

Essay

December 2011



Journey Out of Darkness

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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December 2011



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.

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Journey Out of Darkness

Feet shuffling, I made my way through the darkened tunnel. I was part of a handcuffed, chained sea of men in orange that was slowly making its way through an underground tunnel toward the courthouse. We shuffled, a few inches at a time, because our ankles were connected by chains. I was in shock, floating on a dark cloud of uncertainty, shame, loneliness, and self-pity.

My name is Jimmy, and I am a sexaholic. Before my arrest, my life was perfect: great wife, kids, job, church, music, athletics, and health. But I was also addicted to pornography, lust, sex, resentment, anger, self-centeredness, and denial.

I grew up in a loving, upper-middle-class home. The youngest of three children, I followed in the footsteps of intelligent siblings and parents who graduated from Ivy league schools—but I always felt different. I felt that I was not as smart as the rest of my family.

I discovered girls one day in kindergarten when a girl smiled at me. I stole my first kiss at a third-grade dance. I remember a

girl saying “you’re sexy” in fifth grade, and I remember how much I liked the way that made me feel. Beginning in about the first grade, my best (male) friend and I liked to dance naked together. As we grew into our early teens, we began to experiment with sexuality, look



at porn, and smoke cigarettes together. I recruited other friends into this behavior, but I did not feel right about it. My friend and I discussed our behavior,

decided that we were “not gay,” and stopped. However, I carried some doubt and shame regarding this same-sex activity, as well as the way I manipulated other friends to join me in these behaviors.

When I was 13, I had my first girlfriend. I was thrilled to walk hand-in-hand with her. She broke up with me quickly, however, and I blamed myself for not kissing her. My next girlfriend broke up with me for kissing too much. Masturbation and obsession with pornography soon took priority, as I felt safe and was “not hurting anyone.”

When I was 15, my brother put a pornographic magazine under

the Christmas tree. My dad paid the “bill-me-later” payment, and the result was a new magazine in the mail every month and the beginning of my porn obsession. After that, I stole pornography from adult bookstores and hid it under my mattress and in compartments in my closet.

When I was 16, a male family friend came to stay with us. He was about four years older than I was. When I confided in him my prior sexual behavior, he groomed me with liquor and pornography, and manipulated me into sexual behavior with him. I spent most of my life telling myself this behavior was just “boys being boys” and “my choice.” In reality, I carried the guilt, shame, and denial from this sexual abuse with me into adult life and into my adult relationships.

Before I was 18, I had acted out in adult arcades, adult movie theaters, and massage parlors. I remember the first time I acted out at an adult movie theater. I slumped down and masturbated in public. Afterwards, overcome with feelings of shame and guilt, I forced myself not to feel. I actually convinced myself to not feel shame and guilt! I learned to be proud of my ability to stuff feelings.

I graduated from college with a music degree and plans to attend graduate school for conducting. My fiancée had different ideas and told

me it was time to go to work. So I cancelled my plans and hit the streets to work as a busboy, clerk, and eventually a salesman. Co-dependent, I did what I thought my wife wanted, stuffed my feelings, and used my anger and resentment as fuel for my acting out.

Married at 22, I lived a double life of husband, salesman, and musician on the one hand, and porn-lusting, prostitute-chasing, delusional self-centered liar on the other. I played my part well. In my desperate need to keep my sexual behavior going, and secret, I was self-righteous and passive-aggressive toward my wife. I projected an attitude of “I’m fine, what’s wrong with you?” Hence, she blamed our failing marriage on herself and we divorced. My addict self was elated. I started a new, successful career, dated women I could use and discard, and acted out as I pleased.

I knew I had a problem because I could not stop. But I rationalized that this is how I had “always been” and continued my acting out behaviors. Stuffing my feelings of shame, anger, and resentment, I continued to act out, hurting and abusing myself and everyone else in my life.

I married again. I believed my new wife would fix me because she knew about the porn and she was “okay” with it. Eventually, the secrets started again and we drifted

apart. Escalating in quantity and deviancy, I kept the porn, adult stores, and clubbing behavior to myself. My wife drifted into depression and self-doubt as my self-centered, abusive, passive-aggressive behaviors and attitudes raged. I manufactured conflicts with her in order to form resentments, which I then used to rationalize my sexual acting out. All along, I minimized my activities, telling myself, "At least I'm not having an affair." I thought I was so entitled!

Ten years later, I found myself sitting across from a good friend who had 15 years of AA sobriety and program experience. I described to him my frustration, shame, and bewilderment over my behavior and my inability to stop. He pointed me toward the concept of powerlessness, Twelve Step recovery, and hope. I soon chose to tell my therapist, and she encouraged me to disclose to my wife.

I told my wife everything. She was shocked, hurt, and angry. However, through her family's experience, she understood AA and the miracle of the Twelve Steps. She supported my entrance into recovery and SA meetings. I, however, wasn't ready to stop. I attended one SA meeting a week, saw a new therapist

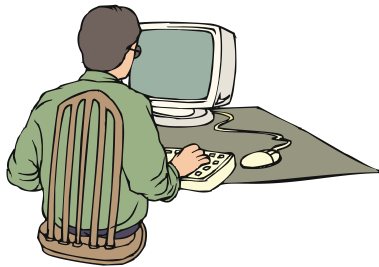
who specialized in sex addiction—and learned to "talk the talk" and lie with sincerity while I continued to act out.

I began to visit adult stores instead of going to meetings. Upon returning home, I would share with my life "what I learned" in the "morning group session!" During the day I smoked cigarettes and looked at pornography in my car, rationalizing that I wasn't really "acting out." Inevitably, I would act out. I would be at a club when it opened, drinking and smoking at 11 am. A few hours later, I was at the adult bookstore, acting out and smoking more. Since my wife thought I had quit smoking, I would

bring a change of clothes, go to the gym to shower, dress again, and then go home and play the good husband.

Intimacy with my wife became infrequent and anxiety-producing. She was buying my act and attempting to move closer to me, but I was unable to connect. I was terrified that the house of cards I had built would collapse, so I had to keep running, acting out again and again.

I began making my own pornography, using the Internet and a home printer. Smoking and viewing pornography became all-consuming



obsessions. Morning, noon, and night I would find excuses to drive somewhere to act out. I smoked and viewed pornography at home, late at night. The images became more extreme and more disturbing as I continued to cross boundary after boundary.

In November 2006, I was diagnosed with advanced malignant melanoma on my upper left cheek. My wife was a rock and supported me through the surgery and tests. In early January 2007, I was told that it had not spread, and that I did not need to have chemotherapy. Was this my wake-up call? My bottom? Not at all. As I have heard in meetings: "If you don't know whether or not you have reached your bottom, God will arrange one for you."

A few days later, I was chained, wearing orange, and headed to court. Why did I choose to view and print child pornography a few days after the good news about my cancer? Why did I throw the offending pictures into a dumpster only to retrieve them in the freezing snow the next day, resulting in my arrest? Why did I not remember that across the street from the dumpster was a fire station, and that my behavior was suspicious enough that neighbors might call the police? There is no reason why. I knew my behavior was wrong.

