious. I had to take a hard look at myself, make restitution for wrongs done to others, seek a better way of life, and be committed to helping the sick and suffering. I summoned my courage and went to my wife, confessing my past.

Also, because I had harmed others sexually and wanted them to get the help they deserved, I revealed my past actions to the police. After meeting with the police, I remained out on bail for about six months while they decided my case. I was privileged to carry the message of recovery during this time. In September 2006, a plea agreement was accepted and I was (and still am) incarcerated.

Meetings here in prison lack certain things that I took for granted in my home group on the outside. We don't always have access to newcomers. The same room with the same people, day in and day out, offers my mind more opportunity to wander. Sometimes, when my ego is acting up, I forget the miracle that is taking place right before my eyes: men who were once society's castaways, now recovering, useful, and alive. One day in a meeting, I suddenly realized that at that

moment, all up and down the East Coast, perhaps all over the world, SA meetings were being held. There were hundreds, maybe thousands of us in fellowship together. When I consider the magnitude of our fellowship, I am filled with new hope.

Some members have yet to experience these freedoms. Some, like me, have participated in other fellowships for years, maybe decades, but have failed to discover true peace. We need to look into ourselves, past the shame,

regret, and fear. Just for a moment, I can refuse to believe that my life is nothing more than pain. I need to look straight through the story of my past. Beyond all of that is the God of my understanding—my fortress. That is where I find all the power I'll ever need to change, to be liberated from pornography, sex, lust, and whatever else ails me. I can set right my wrongs.

There is a better way. We can all heal and be part of the healing of others. This is the place where God lives, the only place that can't be subdued by evil. When life is bearing down, and emotions or cravings are overwhelming, this is the place inside where I go to seek sanctuary with the God of my understanding.

Today I make new moments. It's up to me to see that they are in accord



with harmony. This can be done when I'm in tune with God. That comes by following a few simple directions: check myself, consult others who know me intimately, seek guidance from God, listen, discern, and obey. But I cannot expect God to do the things that I alone am responsible for. My thoughts are just that: thoughts that I must own. I can no longer pretend that corruption does not exist inside when in fact it does exist.

There is no justifying or denying the consequences that befall others

Family

I'm a sexaholic, married to the man who wrote the previous story. My husband is serving time in prison for crimes he committed while active in his sexaholism. Our story is one of hope. We've been told that we will never be a family again because of society's laws and judgments—but we choose to see our family differently.

My story began as an incest survivor. My abuser was my grandfather. The abuse started when I was five and ended when I told my mother at age 11. My mother kept me safe from my abuser, but she was unable to stop my choice to regard myself and others as sex objects.

To escape from life, I became addicted to alcohol. Alcohol became my gateway to other demons. I

through my actions when I become spiritually lazy. Allowing wrong attitudes to remain and grow will ensure that I eventually lose vital contact with God. The question remains: will I submit to the truth and use the tools God has so freely provided?

Peace be to your hearts!

—*In love and service, Scott M.,
sober since April 15, 2006*



tried to find meaning in empty bars, cars, public places, and alleyways, with unknown faces who pretended to care. I didn't care.

At a young age, I learned that love is control. My abuser had controlled me, and until my SA sobriety, I was determined to control others sexually. If a man would not oblige my sexual fantasies, I would move on to the next in order to fulfill the fantasy. I had no interest in long-term relationships. All I ever wanted was my next fix.

In school I received graduate degrees and found employment in the field of social work. I hid behind a mask of intellect while inside

I just wanted to be loved—but I did not allow anyone to get close. Professionally, I was educating others on relationships, marriage, and how to be effective parents. Personally, I was living a life of compulsive sex and alcohol abuse.

I worked in residential treatment facilities with adolescent girls who had suffered sexual, physical, and/or emotional abuse. Because of my background, I thought, “I can relate, I can help.” I believed that was the end of the story. God had a different plan.

I married young to a loving man. We had two beautiful daughters. My husband was a wonderful father, but over time I began to feel that we were not compatible emotionally or sexually. I questioned my sexuality and even told my husband that if he died, I wasn’t sure whether I would be with another man or a woman.

I was repeatedly unfaithful to my husband with a man I had met in college. We would meet at college reunions, art exhibits in other states, or mutual friends’ weddings, always with the same result at the end of the night. We would dance, grope, hide from our colleagues and plan the next rendezvous. As long as we didn’t have intercourse, I justified my actions as “just having fun.”

After 10 years of marriage, I met up with another college friend. This time, we became sexual. I could no longer justify my sexual

acting out but did not want to stop my encounters with men. So upon returning home, I told my husband that our marriage was over. I simply said that it was time to move on as we weren’t happy in our marriage and were more friends than husband and wife. We divorced amicably; our daughters were always the priority.

Flying solo, I continued working and caring for my daughters. I felt a new freedom—but my demons also had more freedom to soar with no one watching. I found myself doing things I thought only others did: sex in public places, pools, and campground bathrooms. Masturbation became my lover when no man was available. I was addicted to the adrenaline rush of possibly getting caught. I entered relationships with men with whom I did not want a commitment, but at times would even wear their wedding ring just to fulfill my sexual fantasies. I thought that if I agreed to marriage, I could justify anything.

One man I was engaged to couldn’t drink due to a DWI. I decided to stop drinking to support him. I quickly realized that quitting drinking was more difficult than I had anticipated. The relationship ended, but alcohol continued to control my life. I began attending emotional sobriety support groups and individual therapy for my alcoholism.

I was in another relationship that I wanted to end, but I could

not stop having sex with the man. My therapist suggested ways to set boundaries on sex. I would agree, but the next week would justify and minimize why I had failed to keep the boundaries. My therapist said he believed I struggled with sex addiction. I thought, “No way do I have *that!*” But a seed was planted.

Eventually, I spent time in a psychiatric unit and finally surrendered my alcoholism. I began staying sober and participated in the AA fellowship. One day I met a man at an AA picnic. We seemed to have much in common. We shared recovery and the desire to help others. We were both single parents: he had four children and I had my two daughters. Emotionally and spiritually, I felt a strong connection. When we married, our children ranged in age from four to 12.

