

Essay

June 2011



Out of the Ashes

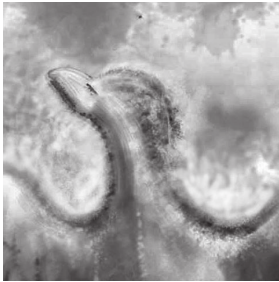
A quarterly publication of Sexaholics Anonymous

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

The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions are reprinted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. (AAWS). Permission to reprint and adapt the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions does not mean that AAWS has approved the contents of this publication, nor that AAWS agrees with the views expressed herein. AA is a program of recovery from alcoholism only. Use of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions in connection with programs that are patterned after AA, but which address other problems, or in any other non-AA context, does not imply otherwise.



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.

Behind Bars

Out of the Ashes	2
Finding Serenity	7
A Spiritual Awakening	12

SA Around the World

Learning to Be Honest	13
Celebrating Ten Years	16

Member Shares

A Design for Living	18
What About Sex in Marriage?	21

Program Tools

Step Nine: Making Amends	24
Amends to the Women I've Harmed	26

Meditations

AA Grapevine Reprint	27
----------------------	----

SA Business and Updates

Note from the Delegate Chair	28
SACFC Update	29
SAICO Financial Update	30
Delegates and Trustees	31
Calendar of Events	32

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.

Out of the Ashes

By the time I had sense enough to feel ashamed of my acting out, the allure of lust had its hooks in my mind and heart. As a young child, I became lost in my own private hell: trying to navigate right from wrong, discovering family secrets and keeping my own, and experiencing a growing desire for pleasure.

My need to chase that high would eventually surpass every obligation to respect myself and others. My peers were going through the awkwardness of maturing sexually and moving on to developing responsible relationships. Not me! From the start, I was swept away by the torrent of lust. Whereas others developed self-restraint with regards to sexual desire, I developed an irrational greed that defied every attempt at control.

This mindset permeated every aspect of my childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Every relationship, every career choice, and every daily plan for my life was somehow wrapped up in the pursuit of lust. This wasn't easy for me to see. Shrouded in self-deception, I moved through the lives of others,

devouring objects of desire. In fear and secrecy, I watched my life descend into self-hatred and despair. Nothing was sacred; not friendship, not brotherhood, not marriage—not

even the bonds between father and child.

This thing that compelled me did not rest until it had what it wanted. To others, I probably

appeared to be a monster. No one suspected that trapped inside of me was a person yearning for peace.

My greatest shame was that I had molested three of my children, who were the pride and joy of my life. Of all the disgraces I would endure, none could compare to the torture of my own conscience. When my mind turns on me, condemning and torturing, the scorn of others cannot begin to compare.

Lust had promised so much pleasure and escape from pain, but in the last years of its dominion in my life, it delivered only suffering. I became suicidal. With a handgun tucked neatly in my mouth, I cursed God for ignoring my cries for help. I felt utterly alone, contemplating suicide because I was unable to conquer lust, and believing that even



God had turned his back on me.

With my first marriage ruined, I went to work on a second. Somehow, my ex-wife's plunge into post-divorce misery afforded me custody of our five children. This was problematic, for even though I loved them very much, my obsession with lust had proven harmful to them. So I set out once again in search of the "right woman" who would "fix me." This only made matters worse. Grabbing at people in order to make everything perfect was merely another expression of my lust.

At first, my second marriage seemed to be the answer to my problems. The sex was fresh and exciting, we were able to get along and compromise, and our families blended without much of a fuss. I was even able to give up pornography and masturbation. What a sham! Then came the day when jealousy and low self-esteem provided an excuse to act out.

You would think that after thousands of attempts at using lust to dampen emotional pain, I would have remembered that it always ends up controlling my freedom of choice. But I was always ignorant of the relationship between desire, acting on desire, and the inevitable consequences. So after satisfying myself, with the sincerest intention that it be only one time, the force of this illness crashed down on me. My brief period of control had caused

the compulsion to worsen.

Terror set in. I was in a new home with new stepchildren, as well as those I'd already hurt. Then a strange thing happened: the veil of ignorance was temporarily lifted. I realized that on my current path I would eventually harm someone in our home. I realized that the beast must be exposed to the light. I had never shared my secret with anyone, but things were critical now. I couldn't eat, sleep, or work.

My new wife asked what was wrong. I took a deep breath; it was now or never. It was time to let the light shine on my deeds, or use the handgun. Certain that my life was over either way, I told her in detail who I truly was and the harm I had wrought upon my children. There is no way to describe the pain in the room that day. We spoke until the only right action revealed itself: our children needed help. That meant others must know. The next day we went to the police, and I confessed the abuse. The day after that, I stumbled into an SA meeting seeking something; I did not know what.

I was amazed to find that the men and women there spoke my language. Listening intently, hope welled up in my heart. These people knew what I was experiencing! As they shared their experiences, I saw that victory over lust could be a reality. I was headed to prison, watching my family disintegrate,

unable to work, and unsure about the future of my marriage. Yet even though these had been my deepest lifelong fears, I began to experience periods of peace. I found a sponsor, began working the Steps, and attended as many meetings as possible.

After a few weeks, I was formally charged and jailed for a month before making bail. Halfway through that month, I lost my sobriety. In a panic, I called my sponsor from prison. Bracing for a rebuke, I was surprised by his reaction: "Okay, so you lost your sobriety. It happens to many of us. We just start over again, that's all." After making bail, I was on the streets for six months. During that time, I shared a Step One with my home group and a Step Five with my sponsor. I made some difficult amends. I surrendered, not only to a Higher Power, but to the concept that life is not mine to control. Meditation became a daily habit, replacing fantasy and intrigue.

A workable method for overcoming lust temptations began to solidify in my life: I realized that, to stay sober, I needed to help the sick and suffering sexaholic. At long last, I was walking the path out of Hell. Watching me, my wife admitted her own addiction and pursued help. We agreed to uphold our wedding vows as sacred, and to weather the storm ahead with loyalty, compassion, and honesty.

On September 25th, 2006, I was

incarcerated. I was sentenced to 6 1/2 to 13 years in a state penitentiary. I was frightened by stories I had heard that sex offenders are at the bottom of the prison food chain. So while sitting in the county jail waiting to be moved upstate, I asked God to help me accept the situation and be able to let go of fear. I surrendered the final destination to Him, asking only that if it were possible, I be placed in an institution where SA existed.

After being transferred to the main hub in the State system, I was moved to a general population block. Several seasoned inmates sat down with me upon arrival to tell me what to expect and how to act. I listened politely for half an hour, then one of them asked if I had any questions. "Does this block have an SA meeting?" I asked. "Yes," was the reply, "one is scheduled this very night." I wound up on the one block out of 17, in one of only two prisons out of 30, in which the SA fellowship had been established. This could only be God's grace!

Prison life can be tumultuous, but I have found that it is a great proving ground for practicing the principles of our program. I have learned that fear need not dictate my thoughts, beliefs, or actions. I believe that, if we are willing, we will have opportunities to practice all Twelve Steps and Traditions during our sentence, and if we choose to, we can be of service to others.

Our group was a motley little

crew when I found it. Only one fellow was holding it together—but his sobriety was kept alive by that service. The rest of the attendees were only haphazardly involved. At my sponsor's suggestion, we began to pray for opportunities to carry the message. Before long the group grew in numbers and strength. People were being sponsored and getting better. The fledgling group became a safe haven.