So what was this new feeling of subtle relief inside me? In the

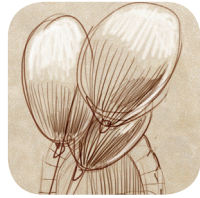
midst of trauma, I began a spiritual awakening, based on truth—no matter how ugly, difficult, or (in my case) illegal. In the darkness of reality, I discovered light within. My journey from self-centered, angry, resentful, passive-aggressive, righteously indignant man to one who accepts life as today's gift took many subsequent years. It took many gifts from God, disguised as "unfair" punishments and consequences. It took severe limits on my freedom. It took being booked into county jail, complete with picture ID, orange jump suit, and towel. It took spending the night in a tiny cell, on the floor next to the toilet because there were six of us in there. It took being released but placed on virtual house arrest, with friends leaving groceries at my front door and unable to come inside. It took being unable to see my children, losing my job of 22 years, and getting divorced after 19 years of marriage. It took polygraph tests to teach me that truth and honesty is not necessarily what you say, but what you do not say.

It took being banned from attending SA meetings by my probation officer, and as a result, choosing to focus on what I *could* do versus what I *could not*. I could meet regularly with SA members for coffee and fellowship. I could connect with others and work the program. I had known who I wanted as a sponsor, but it wasn't until after the arrest

that I walked up to him and asked for help. We met every Thursday for breakfast and worked through the Steps using the Big Book, the Twelve & Twelve, and the White Book as our guides. I could design and edit our local SA newsletter and an SA/S-Anon International Convention program. I could create and sell recovery greeting cards. And I could continue my recovery journey with my dog Maxey, in the form of an original cartoon. I call it (surprise) "Maxey."

Acceptance is my lifeline to God and to serenity. Boundaries, consequences, and responsibility for my thoughts, feelings, and behaviors were not to be fought, but accepted. Feeling hurt, angry, or sad wasn't something to fight, but part of being

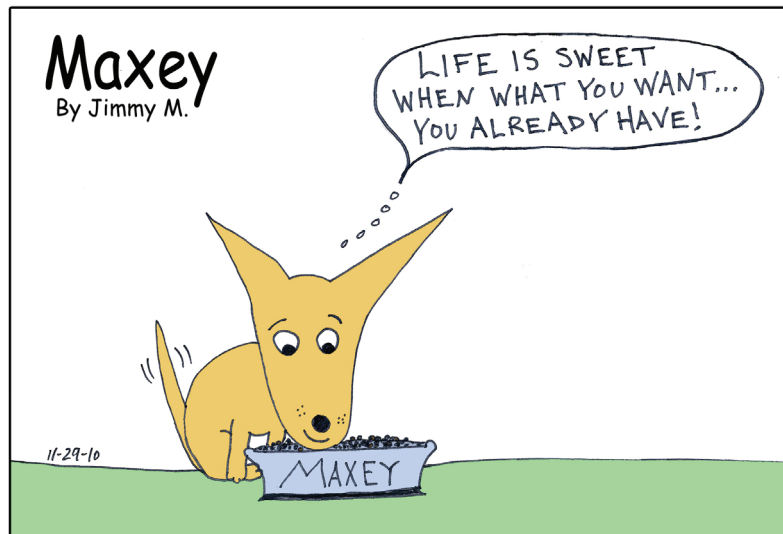
human. Throughout my life, I had pushed boundaries and suffered little or no consequences. This instilled in me a self-righteous, entitled attitude.



I fiercely fought all criticism and avoided responsibility. Steps Four through Seven were a breakthrough for me, because I was finally able to not only look at myself, but to know myself.

I asked God to remove my self-centeredness, anger, lust, self-pity, conceit, fear, phoniness, dishonesty, self-sufficiency and greed. Working the Steps, I began to feel again: to be real—not perfect and not an illusion, and not mirroring to others what I thought they expected from me.

On October 5, 2011, I received the court order notice confirming my release from supervision! On October 6 (after three and a half



years), I walked through the familiar doors of my SA home meeting and my joy overflowed with smiles and tears. What a blessing; a privilege to be where God is present, working miracles in the lives of those sitting at the table with me. What a blessing to be able to meet with my sponsor face to face again. What a blessing to meet for fellowship after meetings, and get reconnected with old friends and meet new ones.

Today, because of the things I have learned through SA, my ex-wife and I communicate and parent better than I would ever have dreamed; a testament to God's will and plan in my life. My level of acceptance and

gratitude for God's plan in my life has been forever transformed. It's not that I'm that much different. I can still be self-centered and fearful; but today I am aware of these things. I am accepting of who I am, I empathize with myself and with others in a way that would not have been possible (or even conceivable) prior to working the program. A free man, I choose a new life of spiritual awareness and connection. I know what the other kind of life brings.

I am a grateful sexaholic, for without the journey into darkness, I would not be experiencing the light of God's grace today.

—Jimmy M., Denver, CO

You Are Not Alone¹

For many of us, our addiction is a disease of isolation and loneliness. Even those of us who have been outwardly successful—with families, careers, and a group of friends—often find that our relationships are really only superficial. Addicts, for the most part, have real trouble connecting on an emotional level with other people. This is the result of many factors such as fear, resentment, anger, and often just a sense of being different from others.

This description very accurately characterizes me. I was a successful career employee at a large corporation, was married with

children and involved in their lives, and had a number of friends. Externally, I had all the trappings of a model citizen, but I knew better. Ultimately, my worst fears of being publicly humiliated for my actions came true, costing me my marriage, my job, my friends, and my involvement in my children's day-to-day lives. Prison is just the icing on the cake—the rest hurts much worse.

Thankfully, I hit a very hard bottom and was blessed with



¹Originally published in prison newsletter 2011, adapted for Essay by permission.

a real spiritual experience in recovery. I did extensive work with a psychologist to better understand how I got where I was. More important, however, I joined SA, a fellowship of sexaholics like me who could love me through the worst time of my life. I threw myself into the program with all the energy and honesty I could muster and found that all that SA promised could be delivered and more. Today I gladly carry the message of recovery. That's because SA saved my life.

In my Step work, I began to discover that the relationships I'd had all my life were far from what true love for my fellow man (or woman) can be. Even with my wife, I was never connected at a level of complete honesty and trust, nor could I be. I never had any trouble seeing where others lacked honesty and trust, but it took the consequences I suffered to finally see these failures in myself. A member of AA relates a similar story in "Gutter Bravado" (AA, 505):

My cherished individualism was turning into isolationism. I had a growing uneasiness

that I was in a vicious circle. I had no friends—only acquaintances.

A few months before I truly hit bottom, I was miserable enough to try out an SA meeting—so I went. I immediately felt welcomed and realized that these people really understood what I was going through. Still, I wasn't ready to completely give myself up to the program and to God, even though I knew that I was completely out of control (I call it insanity) and had no power to change things. However, when my indiscretions were finally revealed and I hit bottom, this group of people was there to catch me and lead me into what has been the greatest period of growth I've ever experienced. Here's what is even more important though: those same people continue to support me today, four years later and three years into my sentence. They aren't acquaintances; they are true friends.

In the *12&12*, Bill W. describes the loners who come into AA, and he wonders whether AA can offer these members the same real level of social and family contentment that

others seem to have:

... can AA offer them satisfactions of similar worth and durability? Yes—whenever they try hard to seek them out. Surrounded by so many AA friends, these so-called loners tell us they no longer feel alone. ...We daily see such members render prodigies of service, and receive great joys in return. (*12&12*, 120)

In "Working with Others," Bill writes,

Life will take on a new meaning. To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends—this is an experience you must not miss. (*AA*, 89)

I can easily lose myself in negative thinking. I wanted to find a way to avoid prison, but it wasn't to be. Instead, I have learned to find thankfulness for all that is right in my life. I'm no longer driven by the insatiable demands of lust. I have a spiritual connection that allows me to feel whole in a way I never did before. Most important, I have honest, open relationships with friends who know what I've been through and support me fully. I've mended fences with some and stand

ready to do so with everyone else I harmed in any way. I'm able to love and be loved.