Finding my second husband was one of the happiest times of my life. But a few months after we married, I noticed one day that he seemed depressed. When I saw him standing in our kitchen looking pale and teary, I asked what was going on. He looked at me for a few moments with glassy eyes and said, “It’s bad.”

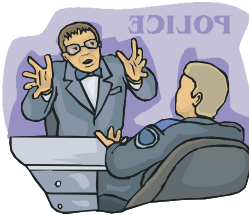
I had no idea that at that moment my life would change forever. My husband disclosed to me the sexual

offenses he had committed prior to our relationship, and said that he felt the compulsion coming back. I was overwhelmed by a grief I had never experienced before. I had married this man. How had I missed this?

When I looked into my husband’s eyes, I saw a broken man, desperate for healing but not knowing where to turn. The only option for him was to get help and turn himself in. The next day, February 11, 2006, my husband and I went to the police. He told the officer what he had done and a formal investigation followed.

We endured interviews, questioning, and appointments with lawyers and psychiatrists. We were desperate for help and looked for recovery groups. My husband started attending SA. I went to S-Anon to be a supportive wife, but I soon realized that I could not relate to the anger and betrayal the spouses shared. Instead, I understood the compulsion to act out. Before long my husband shared with me the sobriety definition and his commitment to sobriety, and what that would mean for our sex life. It was then that I recognized the side of myself I had never wanted to face.

I found my own SA sponsor a few days later and wrote my Step One. I was worried that I wouldn’t fit in, but after hearing my story, my sponsor looked me straight in the eye



and said, “Welcome to SA.” I knew then that I had found the place where I truly belong.

My husband was sentenced to 6 ½ to 13 years in prison for his crimes. Acceptance had to be the key. On the day of his sentencing, he looked at me and said “God is merciful.” He knew his fate and accepted his sentence. Although he would be behind bars, he was finally free to get help. This all began with SA.

Today I can see the effects of lies, compulsion, and sex addiction from every angle. My husband, children, and I have all lived it. However, when I look at myself and where I have been and where my husband is today, I recognize a slow healing for us. I, as an incest survivor, got to see the other side of sexual addiction. Through SA I can heal from that also.

Today, after four years of working the SA program, I try to stay positive and hopeful that, at the very least, my husband and I are breaking the cycle of sexual addiction in our family. My hope is to reach out to

others in sobriety and share that we can have a life beyond our wildest dreams when it is based on living the truth.

I’ve explained to our children the events of the past. I tell them that we will live the truth today, even when we don’t like the outcome. There will be no more lies. I’ve explained that even though we don’t live like other families live, we are still a family because we all love and care for each other. Our children are safe today and they respect and love their father. They understand why my husband goes to his meetings and why I go to mine.

I’m not sure that many families can say they live the truth the way we do. I’m grateful for the opportunity to raise our children and to love a man who was willing to go to any lengths to live the truth.

We know what family means and we will continue to fight for our right to heal, no matter how long it takes. We are worth it. So are all of you!

—Dayna M., *sober since*
April 15, 2006



Resources Available For Helping Incarcerated Members

SA’s Correctional Facilities Committee (CFC) offers resources to support SA members in prison. For suggestions on helping members prepare for prison life, see “Note from SA’s Correctional Facilities Committee,” p. 29.

SA Unity

*Tradition One: Our common welfare should come first;
personal recovery depends on SA unity.*

Arriving in SA, all my powers spent, I entered a new world: a world where meetings, the White Book, the Twelve Steps of SA, a sponsor, and fellow sexaholics were already there waiting for me. Through these tools I received the gift of sobriety. I knew enough to be grateful for my group. Alone, I had never been able to stay sober. I was eager to contribute to the life of the group, first as coffee maker, then leading meetings and doing a variety of service jobs.

I was still new in the program, not sure whether my newfound sobriety would hold. A handful of members, all sober longer than I, began to spread disturbing ideas in the meetings. They questioned our meeting format, the emphasis on sobriety, even the Sobriety Definition itself. We would no longer call ourselves sexaholics, give our sobriety dates, or share personal check-ins—“That’s just shame-talk!” they said.

I was very confused—my sponsor’s sponsor was the principal spokesman for the rebel faction! They were proposing something different

from the SA meetings we knew—would it even be SA? Would my infant sobriety find the sustenance it needed to survive?

The fellowship in our town was in anguish—we had to do something! We gathered for a day of Inventory. In the morning we discussed the Problem—what was wrong? What was not working? What was out of whack? The afternoon was devoted to brainstorming the Solution: what did

we need as a fellowship? What could we do? Which SA principles did we need to keep?

There was no vote, no group conscience—but the voices affirming SA principles and SA sobriety rang loud and clear. Although I did not know it at the time, I realize today that was Tradition One at work: we were diligently seeking our common welfare. The would-be reformers drifted away. Meetings again became safe havens where sobriety could be “caught” from one member to another.

That was 20 years ago. The fellowship in our town has grown and prospered, thanks in large part



to the unity of the SA fellowship. The tender seedling of my sobriety grew and matured. Tradition One is a constant reminder to me that I need to foster SA unity in order to preserve my sobriety—my very life—and the lives of others. As the long form of this Tradition states: “SA must continue to live or most of us will surely die.”

Today the groups in our town use the Declaration of Unity, adapted

from AA, to close our meetings. United by our common history, we never want to forget how a band of disaffected ones threatened our survival. As we join hands in the circle, we say:

This we owe to SA’s future:
To place our common welfare first,
To keep our fellowship united,
For on SA unity depend our lives,
And the lives of those to come.