In many ways we are perhaps more blessed than our fellows who are free, because we are forced daily to confront ourselves in an environment that allows little comfort. Emotional disturbances that might go undetected for months in the world outside become obvious every night when we are locked in our cells. My conscious contact with my Higher Power is vital, because sometimes that's all I have when a corrupt mental state arises. We see each other throughout each day and at one or more of our five weekly meetings, but if we don't put in the individual work of the program, we'll have no defense against lust if it manifests during a lockdown.

Twelfth-Step work has been critical to my recovery process. I've been blessed to have a group of people who empathize with me. But if I want to overcome the compulsion to act out and the obsession with

lust (not just stay sober), then reaching out to others is vital. In the meetings, I watch for men who seem to want to learn something. Afterward I approach them, share my story, listen, and if they're ready, invite them to work the Steps with me. It is in these interactions that I recover. I'm not sober just to feel better, get stuff, or be released from prison. I'm sober to provide an example of what's possible for the sex-drunk who doesn't know there's a way out.



As our group has grown, we have been learning how the Twelve Traditions function. We are confronted with a multitude of politics in this environment. There are the prison's rules, the staff members' unwritten rules, and the inmate code. None of these coincide. In order to find serenity in this mess we've had to be vigilant at finding the most effective combination of anonymity, unity, faith, and membership requirement, while staying in balance with our primary purpose (to help the addict who still suffers) and placing the group's survival ahead of its individual members. We don't always get this right, but we learn from our mistakes.

I've also discovered compassion toward those who persecute me. There is a real path to peace with

even the harshest of men, even if only to learn patience and self-restraint. When confronted with negativity, injustice, or abuse of power, I must remember two things: I am fortunate to have survived this addiction, and whoever is before me being offensive is really a human being full of dignity. And while society may have cast us here to be forgotten, I refuse to believe that any of us are hopeless.

Fellowship is important to me, so I'm always happy to hear from members of my home group on the outside—especially the newer members who are facing jail time. These members seek some assurance, and I am glad to share my experience with them.

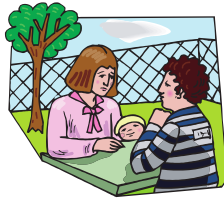
When some members of my home group became unable to continue writing, I reached out to the next closest Intergroup. They've been happy to correspond and even visit at times. When the well's dried up, you've got to go where the water is!

Initially, I felt great resentment at the prison system because I felt that it was not designed to help me. But when I became willing to take responsibility for my own recovery, I found that real change was possible here! If I had not come to dwell in this pressure cooker, I might not have learned so many lessons. The inconsistencies and hardships are what has made my transformation

possible. I am truly grateful to be here, alive in this present moment. Peace, contentment, and harmony aren't contingent on location; they're products of a clear mind, polished through self-sacrifice for others.

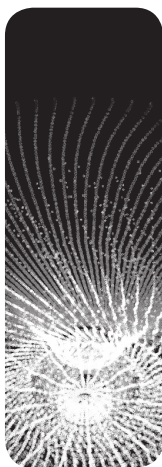
All of us in SA, whether free or imprisoned, eventually arrive at a place where we must make use of our SA experience. Sometimes I revisit my personal inventory. Sometimes I apply Tradition Five by sticking to my primary purpose at work or in the chow hall. Sometimes I need to make amends to an inmate or officer. Sometimes I practice being self-supporting by giving my Big Book to a newcomer. Sometimes I stop to meditate on a wise course of action. Sometimes I have to concede to our SA group's conscience. Sometimes I listen to someone's Fifth Step. And many, many times, I practice being powerless over this place and its inhabitants. There are always opportunities to apply the principles. But the responsibility to do so rests squarely on my shoulders. If I can be restored to a sane and useful life, anyone can.

Today, I've been sober almost five years. My wife and I enjoy a finer intimacy than either of us has ever known. Our relationship is based on mutual respect, honesty, kindness, sharing, and love. We've been able to use this time to learn each other's strengths and



weaknesses—forming the type of friendship, acceptance, and trust I had always dreamed of. Our children have returned home (after being removed for a time), and I am working diligently to be the father they deserve.

Instead of sitting around waiting for the fellowship to happen, I help create it, reaching out to other inmates and to SA members all over North America. My current sponsor is big on service, and that legacy has been passed on to me. I try to stay active in SA's Literature and Correctional Facilities committees. Although in prison, I live a full life. The compulsion to act out has subsided.



And the mental obsession with lust has become something easily dispatched by one of the many tools in my spiritual tool kit. Every once in a while, I'll meet a man with the same 1,000-yard stare I had in the beginning. I try to show him he's not alone anymore.

Right now I'm considered state property. That's because I sold myself for a lifetime of lust. A 13-year prison sentence—to pay the debt for that much pain—is mercy in the long run. It's a funny thing to face your worst fears, to rise up out of the ashes and into a new way of life. Because on the other side of that experience is what one would never expect to find: liberation.

—Scott M.

Finding Serenity

The Twelve and Twelve says that "... only through utter defeat are we able to take our first steps toward liberation and strength" (21). This is the story of how I came to be utterly defeated, and how that defeat led to liberation for me.

March 31, 2004 started out like any other day. I was on a one-week vacation from work. My wife of 14 years was at her new job and my daughters (ages five and eight) were at school. The reason I say that it



started out like an ordinary day is that in the depths of my addiction, I would go to any lengths to have my house to myself, so that I could spend hours on Internet chat rooms. From the moment I logged on to the Internet something changed inside me. The noise the computer made when connecting and the anticipation of acting out changed my physiology. The uncontrollable feelings were comparable to a nasty cocaine addiction I had kicked over

a decade earlier. As a lust addict, I would plan, anticipate, carry out, and hide the evidence of what I had done. But I told myself this was different; I wasn't *really* addicted!

In the fall of 2003, my wife, children, and I packed our bags and moved across the country, leaving all of our friends and families behind. We moved because I was offered a teaching job in a well-respected school district. I was a high school teacher who had just won a teacher-of-the-year award. But by this time I had been abusing Internet chat rooms for over four years, and within days of arriving at our new home, I connected my computer and was back to my old behaviors. I used the Internet for only two purposes: to meet women online who would engage in sexual conversations, or to seek women who would meet me for some form of sexual contact.

Throughout my life, I cheated on every female I knew. When I was 18, I met the woman who would become my wife—but at the time she was just one of many sexual conquests. In 1991, within six months of being married, I violated our wedding vows. Over the next ten years, I masturbated, frequented strip clubs, bought magazines, and engaged in all types of acting-out behaviors. I had a dozen one night stands. My behavior became more and more out of control, but I couldn't see it.

In 1999, I saw a TV show about

Internet chat rooms and decided to check out this new fad. The next morning I was on the computer and acting out within 45 minutes. I was hooked. Soon, I began using chat rooms to get phone numbers.

I remember being on the phone and acting out in my locked bathroom when my young daughters knocked on the door to tell me that their movie was over. I harshly told them to put in another video and stop bothering me as I was in the middle of a very important conversation! I was a monster of a father. I did not care about anyone but myself.

On March 31, 2004, I was home on Spring break. Earlier in the week, I had started an online conversation with a girl who told me she was 13. We agreed on a time and place to meet for a sexual rendezvous. On that fateful day, as I was getting ready to meet her, it occurred to me that the whole thing might be a setup. But the anticipation was greater than my fear. I went upstairs, looked in the mirror, and said aloud, "This is the last shower you will ever take as a free man." Then I got dressed and headed off to meet her.

As I arrived at the meeting place, I was met by seven sheriff's deputies with guns pointed at my head. I was so completely insane and powerless that I had knowingly walked into a sting operation and flushed a promising career down the toilet in 15 minutes. I called my wife from

the police station and told her what I had done. She knew no one in the state, had no support system to rely on—and I needed her to find someone to care for our daughters and come bail me out.

