

# Essay

September 2011



*Becoming the Man I Wanted to Be*

*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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**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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**New To SA?** Call toll-free at 866-424-8777 or outside North America call 615-370-6062; email us at [saico@sa.org](mailto:saico@sa.org); or visit SA website at [www.sa.org](http://www.sa.org).

## Becoming The Man I Wanted to Be

When I was around ten years old, I was introduced to pornography by my next door neighbor. We were the same age, and he would bring magazines over to my house. I will never forget the first time I saw pornography; I was immediately hooked. From the very beginning, I always wanted to see something new and different each time. Even then, I had trouble reconciling the two parts of me: the part my parents saw and the part they didn't.

I didn't have any girlfriends until my junior year in high school, but beginning with my very first girlfriend, I wanted to try all the things I had learned from looking at porn. I didn't know whether this was right or wrong, but I absolutely wanted to do those things. My relationship with my girlfriend consisted of having sex and trying to hide it from her parents. I was happy to introduce her to something I enjoyed, although I felt bad because of the pressure I placed on her.

When I graduated from high school, I immediately got involved in a number of relationships.

I constantly jumped from one relationship to the next. The relationships all had a common theme: I wanted to practice

everything I'd learned from pornography.

In 1998, when I was 21, I got my dream job in law enforcement. I also began an eight-year drinking career. I thought the drinking was okay, but I hurt many people along the way, and I began blaming my sexual behavior on my drinking. Every morning, when I had to look at a friend's face or a girlfriend's face or eventually my wife's face, I would say, "Hey, I'm sorry, I was drunk!" It was a

great excuse until it was no longer an excuse, because it became an actual part of my life.

I was leading a double life. One part of me was a respectable police officer. The other part was a drinking, cheating, hurting bum. On the outside, I could talk the talk and play the game. On the inside I was a wreck.

As my acting out progressed,



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I began to seek relationships with people I met on the Internet. One of these was the former girlfriend of a good friend. I began having multiple partners and even had sex with another guy. I didn't care who I was hurting. The only thing that mattered was getting my needs met. One woman I acted out with got pregnant. Then she had an abortion because she didn't know who the father was. I felt the abortion was wrong, but I was caught in a vicious cycle of guilt and shame. I had to act out because I didn't know any other way to make myself feel better.

When I got married, I managed to stay faithful for about a year and a half. Then I started cheating again, using Internet pornography and masturbating. Some of my relationships were dangerous. I once had sex with a coworker, the wife of a former supervisor. I never thought about the repercussions on her marriage, on my marriage, or on my job.

After a couple of years and two affairs, my marriage was in trouble. I tried to focus on improving it, but I was still satisfying my own needs through the Internet. I was also becoming a miserable drunk. I was mean to people, including my wife. I thought the rules didn't apply to me. I longed for love, but I was pushing everyone out of the way.

I finally decided to get help because I was hurting so many people. The night before I got sober

from alcohol, I was sitting in a drunken stupor with a buddy. He looked me straight in the eyes and asked if I thought I had a problem with alcohol and needed help. That was a wake up call. Until then, I didn't care. But for some reason, I realized that night that I didn't have to be drunk all the time. So I went to AA, got a sponsor, and worked the Steps. Today I've been sober from alcohol for six and a half years.

I learned how to live life alcohol-free—but that's all I was doing. I wasn't drinking anymore, but everything else was still a mess. When I got to Step Nine, I was unable to make complete amends to my wife. I felt that I couldn't make amends for my past sexual acting out because of the harm it would cause her. So I made amends for the things I did when I was drunk, not mentioning this "little" sexual thing that caused pain in every other part of my life. I kept this to myself. I didn't even share it with my sponsor.

Everyone gave me kudos for not drinking and for my great turnaround. Doors were opening up at work—yet I had this secret part of my life. I continued to use Internet pornography to masturbate and look for sex partners. I distinctly remember one day thinking, "I'm really glad I have this outlet; otherwise I'd still be drinking." That should have been a clue. Even though I was sober from alcohol, I

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was still a hopeless sex drunk. As the White Book says, “How can we consider ourselves sober if we are still resorting to whatever or whomever we are using addictively?” (191). That was my situation exactly.

2007 was one of the roughest years of my life. My son was born. My mom passed away from cancer. A work buddy died unexpectedly from a heart attack. Then I crashed on my motorcycle, broke my foot, and was out of work for four months. As I struggled to deal with these losses, I was waiving a banner that said “At least I’m not drinking!” I didn’t realize that I was holding things together only because I had another addiction to help me.

During this time I was brewing with resentments against my family. After my mom died, my dad wasn’t mourning to my satisfaction. He wasn’t behaving as I thought a newly widowed person should. He started dating someone within a month, and got married a year later. I resented him for disrespecting my mother.

With my wife and son, I was a tyrant who tried to dictate their every action. Even though I wasn’t drinking and I had worked the AA Twelve Steps, my attitudes were still rotten. The truth is that my attitudes were getting worse because I was active in my sex addiction. One of my most painful memories is the way I would

argue with my wife. I would storm and rage, then I’d blame everything on her. That was a lot easier than accepting blame myself.