—*A Grateful Member*

Questions For Working Tradition One

Suggested questions for working the Traditions are available at AA.org.¹ Tradition One study questions include the following:

1. Am I in my group a healing, mending, integrating person, or am I divisive? What about gossip and taking other members’ inventories?
2. Am I a peacemaker? Or do I, with pious preludes such as “just for the sake of discussion,” plunge into argument?
3. Am I gentle with those who rub me the wrong way, or am I abrasive?
4. Do I make competitive AA remarks, such as comparing one group with another or contrasting AA in one place with AA in another?
5. Do I put down some AA activities as if I were superior for not participating in this or that aspect of AA?
6. Am I informed about AA as a whole? Do I support, in every way I can, AA as a whole, or just the parts I understand and approve of?
7. Am I as considerate of AA members as I want them to be of me?
8. Do I spout platitudes about love while indulging in and secretly justifying behavior that bristles with hostility?
9. Do I go to enough AA meetings or read enough AA literature to really keep in touch?
10. Do I share with AA all of me, the bad and the good, accepting as well as giving the help of fellowship?

¹ “Traditions Checklist” from AA Services Manual, originally published in AA Grapevine, 1969 - 1971, http://www.aa.org/en_pdfs/smf-131_en.pdf.

Removing My Defects

Step Seven: Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

My sponsor once suggested that I look up Twelve Step words in a dictionary. That request unleashed my interest in recovery-related words and led me to create several drawings illustrating the Twelve Steps.

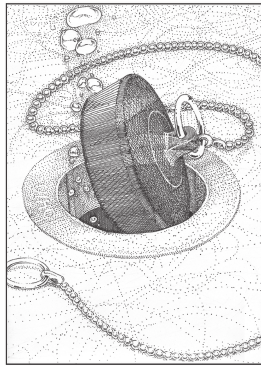
A few years ago, I found a 1934 *Webster's Dictionary* in a used book store. I knew from AA history that 1934 was the year that Bill W. got sober. Curious, I opened the old dictionary to a word I was having trouble understanding at the time: "God." *Webster's* 1934 definition of "God" was "a being of more than human attributes or powers." It struck me that these words were so similar to Bill W.'s phrase "a power higher than human power."

Curious, I looked up some other words from the Steps. In every case, the very first definition of each word seemed to reinforce Bill's writing, while also adding fresh insight into those familiar words. Reading the definitions gave me a more lively connection with the Steps. Take the word "remove" as found in Step Seven: "We humbly asked God to

remove our shortcomings." Before checking the 1934 dictionary, I believed that "remove" simply meant to "make it disappear." When I worked Step Seven, I fully expected the God of my understanding to make my dishonesty, fear, selfishness, and inconsideration disappear. The trouble was that my defects kept creeping back in. A few instances of this led me to doubt God's ability to remove, say, my

dishonesty. I was a little resentful that God wasn't meeting my expectations. If He could make my defects completely disappear, why didn't He?

I turned to the dictionary and found this definition: "Remove: To change or shift the location, position, station, or residence of." The dictionary didn't say anything about making my defects disappear; it just said, "shift the position." This definition hit me hard. Viewed in this light, the Seventh Step tells me my defects will always remain nearby, just in case I get the insane urge to invite them back in. This new information forced me to let go of my old—and utterly illogical—



7. Remove

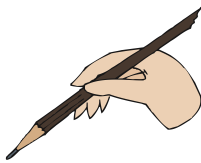
v. To change or shift the location, position, station, or residence of - WEBSTERS 1934

assumption that God wanted to make me “perfect” like Him. Thanks to that old dictionary, I found a new appreciation for Step Seven.

This and other examples of 1934 definitions redoubled my interest in the Steps. What could I do with my enthusiasm? If I went to my local meeting and urged everyone to start reading musty old dictionaries, they would label me as insane. If I typed up the definitions and handed them out, very few would ever get read.

Then it occurred to me: I am an illustrator, so I turned to my sketch pad. I reflected on the newly discovered definition of “Remove” and began scribbling ideas. I’d never heard of anyone turning a personal meditation into a drawing before, so I wasn’t sure how to proceed. I felt a little foolish at first, but I prayed for serenity and courage as I worked.

I asked myself, “What’s something that we remove but never stays removed?” Finally, an image began to emerge. I remembered my grandparents’ 1930s bathtub. When the rubber drain stopper was removed, it would float aimlessly around in the bathwater for a time. If left to drift, the plug would follow invisible currents in the water and eventually make its way back onto the drain hole. The round plug might block the hole completely, or else turn sideways



and seriously slow the water down.

As quirky as the memory seemed, I had to admit that it fit the definition perfectly. When God removes a defect from me, the defect never goes away completely. Sometimes it drifts harmlessly around, and at other times it returns to either partially or completely block me off from God. I busied myself at the drawing table and soon had a finished drawing. It was an enormous rubber bathtub drain plug. “People will think I am absolutely insane,” I thought. I gingerly showed it to someone, then another, then another. The reaction was always the same, “Can I have a copy?” I should mention that it is rare for anyone to say that about my non-recovery drawings; someone might say, “Oh that’s nice” and hand the art back to me. These recovery drawings affected all kinds of people, both in and out of the program. I don’t try to understand it. The drawings are the result of prayer and meditation, so I suppose it wouldn’t do much good to try to explain them.

All I know is, I no longer harbor the notion that God as I understand Him seeks to make me perfect. All I am expected to do is make daily progress. If I want my defects cleared away in the next 24 hours, all I must do is ask Him to remove them now.

—*John I.*

Progressive Victory Over Lust

In September 2007, I lost 18 years of SA sobriety—or so I thought. Looking back, I see that I was hardly ever sober, not in my mind anyway. I had thought that all I needed to do was to not act out, and I had done that since 1989—a few months before joining SA. To paraphrase the late Roy K. from about 10 years ago, I’m only now learning what lust recovery is, or even what my lust is. And

as Roy pointed out, Step One is *not* “We admitted we were powerless over acting out...” (see *SA*, 208).

I used to think I could enjoy lust as much as I wanted as long as I didn’t act out. I thought it was okay to take in lustful images on TV and on the Internet. I even called this “progressive victory over lust.” While calling myself sober, I still manipulated women to do what I wanted them to do, just as I did before SA. Since my actions didn’t involve sexual contact and I didn’t reach orgasm, I figured it was okay.