The next day I was bailed out of jail. It was April Fool's Day; how appropriate! My story was printed in both of our city newspapers. It began,

Sheriff deputies are investigating a high-school teacher who allegedly solicited a child over the Internet. Todd, 37, now on administrative leave, was taken into custody March 31st and released on his own recognizance the next day.

I was fired from my job. Television reporters conducted live broadcasts from my school parking lot about the teacher who was a sex offender. I did not leave my home for weeks. I was afraid to be seen at grocery stores or gas stations. However, on the advice of my attorney I met with a counselor who dealt with sex offenders. I hated seeing him at first, but after a few months he said something that changed my life. He said, "You need to work on your humility." I was furious. How dare he tell me I wasn't humble! He gave me a brochure for an S-group and challenged me to go to 90 meetings in 90 days.



I couldn't wait to prove him wrong, so when I got home I grabbed a dictionary and looked up the word "humility." It said, "the quality or condition of being humble." Then I looked up "humble": "showing awareness of one's shortcomings, not proud." Finally, I looked up "proud": "having excessive self-esteem, haughty and arrogant." I was beginning to understand what the counselor meant. My walls were breaking down. I researched S-groups and found SA.

On October 8, 2004, when I walked into my first SA meeting, a weird thing happened: I felt like I was home. The people understood me. I went back the next day and eventually committed to 90 meetings in 90 days. I was beginning to participate in the fellowship of the program. I got phone numbers and began calling guys from the meetings. I also met with guys outside the meetings. After 87 meetings, I found the courage to ask someone to be my sponsor. He said he would agree if I went to 90 meetings in 90 days. I said "I'm on 87." He said, "No, I want you to do another 90 meetings in 90 days." I ended up attending 365 Twelve Step meetings in my first 365 days in SA.

Sometime in my first 90 days I had a Step One experience. The

White Book (83) says,

... [T]he time came when we knew the jig was up. We had been arrested—stopped in our tracks—but we had done it to ourselves. If surrender came only from without, it never ‘took.’ When we surrendered out of our own enlightened self-interest, it became the magic key that opened the prison door and set us free.

In my case, there was a real prison door. When the jail door shut behind me on March 31, I felt utterly powerless. I fell on my knees and asked God for help. The message I heard was one of forgiveness, and that I would never have quit if I hadn’t been caught. I began to see clearly that I was addicted. I had hit bottom. I also began to realize that I could put my destructive behavior behind me through the SA program.

In June 2005, I was convicted of my crime and sentenced to four years of treatment, four years of probation, and 10 years of registering as a sex offender. By God’s grace, I was given a deferred sentence. This meant that after four years with good behavior, my felony would be expunged and I would have only a misdemeanor on my record.

Because of my conviction as a sex offender, I was removed from my home for a few weeks. I was living in a hotel and was not permitted

to see my daughters. I knew that I needed to pour myself into the Twelve Steps. My sponsor kept referring to the Twelve Steps as a practical program for living. I knew that I needed a new way of living!

Step Two states that I need a power greater than myself to restore me to sanity. I already knew that my behavior was insane: I had tried to meet a 13-year-old girl, I had been unfaithful to my wife for many years, and I completely destroyed my career. I truly needed to be restored to sanity. The Big Book says,

... crushed by a self-imposed crisis we could not postpone or evade, we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or else He is nothing” (53).

I had a small amount of faith but hadn’t practiced it in a long time. One day I looked in the yellow pages and found a church that looked interesting. I decided to attend the next Sunday. As I sat in the back row, I wept through the entire service. Just as at my first SA meeting, I felt that I was in the right place and that God truly could restore me to sanity. The Twelve and Twelve (34) states,

... the effectiveness of the whole A.A. program will rest upon how well and earnestly we have tried to come to “a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of



God as we understood Him.”

Step Three calls for action: I must *surrender* my life to a new boss, and allow Him to be in control of everything. My addiction was very public, especially in my community, but I have learned that I cannot control the opinions of my neighbors or adversaries. Today when I'm tempted to worry about others' opinions, I need to place my trust in God and surrender the outcome to Him. Then I can bring my thoughts and actions into agreement with His intentions for my life.

Over the past nearly seven years, I have found serenity through the Twelve Promises of AA (see AA, 83-84). Ours is a program of self-examination which develops slowly in the process of attending meetings, making mistakes, learning to acknowledge our wrongs, and correcting those wrongs. I am painfully aware that I will continue to fall short of living a perfect program. The pot of gold at the end of the rainbow for me is that I am promised so many gifts if I simply follow a clear set of principles.

Working with my sponsor, I continue to reach a deeper level of understanding the Steps. Step Twelve is one of the most important to me. I've been given the gift of a spiritual awakening, and I've heard that I can

only keep what I have by giving it away. I want to keep what I have, so I'm committed to working with others. I lead meetings and make coffee, hold service positions in my home group and Intergroup, help plan conferences, and I started a new meeting in my area. I've also built relationships with men that I hope will last a lifetime.

But even that is not enough; I must practice these principles in *all* my affairs. I've thrown myself into the service work of my faith community. I've tried to serve as a humble servant to my family. I've watched my marriage become solid. My two daughters have grown to have strong character and good morals and values. Thanks to SA and my higher power, I still have a family and we are doing incredibly well. God has given me a new beginning.

In March of 2009, I was released from treatment and probation, three months early. On April 20, the District Attorney withdrew the felony complaint and the judge threw out my felony conviction, after I had met my obligation to probation and the justice system. Both the state and the Sheriff's office have removed me from their sex offender web site. And in June 2009, my wife and I had our third child. I guess God really did have a plan for me!

I am reminded of the Promise, "Rarely have we seen a person fail



who has thoroughly followed our path" (AA, 58). I only hope that I will continue to make every attempt to be thorough in my pursuit of sobriety and recovery. The formula is so simple. Go to meetings, get a sponsor, work the Steps, be of service

to others, and rely on God. It's just that easy. Would you like to join me on the road to happy destiny? There's room on the bus. Hop on!

—Todd, Denver

A Spiritual Awakening

I came into SA two years ago, when I was released from prison after serving four years for indecent exposure. I had been out on parole for a year and had been sober for seven months when I was questioned by a detective for a crime I committed 10 years before. In a panic, I ran off to Mexico to avoid prosecution, only to learn a few months later that I would not be prosecuted because of the statute of limitations. Chagrined, I returned and turned myself in to serve three months for violating my parole. Two weeks after being released, I was sent back to prison for attending a professional baseball game—and unknowingly violating a parole condition. This time I served six months.

Out on parole for the third time, I attended seven SA meetings the first week, went to confession at my church on Saturday, and attended Mass on Sunday. On Monday, I was arrested by my parole officer for another violation. This time it was because I was near a school. It

turned out that a Sunday school class was held in a building adjacent to the church. I was shocked. It seems that I had never fully understood the specific conditions of my parole.

I was processed through the prison system and was scheduled to appear before the parole board, which would decide upon my guilt and length of sentence. Based on my past experience, I was positive that I would be found guilty and would serve one more year in prison. Even the student lawyer assigned to my case believed he had little chance to argue against the violation.

Not knowing what to do, I turned to God in prayer. But this time I did something different. I did not try to bargain with God or beg Him to get me out of the situation, as I had unsuccessfully done so many times before. Instead, I asked that He would be with me no matter what the outcome, and that He would help me to turn to Him and stay with Him throughout the entire



ordeal. I didn't ask for any favors. I just wanted to have a real relationship with God and get to know Him. I asked that He would help me keep this desire and save me from turning away from Him now or in the future.