If I can convey anything about SA recovery to someone who doubts the ability of our fellowship to help, it's this: You are not alone. There is a group of people who have been through what you have and more, and we want to help you get out of the vicious merry-go-round you've been on. We do it because it helps us recover, not because of religious

demands or in order to gain something materially.

When I can help another recover, it helps me to stay recovered. That's the immediate payoff. However, the result is lasting, true friendship with people I trust and

love and who feel the same toward me. It's really a beautiful thing, and when I watch closely, I see God in all of it.

Maybe SA is not for you—it's not for everybody. However, it just may save your life and help you to rebuild from the loss you've experienced thus far. The risk is very small—your time and willingness are all that is required. In return, you may just receive the priceless gift of life and love that I and many others have received in the fellowship of SA.

—Chris C.



Members Please Submit Your Stories!

Sharing your experience, strength, and hope encourages the addict who still suffers as well as other members who are in recovery. Please share what you were like before, how you became involved in SA, what happened, and what is working for you today.

Submit stories or ask questions at essay@sa.org.



Back to the Basics

It seems like only yesterday that my old friend and sponsor, Jesse L., shared with me a wonderful story. He said that there once was a world-renowned football team that had successful seasons year after year. One year, however, things were not going well for the team. They were certainly not playing their best. Their famous, well-respected coach felt it was time to intervene. During the halftime of one of their worst games, he announced that he wanted to talk to the team in the locker room. When the players were all assembled he said, "Guys, you know we are not doing well this season. There is a very simple solution to get us back on track. We need to get back to the basics." He then reached down, picked up a football, and in a loud and sonorous voice he said, "This is a football!"

Over my years in SA, I have observed the struggles of some members in remaining sexually sober. I have often thought that many of our problems are related to not grasping the basics of this very simple program. As it was with that football team, I think many of us need to be told today, "This is a football!" I would like to share with you the basics I use for my program on a daily basis. These are the footballs that I must use to stay



sexually sober. These basic tools have worked for me for more than 27 years.

1. *I believe I have a disease.* This disease is called sexaholism. As the White Book says, "Looking at our sexaholism in terms of addiction seems to be a useful way to begin looking at ourselves" (SA, 29). As Dr. Silkworth says in "The Doctors Opinion,"

... the action of alcohol on these chronic alcoholics is a manifestation of an allergy ... the phenomenon of craving is limited to this class and never occurs in the average temperate drinker. ... They are restless, irritable and discontented, unless they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort which comes at once by taking a few drinks... . (AA, xxviii-xxix 4th edition)

I am not bad getting good. I am sick getting well. Willpower will not stop this disease. Only a Power greater than myself can relieve my malady. "More About Alcoholism" hammers this home:

Once more: The alcoholic at certain times has no effective mental defense against the first drink. Except in a few rare cases, neither he nor any other human being can

provide such a defense. His defense must come from a Higher Power. (AA, 43)

2. *I acknowledge that I am powerless over lust.* As we read in the White Book, "The sexaholic... has lost control, no longer has the power of choice, and is not free to stop" (SA, 3). I cannot pretend to be able to control and enjoy lust. It has no place in my life today.

3. *I work my SA program just one day at a time.* This concept is beautifully portrayed in the story "Alcoholics Anonymous Number Three." The man in this story said to Dr. Bob (as Dr. Bob and Bill W. were visiting him in the hospital),

"Yes, Doc, I would like to quit, at least for five, six, or eight months, until I get things straightened up, and begin to get the respect of my wife and some other people back, and get my finances fixed up and so on." And they both laughed very heartily and said, "That's better than you've been doing, isn't it?" Which of course was true. They said, "We've got some bad news for you. It was bad news for us, and it will probably be bad news for you. Whether you quit six days, months, or years, if you go out and take a drink or two, you'll end up in



this hospital tied down, just like you have been in these past six months. You are an alcoholic... ..

The next question they asked was, "You can quit for twenty-four hours can't you?" I said "Yes, anybody can do that, for 24 hours." They said, "That's what we're talking about, just 24 hours at a time." . . . Every time I'd start thinking about drinking, I would think of the long, dry years ahead without having a drink; but this idea of 24 hours, that it was up to me from then on, was a lot of help. (AA,187-188)

4. *I clearly understand what sexual sobriety is and is not.* I cannot pretend to be sober while practicing any kind of self-stimulation, with or without orgasm. See my article "What Is Sex with Self" (*Best of Essay: Practical Recovery Tools*, page 13).

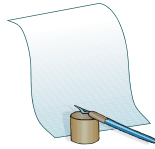
5. *My disease lives in my brain.* I cannot trust my thinking to get me out of my disease. My best thinking got me into the mess I was in. I therefore need to rely and work closely with my sponsor and with other members of the fellowship to help me avoid sinking into "stinking thinking."

6. *I make a daily surrender to a caring God who loves me.* God loves me so much that He watched all the

crazy things I did in my disease and brought me to the program anyway. That's the God I believe in today.

7. *I am very explicit in sharing my lust temptations with program members.* As the White Book says,

Lust hates the light and flees from it; it loves the dark secret recesses of my being. And once I let it lodge there, it's like a fungus and starts flourishing—the athlete's foot of the soul. But as soon as I bring it to the light, exposing it to another recovering sexaholic, the power it has over me is broken. Light kills lust. I did this with specific experiences, not in generalities. (SA,160)



When I surrender a lust temptation to my sponsor or other program members, I do not hide behind generalities like "I was lusting today." I say exactly what I was thinking. I do not filter my behavior to make it sound more acceptable. I say it as I thought it. If my sponsor or others cannot deal with it, then I need to find someone else in the program who can hear what I was thinking. I try to preface my sharing with the phrase "I am going to be explicit now."

Of course, I also need to be willing to listen to others' lust temptations. I usually say a prayer so that I don't take in their lust. When people share with me explicit material, I pray "God let me hear

this with your ears."

8. *There is no room for sexual fantasy in my life.* My sponsor would say, "The first thought is on God, the next thought is on you." What do I do with that first thought? Do I let it progress into a motion picture, or do I use the tools that I have learned in "Overcoming Lust and Temptation" (SA,157-168). One day at a time, I choose to use these tools to prevent the first frame of a lust-thought from turning into a motion picture.

9. *I make a gratitude list every day.* I especially like to do this in the morning, to prevent my enemy "self-pity" from sneaking back into my life. Self-pity means I am back to self; I am "I"-centered rather than God-centered. When I feel sorry for myself, I am forgetting all the wonderful gifts God has given me. "Selfishness—self centeredness! That, we think is the root of our troubles." (AA, 62)

10. *I avoid situations that can be lust-triggers for me.* I review movies before I watch them so as to screen out ones that would cause me discomfort, and I try to avoid certain TV programs.

11. *I am careful to not let lust into my marital relations.* I wrote more about this in my article "What About Sex in Marriage?" (Essay, June 2011).

12. *I try to live the Steps, one day at a time.* The Steps cannot be part of my life. They are my life.

Working Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve as my maintenance Steps is of the utmost importance for me. I must promptly admit when I am wrong. I must be faithful in seeking conscious contact with God, and I must carry the message of my recovery.