I took many half measures in my SA program. I eventually realized I had to let go of satisfying my lust by going to swimming pools and libraries. But I refused to let go of the memories and the images I held

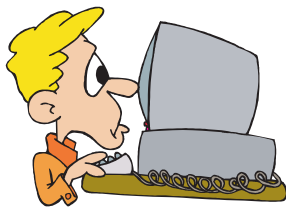
in my mind, and didn’t surrender my desire to see Things I Shouldn’t Be Looking At. I figured I could surrender them after the fact.

All the while, as I listened to Roy, Harvey A., Jesse, and others on tape, I heard clear messages calling me to be more honest about where I was in lust recovery. Even though I liked what they had to say, I was still fighting my lust with willpower (when I wasn’t letting it get the best of me within).

After years of using the Internet without lusting, I discovered one day that I could find many images there that satisfied my lust. I became hooked. I thought I could control and enjoy the images, which only resulted in a series of binges where I all but “blacked out” on the computer while watching online videos. Once I was interrupted by my wife.

For almost the next two years, I became a periodic, getting sobriety for a while but going back to the videos eventually. I wanted to lust and to recover at the same time. But before I make this too much of a drunkalogue, I want to share what I’ve learned.

For me, the issue isn’t so much seeing images as it is *seeking* images.



For example, one night I started to watch a movie before going in to work the night shift. I could see that it might be a problem for me, so I turned it off. But I kept wondering, “How does it turn out?” I wanted to know more. I figured I could find out when I got to work. But I knew that if I pursued it, this could be the start of another lust binge for me. So I called another member and

surrendered the obsession. It worked. I see now that I have to surrender way before I get to the point of no return.

I have now been sober since August 6 of last year, and it has been the most lust-free I’ve ever been in my life, thanks to God and all of you. I’ll keep surrendering!

—Paul T., Sparks, NV

God Is Watching

It had been a while since I heard the song “From A Distance” on the radio. After hearing it last week, I can’t get the tune out of my mind!

Even more than the music, I’ve been pondering the lyrics, “God is watching us... from a distance.” It’s basically an optimistic song of harmony, hope, love, and peace. But I think it has special meaning for those of us in recovery. Let me illustrate.

When my daughter was six or seven, she got upset and declared she was “running away from home.” I watched her closely until she struck out up the road toward the school a couple blocks away. It was late afternoon, and I was able to follow her discreetly. She never looked back, even when she got to the playground. Putting down the armful of stuff she

was carrying (a doll, etc.), she began playing at the sandbox, the slide, and the swing set, apparently feeling free from the tyranny of her parents. I hid behind some bushes and watched her—from a distance.

How like me when I first ran away from myself and found the wonderful world of addiction. What fun I had as I went from one “object” to another in search of the perfect plaything. No one, not even God, to stop me; I had found my own God.

At first my daughter seemed to be enjoying her newfound independence. She occasionally glanced toward home, just to see if anyone was coming. A little later, she walked over to get a good look down the street, seeming disappointed that no one was concerned enough



to search for her. By this time it was getting on toward dusk, and I wondered what would happen as the light faded. I didn't have long to wait.

In the past, I too took an occasional glance at reality, hoping I might see something more satisfactory for my life. At times I actually stopped and peered across the street that separated me from sanity. Disappointingly, I never saw anything appealing enough to make me leave my isolated playground, so I played on pretending it was what I really enjoyed.

After attempting to play a little more, my daughter stood looking longingly all the way down to our house. I was tempted to come out of hiding and "rescue" her, especially when I saw her tears—but I waited. Finally she picked up her belongings and started making her way slowly down the road, walking right past my hideout without seeing me.

Like my daughter, I went from plaything to plaything hoping to find a satisfactory connection. Eventually I got tired of the whole playground thing; it just wasn't much fun by myself, especially when my world was getting darker and darker. The more I allowed myself to look toward "home," the less I wanted to stay where I was. But I never managed

to take the first step, to cross the street that separated me from where I belonged. On January 3, 2004, the darkness overwhelmed me, and I reluctantly began the slow journey down the "road of happy destiny."

I don't remember what happened after my daughter reached home. Probably I told her at some point that I had followed her. I'm sure I let her know she was never alone. To my knowledge she never tried to run away again.

The lesson for my life of addiction and recovery? It's a no-brainer. While I frolicked in my playground of addiction, my God was watching over me, waiting

patiently for me to decide to "come home." He was not anxious to punish or shame me, but to protect me from myself. In my insanity, I kept Him at a distance, but I could not remove myself from His loving care. He was

watching—from a distance—until I decided to come home again. When I took that First Step, He welcomed me back into the human family, and I am still His "child" today.

No more running; I am home!

—Art S., Columbia, SC



It Works if You Work It!

Ever since I was eight years old, when I began looking through adult magazines, I was hooked. My life was filled with fantasy, masturbation, pornography, TV, videos, and trying to connect with girls. In my college years, alcohol and marijuana seemed to go well with my lust. I was much less inhibited with dates when I was under the influence of chemicals.

When things got bad enough, I joined AA. My last drink was 26 years ago, thanks be to God. However, during my first eight “dry” years, my lust and sexual acting out got worse. A typical day for me consisted of fantasy, masturbation, pornography, and flirting. I got married during this time, thinking I was in love—but our relationship consisted mostly of acting out together a lot. We never built any real emotional intimacy.

Toward the end of my addiction, I had a second job and came home late many nights. Sometimes, between the two jobs, I would act out with women I was seeing. My wife and I had a nightly ritual. First, I would feign a good mood in order to make a lustful advance. She would usually decline. Then I would park myself in front of the television and



pout. “What’s wrong?” she would ask. “Are you mad at me?” I would deny it and she would go to bed. I then proceeded to flip through TV channels, looking for triggers and acting out. On days when I was off and at home, my three-year-old son would hardly ever think about asking me to play with him. “Daddy” was an isolated and distant piece of furniture attached to the couch.