During these arguments my wife began saying, “You’re starting to sound like you did when you were drinking.” Then I’d backpedal fast and try to make things look good—but my addiction wouldn’t let me. I was still using the Internet to find porn and masturbate. When I was laid up with the broken foot, I made sure that our laptop had a wireless connection so I could use it downstairs, because I couldn’t get upstairs with my foot. And I still didn’t think I had a problem!

The next year, 2008, I had another affair. I thought this other

woman would fix me. She was the one! I was happily plotting to leave my wife and ruin someone else’s marriage as well. I was insane.

I finally told my wife what was going on, and I broke her heart in the process. I thought I had finished breaking her

heart by getting sober from alcohol, but I found that I had barely touched the surface of the harm I was capable of. As I talked with my wife that day, I believe that God intervened, because He didn’t let happen what I wanted to happen. I felt that He was telling me to give my marriage a try, so I agreed to go to marriage



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counseling. Yet even during marriage counseling, I started an affair with a different woman—just for sex, because the problem with the other affair was that I fell in love with her. This affair was just about sex, so it was okay!

After a few months of marriage counseling, I still believed everything was my wife's fault. I was still saying, "At least I don't drink anymore." I was still looking for that outside connection to fulfill my needs. But I broke off the affairs and stayed faithful to my wife for about 10 months.

In 2009, I had my last affair. Once again, I was wanting something more, something different. I used my job, my resources, everything I could to make connections. In doing so, I was causing irreparable harm to myself, my family, and my reputation.

At my lowest point, my behavior was so bizarre that even my wife could see it. One day she asked, "Are you cheating on me again?" There was no other answer than "Yes." I was hoping that my behavior would push her away; that she would leave me so I wouldn't have to feel bad anymore about acting out, or for lying and cheating. But she stuck it out. I eventually moved out because I felt so guilty being around her.

Around this time, I went to another therapist to talk about issues related to my mom's death. But when he asked what was going

on, I confessed that I was at the breaking point, and that I thought I might be swapping one addiction for another. The therapist said I needed to go to SA, and he explained the sobriety definition. That scared me—I couldn't masturbate for the rest of my life? Then I thought: This is the same as not drinking for the rest of my life. How did I do that? One day at a time. That day—November 4, 2009—is my SA sobriety date.

When I left the therapist's office, I called my wife and apologized for the thousandth time. I told her that I had another addiction and asked her if I could come home. She said yes, and I'm so glad she did! Today I realize that I've been twice blessed by Twelve Step Programs. They saved my marriage twice: first when I quit drinking and again when I joined SA.

Because of my AA background, I knew I would have to go to meetings. At first I was scared to attend SA meetings—especially the larger meetings with 40 or 50 people! I walked into those first meetings feeling that I must be the worst person in the room—until I heard others share. Then I realized that these men and women were all here for the same reason, and everything suddenly made sense. I knew I was home.

After my first large meeting, some of the guys wanted to exchange phone numbers. One of them called me the next day and shared a bit of his story, to let me



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know that we are really all the same. His call meant a lot to me, because for so long I thought I was just a horrible person. The fact is that I'm a sexaholic and I'm allergic to lust. In SA, our ways of acting out may be different, but we all share a common problem: an addiction to lust.

I got a sponsor and worked the SA Steps. I read my Steps One, Two, and Three in SA meetings. This was difficult, but I made it through those experiences with my sponsor's help. Today I realize that other SA members were doing for me what others had done for them. I remember how scary those first few meetings were, so today I take the time to reach out to newcomers and help them feel welcome.

When I arrived in SA, I didn't know where my marriage was headed. I only knew that I had a second chance, and that it was contingent on my staying sober. This would determine whether I could be a good husband and father and be part of my family again.

At first I was worried about sharing my past with others. To me, being a recovering alcoholic

seemed cool, but being a recovering sexaholic did not seem so cool. Today I'm grateful for the guys in SA who let me share my deepest secrets with them. Because of sharing my past with others, I'm more comfortable with who I am today. My insides are starting to mesh with my outside.

Because of SA, I've also reconnected with the God of my understanding. I walked away from Him in junior high school, but I went back to church when three guys from my SA group invited me. When I first came to SA and heard the Twelve Steps again, I thought, "When did they re-write the Steps? I've never heard *these* ones before!" And when I made it back to church, I thought that somebody must have rewritten the Scriptures, because I didn't remember *that* part before!

It's amazing what I can hear when I'm open. The message at church never changed; I changed. In my addiction, I couldn't attend church while I was masturbating, looking at pornography, and cheating on my wife. But now, in sobriety, I feel comfortable at church. I can

### **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](mailto:essay@sa.org).**





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even be of service there.

I'm finally on the path where I can be the man, father, husband, and friend that I always wanted to be. I've only gotten here by participating in the fellowship of the program, being of service to others, and working my Steps all over again, the SA way. I can't just come to a meeting once a week and think I'll be fixed. I need to participate

and give back what I've been given. Today, all the



things that people have shared with me, I get to pass on to someone else. How great is that? This is not just a responsibility; it's an honor.