I entered the parole hearing room with a prayer on my lips. At some point I became aware of the proceedings on two different levels. On one level, I heard the charges read and the commissioner and the lawyer discussing my case. On another level, I became aware of the "hand of God" reaching in to intervene. The words I heard and the conclusions of the commissioner surprised me. He was deciding, for no clear reason, to dismiss the case!

Returning to a holding cell, I was thankful to be in there alone. My eyes filled with tears and my heart filled with joy as I fell to my knees and thanked God because He had intervened and I was being set free. But the main reason for my joy was that He had revealed Himself to me. Up to this point in my life I maintained a kernel of doubt as to the existence of God. But after experienc-

ing the living reality of His presence, I was filled with awe. I can hardly describe the wonder and gratitude I felt in that moment.

Looking back on that day, I believe that I was given the precious gift of a spiritual awakening to assist me in finding faith in a God Who can restore me to sanity. I no longer even call it a faith, for today, I know! I now turn to this same God every day to keep me sober and "to build with me and do with me as He wilt."

Today, I have the precious gift of belief, sobriety, and a daily relationship with a God Who I continue to learn about and take comfort in. I'm learning that, through prayer, meditation, and using the tools of the program, I can grow and change, because God can do for me each day what I have never been able to do for myself. That is, through God I have the power to stay sober and actually change my attitudes, motivations, and behaviors.

Thank you God and thank you SA for guiding me and giving me this new life.

—Robert M., San Diego

SA Around the World

Learning to Be Honest

My sponsor here in Wales suggested that I write an article for *Essay* as an indirect amends for some blatant dishonesty from my past. Simply put, during my

teenage years, I made up stories about having a girlfriend in order to impress schoolmates, and with the hope of attracting some female



attention. Not a very glamorous dishonesty, but shameful and painful for me. My sexaholism was never glamorous and quietly destroyed me in a very unspectacular fashion.

At age seven, I had an experience in which two girls teased me, leaving me with feelings of humiliation and desperation. I wanted to run away. From that point on I would fantasize, obsess about, and worship girls. I was guilty of voyeurism and lots of attention-seeking behavior, but I never approached any of them. I hoped that they would approach me, declare their undying love, and ask me to go out with them. On the rare occasions when one of them did, I would reject her—thus taking revenge for my earlier experience. Then I would hate myself, and would repeat the behavior or move on to the next unfortunate focus of my obsession.

I never grew out of this practice. It became a core feature of my sexaholism, overlaid with masturbation, pornography, and prostitutes. Most girls (and later women) ignored me, but some were genuinely confused and hurt by my mixed messages. I went insane with this obsession, which brought me little contact with real women

By my late teens, it seemed that girls were mostly ignoring me. I was masturbating heavily and consumed with lust, craving the “real thing.” On

two occasions, I concocted elaborate stories of a fictional girlfriend. I hoped that this would increase my standing so that I could talk to the girls I was obsessing about. Then perhaps one of them would want me to split up with my fictional girlfriend and go out with her. I also hoped that it would make me feel more normal, and thus more accepted by the boys. None of this worked.

These behaviors led me to exaggerate and occasionally trot out a complete lie to sustain the madness of my sexaholism. I was always lonely, depressed, and isolated. I felt inadequate, painfully shy, and hopelessly lost in my secret life of acting out. To the outside world I tried to project self-sufficiency and popularity, with lots of friends and social events to attend (fabricated). Most of all, I lied to myself. By my early 20s, I was dead inside and leading a sad and lonely life.

Step Seven asks me to humbly ask God to remove my shortcomings. This means that I would need to ask Him to remove my habitual dishonesty so I can start practicing honesty. My low self-esteem says, “No way. I’m fundamentally unacceptable and must put on a façade just to survive.” Today I can see the grandiose self-pride in this belief. In truth, I’m just another recovering sex drunk. Sometimes I feel it is easier to lubricate my life with untruths. In my disease, tact,



diplomacy, and compromise (virtues) can be twisted into rationalizations for not telling the truth (defects). In recovery, I'm learning to distinguish between these.

But what of the people to whom I told my tall tales? I'm willing to make direct amends to them. Making direct amends wherever possible is what really puts the seal on a change in my behavior. It brings me out of the fine words in my prayers and writing (which flow relatively easily) into putting "these principles into practice" with real people (which I find difficult). In the meantime, in the instances where direct amends are not possible, I've settled for an imagined amends with three chairs: God supervising in the one chair, me in the second chair, and the wronged person in the third chair, listening to me say my amends eyeball-to-eyeball. It's a great tool. I feel that I've done everything I can for now, but I hold



myself open to direct amends if by a "God-incidence" the people become available.

Today I still struggle with rigorous honesty. I still tend to exaggerate or minimize. On the job, I am tempted at times to pad my expenses as I rationalize I'm entitled to this (I commit to stopping this now as I've said it!). And my disease has the great final fling, asking, "What is truth anyway?"

My truth is that I'm a sexaholic, and this is the best explanation of "me" that I've ever found. I live this recovery program or I die. If I'm not honest with others I cannot be honest with myself, and this will cause me to find an excuse to lust at some time in my life. Lust will destroy me. So I'm going to keep working on honesty—and try to avoid creating too many opportunities for more amends.

—Michael B, Wales, UK

Greetings from Wales, UK

SA in Wales began in the summer of 2006, when two members started meeting on a grass verge at a motorway service station. This got a bit wet by autumn, so we moved into rented accommodations, where we've been meeting ever since on Sundays. We've grown slowly, and recently started a second meeting on Wednesdays. Both of these meetings are in Cardiff. We are now attempting to establish a group in Aberyswyth.



We always enjoy having visitors and Wales is a great holiday destination, so drop in and join us some time! Contact us through the UK website: www.sauk.org or call the SAUK 24 hour helpline at 07000 725463.

Celebrating Ten Years

I recently celebrated ten years of sexual sobriety in SA, so naturally I have been thinking about how I came to achieve this and what steps I took on the way. I then started to think about sobriety itself. What is sexual sobriety? Is it just a physical thing or is there more to it than that? As we read in the Sobriety Definition, “Physical sobriety is not an end in itself but a means toward an end—victory over the obsession and progress in recovery” (SA, 192).

As the Solution says, “We saw that our problem was threefold: physical, emotional and spiritual. Healing had to come about in all three” (61). I believe that when I reached a point of healing in all three, I started to experience sexual sobriety in a true sense. Being emotionally and spiritually sober (as well as sexually sober) seemed to

bring about something far deeper: a positive sobriety.

How did my sobriety begin? When I acted out, it was always in secret. I was accountable to no one. But at my first SA meeting, I heard, “Let’s take a minute to introduce ourselves by first name and state our length of sexual sobriety” (SA 197, #5). (I regret that in some meetings this sharing of sobriety dates is no longer practiced.) At my first meeting, I heard some members admit to years of sexual sobriety! Suddenly I was accountable to a group of people for my length of sobriety. As I listened to members share their experience, strength, and hope, I felt a new hope grow within me. I wanted so much what they had, and was eager to soak up their wisdom.

Then what? I got a sponsor, and



Greetings from Tasmania, Australia



Here in Tasmania, we’ve had difficulty holding regular meetings of late, because of the ill health of some members. Also, because of the long distances involved, we use Skype and phone meetings where we can. However, when we are able, we meet at Deloraine every second week on a Friday at 8pm. We also hold a meeting in Hobart (300kms from where I live) every six to eight weeks to enable enquirers to attend a meeting. It is our goal to establish a meeting in Hobart, because that is where we get most of our enquiries.