In the last week of my addiction, my wife and I had some of our loudest arguments. Blunt objects and harsh words flew in our house, leaving my wife, my son, and me in a lot of tears. The pain got so bad that one day I finally told someone—a therapist—what I had been doing. I told him that this felt a lot like alcohol did eight years ago: a real hell. I asked him if this could be an addiction just like booze. He said, “Absolutely!” The next night—July 16th, 1991—I attended my first SA meeting. I was ready.

The tears flowed frequently that first week, but this time they were tears of relief. The old-timers asked whether I was sure I was ready to stop. They said that half-hearted beginnings may not succeed. They asked, “Do you think you have any options other than to stop

completely?” I had to say no. I found a sponsor immediately who urged me to begin working the Twelve Steps right away. Pain sure is a great motivator—I did exactly as he told me.

Every Sunday morning, four of us would get together for breakfast and Step work. We worked Steps One through Eleven in a non-stop manner. We would work on them individually during the week and then share our work on Sundays. This was a beautiful way for newcomers to learn how the Steps build upon each other—with the idea that we would continue working the Steps for the rest of our lives.

It was through this working of the Steps, by the grace of God and the fellowship of SA, that I stayed sober for 9 1/2 years.

During these years, I began to respect and take care of myself—new territory, indeed. God even led me back to the religion of my childhood, and my son and I began going to church together. He and I became very close. We have some great memories of those years.

Sadly however, as I grew in my recovery, my wife and I grew apart. My wife was not interested in working on our marriage. Eventually, she had an affair and we divorced. I

was devastated.

I found an apartment that I could share with my son half the time. While living on my own, I made some very bad decisions. During this time, I focused way too much on my resentments, anger and self-pity. As I harbored these feelings I began to dabble in Internet pornography. Inevitably, I acted out twice. On my own, I have no power over lust. Thankfully, God has all power, and with His help, all things are possible.

The last time I acted out was August 29, 2001. My life has changed in so many ways for the better. Today, my head is clear, and I feel more useful, productive, and

happy than I ever thought possible. I remarried in sobriety—another beautiful gift. By being clear-headed and prayerful during our engagement, my wife and I had an absolutely beautiful wedding night. It was well worth the wait!

My sponsor once told me that if I want to really know how I'm doing in recovery, I should look at my family to see how they are doing. I'm grateful to report that God has given my son a level of confidence and happiness that I never had growing up. He seems well-adjusted and successful in school and with friends. My wife is filled with God's peace and joy. We love spending time



together, walking and talking. We still feel like newlyweds, after being married for almost eight years.

Today, I have a new self-confidence and a sense of purpose that I never dreamed possible. My productivity and attention span have improved both at home and at work. I could never have handled the position I have now if I were still acting out. I am truly blessed.

Another blessing has been the SA fellowship in our area. Our home group just celebrated our 15th anniversary. Fifteen years ago, we had only two meetings in the area. Today there are 48 meetings nearby, as well as a regular Twelve

Step workshop for newcomers. God is good!

Everywhere I turn lately, I hear about sex offenders. Many people are suffering from our addiction, but they have no idea what is wrong with them. Using the Steps, we have the ability to help the addicts still out there—if we are sober. If I want to be



able to help the next person who walks in the door, I must be free from lust. God has blessed us with

these Twelve Steps, and if we work them, He will use us to help others—in His own time, in His own way.

—*Anonymous*



Freedom From Temptation

Early in my sobriety, I heard a member share that we will never be free from the temptation to lust, but we can gain progressive victory over it. I wasn't comfortable with that statement for a long time. I wondered, "Can we *never* be free from the temptation?" Today I believe that, although we will never be cured, we can experience progressive freedom from temptation, just like progressive victory over lust.

For me, progressive victory over lust means that I do not participate in any of my addictive behaviors, and

I live a life of rigorous honesty and compassion. This includes rigorous honesty with my wife. Unless I am completely honest with her, then the marriage we are rebuilding from the foundation up is built on quicksand rather than bedrock. But I cannot be honest with her if I am not honest with myself, and I know from experience that if I am not honest with myself, I cannot be sober or recover. I believe that freedom from the temptation to lust requires the same level of honesty.

After discussing these thoughts with my sponsor and other SA members, I have come to believe

there are three prerequisites to experiencing freedom from temptation to lust.

The first is spiritual fitness. “What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition” (AA, 85). If I am not working my program and the Steps and do not have daily conscious contact with God as I understand God, then my chances for progressive victory over lust are limited. Without progressive victory over lust there cannot be a chance for reprieve from temptation.

Second, I cannot have progressive victory over temptation to lust if lust is active in my marriage. A significant period of sexual abstinence with my wife was called for, agreed upon, and completed. Abstinence did not miraculously result in lust being removed from our marriage, but it gave us time to reflect, share, learn, and grow together spiritually, without the pressure that sexual relations can bring. Our communications improved. We became more willing to talk about sex and lust and the difference between them. We’ve been able to share sexual experience that is mutually agreed upon (this requires talking about sex and what each other wants), and that is selfless



and compassionate— and free from lust.

This ongoing communication requires practice. We have faced many issues and shared tears and smiles. Our marriage is not perfect but today we have a true union, where the door to each of our hearts is opened with honesty, intimacy, and communion. We are willing to be vulnerable and talk about the difficult things. This builds trust in our relationship.

The third prerequisite to experiencing freedom from temptation is surrendering my character defects, the same way I surrender lust. As I have worked the Steps, prayed, meditated, and turned everything over to my Higher Power, I have found that two of my most insidious defects are seduction and manipulation. These defects are pervasive in all my relations and are so subtle that I struggle to detect them. My stomach flips when I think about admitting my powerlessness over these defects to my wife. But I must face the truth about myself if I am to trudge forward. Being honest with my wife about how I would practice seduction to satisfy lust in my marriage, or how I would manipulate our relationship to groom opportunities to seduce myself with

ritual and act out, is like tipping my hand. If I show her this, I have no cards left to play. This is scary but I want to progress to the next level.