Because of SA, I can be sexually sober, and in sobriety, I get my life back. Today, I can be fully present at work and then come home and be fully present for my wife and my son. I'm reestablishing connections with my dad and my sister. I can share with them what's going on in my life. I was finally able to tell them that I'm a sexaholic, not just an alcoholic—and that my wife was not the one who had the problem, it was me. This was not my proudest moment, but coming clean with my family helped break down the walls of manipulation I had created so that they would think better of me. I was only able to do that because of doing the

groundwork of working the Steps and surrendering to God.

My life is amazingly different today, because I'm free from the obsession of sex. I'm free from walking around in a panicked state while thinking of ways to make a connection. I can spend time with my family and not worry about what other people are thinking about me.

I don't have to worry about the dangers that

might be lying in wait for me when I go to the mall or to the museum with my son. I have tools I can use. I work Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve daily. I surrender lust hits in the moment, and I focus on being present. It's wonderful to be present in the moment; that's something I haven't felt in a very long time. Most important for me is that, through SA, I've become reconnected with the God of my understanding. This has been a huge blessing.

Today I can finally be a part of something that is bigger than myself. I can help other people and feel useful to God. For the first time, I have a sense of purpose. I feel that I am where I truly belong. As one of the guys says at our morning meeting, "These are my peeps."

—Anonymous

## **I Had to Surrender Me**



My sexual history involves a long list of adulterous affairs, pornography, strip clubs, videos, and acting out—but those things were never really my problems; they were the results of my not facing my problems. My problems included loneliness, fear, insecurity, frustration at my inability to get my own way and my inability to deal with the hurts in my life, and all of the rejections (real or imagined) that I suffered. The rejections included childhood beatings and the girls who wouldn't let me date them. I was enveloped in feelings of unworthiness and shame.

At first, I dealt with my feelings by immersing myself in athletics, for which I had some talent. During my teens and early twenties, athletics allowed me to build some self-esteem as well as use the physical energies that might otherwise have gone into sexual activities. Then a severe injury ended my career in athletics and I became emotionally lost. I was no longer able to live out in sports my obsessive and compulsive self. I found a girl and got married.

I turned to my wife to help me overcome my insecurities, but she either didn't know how, or could not. I began to masturbate compulsively and soon was addicted to it.

Unconsciously, I became angry at my wife for not fixing me.

I continued my education beyond college and developed a career in business. I felt some satisfaction in these activities, but they also gave me a cover for a second career of lusting after women. I pursued this second career with all my energy. This was an attempt to overcome my previous rejections, but I only vaguely recognized my feelings or the reasons for them. This all seemed too shameful in my eyes to share with others, who would probably only reject me. I believed that only weak people seek help.

This is actually my second time in SA. The first time was a failure because I didn't seek help. I tried to do it all on my own and I ended up botching any recovery through emotional isolation. But the second time I was really scared and ready to seek help and be helped. Now, 12 years later, I'm still here and still sober because of the help members have given me.

When I first came into SA in California around the summer of 1996, I simply wanted to be sober. Only later did I discover that there is a difference between sobriety and recovery. I had wanted to stop

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looking at pornography, going to strip clubs, and masturbating. That's it, and that's why it didn't work for long. I gained five months of physical sobriety, but I certainly had no emotional sobriety. My spirit was still diseased with fear, frustration, and hurt, which often showed up as anger or self-righteous behavior (though I couldn't see it at the time). I hadn't learned that until I faced my many character defects, my spirit would remain an emotional wreck, and I would soon act out once again. Still, as my own sponsor, I pronounced myself cured and stopped going to meetings. After all, I had stopped acting out. I was sober.

But not for long. When an email invited me to look at a porn site, I rationalized that since I had proved that I could stop acting out, then obviously I could now look without experiencing harm. Suddenly I was off to the races once again, and this time it was worse than ever. I was even more obsessed and more compelled than before. I was trapped. I couldn't go back to my group and tell them I had failed, because failure at that time meant that I wasn't trying hard enough. Furthermore, I didn't know how to stop. So I continued going deeper into my disease and became increasingly frustrated that I couldn't



stop my behavior.

I was also afraid that my wife would find out. For years, I had taken great effort to live a double life so that she would not know about my secrets. The stress of being two personalities took its emotional toll. When I had announced to her in 1996 that I was a sexaholic and would seek treatment in SA, she simply said, "Okay, that's good," and that was the end of it. She thought I was referring to my earlier adulterous affairs and I had told her that those would stop. When she did find out in April 1999 that I was a practicing sexaholic, she announced that if I continued to live that way she would leave me. I immediately returned to SA.

This time was different. My wife and I were in Germany at the time, visiting our daughter, and I actually began reading the White Book. In it I discovered things that had eluded me for all of my life. For example,

... just as the admission of powerlessness over lust is the key to our sexual sobriety, so the admission of powerlessness over our defects is the key to our emotional sobriety (88).