If you are visiting the state of Tasmania, please contact us at dabetsa@hotkey.net.au or call 0411 283 679. We would love to meet you!

found that by working the Steps with him and regularly attending meetings, I began to progress in recovery. I learned a lot from meetings and from hearing people share their own experiences, including how they worked the Steps. I started to enjoy “progressive victory over the obsession in the looking and thinking,” as well as “the positive sobriety of acting out true union of persons” (SA 193).

In sobriety, my relations with others are much improved. For 50 years, I struggled with same-sex lust, but today I can relate with men in a healthy way. Men are no longer lust objects. I do not expect to be lusted after. I can feel comfortable around men and encourage them in their endeavours. I also have a deeper emotional connection with my wife. I’ve come to realize the value of doing things that mean a lot to her, such as gardening, even when I don’t naturally care for those things.

Sponsoring others has helped me stay current on my SA journey. Often, when a sponsee shares with me a part of his story, I am reminded of something in my own life that needs attention. When sponsees share their pain it resonates with me because I don’t want to be in that place again. I also need to work with my own sponsor so that I can benefit from wise counsel in all of

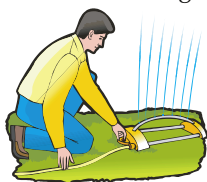
my relationships.

The most important thing of all for me is keeping a close relationship with my Higher Power. First I was accountable to the group, then later to my sponsor, and finally after I restored fellowship with my Higher Power, I was accountable to Him. He enables me to carry the message of hope to others who are still struggling and share with them my experience, strength, and hope.

I have learned the importance of total surrender, and giving up the right to make decisions regarding my sexual behavior. Today I let my Higher Power take the driver’s seat in decision making. I find myself often asking “Is this my will or the will of God as I understand Him?” As the pressure of decision-making is taken away, I experience serenity. My Higher Power gives me the courage, the wisdom, and the strength to walk in total surrender with Him so that I can make the right decisions.

I will be forever thankful to SA for offering me a new life, a new hope, a new emotional experience, and a new spiritual experience. I am also thankful to those sober members who, by coming to meetings and sharing their stories, carry the message of sobriety—the message that I needed so much.

Yours in sobriety,
—David W., Tasmania, Australia



A Design for Living

About two years ago, not long after finishing the Steps with my sponsor and having the spiritual awakening promised in Step Twelve, I decided I could manage my own life. I became complacent, making fewer phone calls, going to fewer meetings, becoming less active as a sponsor, and reaching out less to my own sponsor. I was in school at the time, and things seemed to go okay for a while. One of the first signs that all wasn't well was my constant and often overwhelming anxiety that I wouldn't get my schoolwork done on time. I deepened this fear by procrastinating, a defect rooted in the false belief that I wasn't capable of doing good work. By the end of the semester, I was living in constant fear and worry. In my preoccupation, I often declined my wife's requests for quality time, or, when we did spend time together, I wasn't present. I was becoming self-obsessed, but I couldn't see it.

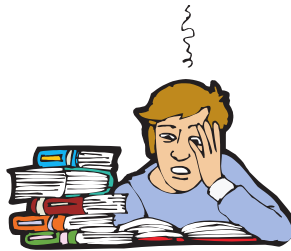
When the semester ended in December, I crashed. I didn't know what had hit me. I felt lost, crazy, alone, and scared. I couldn't think clearly. I didn't eat much. I had great difficulty relating to my wife, or anyone else for that matter. Without

realizing it, I had made school my higher power, and now that higher power was gone, leaving a spiritual vacuum that quickly sucked me in. All winter I struggled, trying to figure out what had happened. At times I felt a terrible despair that the Steps had not worked, that I had been fooling myself about my spiritual experience, that nothing had really changed.

I switched sponsors, got back on some non-prescription antidepressants, and began working out. But I stayed depressed. I talked to my new sponsor about my depression—a lot. His approach

was to examine with me how well I was working my program. We identified my failure to reach out regularly and check in with others in the fellowship, especially

those who had worked the Steps. So I started making more phone calls and talking to those people about my depression, but it didn't help. It's not that they weren't helpful. I got a lot of good suggestions from them. The problem was my focus was on myself—how to get me well. I would try their suggestions and then closely observe my mental and spiritual state for signs of improvement. If



depression were a Volkswagen, my self-obsession would be diesel fuel.

One day, after I had been in this state for several weeks, a newcomer showed up at our meeting. As I often do with newcomers, I called him a few times after his first meeting and encouraged him to find a sponsor. After a week or so, he asked me to sponsor him. Though I had been the one to call and pester him about finding a sponsor, and though I knew from experience that the people I pestered usually asked me to sponsor them, I told him I would need to think about it before agreeing to work with him. I reasoned with myself that since I was already sponsoring one person, I didn't have time to work with another. I decided to call my sponsor. "Do it!," he told me. "You have time." So I did—reluctantly.

I asked my new sponsee to call me every day, and he did. One day he called to tell me he was beginning to see how self-centered he was. As I listened, I remembered a passage from the Big Book that talks about self-centeredness (62-63), so I got it out and read some of it to my sponsee, sharing my own experience with self-centeredness as well. After we hung up, I noticed I felt pretty good. This was not a new experience for me. I learned early in my recovery that the most effective and fast-working antidote

for depression is to reach out in love to another person, whether through prayer or a phone call. This tool has saved me many times from my own destructive thinking. I had not forgotten this. Several times over the couple of months I was depressed I tried praying for others or calling struggling friends, and it worked just as it had before, lifting the fog and internal pressure of self-obsession. But the effect was only temporary. I found that only a couple of hours or so after making a phone call or praying, my depression would return.



I began to despair because it seemed as though these once powerful and simple spiritual tools had lost their potency. But the problem was not the tools. Using these tools during a deep depression was like taking aspirin for a headache that was caused by not eating. What I really needed was not a pain reliever, but food. I had been starving myself spiritually for months by living a self-centered, supposedly self-sufficient life, and when I started feeling the pain of that kind of living, I popped a pill, spiritually speaking. Prayer and phone calls—useful as they are—didn't cure my depression because, by themselves, they were not enough to make up for the way I was living on a daily basis.

I began meeting with my sponsee every week after our

Thursday meeting to go through the Steps. Many times I did not want to stay after the meeting; I felt I had nothing to give. But I noticed, to my surprise and relief, that almost every time I left the meeting after spending an hour or so with my sponsee, I felt pretty good. I especially noticed the improvement when I told a story from my own experience. I told him about how I finally quit trying to change my wife and started focusing on myself through the Steps, and the wonderful results of that in our marriage. I shared with him about how fear steals from me and from the relationships I participate in. Sharing my experience, strength, and hope reminded me that the program does work, that I had made progress.

One day, in late February or early March, I was driving home from school when I suddenly realized my depression was gone. At the time, I couldn't account for its disappearance, nor did it really matter. But a little later, as I talked with my sponsor about my rediscovered sense of peace and well-being, he directed me to the Big Book, where Bill writes about his first 18 months of sobriety:

I was not too well at the time, and was plagued by waves of self-pity and resentment. This sometimes nearly drove me back to drink, but I soon found that when all other



measures failed, work with another [sexaholic] would save the day. Many times I have gone to my old hospital in despair. On talking to a man there, I would be amazingly lifted up and set on my feet. It is a design for living that works in rough going (AA,15).

I had found the solution to my depression.