13. *I participate in a great deal of service work.* It is only by giving it away that I can keep what I have. This is stated eloquently in "The Family Afterward":

Like a gaunt prospector, belt drawn in over the last ounce of food, our pick struck gold. Joy at our release from a lifetime of frustration knew no bounds. Father feels he



has struck something better than gold. For a time he may try to hug the new treasure to himself. He may not see at once that he has barely scratched a limitless lode which will pay dividends only if he mines it for the rest of his life and insists on giving away the entire product. (AA, 128-129)

Do I do any of the above perfectly? No. I do them conscientiously and to the best of my ability—and these basic principles have worked for me for more than 27 years. I know they can work for others also. These are my basics. These are my footballs! Let's all continue to recover as the champions we are.

—Harvey A., Nashville, TN

Attitude of Gratitude

I found SA and started my recovery journey just over three years ago. Going into recovery, I expected to learn just what I needed to do in order to not act out. I soon discovered, however, that the program provides me with tools to better face life and life's challenges—to be able to actually grow stronger through them, not just get through them. As I began to recognize that my real problem was the spiritual

void in my life, I could see that this truly is a journey of recovery, not simply a program of checking the boxes.



When I had been in the program about six months, my father became ill. He spent three months in the hospital before passing away. I recognized during that time just how much SA had changed me and the way I deal with life issues. In the past, day-to-day struggles that are simply a part of life would make me

fearful and upset. I would struggle to cope and would turn to my drug to make it through. Yet in facing the experience of my father's illness and ultimate death, I recognized that I had found a connection with God—the Higher Power that I had knowingly avoided for most of my life.

I say “knowingly” because I clearly remember telling God when I was in my late teens that I believed He existed but that I would never completely surrender my life to Him. I had two reasons for this. First, I feared that He would ask me to give up something I did not want to give up and second, I feared that He would ask me to do things I did not want to do. I had no idea just how deep into spiritual death this life decision would take me.

The connection with God that I've found in SA allowed me to get through the pain of losing my father—but more than that, I found that through the pain God was actually drawing me into a greater understanding of my commitment to Him. I began to see that “our change of attitude resulted in commitment of our lives to God” (SA, 135). I found that,

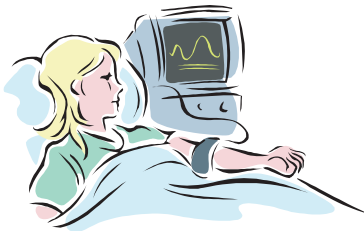
The essence of Step Eleven is *letting God in* through every temptation, emotion, difficulty, success, failure,

sadness, and joy. True union with the Source of our lives. (SA, 141)

I realized through this experience that I was finally embracing the idea that God is for me, and that He will work all things out in my life just the way they need to be, if I let Him. What started out as a willingness to seek a connection with God was developing into a real relationship with Him. I had faced the reality that my old self (the person my addiction had made me) had to die if I was going to truly find life and the freedom it offers.

Now, after just over three years of recovery, I find myself facing another great challenge in which my relationship with God and the truth of my recovery are again being tested. This test comes in the form of another death: this one of my unborn grandson.

My oldest daughter, who was seven months pregnant with her third child, experienced complications and was told that her unborn child would not survive. When I first learned about this, anger began to swell in me and I felt the urge to find someone to blame. This was my old way of coping with situations that were beyond my control. Amazingly, this lasted only moments before I realized that I needed to surrender all these emotions and



the whole situation to God—the One Who is in control of all things. Instantly, I felt serenity sweep over me. This was inexpressibly comforting. My focus quickly turned from my own emotions and needs to a desire to reach out and be of help to my daughter. I was amazed by how much change God has wrought in me as a result of my committing my life to Him. For once, I found myself thinking of what I could do for others.

The reality of Step Twelve in practicing these principles in all my affairs brings me to a place of gratitude, recognizing that God has done for me what I could have never done for myself. I now have a greater understanding of the impact that an attitude of gratitude can have on my life and on my journey of recovery. During my times of meditation, seeking to find comfort and understanding in the loss of my

unborn grandson, God has helped me to see that He has not only been guiding me through each day of my recovery, but He has also been preparing me for all the events that I would face in my life.

Through death, God has brought me to a complete recognition of the life-giving love He has for me. I find great truth in the closing point of Step Twelve in the White Book,

My own attitude and recovery are the key. They open the door to recovery and spiritual life in my family and larger circle of relationships. (155)

I once heard someone say that gratitude is a constant attitude of thankfulness and appreciation for life as it unfolds. Gratitude is what I feel today as I recognize the love God has for me, which I have learned through the SA fellowship.

—With gratitude, Lenny B.

Seeking the Truth

Recently, a friend shared with me the terror, frustration, bewilderment, and despair he was feeling as a consequence of our disease. I told him that these emotions are the natural consequence of the old way of living; that they are what we reap when we sow the seeds of lust. I told him that this is no different than planting apple seeds and eventually getting

apples; if we plant the seeds of lust, we get weeds and brambles. As we pass from the old life into the new, we begin planting new seeds. Still, the old fruits will keep coming for a while. What a bitter harvest this can be!

In my case, I wanted my new life to be a “Jack and the Beanstalk” story. According to the story, I’d toss some



seeds out the window, go to sleep, and wake up the next morning with a vine going up into the sky. But the seeds of the new life shouldn't be simply tossed out the window. I need to plant them in the best available soil. They will take time to germinate, and once they do, the seedlings will be tender, fragile, and in need of much care.

Divine help is needed to save a spiritual garden overrun by weeds.

My own actions are what activate the Divine help. If I water the weeds, then the weeds will grow. If I do all that I can to protect and nurture the seedlings of the new life—especially being honest and asking for help when what I'm doing isn't working—I'll find that God will help me do what I cannot do for myself.

If I am steadfast, then sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly, the garden reaches a critical point where the good fruit starts to run the bad right out of the harvest. This is how "we are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness" (AA, 83).

What needs to happen inside and outside of me so that I can pass from the old life into the new? "Simple, but not easy; a price had to be paid. It meant the destruction of self-centeredness." (AA, 14) But what

is this cost in terms of the currency of my life today? And can I afford to wait for a better exchange rate?

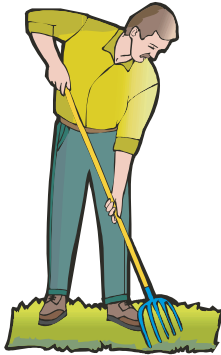
What does surrender look like? Considered from the perspective of my old way of thinking, the question itself terrifies. I don't have the answer. However, I have found that life always answers this question for me. Somehow, sooner or later life's response does come.

If I am seeking the Truth, I will be blessed by reaching it and entering into it. If I run from it, it will in the end consume me. Whether I find joy or despair in it is really up to me. When I am distracted by past and future events (real, distorted, or imagined), I feed my sense of isolation and terror. But if I truly seek entry into the new life today, I will find everything I need to live successfully in the moment.

I told my friend to cling to the gift of the moment as if his life depended on it—because it does.

I could never figure out why knowing the truth about God never set me free. Or the truth about psychology or the Twelve Step program. But when I finally came to the place where I saw the truth about me—and despaired . . . Well, *that* was the beginning. (SA, 106)

—Anonymous



Program Tools

Step Two: Restore

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

I like to look up definitions of key words used in the Twelve Steps. I use a 1934 *Webster's Dictionary* that was current when the Big Book was written. Key words and their definitions have become the subject of my artwork.