Defects? Me? Yes, me. Early on, I discovered that I could not have any lasting sobriety from lust if I did

not have lasting emotional sobriety.

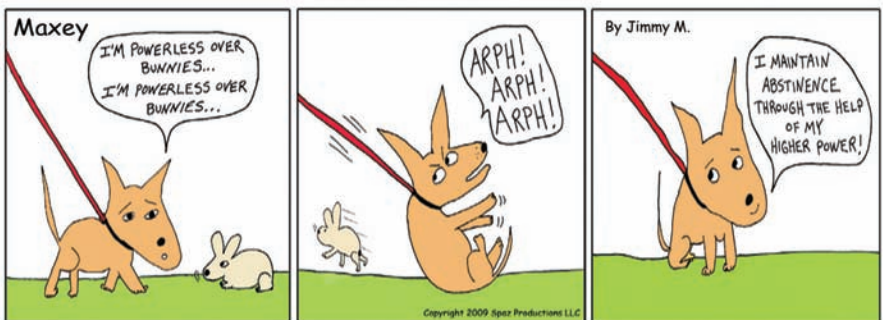
This drove me into examining my emotions in every relationship and every event of my life. In time, I began to see many of my character defects, and began to see that they were energized by my many fears, frustrations, and unresolved hurts, all of which fueled my lusting. Obviously I had much to surrender, and much to change in me.

One fateful night in Germany, when I was all alone, I read the words in *SA*: "I couldn't just surrender my lust; I had to surrender me (80)." I was stunned. Such a thought had never occurred to me. In fact, it was foreign to my approach to life. I had always fought to win, whether in athletics or in business. Success came from never giving up, from trying harder, from being smarter and better educated. Yet one day, in April 1999, something inside me saw the truth, and for the first time in my life, I closed my eyes, put down the book and said, "Okay God, you win."

At that moment, I felt all the

negativity in my life flow out of me. A sense of peacefulness took its place. I finished the chapter, turned out the light and went to sleep. I awoke the next morning refreshed and thought to myself, "I think I'm going to be all right." That night I continued to read the *White Book* and gained more understanding of my disease. During my time in Europe, I read the entire book twice. It made a profound impression on me.

In my reading, I discovered that the energy of my lusting comes from my many character defects. That's why I like reading "The Problem" (*SA*, v). While it is not my story in all the details, it captures the essence of my feelings and experiences. I am struck by the sentence, "We lusted and wanted to be lusted after." It took me a long time to realize that behind my lusting behaviors, what I was really looking for was for the object of my lust to lust after me. Once I realized that, then it was a matter of acknowledging it to my sponsor and to my groups, and



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surrendering that to the God of my understanding. This surrender, like some of my other surrenders, has to be repeated every time the desire to lust arises in me.

A program friend taught me that to live in the solution, we have to practice the Solution: “Forgiving all who had injured us, and without injuring others, we tried to right our own wrongs”(SA, 62). He further taught me that I had to [begin] “practicing a positive sobriety, taking the actions of love to improve our relations with others” (SA, 62). In no time I was doing all the washing, drying, and putting away the laundry at home; doing all the vacuuming; taking an interest in things in which my wife was interested and asking for her input about decisions that would affect our present or our future.

This wasn't easy, but it was rewarding because it brought happiness to each of us. Much praying to the God of my understanding as expressed in the Eleventh Step prayer opened my heart and mind to healthier attitudes and actions on my part. The hardness in my heart toward others melted away. Our children noticed and wanted to be around me more; my brother even told me that I had become easier to live with. Today my life is much less stressful, because I am not attempting

to live a public life and a secret life.

Lest I not be clear, I know for certain that:

God has apparently not chosen to eradicate my defective self so that I am no longer capable of lust, resentment, fear and the rest (SA, 188).



My old habits, my old attitudes and behaviors are not gone, they just don't have the power they once had to dominate and direct my life. They are becoming less powerful with good reason. I have discovered that:

I can live free of the power any and all these defects have over me by resorting to God instead of such negative emotions. I thus have a daily, hourly reprieve from my lust, etc., based on maintaining the right attitude, by working the Steps and Traditions and going to meetings, meetings, meetings, meetings, meetings (SA, 168).

Today I've been sexually sober since April 2, 1999. As I contemplate my journey, I am grateful to all of you in the fellowship for your kindness and helpfulness to me and for speaking the truth into my life during my 12 years of sobriety and recovery.

—Jim M., Ormond Beach, FL

## Letting Go and Letting God



Recently I was preparing to go away on a wonderful trip to Italy: first a week by the sea on my own, and then a week in the Roman hills with friends to attend an art workshop. This was to be a dream holiday, but I was feeling overwhelmed with fear: fear of my own intentions, fear of acting out, and mostly fear of having to feel my emotions with no other people to buffer them or fill the void. I shared this at meetings, as well as with my sponsor and other SA members, but I felt embarrassed to feel so much anxiety about such a great opportunity.