As I write this it is late spring 2011, over two years since I was depressed, and life has never been so good, so full of joy and love and purpose. I have not been depressed since I got back to the program, especially carrying the message to others. I was even able to come off the antidepressants about a year ago without any setbacks (though I did this gradually and by talking with my wife and sponsor). I've certainly had moments or even days when the old symptoms of self-centered living return, but today I take action quickly. I pray for others. I surrender my fear and obsessive thinking. I keep making calls to check in and to reach out to those who still suffer. And of course, I meet regularly with my sponsees to pass on what was given to me. I'm grateful that just for today I have the willingness to work the program and so receive God's gifts of happiness, joy, and freedom.

LB B.

What About Sex in Marriage?

SA is not a fellowship of only celibate people! Even though I know many married members (as well as single members) who are celibate, our sobriety definition allows sex within marriage. In fact, many married members of our fellowship actually have sex in marriage and stay sober! Yet for some reason I don't often hear the topic of "healthy sexuality in marriage" mentioned in the SA meetings I attend.

Why is it so difficult to speak about sex in marriage at meetings? Is it a feeling of disloyalty to our spouses? Do we still carry shame about sex in general? Do we think it is unfair to the single members? I personally feel that this topic is important to speak about and to bring into the light.

When I was active in my disease, I was sexually demanding with my wife. When I had 11 months of sobriety, I became frightened that I could lose my sobriety if I did not keep getting progressive victory over lust. This was back in early 1985, and there was no one I knew in SA at the time who had not relapsed during his or her first or second year of sobriety. I thought, "Everyone I know has relapsed. Does that mean I have to

also?" I had been such a low-bottom sex drunk that I knew, in my heart, that a relapse for me would be my end. What was I to do?



I realized that I needed to do the one thing I did not want to do: to ask my wife for a period of sexual abstinence. I was sure my wife would be aghast at such a suggestion. I sheepishly asked her if she would mind if we went on a short abstinent period. I was shocked by her immediate

response. With a look of disgust on her face she said, "Certainly, it's all right. I have had enough sex with you to last me a lifetime!"

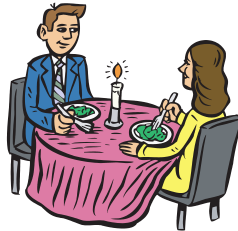
Most normal people would have understood what those words meant. The drunk that I was did not grasp the depth of those words until six weeks later when I said to her that I was now ready to end our abstinent period. To my great surprise she said, "I am not ready to end it." I immediately got angry at her. I indignantly called my sponsor. I said to him "Can you imagine that? I have done this great recovery deed of abstinence for six weeks, and my wife has shown me no appreciation. She had the audacity to say she is not ready to end the abstinence." He said, "You are an addict. How do you know when to end abstinence? Let God decide the length of time by

talking through your wife.”

It wasn't until 21 months later that God led my wife to say she was ready to end the abstinence. During that 21-month period, a great paradox was revealed to me about myself: the less sex I had with my wife, the more I felt like a man! I had always thought that sex with my wife was what made me a man. My inner self was finally revealed to me. I discovered that I could feel loved by my wife without sex.

In sobriety, our marriage has been a 27-year journey toward healthier sexual intimacy. Eleven months after the first abstinence, we began a prolonged second period of abstinence. After that we had a period of having sexual intimacy only when my spouse requested it. Then for years we took turns requesting sexual intimacy. We got to the point where we each felt free to request or to reject it.

Then some years ago a member at an SA meeting mentioned that he and his wife had a set date when they were sexually intimate. When I heard this I thought he was crazy. My mind said that idea would negate spontaneity in our marriage. However, with this, as with so much else in my recovery, I had to face my closed-mindedness. At present we practice this approach in our marriage and it has worked well.



As it turns out, spontaneity leaves the door open for my lust. It permits me to wonder whether this is the day we will be sexually intimate. Now that I know the day, it becomes clear to me that thoughts of sex on any other day are merely part of my sexual addiction trying to pop back in. This also permits my wife to know that when I am nice to her on the days that are not our “special day,” there is no ulterior motive behind my behavior. We are now at a point in our marriage where we are both comfortable with the frequency and style of our sexual intimacy.

Sex in my marriage is not the core of my problem. When lust sneaks in, *that* is the problem. We are powerless over lust—and lust has the potential to sneak into our marital sexual intimacy as it did in other areas of our lives. So we need to deal with how to avoid lust creeping into the marital relationship.

If sex is the primary channel of intimacy in my marriage, then lust will more likely invade my relationship. How can I prevent this? I often ask myself the following questions to help prevent such an invasion:

- Am I working on improving other aspects of intimacy in our marriage?
- Am I having a regular date night with my spouse without sex being the payoff for the evening?

- Am I positively affirming my spouse throughout the week?
- Am I inwardly appreciating my wife and being grateful for our relationship?
 - Am I being honest with my wife so that I am not saying yes when I really mean no? Is the yes merely a dishonest response based on fear that if I say no my spouse will not have sex with me later in the day?
 - Are we having intimate conversations about sex in our marriage?
 - Are compromises being reached concerning frequency of sexual intimacy?
 - Am I asking my wife what she likes sexually and actually hearing what she says?
 - Is there romance in our relationship?
 - Is my spouse my best friend? If not, why not?
 - Are we having fun? I believe that if we don't have fun in our relationship, lust will have a better

chance of sneaking into the sexual aspect of our intimacy.

Many of us have been negatively affected by our addiction. We know a lot about sex with self, pornography, and sex without intimacy. We have become love cripples. But many of us know very little about romance and intimacy with our spouses. Learning about intimacy in marriage has been a very important aspect of my recovery. As it says in our Sobriety Definition,

Our whole concept of sex begins to change. Sex finds a simple and natural place it could never have before and becomes merely one of the things that flows *from* true union in committed marriage. And even here, we've discovered that sex is optional. (SA 193)

—Harvey A., Nashville, TN

Upcoming International Convention

July 15-17, 2011 Portland, OR

“Recovery on the River”

We invite you to join us for the “Recovery on the (Columbia) River” convention in Portland this July. With the usual mix of speakers, couples groups, and smaller breakout meetings, we will encourage one another with the spirit, power, and love of our Twelve Step way of sobriety and recovery. After all, we are a fellowship of men and women who share our experience, strength, and hope with each other that we may solve our common problem and help others to recover (SA 201). For more information, visit our website at www.recoveryontheriver2011.com. We look forward to seeing you soon!

—David M. and Kathleen D., Co-chairs



Step Nine: Making Amends

My addiction caused me to lose my business, my reputation, and my home. While addiction devastated me, it was inevitable that my family would suffer. Toward the bitter end, everything had gone so far down that I doubted I could ever make things right again. I thought that the only remedy for my guilt would come through some sort of punishment and suffering. So, when I joined SA, I expected recovery to consist of punishment. I normally try to avoid pain at all costs, but if the program had to hurt me to heal me, I was prepared to endure it.

I remember the first time I read the Twelve Steps. I actually skimmed them, because I was jumping ahead to find the expected painful parts. My eye was drawn to Step Nine: “Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.” Surely, this was the punishment Step I had feared. I was convinced that “direct amends” described something painful and dangerous. My addiction had driven away loved ones and business associates who had once placed their full trust in me. The suggestion of going back and speaking to any of those people seemed unbearably painful. I was

afraid of the Ninth Step. Back then, I was afraid of everything—including the very thing that would save me.

Fortunately, by the time I actually had to work the Ninth Step, I no longer believed the Twelve Steps contained any punishments or “bitter medicine.” Fear is a liar, and fear lied to me about how the Steps work. Fear alone had told me the Steps had to hurt to work. But that wasn’t true, which I had learned by working Steps One through Eight.