Some Steps have been hard for me to understand, but the wording of Step Two seemed straightforward at first. The phrase "a Power greater than myself" was a familiar one so I wasn't surprised to see it in this Step. However, my thoughts were still very vague about who or what that Higher Power might be.

After working Step One, I took this Step quickly—probably much too quickly. My hurry was understandable. At that time in recovery, I was desperate to have my sanity restored. I had experienced many absurd disconnections between my thoughts and actions, and I would have gladly followed any suggestions to bring my life under control.

So, in my initial rush to get through the Steps, I did not give enough attention to Step Two. As a strong-willed person, I thought that I could restore myself to sanity

by working the Steps. I grumbled, "If some mysterious Power is going to restore me to sanity, then let *it* take the Step instead of me." My sponsor steered me back to Step One, making sure I recognized that I was in no shape to restore anyone's sanity, least of all my own.



When we returned again to the Second Step, I understood it more clearly. In Step One I declared myself powerless over lust: accepting that fact meant a surrender of my will. If Step One involved a surrender, then Step Two would be a choice between believing in a Higher

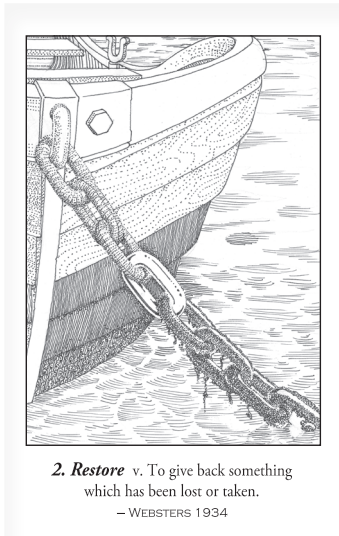
Power or in a lower power (that is, the types of human power that had failed to save me from addiction). Presented with those grim choices, I "came to believe."

Eventually, I looked up the word "restore" in the 1934 dictionary. The definition given was: "Restore - v. To give back something which has been lost or taken." I noticed the phrase "to give back" rather than "to take back." I found it interesting that the old dictionary clearly stated what had taken me so long to realize: my sanity needed to be given back to me.

As I began to think about an

image for Step Two, I thought at first of fantasy images, such as a castle floating on a cloud, or an angel rushing to rescue a person in distress. However, as with my other drawings, I had already made a decision to use only real-life images. I pondered my upcoming “restore” drawing for a long, long time. (The simplest words often required the most prayer and meditation.) I briefly considered creating a scene in which a person was returning a belonging, like a borrowed tool, to another person. But that didn’t match the dictionary definition of “lost or taken.” I had not loaned my sanity to someone; I had lost my sanity completely.

Then for some reason, images of boats crossed my mind, particularly boats near the water’s edge. I knew that a moored boat that becomes untied will eventually drift away. That certainly fit my experience of insanity. I had not driven my sanity away on purpose, but I had lost it just the same. I tried sketching boats adrift on the sea with untied ropes or broken chains dangling over their sides. But again, the images did not match the definition of giving something back.



Then finally one particular image formed in my mind. I sketched a small boat that was held fast by a chain—but a chain that had obviously been recently repaired. The chain halves had clearly been separated for a long time. The upper part of the chain had become coated with a patina of dry rust while the lower part was encrusted with the

soupy slime found at the water’s bottom. A little jolt passed through my body—something that for me usually announces the arrival of a valid idea.

The bright and shiny link that tied the two ends together appeared to be freshly forged. The sturdy new link looked stout enough to

reunite the broken ends and restore the chain to its original purpose. But my initial enthusiasm turned to doubt and despair. I thought that this image might be too dull to interest other people. Everyone likes a little drama and there was no drama in this image at all. But when ideas arrive through prayer and meditation, I have to let them speak for themselves.

Even today when I see this

drawing, I find myself swallowing hard. The drawing is a confession of the neglect I inflicted on my family. Even though I have since been restored to sanity, nothing changes what I went through. I lost my sane mind for a very long time. It would still be gone had it not been restored by the action of my Higher Power.

On better days, this image reminds me of the renewed life I’ve been given through recovery. The slimy end of the chain speaks of my freedom from the murky mire of isolation. The rusted chain is a reminder that my mind was once

drifting aimlessly, but has now been restored and redirected. What about that shiny new link that restored the broken chain? I only know that it was formed by something greater than human power. Who or what was this power—this spiritual blacksmith—who forged the link that restored me to sanity, and brought me to the safe harbor of SA? All I know is that, like the image itself, when I needed it, it was there. I cannot fully explain that statement, but I firmly believe it.

—John I.

Overcoming Shame

Step Four: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.



In July 2011, our 6:30 group (under the Nashville Intergroup) decided to have monthly speaker meetings. One of the first talks was on Step Four. The speaker focused on the Big Book pages on how to work Step Four (AA, 64-71), and as he went along, he shared his personal experience related to working each phase of the Step. On the topic of resentment, he read, “Sometimes it was remorse and then we were sore at ourselves” (66), and shared that this idea—resentment turned inward—seems to be describing shame. He then suggested that for some members, a shame inventory (along with the other inventories mentioned in the

Big Book) might be helpful. This struck me quite strongly. I knew that I carried a lot of shame and that shame blocked me from doing many things that I knew my Higher Power wanted me to do. One of those things was completing my Fourth Step. I had been working on my resentment and fear inventories but kept having trouble moving forward. So I asked my sponsor what a shame inventory might look like. He said he didn’t know but said that it likely would look similar to the resentment and fear inventories. He suggested that I ask my Higher Power for guidance.

For a few days nothing came to me. Then, as I was walking to

work one morning, a question from my Higher Power came to me. He asked, "Does this shame help you to carry out My will for you?" This was a profound question, and I realized that the obvious answer was "No." Throughout the morning, ideas for the column headings of a shame inventory came to me. I started by using several of the columns from AA's resentment and fear inventories (AA, 65). By the end of the day, I had a plan for preparing a shame inventory. My sponsor suggested some changes. He then suggested that I try the inventory out on some of my own shameful events that continued to haunt me.

I took several days working through the inventory—but when I was finished, I felt that a huge burden had been lifted off my shoulders. And I was amazed that,

when I picked up where I had left off on my resentment and fear inventories, they were now easy to complete! I no longer had that invisible barrier (which I now know was shame) holding me back from finishing.

I have shared the shame inventory with several dozen members. Their experiences have been similar to mine. We have found that not every member suffers from problems with shame. But those of us who do have found that this shame inventory has helped us work the rest of Step Four. So in the spirit of the Fifth Tradition (to carry our message to the sexaholic who still suffers), we decided to write down our experience and share it with our brothers and sisters in the fellowship.¹

—Mark V., Nashville, TN



Step Four Shame Inventory

Early in our Step work, especially while working Step Four, some of us were blocked by an unknown force. We had been warned that our pride could be a barrier here. But this strange phenomenon seemed different. Instead of leading us to believe that we were better than others, as pride will always do, this led us to think that our unique situation somehow made us worse than everyone else. The AA *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* offers this insight:

If temperamentally we are on the depressive side, we are apt to be swamped with guilt and self-loathing. We wallow in this messy

¹ Inventory available for download at <http://tinyurl.com/ShameInventory>.

bog, often getting a misshapen and painful pleasure out of it. As we morbidly pursue this melancholy activity, we may sink to such a point of despair that nothing but oblivion looks possible as a solution. Here, of course we have lost all perspective, and therefore all genuine humility. For this is pride in reverse. (12&12, 45)

We heard others talk of their experience with this "pride in reverse." Many of them called it shame. We identified with them, and we were grateful to have a name for what we were experiencing. But what we wanted even more was a solution, for this shame seemed to be way too much for us to bear.