The night before I left I couldn't sleep. I felt as if I was going into battle. In the morning, I headed for the airport with a heavy heart. But then program slogans that I had heard from other members began to fill my mind. I asked myself, "What's the next right thing to do?" I told myself "Easy does it," "One step at a time," and "Practice gratitude and watch for miracles." Bit by bit, I started to relax.

At the flight gate, I put into action the tools of recovery by phoning a couple of members. After making that connection I felt better—and just as I hung up, I saw a

woman I knew who was taking the same flight. I couldn't believe it! I started to laugh. Was this God intervening?

Finally I arrived at my destination. As the train from the airport approached my Bed and Breakfast, my stomach sank. The B&B was located on a noisy road and had an unkempt air about it. I began feeling anxious again. My room was small, dark, and hot. I couldn't open the windows because of the noise outside and the fumes of the traffic. I started to panic. I couldn't face spending seven days here!



As an AA member, I had checked a meeting schedule before leaving my home in Ireland, and I had promised my sponsor I would go to a meeting my first night there. Hoping to get some relief from fear and self-pity, I headed out as soon as I arrived. After walking for about an hour I found the address—but it was a funeral parlor and not the church indicated on the schedule! I had to laugh yet again. This is where I would end up if I acted out. But I didn't give up. I needed a meeting!

I asked people for directions to

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the church, and they all said it was further on. I walked for another hour or so along a winding road, but I was starting to doubt its existence. Still, a voice inside of me (the voice of God?), kept egging me on. When I finally found the church, the building looked like nothing more than a shed. Disbelieving, I turned the corner and finally saw a little sign hanging on a rusty gate. It was the service triangle of AA! God had led me to the place I needed to be.

There were only four people in that meeting, but I found relief from my self-induced stress and anxiety. My attitude shifted as I once again felt the grace of God giving me a daily reprieve from this disease. I

remembered that I am to think not of what I can get but what I can give, so I opened my heart and ears to the other members in the meeting.

The meeting topic was Steps Six and Seven. We were discussing the importance of surrendering all defects when one long-time sober AA member shared that he would not consider himself sober—even though he wasn't drinking—if, for example, he was still practicing old behaviors that had hurt himself and others, such as affairs and inappropriate sexual conduct.

I was surprised to hear an AA member in a meeting be so specific about past sexual conduct, and link it to his own AA recovery. After the

## Blessings from Ireland

The SA message first reached Ireland in 1993 when, for a brief period, there was a lone group in Dublin, our capital. Those meetings were short-lived but the seed had been sown. Meetings started up again in 1995. In 1996 we had our first Intergroup meeting (three members attended) and the first convention (13 people were present).



Since then, SA has grown slowly but steadily here. We now have meetings all over the country from Dublin to Waterford, and from Galway to Kingscourt to Naas. It is now possible to get to a meeting every day! We also have three conventions and two recovery days each year, plus regular Intergroup meetings and a constant flow of members between Ireland and the UK.

There is great fellowship here and a sense of belonging to a much bigger whole. I particularly recommend the talent show at our conventions, so please come and visit us! You can reach us by phone at 1850200692 or email at [saireland@eircom.com](mailto:saireland@eircom.com)

We'll be here waiting!

—Denise O.



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meeting, I spoke with him about people who have problems in the area of sexual conduct. This man, who was already bringing a message of sexual sobriety, did not know there is a specific programme for this disease—so I shared with him about SA. He was happy to learn about our fellowship. A seed was sown!

When I returned to my B&B, I settled myself down for the evening. Despite the great meeting experience, I had another difficult night. The constant noise of the traffic competed with the noise of the pub across the street. Couples went in and out of the B&B drunk and noisy. As I tossed and turned, fears again assailed me: fear of acting out and then financial fear. I knew I would have to change hotels and was worried that I would not find another place at a price I could afford. I finally turned to God and asked Him to take the fear from me, and restore me to sanity. The voice



inside of me spoke again, “Find a hotel for 60 euros a night, and you’ll be fine.” Suddenly I realized that I really was safe in my room, and I wasn’t out acting out. Finally I slept.

Early the next morning I walked to the seafront. The town looked fresh and clean in the morning light. Feeling peaceful and serene, I found a lovely hotel on the sea front and ambled in. With no expectations, I asked the receptionist if they had a room available. She smiled and said

that, yes, they had a room, and the cost was 60 euros!

Today, I believe I was led on this journey in order to be an instrument for

God’s will. I learned many lessons in trusting my Higher Power, and I planted a seed for potential new members of SA. I feel grateful for the many miracles that happen when I can remember to “let go and let God.”

—Denise O., Ireland

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## Members Share

# High-Powered Days

I never fell into a rabbit hole, but I fell hard into the Internet. There, I found a strange world where forbidden things were freely available—even celebrated. At first, I enjoyed this secret place where there was no right or wrong. What

I did there, stayed there. So I stayed there longer and longer each day. Soon, my daytime life lacked the electrifying intrigue of my secret underworld. Before long, my seemingly harmless online meetings turned into face-to-face infidelities.