In Step Eight, I made a list of all people I had harmed, and discussed the list with my sponsor. Then I started Step Nine with his help. Using the literature, I pieced together my plan for how to make my amends. I had a huge lump in my throat the first time I made an amends. But I must have done something right, because I felt a genuine shift in my spirit as I began working Step Nine. I didn’t recognize it at first, but I was experiencing the Promises. I found this hard to believe because I felt I had done nothing to deserve this precious gift.

I wanted to create a drawing for “Amends,” but I didn’t know where to begin. My old *Webster’s* 1934 dictionary described “amends” as: “Compensation for a loss or injury.” In legal terms, a loss relates to



money or property. An injury relates to health or reputation. But I wanted to draw something that was familiar to people. How could I show something like “compensating.” Putting a cast on someone’s broken leg? No, that’s a job for a doctor. Handing a person money because I dented his car?

Not really, because auto insurance would take care of that. A picture of someone simply saying “I’m sorry”? No, something more than an apology must come from an amends.

But then I thought back to when I was a kid, when I accidentally broke a wooden railing. I felt terrible about it, but that didn’t fix the railing. My father got angry, but he never told me how I could fix it. That railing stayed broken for years, and I felt guilty about it every time I walked past it. Finally, just before we moved out of that house, my father repaired the railing. It took only part of a day, yet it relieved years of guilt for me. I now wish I had asked him how to fix it right away. That would have helped me make things right—and that memory was the inspiration for

my drawing.

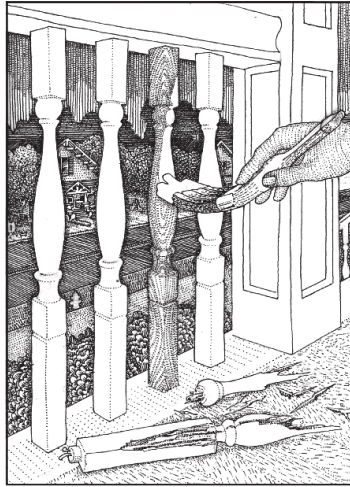
What I have learned to do in Step Nine is mend fences. When I cause damage, I ask those I have harmed, “How can I make amends to you?” I then follow their directions (so long as no one is injured by the directions). There is more to making

an amends than that, but that is the key ingredient as I understand it.

The past is unchangeable. I cannot turn back time, but the past can still feel real to me. I can choose to obsess about a word or action I would change if I could only go back in time. But real change only happens in the present. Before I got into recovery,

I wasted many years wanting to change a past that could never be changed, while ignoring present opportunities to compensate those I had harmed.

Today, when I spot a loss or injury that I caused in the past, I promptly offer to correct it in the present. Thanks to the Ninth Step, I have become very fond of the present. I see that every minute spent idly worrying about the past is



9. Amends

n. Compensation for a loss or injury.

—WEBSTERS 1934

one minute of the precious present
I am losing out on. With the help of
my Higher Power as found through

working the Steps, I can fully live in
the present, one day at a time.
— *John I.*

Amends to the Women I've Harmed

To the women I objectified and used,

How can I make an amends to you? I don't know
you. I can't track you down; it would be wrong for me to
even try. So I am writing this letter, and I will put the rest
into God's hands.

This public amends is my way of admitting that what
I did to you was wrong. My actions turned the most
intimate human relationship into a financial transaction for my own selfish
pleasure. I corrupted the real and turned it into the unreal. I used you. I
viewed you as non-people. I treated you with no respect.

My behavior was wrong. You did not deserve to be treated the way I
treated you. You are all precious children of God. You are worthy of respect,
dignity, healing, and recovery. You deserve to be treated as human beings
with ambitions, emotions, and spiritual needs.

With God's help, today I will surrender my selfishness and treat all
people with the respect and dignity that every child of God deserves.

— *Anonymous*



Meditation

Giving

*Giving, rather than getting, will become
the guiding principle. (AA, 128)*

I am an SA woman who has been sober for four years. If you had met me five years ago, you would have found a confused, greedy, and very sick person. Today, thanks to my Higher Power, sponsor, and my SA groups, I am able to see my life and world in a sane way. "Being restored to sanity" sounded boring to me at first, but I now find sanity so much more rewarding than my old, lust-driven life. Sometimes I feel depressed about my past choices, but that does not help me or my family today. After the havoc of my acting out behaviors, what my family needs is a new wife and a new mother—and I also deserve a new me! I used to think that happiness consisted of getting lots of gifts. I would even buy gifts for myself on my birthdays. But whatever I did, I was never satisfied. Now that I



have been given a second chance in life, I have learned that giving to others is truly the gift. Learning the difference between giving and getting has made all the difference. Am I satisfied today? You bet I am!

—*Blessings, Beth N.*

AA Grapevine Reprint

Simple Program¹

AROUND THE TABLES, slowly and with love, my AA teachers have done wonders with and for me. Long ago, I lost depression because of AA. Now, that is a marvelous character defect to lose! As days float joyously by, with or without problems, the AA program continues to be fresh and delightful.

Early in the program, I found “ego deflation at depth” to be a goal toward which I would have to struggle perhaps for as long as I breathed. Everywhere I turned in the Steps, I was faced with my pride. I had to battle—and continue to battle—to get off the center of the universe. I have not let this fight interfere with the beauty of living in sobriety. Rather, it keeps me steadily attuned to the importance of regular and frequent attendance at meetings.

There has been some improvement in the deflation department, I realized the other day. I no longer have to count the stars at night to make sure they are all out there and in their proper places. And so it is with supervising tides, sunrises, and the flow of rivers on either side of the continental divide, along with many other tasks of which I have been relieved.

Not being concerned with these details anymore, I now have latitude to work on more personal items such as lying, procrastination, indecision, lust, remorse, guilt, and so forth. As a result, the quality of life keeps improving. I complete each day knowing that—even if I no longer have much time to spare from meetings, Twelfth Step calls, family obligations, etc.—somehow, the universe is being cared for. What relief one can get from this simple program!

—*Anonymous*

¹ Copyright © The AA Grapevine, Inc. (July, 1980). Reprinted with permission. Permission to reprint The AA Grapevine, Inc., copyrighted material in *Essay* does not in any way imply affiliation with or endorsement by either Alcoholics Anonymous or The AA Grapevine, Inc. —*Submitted to Essay by Anonymous SA member*



Note from the Delegate Chair



Dear Fellow SA Members:

I'm looking forward to the "Recovery on the River" Convention in July in Portland. My prayer is that many of you are too! What a wonderful spiritual experience it will be! We might even experience miracles in our lives while attending.

The decisions we make today will determine who we become tomorrow. As we trudge the happy road of sobriety (leading to a spiritual awakening in lust recovery), we will find peace and serenity, one day at a time. By moving forward in the Solution, "The crucial change in attitude [begins] when we [admit] we [are] powerless, that our habit had us whipped" (61). When I embrace the journey of recovery by abiding by Step One and being *honest* with myself, I will find joy. Step Two gives me *hope* that I will be able to feel joy each day. It is my choice to embrace this hope. Step Three tells me to *trust* God. "We discovered that the root of our problem is conscious separation from the Source of our lives; the solution is conscious union with that Source" (SA, 93). Recovery is a process, not an event. I've heard members say "Directions will come, if I righteously seek them and listen to God's spirit." That is one of my favorite sayings.

"We have come to believe He would like us to keep our heads in the clouds with Him, but that our feet ought to be firmly planted on earth. That is where our fellow travelers are, and that is where our work must be done"(AA,130). We must take responsibility for our own sobriety. We cannot subscribe to the belief that this life is a vale of tears, though it once was for me. I made my own misery; neither my family, friends, nor co-workers caused my problems. Now I must insist on enjoying life each day. My sponsor used to allow me to wallow in the mire for 5 minutes a day. Any longer and I would start on that slippery slope, thinking I'm in control.