When I surrender my character defects, I begin to see the light of true recovery (rather than mere sobriety): the positive practices of taking the actions of love, carrying the message, and helping those still suffering, including myself. Then I begin to feel the obsession and compulsion being lifted. This is not a permanent solution but a daily reprieve, and again it is totally dependent on my spiritual condition.

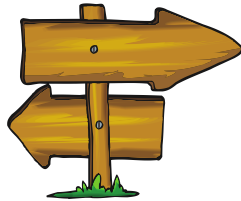
Today in my sobriety I have two choices for each situation that arises. I can choose to do the next right thing—my Higher Power leads me to make that choice. Or I can choose the path of lust—my self-will leads me there. I believe that the ability to make these choices is a gift—but there are other levels.

Sometimes I feel an aversion to connecting with others because I don't want to look, fantasize, manipulate, or embellish the truth in my relationships. But if I am to know serenity, practice taking the actions of love, and be able to "look the world in the eye and stand free" (*AA*, 75)—then I can't look away all the time. The aversion helps me to *not* lust but it also prohibits me from looking

through the eyes of a free human into the eyes of another. The aversion is also a gift that helps me to not look at the magazines in the checkout aisle. It helps me to not look at the skin all over the television or the girl walking down the street. But I desire the positive recovery "of acting out true union of persons" (*SA* "Sobriety Definition," 193).

Some of us start working the Steps and move from abstinence to sobriety, but then we become paralyzed by the fear of looking again. Moving on to the next level of sobriety—into recovery—makes me feel more vulnerable, but I need to progress from dealing with lust to righting my relations.

So here I stand at the market where my wife works and I'm looking into the eyes of another. Another woman, another man, another girl, another boy. I am confronted with the aversion and look away, unwilling to risk lusting, unwilling to risk a look that will steal from them, a look in which I take instead of give. This can't be all there is. I want to be free to connect spiritually with another, to be able to relate and love and laugh. I want to be free of the fear that I will hurt more people. Free to be human and be with humans in a loving, caring, and peaceful way. I want to be free of temptation one day at a time. Is this



my God's will for me? I hope so.

We can all find encouragement in the words of SA (69): "The fear of our vulnerability gradually diminishes as we stay sober and work

the Steps. We can look forward to the time when the obsession—not temptations—will be gone."

—Tim S., NY

Hope

Recently, I was challenged to write a gratitude list of 10 things that I am grateful for in my recovery. Among the items I listed was the word "HOPE." It was the only word on my list that I had written in all caps. When I finished the list—which also included "being present," "learning true intimacy," and "my recovery community"—I reflected on each item, but came back to the four upper-cased letters and paused.

As I pondered the word "hope," I remembered that I didn't have hope while I was acting out. I recalled driving off with a man I had just met. He asked me, "How do you know you're not leaving with a serial killer?" To which I replied without emotion, "How do you know *you're* not leaving with a serial killer?" He replied "Fair enough," and drove on.

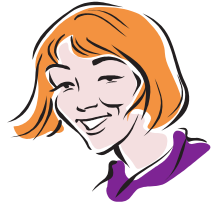
I did not care whether I ever returned that night. I did not care whether he was a serial killer, or a rapist, or a child molester; or if he was a gang member, abusive, or involved in human trafficking. I had no hope for myself or my future. I willingly and carelessly left with him as my two young children slept

unknowingly a few feet from his truck, entrusted to the care of my "friend" who was just as stoned as I was.

To think back on that night stirs a world of emotions inside me, emotions that I now acknowledge, feel, and process through the Twelve Steps of SA. I am powerless over my past. I cannot change it. No matter how bad it was, I am seeing that my experience can help others. My whole attitude and outlook on life has changed as I have started making conscious contact with God on a daily, sometimes minute-by-minute, basis. I am living in a freedom and happiness I've never known before through surrendering my will and life each morning to my Higher Power.

There is my HOPE. It was not there before, but now I want to live. I want to protect myself and my children. I care about others. If that's not hope, I don't know what is. God is doing for me what I could not do for myself. Today I am willing to step out of the way and let Him continue doing that for me.

—Hope & Joy, Debbie S.



Reaching Upward

I'm part of a small men's Step study group that has met every two weeks now for a few years. We've worked through several Twelve Step workbooks. This exercise has served to deepen our programs, our spirituality, our accountability, and our ability to be intimate and truly vulnerable with each other.

One of our recent exercises was titled: "A Portrait of Unmanageability!" The objective was to artistically express unmanageability through drawing. Imagination and creativity were the important elements. We gave ourselves a time limit of a few minutes, with the emphasis on keeping things simple. Or simpler anyway.



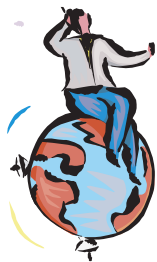
I tried to capture the way I feel when my fears and active addiction keep me bogged down in what so often feels like a gooey web of dark, dank despair. More important, I tried to show that no matter what, I always need to continue to *reach upward* into life! As I lack power, my only hope and source of reprieve today is through a vital relationship with God, the One Who has all power.

It sounds pretty easy, but the process has been (and continues to be) challenging, at times painful, but more often than not, rewarding! "Just keep coming back," they say. Just keep coming back!

—Jeff K..

The Joys of Being an International Sponsor

On any given day, while talking on Skype to a sponsee in Malaysia, I might hear torrential thunderstorms. Another time I might hear the call to prayer from a Mosque's loudspeaker while talking to a guy in Istanbul. Sometimes the sound is so loud we have to talk between breaks in the prayer call. Other sounds I might hear are raindrops



bouncing off metal roofs in Taiwan, or birds singing and dogs barking in the Netherlands. The funny thing is that CDs made for relaxation include many of these types of sounds (I know because I own a few), but I can hear the relaxation sounds coming at me live in my home from halfway around the world.

As the AA Big Book says, "this is an experience you must not miss." (AA, 89).