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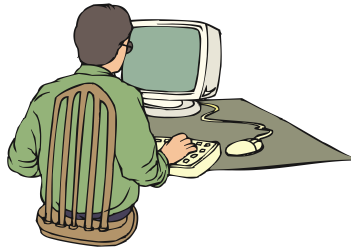
I cheated frequently, despite more than 15 years of faithful marriage.

My wife initially tolerated my online misbehavior, expecting me to outgrow my "Internet phase." Five years later, I had not outgrown my phase, but she had outgrown marriage to an addict. I soon found myself raising our two kids largely myself. My new "wife" was the Internet.

My life online involved crossing all sorts of lines.

Anything that revolted me eventually had to be tried. Still, I was fiercely proud of one thing: my online life never affected my kids. Or so I told myself.

Although my online insanity was never directed at my kids, they surely felt its effects. I remember one Saturday morning when I quickly logged onto the Internet "just to see who is on." When my kids woke up, they begged me to cook them breakfast. "Just butter yourselves some toast," I yelled, stalling to prolong an online chat. "We're still hungry!" they yelled shortly. "Cook yourself some eggs!" I shouted back, feeling irritated. "But it's lunchtime, now!" I glanced up and realized that four hours had somehow elapsed. "Heat up some pizza, and I'll be right there," I pleaded, "I'm really busy right now!"



Soon they were whining, "You said you'd take us to the pool, but now the pool's closed." I snapped back angrily, "Quit whining! The pool doesn't close until 6:00!" But then a glance at the clock on the wall told me what I didn't want to admit. I had lost another entire day to my addiction, and I had deprived my kids of yet another day of normal life.

"I'll make it up to you kids," I would vow, "You'll see. I'll get caught up with my work soon and things will change." I prayed they would believe my non-stop claims of "important work" on the computer. But

their meager clothes drawers and empty pockets told them my work wasn't earning any cash. "I'll make it up to you," became a familiar and empty promise.

Until I got into recovery, I couldn't see the unreality that was staring me in the face. My online life was no life at all. If I met a new person online, I would quickly become bored and abandon her in favor of the next unreal friend. My "real life" became my nights at the computer, and my days became pale ghosts of my past. My home, my marriage, my business, all slipped away right before my eyes. I would gripe bitterly to my online friends about how insane the offline world

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was—especially my crazy ex-wife. Anyone who didn't agree with me was replaced immediately with another "friend."

One day, my daughter caught sight of some online chat I had forgotten to erase. It was brief; it was terrible. I doubt she wanted to believe those words had come from the father she trusted. But they had. She left my life due to a vigilant mother. My sickness hadn't touched my daughter literally, but it destroyed her belief that she had a good father. Some people don't hit rock bottom until after jail, an asylum, or a divorce court. For me, it came when my secret underworld collided with the fragile reality of someone I loved with all my heart.

I thought my life of addiction would probably end in suicide. Still in shock, I called the SA phone number and was surprised when a highly respected person in my community returned my call. I went to my first meeting desperately wanting out of that insane "rabbit hole" of addiction. As I heard members read "The Problem," and "The Solution," I found some relief in their words. I looked around the room, and saw how totally ordinary the others appeared. This eased my inner fear that I was a monster among monsters. I found instead that I was a suffering addict among others

who had laid their sufferings down.

My sponsor started me on my way to recovery with the Serenity prayer. He was a religious man, but he said, "Neither my religious or intellectual ideas will get you sober. Only working the Steps, going to meetings, and participating in sponsorship will."

I had known many religious people, but had never heard such utter humility. It made me sit up and listen. It made me think maybe I too could be a good

man again. I thought of my daughter. The Steps seemed worth a try.

Despite reaching my rock bottom and experiencing other negative spiritual consequences, I worked the Steps very slowly—almost reluctantly. My journey through the Steps was like the saying in the White Book: "Instead of running joyously to heaven, we seem to back away from our hell, one step at a time" (SA, 69). On good days, I worked the Steps gladly. On other days I really had to force myself. But I was lucky because my rock bottom proved that I had no other option but to stop my addiction.

My sponsor never wavered: he said the way forward was through the Steps. I stopped fighting and surrendered myself completely to following my sponsor's suggestions. I stopped overcomplicating the Steps and simply worked them.



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And sure enough, they have always worked, one day at a time. I stopped surrendering to my addiction and instead surrendered to my Higher Power. I no longer ran toward my own death but started trudging toward a new way of life. In other words, I started working the program every day of my life.

Now, roughly 10 years later, I work on the Internet nearly every day as part of my profession. Thanks to my Higher Power, the Internet is not the automatic trigger it used to be. After I found sobriety, I realized the Web was never my real problem. My problem was a physical craving and a mental

insanity within myself. The Internet was only a trigger. My real enemy was my addiction, not the Internet.

Just today, I talked on the phone with my daughter for an hour—she was telling me all about her new apartment and two job offers. She attended my recent wedding and I came to her college graduation. I don't know if she'll ask me to escort her down the aisle at her wedding someday, but I think she might.