Each day, as I go out to face the world, I need to make the decision to let God direct my thoughts and actions. One way to begin the day is to look in the mirror and thank God for the person in the mirror, and to promise to love that person. Gratitude is contagious. The more we give, the more we get back. Today is a gift—let's all make the most of it.

—Mike S., GDA Chair

Attention Committee Chairs

Would you like to update the fellowship on your activities? Submit committee reports (300 words or less) to essay@sa.org

SA Correctional Facilities Committee (CFC) Update

Following are highlights of some recent CFC activities.

The Mid-Atlantic Region (MAR) hosted the CFC at their “Change of Heart” regional conference this past April. MAR is the first SA region to create a regional-level CFC in response to recent events occurring in the Pennsylvania prison system. At the conference, more than a dozen attendees committed to serve the needs of prisoners. There was also Seventh Tradition collection for the CFC of more than \$700.

I was recently directed by the Pennsylvania prison system to contact an individual who will help us facilitate the delivery of Prison Starter Kits to the remaining 20 prisons in the state. This contact will also work with us to deliver White Books to each prison library.

The Prison Psychologist in Fayette (the first prison to start a meeting in response to the Pennsylvania initiative) has reported that the prison fellowship has been getting sponsors through the sponsor-by-mail program. Additionally, inmates who are exiting prison are receiving support from

the CFC outbound program, which helps former inmates find temporary sponsors, meeting lists, and rides to their first meeting. The Fayette prison has also requested support from the Pittsburgh Intergroup to have SA members come into the facility to run meetings.



There has also been a lot of activity in other regions. We received requests from two Oregon Youth Sex Offender prisons for outbound services, to assist inmates who reach legal adult age and are being released. We have sent out

Prison Starter Kits and are seeking additional support from the local Intergroups in the Portland area. We also received a request from Long Island, NY, for a Prison Starter Kit, for members to chair meetings in the prison, and for women sponsors-by-mail. We are working hard to meet these requests.

We are grateful to God for these many opportunities and to the fellowship for your ongoing service and financial support of the CFC.

*In Love and Service,
— Tim S., CFC Chair*

Upcoming CFC Teleconference Meetings All Members Welcome!

Our next three meetings will be held on June 18, 2011, August 20, 2011, and October 15, 2011, at 5pm EST. The conference call number is 641-798-4200 PIN 6460229#. Please join us!



SAICO Financial Update

Following is a summary of SA fellowship revenues and expenses for First Quarter 2011. A detailed donations report is enclosed with mailed issues of *Essay*. The report is also available from SAICO by contacting 866-424-8777 or saico@sa.org.

We wish to thank all of our members who so generously contribute to our fellowship, so that we may continue to carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers.

SAICO Financial Update First Quarter 2011	
Donations	40,008.99
Other Revenues	28,046.34
Expenses	86,091.67
Revenues (less expenses)	(18,035.34)
Total Prudent Reserve	180,935.36



USA

Brooklyn, NY
(additional meeting)
Detroit, MI
(additional meeting)
Grand Rapids, MI
(additional meeting)
Memphis, TN
(additional meeting)
Sommers Point, NJ

New SA Groups

Passaic, NJ
(additional meeting)
Wesley Chapel, FL
Wilmington, NC
(additional meeting)

Canada

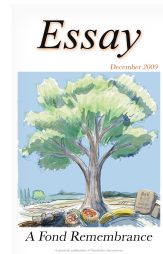
Barrie, ON (additional meeting)



Subscribe to *Essay*

Order a subscription to *Essay* for yourself, a friend, a newcomer, a library, or a doctor's office. Individual subscriptions are \$12 per year; \$10 per year for each additional year. The group rate is \$10 per subscription per year for 10 or more subscriptions mailed to one address. Order subscriptions for your group and save money!

Order subscriptions or read sample articles at www.sa.org/essay.php, or contact SAICO at 866-424-8777 toll free, outside North America call 615-370-6062.



Please submit articles for *Essay* to essay@sa.org

Delegates and Trustees

Delegates

Region	Delegate	Committees
Southwest	Mike S., <i>Chair</i>	COMC, Conventions, Service Manual, Finance
	Tom K.	Conventions, CFC
	Eric S., <i>Alt</i>	CFC, Internet
Mid-Atlantic	Laurens A.	International, Nominations
	Nancy S.	Nominations
	Lia F., <i>Alt</i>	International, Literature, CFC
North Midwest	Gary L.	Literature, Legal, RAC
	Tony R.	Finance, International
	Lee W., <i>Alt</i>	Internet, RAC, Service Manual
Northeast	Terry O.	Internet
	Peter T., <i>Alt</i>	
Northwest	Farley H.	Internet, RAC, Nominations
	Marie W., <i>Alt</i> .	
	Will D., <i>Alt</i>	
Southeast	Steve S., <i>V. Chair</i>	COMC, Service Manual
	Dave Mc.	COMC, Finance
	Jon B.	Conventions, COMC, Literature
	Robert M., <i>Alt</i>	H&I
South Midwest	Joe M.	International
	Steve L.	
	Glenn J., <i>Alt</i>	International, Conventions, Public Info
UK, Ireland	Tom C.	International
	Mark P., <i>Alt</i>	
Germany	Hans-Friedrich	International

Trustees

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



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

Calendar of Events



September 2-4, 2011, SA UK Convention, Ammerdown, Somerset, England. Info at frome@sauk.org

September 16 - 18, 2011, Alberta SA Fall retreat, Battle Lake, AB, Canada. *Living Sober*. Info at: 780-988-4411, or email essayedmonton@yahoo.ca

September 17, 2011, One Day Marathon, Cincinnati, OH. Info at 513-521-5404

September 17, 2011, Annual SA Fall Retreat, Winnipeg, Manitoba,

Canada. *Learning Day*. We are a young fellowship in Winnipeg looking for more experienced members who would be willing to come share some of your ES&H. Info at 204-795-3189 or sawinnipeg@gmail.com.

October 22, 2011, One Day Cleveland Fall Marathon, Westlake, OH. Info at rca2@centurytel.net

Nov. 4 - 6, 2011, Greenville, SC. *The Steps We Took*. Info at orgsites.com/sc/upstatesa

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

Submit info to be listed in *September 2011 Essay* by July 15, 2011. Please submit dates, theme, place, and points of contact.

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

Upcoming International Conventions



July 15 - 17, 2011, Portland, Oregon

Recovery on the River

Sheraton Portland Airport Hotel. Make hotel reservations at starwoodmeeting.com/Book/RecoveryontheRiver2011. For more information contact 509-249-7606 (local) or 800-426-7866 (toll free,) or visit our website at www.recoveryontheriver2011.com.



January 13 - 15, 2012, Newark, New Jersey

Liberty from Self in New York. Sheraton Newark Airport Hotel. There will be two tours of Stepping Stones (historic home of Bill and Lois Wilson) available. For more information visit our website at www.libertyfromself.com

July 27 - 29, 2012, SA Nashville, Tennessee

Three Legacies. For information contact 615-345-4334 or sanashville.org

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

Subscribe to Essay. Individual subscriptions are \$12.00 per year. Multi-year subscriptions are \$12.00 for the first year, \$10.00 for each subsequent year. Group rate is \$10.00 per year for 10 or more subscriptions sent to one address. Essay is also available by online subscription in PDF format. For more information contact saico@sa.org or Essay, PO Box 3565, Brentwood, TN 37024-3565, USA.

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.



Your picture
here



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.