—Ed R., Columbus, GA

Greetings from Ontario, Canada



I'm an SA member living in Sudbury, Ontario (Canada). Here in Sudbury, we have a large group of SA members who meet every Monday and Friday. One day I wrote a poem, expressing my gratitude for the members of my group. Long after I wrote it, an SA friend told me the poem had blessed her. She suggested I submit it to *Essay*. My Higher Power reminds me that when he has me do something, I may not know the reason for years to come.

If you are ever visting Sudbury, please look us up. Visiting SA members are always welcome!

—Anonymous SA Woman

Darkness Falls



Fear is my God,
Fear is my
Creator,
I am in Darkness,
I cannot dream.

People gather to help each other. Darkness
lifts as I draw strength with others.
I imagine a path of many colors.
I take a chance to Hope, just a little.
I still "FEAR." I'm still scared.
But wait. I hear you.
I am Love. I am OK. I am One.

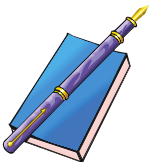
On my own, all alone, I am scared.
There are no others, no people all
around.

They cannot see "me."
It is Dark! Please...Help me.

Hey There! I am here. To give you
HOPE.
I see you. Come this way. There is a
Dream.
I see inside you. What is that I see??
Is that hope?

People gather and support and love each
other.
I still fear, and do it anyway.
The Darkness is still there. That's okay.
Thank you Darkness, Depression and
Aloneness. But today I will walk another
way.
Thank you Darkness of the Soul, for without
you I cannot know the light that flows.

Contribute to SA's Daily Meditations Book!



The SA Literature Committee is soliciting and welcomes meditations from sober members. Please write about your personal recovery experience based on a quote from the Steps, Traditions, or other SA or AA literature. Please limit your share to 250 words or less.

Meditations should be submitted to saico@sa.org



Note From SA's Correctional Facilities Committee (CFC)

Helping Members Prepare for Prison

Do you know an SA member who is likely to be incarcerated soon? Would you like to help that member prepare for the experience? The CFC offers support to incarcerated members in a variety of ways, including sending complimentary SA Literature as requested, offering a Sponsor-by-Mail program, helping members start meetings in prison, and providing parolees with SA contacts.

Our experience suggests the members benefit from working the Twelve Steps with a sponsor before entering prison—even if the time is limited. Those who have finished working their Steps with a sponsor seem to better experience the happy, joyous and free way of life while in prison. With the foundation of the Steps, incarcerated members have stayed sober, started meetings, and sponsored fellow SAs.

This first journey through the Steps might seem like a sprint to the sponsee. The sponsee may feel rushed or afraid of not working the Steps “perfectly” and perhaps missing some of the wreckage. However, the sooner the member gets through the Steps, the greater his or her chances of continued recovery and spiritual growth. Any wreckage missed in the first working of the Steps will be found in future Step work.

These suggestions really hold true for any addict. Personally, each time I formally work through the Steps, new insights and new connections come to me. The member destined for prison just has a more concrete timeline than the average member. Assisting prisoners in this way is just another example of how we can “practice these principles in all our affairs.”

For more information, please contact me at saico.org.

New Groups

USA

Ashville, OH
College Station, TX
Hixson TN
Kalispell, MT
Panama City FL (2)
Plymouth, MI
Pottsville, PA

Netherlands
Rotterdam



Additional USA Meetings

Daytona Beach, FL
Lexington, KY

Note From the Delegate Chair

Dear Fellow SA Members:

One great blessing in my life was when I found a sponsor and then let him guide me through the Steps. It was not easy to do as he suggested. However, one constant reminder from the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* kept me focused on what I needed to do: “AA’s Twelve Steps are a group of principles, spiritual in their nature, which, if practiced as a way of life, can expel the obsession to drink and enable the sufferer to become happily and usefully whole” (12 & 12, 15). I found the spiritual life is not a theory; I have to live it.



“Henry Ford once made a wise remark to the effect that experience is the thing of supreme value in life. That is true only if one is willing to turn the past to good account. We grow by our willingness to face and rectify errors and convert them into assets.” (AA, 124).

As we insist on enjoying life, I personally need to do the next right thing and let God direct me to do so. Moving forward in our fellowship as members, we too must do the next right thing in our own life. Service is one of the greatest blessings we can experience to bring us joy in sobriety, serenity, peace, and lasting inside happiness.

Be kind to yourself. Expect God to help you. Say yes to God and the spiritual principles of SA. May we all recognize the Key to our sobriety. Relief from lust is within us.

—Mike S., GDA Chair

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SAICO Financial Update



Following is a summary of SA fellowship revenues and expenses for 1st quarter 2010. A detailed donations report is enclosed with mailed issues of *Essay*, or is available at sa@saico.org. We wish to thank all of our members who generously contribute to our fellowship, so that we may continue to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.

SAICO Financial Update 1st Quarter 2010	
Revenues	\$70,440.00
Expenses	60,662.00
Revenues - Expenses	9,778.00
Total Prudent Reserve	181,302.00

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

Delegates and Trustees

Delegates

Region	Delegate	Committees
Southwest	Mike S., <i>Chair</i> Tom K. Eric S., <i>Alt</i>	Conventions, Service Manual, COMC CFC, Conventions CFC, Internet
Mid-Atlantic	Larry H. Laurens A. Will K. Lia F., <i>Alt</i>	Service Manual, Nominations, RAC International Service Manual Nominations, International
North Midwest	Gary L. Lee W., <i>Alt</i>	Literature, RAC, Legal Internet
Northeast	Tom V. Enid R., <i>Alt</i>	Internet
Northwest	Farley H. Lil G., <i>Alt</i>	RAC, Internet Literature
Southeast	Steve S., <i>Co-Chair</i> Bill S. Dave Mc Jon B., <i>Alt</i> Marla H., <i>Alt</i>	COMC, Finance, Service Manual Literature Finance, COMC Conventions, COMC Nominations
South Midwest	Glenn J. John W., <i>Alt</i>	International, Conventions CFC, International
UK, Ireland	Nicholas S.	International, Translations

Trustees

Trustee	Committees
John C., <i>Chair</i>	COMC, RAC, Finance, Service Manual
David T.	CFC, International, Loners
Betsy T., <i>Co Chair</i>	Legal, Service Manual
Gene J.	Nominations
Sean R.	Hospitals & Institutions
Carlton B.	Finance, Conventions, COMC
Francis H.	Literature, CFC, Service Manual

Attention Delegates and Trustees: Please notify saico@sa.org if your committee information changes



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

Calendar of Events



July 16 -18, 2010, Second Annual Dublin Convention, Dublin, Ireland. *The Joy Response* More info at patnireland@gmail.com

September 3-5, 2010, SA Convention, Ammerdown. Info to follow.