After some Ninth Step amends, that low point I went through has been replaced by one High-Powered day after another.  
—John I.



## Overcoming the Obsession

I practiced obsessive fantasy for years. In my obsession, I often chased men who were not available to me. I had the problem described in the White Book, “We were addicted to the intrigue, the tease, the forbidden” (203). I pursued my lust objects obsessively. I was not able to “Let go and let God.” In trying to control and possess men, I lost control of myself.

In 1999, before I came to SA, I “dated” a guy who I thought was single. One day, I folded a piece of paper into the shape of a heart, wrote a note on it, and gave it to

him. Later that week, a woman came up to me, dropped the note in front of me, and said, “Do not give my man any more of your origami!” She looked like she might punch me in the face! I felt sick to my

stomach, but did that stop me from pursuing him? No! I thought of myself as a good person, but somehow I didn't realize that I was acting against my morals. I didn't

know that I was powerless over my behavior or that “Lust had become an addiction” (SA, 3).

I would call this man often and leave messages. When he stood



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me up I would go to his house and knock on the door, then call him from my cell phone, then knock some more. His roommate once opened the door a crack and told me to stop calling and knocking! Frustrated, I sat in my car, which I had parked on a hill where I could see the door to his place. After I did act out with him, I got up to go home and found that my new car had been keyed on one side.

Another time I was flirting with him at his friend's house. I didn't think the other woman knew I was there but I was wrong! She burst in on us and ran straight toward my face with a lit cigarette in her hand. In the blink of an eye I was on the floor and my "boyfriend" pushed her roughly out of the room. They screamed at each other outside the room. He came back and apologized for her behavior. I wondered at my own stupidity.

I pressured him to marry me and he did. We were both 21 when we got married. It was an abusive marriage. We verbally abused each other, and he also abused me in other ways. I never thought a person was capable of feeling as hurt as I felt while married to this guy. I thought that by "winning" him over the other woman, I had won, but in reality I was the loser.

I saw a glimmer of my own insanity, but I blamed my husband

for my problems. After three years of marriage, we divorced. In November of 2003, after a few more experiences of obsessive lusting, I went to my first SA meeting and I purchased the White Book.

I didn't want to go to meetings at first. I was afraid to seek help from others. I wasn't sure I belonged, even though I related to the shares and felt that "The Problem" (SA, 203) described my feelings. I thought that the meetings would make me feel better, but I decided that listening to people share was making me sicker. After a few months I stopped going to meetings. I thought I could find the solution by reading the White Book and asking for advice from my mother!

While I was waiting for my divorce to be final, I dated a few men. But I didn't know how to date! I ended up stalking another man for a time. I would promise myself that I would not have sex with these



guy, but then I would break my promises and feel great remorse. I tried to stop acting out with men by lusting online in chat rooms and using pornography, but I found I needed more and more material to feed my lust obsession. With no meetings and no husband, I had no one left to blame for my troubles. At 26 years old I knew I had no other option: it was either continue in this living hell, or go

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back to SA.

The meetings were mostly full of men. At first, I did not see them as individuals; I saw a crowd of men. But when I listened, I was surprised to hear them share my own feelings. I felt that they knew who I was on the inside. The meetings became rooms full of people who were just like me, no matter what sex or age or marital status. I found that:

We identified with one another on the inside. Whatever the details of our problem, we were dying spiritually—dying of guilt, fear, and loneliness. As we came to see that we shared a common problem, we also came to see that, for us there is a common solution—the Twelve Steps of recovery practiced in a fellowship and on a foundation of what we call *sexual sobriety* (SA, 1-2).

I began feeling safe in meetings. Through the meetings, I began to recover from objectifying and stalking men and—slowly and imperfectly—learned to surrender lust. I turned to my Higher Power to give me the strength to surrender lust one day at a time. I used to think obsession was okay but lust was not. Today I can see that obsession is lust in a different form. I cannot obsess about another human being and live

life happy, joyous, and free. Today I realize that when I go into romantic fantasy (like planning a wedding with some guy I just met), this is the beginning stage of lust for me.

Lust is not sex, and it is not physical. It seems to be a screen of self-indulgent fantasy separating me from reality..." (SA, 42).

Today I've been sober more than six years. Through the SA program—going to meetings, working the Steps, and calling my sponsor and other women—I have learned how to surrender lust one thought at a time. I'm

learning to date soberly. I've also learned that I can surrender hurts and rejections. I learned a phrase from a program friend that helps me cope with loss: "His rejection is God's protection." I could not have learned any of these things on my own. I need the help of my sponsor and others in the program to see where I need help.

Today when I find myself thinking too much about a particular man, I pray for him: At first,

. . . I used various prayers in the moment of temptations: "I'm powerless, please help me!" "I surrender my right to lust" . . . I want you to bless this person and please help them" etc. It worked, thank



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God! (RC, 39).

Then I learned to pray more positive prayers, such as “What I seek in Him may I find in You” (paraphrased from SA, 165), and “Thank you God for this temptation as well as for the victory” (See RC, 39, bottom of page). These prayers release me from the temptation, and

also give me joy.