Then one day a glimmer of hope came to us. Could it be that the solution for shame was the same as the solution for lust? Could we simply turn over our shame to a power greater than ourselves? We remembered the times that God had been faithful to us in the past. Our Higher Power truly did for us what we could not do for ourselves. This problem with shame was no different, we thought—and that was a great turning point for us.

Inspired, we were ready to pick up the pen once more and look again at Step Four. Recognizing that shame had been one of our own moral failings, some of us went about doing an inventory on it. But bitter experience taught us that we had to be careful here. A shame inventory does us no good if we simply write a list of the humiliations we have endured.

This is not a moral inventory at all; it is the very process by which the depressive has so often been led to [lusting] and extinction. (12&12, 45)

So we had to make sure that we adhered to the principles of a proper moral inventory. At times, shame looked a lot like resentment: "Sometimes [resentment] was remorse and then we were sore at ourselves" (AA, 66). Could it be that our shame was nothing more than our being resentful of ourselves? It seemed so. But it also seemed to be more than that. After all, when we read further, we noticed that our shame took on a lot of the elements of fear as well:

[Fear] was an evil and corroding thread; the fabric of our existence was shot through with it. It set in motion trains of circumstances which brought us misfortune we felt we didn't deserve. But did not we, ourselves, set the ball rolling?" (AA, 67)

Indeed, fear fed the flame of the shame that burned in our souls. A real inventory of shame would need to focus on both our resentment and our fears at the same time.

Some of us devised a shame inventory that combined both the resentment and fear inventories found in AA. We used a notebook and opened to two blank pages. We made eight columns, allowing more space to write in the second and fifth columns. We labeled each column as follows:

- 1) The Event
- 2) The Cause
- 3) Affects my _____
- 4) Does this shame help me carry out my Higher Power's will for me?
- 5) What does my Higher Power want me to be instead of carrying this shame?
- 6) Am I willing to become what my Higher Power wants me to be?
- 7) Harm done to others?
- 8) Prayer

As we worked this shame inventory, it was important to remember that we were working in an emotional area. As our White Book reminds us, Human emotions do not travel in straight lines, they zigzag all over. It was not necessary to slavishly follow someone else's outline, format, or procedure (SA, 109).

Sometimes we worked straight down a column. At other times it seemed better to work horizontally, taking one single shameful event through all eight columns. Either way the goal was the same: to remove some of the blockage of shame so that we could continue on.

In the first column, we wrote a couple of words to help us remember when and where the shameful event occurred. If the shame was a recurring event, we noted where or when it happened most often. The second column was a brief description of what happened. In the third column, we recorded the parts of our lives affected by the shame, such as our self-esteem, security, ambitions, or personal or sex relations (See AA, 65).

In the fourth column we asked our Higher Power whether holding on to this shame would help us carry out His will for us. Usually, the answer was "No." However, if we found ourselves answering "Yes," we found it wise to review our work with Step Two, because a "Yes" answer here might indicate that we did not believe in a Higher Power who had our best interests at heart. Our sponsors often recommended that we fire such a Higher Power immediately, because that may be no Higher Power at all, but merely a projection of our own self-loathing (and a slow path back to destruction).

In the fifth column we asked our Higher Power what we should do instead of carrying this shame, and we prayed to know our Higher Power's

vision for us. We were prepared to write down all the answers that came to us. In the sixth column, we indicated whether we were willing to move toward the goal of our Higher Power's vision of us. If we honestly could not say "Yes" in this column, we believed that was an indication that we needed to stop our shame inventory work and talk to our sponsor or a trusted friend in recovery. Often we realized that we needed to re-examine our work in Step Three.

In the seventh column, we asked whether we had harmed someone else in the shame event. A "Yes" would mean leaving a bookmark here, for us to return to as we worked Steps Six, Seven, Eight, and Nine. Finally, in column eight, we released the shame of this one event to our Higher Power. Some created their own prayer for doing this. It was usually something like this:

God, you have given me courage and clarity to open a place in my heart to receive your presence. The shame of [this event] helps me to realize how sick and cut off from you I was. I am ready to let you change me into what you want me to be without this shame. God, I need mercy and forgiveness. I believe You give it freely, and I will receive it gratefully. I also know that I need to forgive myself. Whatever you want of me, I am willing to do.

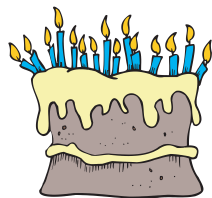
When we were praying, we paused from time to time to let our Higher Power speak to us. This was sacred ground for us; our Higher Power was actually doing for us what we had imagined would never be possible. Our shame was actually disappearing! We repeated the prayer as often as necessary. When we were ready, we checked the eighth column to indicate that the task was complete. Each completed surrender gave us the courage to write down the next, even more shameful event, and work through that one in the same fashion. We experienced the miracle all over again! We repeated this process until we could remember no more shameful events in our lives.

Once we have a complete willingness to take inventory, and exert ourselves to do the job thoroughly, a wonderful light falls upon this foggy scene. As we persist, a brand-new kind of confidence is born, and the sense of relief at finally facing ourselves is indescribable. (12&12, 49-50)



—Developed by Nashville, TN 6:30 Group

Happy Birthday Essay!



I happened to notice while reading *Beginnings: Notes on the Origin and Early Growth of SA* that the “first issue of the SA newsletter with the ESSAY masthead” was printed November 15, 1981 (14). That means *Essay* is 30 years old this year!

Essay has changed a lot over the years—from the first issues pounded out on Roy K.’s old typewriter, to the desktop-published version we know today. Through the years it has had several different formats, from sheets stapled together to square booklets to the present rectangular version. It has evolved from a collection of notes sent to SAICO to actual “shares” written expressly for *Essay*.

Some early issues included inserts—often “works in progress” that were sent out to groups, inviting feedback. One such insert, the “White Paper” developed by the North Hollywood group in 1993, described how that group used strong sponsorship to address the problem of slipping. (I still remember the heated debate this caused at our local Intergroup meeting!) That paper later became the basis for the SA pamphlet “Practical Guidelines for Group Recovery”(1995).

In the “first issue” of *Essay* (I believe there were a few earlier

newsletters), Roy speaks of unity and gratitude. Five months earlier, in June of 1981, the “Dear Abby” letter had “shotgunned” SA across the USA. Roy and Iris personally answered over 2,500 letters from readers who identified with our problem. In July, nine early members had come together for the first SA convention in Simi Valley (see *Beginnings*, op. cit.).

There were now 11 groups, with loners sprinkled all over the USA. The newsletter was a way of keeping in touch, of uniting them into one meeting. And so *Essay* was born: our meeting in print.

In that first issue, Roy speaks of being “welded together in a fellowship of recovery... becoming part of the healing process of each other’s lives.” That’s what *Essay* has meant to me over the years: a binding force that symbolically joins us together in one great fellowship.

In the spirit of gratitude for those early members, for Roy and Iris and all those who have gone before us, I’d like to share part of that historic first issue.