September 11, 2010, Recovery Day, London, England UK. One of Four Recovery Days. For info call 07000 725463 or visit www.sauk.org

September 17 - 19, 2010, SA Fall Retreat, Battle Lake, Alberta, Canada. *Surrender at Battle Lake*. For info contact 780-988-4411, www.edmontonsa.org, [\[lake@yahoo.ca\]\(mailto:lake@yahoo.ca\), or \[www.sanorthwest.org\]\(http://www.sanorthwest.org\)](http://surrenderatbattle-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

September 24-26, 2010. SA Spiritual Retreat, Paoli, PA. *Conscious Contact Weekend*. Info at 215-564-3272 or www.phillysa.org.

October 22 - 24, 2010, SA UK Convention, Waterford, Ireland

October 23, 2010. Fall Conference, Hicksville, NY. Info at: 516-634-0632, www.salongisland.org, or recovery@salongisland.org

November 27, 2010, Recovery Day, Location: London, England U. For info call 07000 725463 or visit www.sauk.org

January 14 - 16, 2011, SA UK Convention, Location: Pantasaph, North Wales, United Kingdom

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

Submit info to be listed in September 2010 Essay by August 15, 2010. Please submit dates, theme, place, and points of contact.

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

Upcoming International Conventions

July 9-11, 2010, Chicago, IL, "Sweet Hope Chicago"



Join us in July for a weekend of Windy City recovery! Special room rates available at Westin O'Hare. Make hotel reservations online at www.sweethopechicago.org/hotel-info. Register online at sweethopechicago.org/registration. For more info contact 630-415-0341, sweethopechicago@gmail.com, or www.sweethopechicago.org

January 1 -16, 2011, Irvine, CA. *Sunshine & Serenity*
Info at www.sasanon2011.com

July 15 - 17, 2011, Portland, OR. *Recovery on the River*.
Info at 800-426-7866 or www.recoveryontheriver2011.com

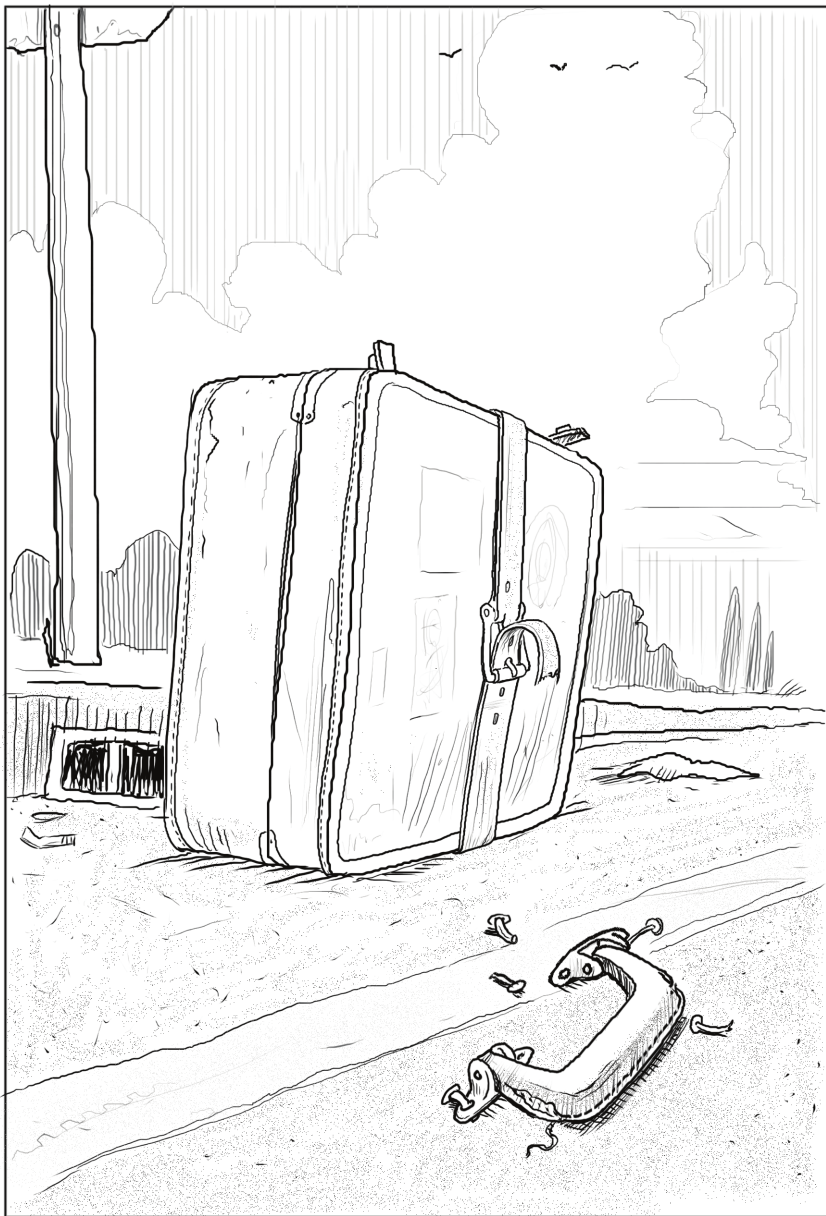
Events are listed here solely as a service, not as an endorsement by Essay or SAICO.

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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 before 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.