—A Faithful Reader

ESSAY

11-15-81

UNION

The word from the S.A. members around the country is unity. We’re being welded together in a fellowship of recovery. Men and women are getting sober! Coming out of themselves into the light, and making contact with other members. Coming to. Becoming part of the healing process of each other’s lives. That’s good news.

And there’s more. New S.A. groups are forming. There’s cross-fertilization starting between groups. And the spouses have started their own Fellowship—S-Anon, patterned after the Al-Anon Family Groups associated with A.A. They’ve discovered they need a Program of their own. They haven’t remained untouched; ours is as much a family disease as alcoholism.

So much to be grateful for. Maybe I should make a list of my own; doing so has been known to keep me out of the “poor me’s.” What am I grateful for?

For my sobriety. I would have nothing without that.

For the sobriety of others in my life, even though they may be phone dollars away.

For the Presence. A God of my very own. A faith that works.

For the fact that most of the time I can now live comfortably with myself and others—one day at a time.

For the joy of seeing others gain victory over the obsession & come to life.

For the Fellowship this creates. I need this as much as anyone else.

For the love of other recovering men and women—a bond that’s closer than anything I’ve ever known.

That all my needs are met (not all my wants).

We look back on our lives, even the bad times, and it seems we’ve always gotten what we’ve really needed. All of our past is what got us here; and we’re grateful to be here. Think of where else we might be! Someone’s surely been looking out for us, in spite of ourselves. And it seems He’s more interested in our freedom and joy than we are.

I embrace you all and wish I could meet with you all each week.

—Roy K.

SA/S-Anon Winter Convention

Midlands, United Kingdom

January 6-8, 2012



Start the New Year in fellowship by joining us for a weekend of recovery, fun, and inspiration at our winter convention at the Ramada Hotel in Birmingham, UK. I have found that the farther I travel to a convention, the more my recovery seems to benefit. Our January convention in Birmingham could be your opportunity to experience this phenomenon. Following are the experiences of some members who attended the UK convention last summer.

This was a very positive and strong convention. I was filled with fear and felt uncomfortable at first, but I felt very charged by the end of the convention. We were nine nationalities, reflecting our different regions. What a great experience!

—Luc D., Belgium

The convention centre was lovely and the food was great. The cabaret night was much enjoyed. The practical advice on how to work the Steps and live sensibly was most beneficial. The attendance of women and couples who are part of the program provided a balance that I haven't always experienced. I loved the support of the fellowship and the sharing I experienced there. Thanks!

—Chris S.

The UK summer convention was wonderful. I learn so much at conventions, and this was no exception. The emphasis was on Hope and Recovery. Members came from Ireland and Europe and they made a wonderful contribution. The location was great, and peace and serenity abounded.

—Alan G.

The warm welcome of the people was great and supportive. I experienced a lot of clarity around how to work the SA program and found hope for continuous sobriety. Also, the social time together and the talent-show were important for getting connected and feeling the strength of the fellowship.

—Roland H., Germany

For information contact Dot (S-Anon) at ++44 (0) 77187 385556, or Alex W. (SA), Chair (SA) at ++44 (0)7726 360592. We look forward to seeing you soon!

—In fellowship, Nicholas S., SA International Committee Member (based in England), +44 1202 763570 or +44 7715 539395



SA/S-Anon International Convention

January 13 - 15, 2012, Newark, NJ

“Liberty From Self in New York”

Register online at www.Libertyfromself.com

from January 3 through January 11, and receive the discounted price of \$100 (without meals)—a savings of \$20 off the walk-in price!

We in New York are honored to host the upcoming SA/S-Anon International Convention, to be held just over the river in Newark. We chose the conference theme, “Liberty From Self,” because we believe that “self” is our greatest obstacle to recovery. We look forward to hearing members share solutions to that obstacle. We are also blessed to be located near the home of Bill and Lois Wilson, founders of AA and Al-Anon. We are offering optional tours (for a fee) of their home, “Stepping Stones,” where the original 12&12 was written. Tours will be available on Friday and Sunday afternoons.

For more information, visit our website at www.Libertyfromself.com. There you will be able to register for the conference, reserve your spot on the tour, and find all hotel registration and other updated information. We look forward to seeing you all there! God Bless!

—Alan N., Convention Chair

Meditation

Diamonds

As gift, I recently received a very beautiful pendant. I learned that the minimum number of cuts a diamond is required to have in order to meet certain specifications is 52. This diamond was not ordinary: it had 72 cuts or 72 beautiful facets with which to reflect the many colors of light.



In my life as a sexaholic, I was constantly harming myself and others. I was insane. Many times I hurt or cut myself deeply. It often seemed as if I had many more cuts than most. Then somehow, someway, my Higher Power took those very cuts and fashioned me into a “diamond.” I no longer regret my past, nor wish to shut the door on it. Somehow, I see that my past and my experiences can now be used to benefit others. I reflect what I have received. I reflect the beautiful light of recovery.

—Nancy S.

Note from the Delegate Chair



Dear Fellow SA Members:

This past year I have been blessed to attend many home group meetings, business meetings, and service meetings. As I reflect on my gratitude for the blessings and peace I find throughout our fellowship, I would like to offer a meditation on the topic of “meetings” from the writings of Roy K., published in *Discovering the Principles: Our Growing Experience with the Traditions*. Enjoy!

Group conscience meetings test our program, our sobriety, and our serenity, but like life itself, they are necessary for our growth. If we can discover, through our get-togethers, the tools and strength to live and work together—and God does for us what we cannot do ourselves—we prepare ourselves, our groups, and our SA Fellowship as a whole for what God has in store for us next. (*DTP*, 5)

Use of other literature or non-program approaches in SA meetings has the tendency to dilute, distract, or completely sidetrack what should be the primary thrust of the SA meeting—that special spiritual quality that develops as the meeting moves from preliminaries into the personal opening of each life to the light of one another and God in honesty, surrender, release, hope, and joy. . . . [A] few artless words spoken from the heart, revealing the truth of what and where a person really is, are more effective in letting light and life break through in a meeting than volumes of “truth” or great literature. It is life that our souls crave, not knowledge. And life comes through self-disclosure, when it lets God in. (*DTP*, 11)

The ideal meeting quality. . . is an elusive, fragile, but very precious thing, certainly not attained in all groups or meetings. It is the pearl of great price. . . Such an ideal meeting does not happen automatically; it usually takes time, pain, sobriety, recovery, and, I believe, God-consciousness and hunger and thirst after righteousness. There is no filling of the void in our hearts without such hunger, no hunger without sobriety, and no group sobriety and recovery without unity. Any practices that are a threat to the essential and precious unity upon which our personal recovery depends should be avoided. (*DTP*, 12)

Our common SA experience to date is showing us how the good can be the enemy of the best. Thank God, the best is possible for us

today in SA, if we pursue it together under God, “putting principles before personalities. (*DTP*, 12-13)

May all of us stick around for the miracles in our own lives. Wishing all of you the blessings of sobriety for today and for the coming year.

—*Yours in service, Mike S., Chair, General Delegate Assembly*

SA’s Correctional Facilities Committee (CFC) Update

The SACFC has been active in finding new ways to help carry the message inside prison walls. We recently developed a form letter that CFC representatives can use for contacting their local prison commissioners. We plan to post the letter to make it easily accessible to regional CFCs.

Requests we receive for help for people coming out of prison are referred to the local CFC. A recent request from a man paroled from a youth prison in Oregon was referred to the Portland CFC. Does your Intergroup have a local CFC?

If you would like to learn more about the SACFC or how you can assist us, please join us on our teleconference meetings. The next three meetings will be held on December 17, 2011, February 18, 2012, and April 21, 2012, at 5 pm EST. The conference call number is 641-798-4200 PIN 6460229#. All SA members are welcome to attend. You may also contact me at saico@sa.org.

—*In love and service, Tim S., SACFC Chair*



Attention Loners and Members Who Sponsor Loners!

Here’s an opportunity to carry the message of recovery to your fellows! SA’s International Committee is creating a loner’s pamphlet and needs your experience, strength, and hope. If you are or have been a loner (or if you sponsor a loner), and if you are sober and have worked the Twelve Steps, please respond to the following questions:

- What resources have been most helpful to maintaining your sobriety as a loner? (such as: reading program literature, making daily phone calls, maintaining a Skype account, going to international conferences, etc.)
- What suggestions would you offer loners who want to stay sober?

Please e-mail your responses to teiwaz85@gmail.com.

Thank you for your service!

—*LB B.*



Please submit articles for Essay to Essay@sa.org

SAICO Financial Update

Following is a summary of SA fellowship revenues and expenses for Third Quarter 2011. A detailed donations report is enclosed with mailed issues of *Essay*. The report is also available from SAICO. To request your copy, please call SAICO at 866-424-8777 or write to saico@sa.org.



SAICO Financial Update Third Quarter 2011	
Donations	29,750.46
Other Revenues	22,682.62
Expenses	75,054.67
Revenues (less expenses)	-22,621.59
Total Prudent Reserve	143,191.36

Retirement of the Quarterly Appeal!

To The Fellowship:

Your trusted servants at SAICO wish to thank the fellowship for stepping forward to support the Quarterly Appeal during our time of financial need over the past seven years. The quarterly appeal was initiated in 2004 to build up our prudent reserve. We are pleased to announce that today, through the efforts of the fellowship, the job has been completed, so that we can now retire the quarterly appeal. The quarterly appeal was initiated at a time when funds were being drawn down from a small reserve to cover the shortfall in SAICO's daily operations. The Trustees established a goal of building and maintaining a six-month prudent reserve fund. The fellowship's support of the quarterly appeal rose during the intervening seven years—in spite of the harsh economy. At the end of 2010, the goal of a six-month prudent reserve was met and exceeded! We are grateful to the fellowship for your generous, ongoing support.

In the 2012 budget, a portion of the excess prudent reserve surplus has been earmarked for spreading the word by investing in the areas of:

- (1) Printing of new literature currently being developed by SA's Literature committee (SA Steps and Traditions and SA Meditation books);
- (2) Supporting the work of the SACFC in spreading the message inside the prisons, as exemplified by the work in Pennsylvania; and
- (3) Supporting the rapid expansion of the fellowship internationally.

Our work is still not complete, because we are always challenged to spread the SA message to those who are still suffering.

Thanks again to the fellowship for your ongoing generosity.

—SAICO

Delegates and Trustees

Delegate	Region	Committees
Mike S., <i>Chair</i> Tom K. Eric S. Jim C., <i>Alt</i>	Southwest	COMC, Conventions, Svc. Manual, Finance Conventions, CFC CFC, Internet
Mike A. Dennis P. Nancy S. Mike S., <i>Alt</i>	Mid-Atlantic	Nominations, Public Information
Gary L., <i>V. Chair</i> Tony R. Lee W. Dmitri P., <i>Alt</i>	North Midwest	Literature, Legal, RAC International Internet, RAC, Service Manual International, Conventions
Terry O. Peter T., <i>Alt</i>	Northeast	Internet H&I
Farley H. Marie W., <i>Alt</i> Will D., <i>Alt</i>	Northwest	Internet, RAC, Nominations International, Conventions
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Joe M. Steve L. Glenn J., <i>Alt</i>	South Midwest	International International, Conventions, Public Info
Nicolas S. Francis C., <i>Alt</i> Mark P., <i>Alt</i> Hans-Friedrich Gilad P., <i>Alt</i>	UK Ireland UK Germany Israel	International, Internet, RAC International International H&I, Public Information
Luc D., <i>Alt</i> Julian D., <i>Alt</i>	Flanders Poland	H&I, Public Information

Trustee	Committees
Betsy T., <i>Chair</i>	Legal, Service Manual
Carlton B., <i>Vice Chair</i>	COMC, Finance, H&I
David T.	CFC, International, Nominations
Jerry L.	Nominations, Literature, International
Bob H.	H&I, Public Info, Service Manual, RAC
Art C.	H&I, Public Info, Conventions
George F.	Finance, Internet, COMC



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

Calendar of Events

January 6 - 8, 2012, SA Winter Convention, Sutton Coldfield, United Kingdom. *Living Sober.* Info available from SAICO at sa.org.

February 25, 2012, SA Winter Convention, Albuquerque, NM. *Stepping into the Light.* Info at 505-899-0633, at sa-abq.ogr, or abq_sa@hotmail.com

April 21, 2012, Mountain Spring Retreat. Asheville, NC. *Renewing Our Recovery.* Info at 828-

237-1332, www.MountainSpringAsheville.com, or SA.MountainSpring@gmail.com.

April 28, 2012, SA Northwest PA Marathon, Shenango, Greenville, PA. *Returning to Our Roots; the Steps & Traditions of Freedom.* Info at steve.mcawho@gmail.com or 814-449-1421.

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



Submit info to be listed in March 2012 Essay by January 15, 2012. Please submit dates, theme, place, and points of contact.

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

USA

Benton, AR
Detroit, MI (additional women's meeting)
Garrison, NY (additional group)
Hagatna, Guam
Lakewood, NJ (additional group)
Memphis, TN (additional group)

New SA Groups

San Diego, CA (new group in Mira Mesa)
Oxford, MS
Towson, MD (additional group)

Canada

Winnipeg MB (additional group)

New Delhi, India



Upcoming International Conventions



January 13 - 15, 2012, Newark, New Jersey

Liberty from Self in New York. Sheraton Newark Airport Hotel. We will offer tours of Stepping Stones (historic home of Bill and Lois Wilson) on Friday and Sunday afternoons. For more info visit our website at www.libertyfromself.com.

July 27 - 29, 2012, SA Nashville, Tennessee

Three Legacies. The Sheraton Music City. For information contact us at 615-345-4334, email at sanic2012@gmail.com, or visit our website at sanashville.org



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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.



Application for Immediate Relief

The Department of Spiritual Affairs will process all forms submitted. Check box where appropriate.

Date: *Just for Today*

1 Request aid from: God Higher Power Other

2 Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change. Please check all applicable.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have been jailed. | <input type="checkbox"/> Other, Please detail below; |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My spouse left me. | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Someone is blocking the way. | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am bankrupt. | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am sick. | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> All of the above. | _____ |

3 Grant me the courage to change the things I can. Please check all applicable.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am taking a deep breath. | <input type="checkbox"/> Other. Please detail below. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I surrender, just for today. | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am talking about it. | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am writing about it. | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am calling my sponsor. | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am going to a meeting. | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am working the Steps. | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> All of the above. | _____ |

4 Grant me the wisdom to know the difference. Please see note below.

The Department of Spiritual Affairs is well aware that this last request is hard to practice. Our experienced staff is willing to hear from you.

Please write to us:



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,
 Thy Will, not mine
 be done.