One huge gift of recovery is the fellowship. Before SA I was alone, and to surrender the fantasy meant facing the truth that I was alone. Today, I can surrender the obsessions, and when I do I am no longer alone. What a gift!

—Anonymous

## True Union with My Wife

Progress toward a healthier, more intimate sexual relationship with my wife of more than 31 years is one of the gifts I’ve experienced through SA. Even the fact that I’m still married is a miracle. It seems that God always took our wedding vows seriously, even though many times over the years I did not. Before recovery, I harmed our relationship by betrayal and unfaithfulness, fear of inadequacy and abandonment, frustration and resentment, and finally loneliness and despair.

Now my wife and I are friends again. We are finally experiencing the togetherness we wanted when we first got married. SA has given me the tools I need to recover intimacy and to experience true union with my wife:

I can’t have true union with my wife while lust is active because she as a person really doesn’t matter . . . And



I can’t have true union with myself while I’m splitting myself having sex with myself... But . . . by surrendering lust and its acting out each time I’m tempted by it, and then experiencing God’s

life-giving deliverance from its power . . . wholeness is being restored—true union within myself first, then with others and the Source of my life (SA, 42-43).

When I hit bottom in October 2009, my wife was spiritually prepared for what was to come. When I announced that I was leaving her for another person, she looked me in the eye and said, “You’re sick and God can fix this.” Not exactly the response I expected! She had been on a spiritual and healing journey toward God for several years, so when this crisis hit she responded with a whole new set of principles.

After one final relapse, I was



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beaten. I attended a meeting the next day feeling crushed. A member offered to sponsor me at that meeting. I attended more than 90 meetings in 90 days, and I worked a thorough Step One. My wife also got active in Twelve Step recovery. We both understand the principle that our individual recoveries must be our priority. Without individual sobriety and recovery, our marriage will not get better.

One helpful concept comes from “The Solution” (SA, 204): “We discovered that we *could* stop, that not feeding the hunger didn’t kill us, that sex was indeed optional.” When I was new, this reading encouraged me that I could stop acting out. As I’ve progressed in my recovery, I’ve found that there is more than one possible course of action for the married sexaholic: sex is optional—not mandatory, not required—but possible. I’ve found the words of the White Book to be true:

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 (193).

I began to hear other married members talk about sexuality and

I began to have hope that my own sexual relationship in marriage could be restored to sanity.

Today I read all I can about marriage and relationships. *Recovery Continues* has been a vital piece of literature on my journey toward healthier sex in marriage. Articles in this book have provided me with new ideas about topics such as abstinence, romance, and sex in marriage. Helpful articles have included “Abstinence in Marriage” (14-15), “What About Romance and Passion in Marriage after Sobriety?” (28-34), “Why Relationships Did not Work for me as a Sexaholic” (45-48), and “Lust, Sex, and the



Marriage Misconnection” (59-63). Most important, from this book I learned the importance of commitment:

Only when I committed myself to this one person, with no recourse to others, even if it meant being alone, did I begin to see what true

union and love were all about and know the freedom for which I had always yearned (RC, 48).

Step work has also been a continuing source of new ideas and attitudes that have led to healthier relations with my wife. In my Fourth Step, I took inventory of the sexual harms I had done my wife. I saw how selfish I had been. Next, I wrote

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out a sane and sound ideal for my future sex life (AA, 69). I strive to make this new ideal the standard on which my actions and attitude are based.

In the Fifth Step, I cleared out the resentment and shame I was harboring about my relations with my wife. In making direct amends to my wife, I told her I was willing to make things right, and that I would listen to what she had to say about our situation. She didn't respond right away. She asked for time to "think about it," which meant I had to remain willing and continue to listen. What a gift!

Over time she told me what she needed and what I could do to make things right. She reminded me of how things were when we were dating. We had looked forward to being together and making plans to spend special moments together. I do that now. I send her emails and leave her notes, and we plan date nights.

My wife encouraged me to believe that I am the man she wants me to be. That means I make amends to her by letting go of my fear of sexual inadequacy and by surrendering my fantasies about how

I should perform. What a relief! I believe that God made us and He put us together for a reason. Today I believe that our marriage is not a mistake; it's a gift!

A final tool that helps me in my relationship with my wife is prayer. The Step Eleven reading suggests that, "If circumstances warrant, we ask our wives or friends to join us in morning mediation" (AA, 87). My wife and I have used this principle in our marriage. We don't always pray together but when circumstances warrant we do.



Sometimes we pray together before we have sex. Sometimes we pray afterwards. Sometimes it is truly a spiritual experience. Sometimes it is just the two of us doing what two married people do. Either way, if lust is not present, I consider it progress, not perfection.

As a married person in recovery, I am discovering God's plan for me, which includes sex without lust in the True Union of marriage. This is how I'm being restored to sanity today.

—Brad M. , Nashville TN

## A Spiritual Awakening

The behaviors that brought me into SA were very selfish and self-centered. Even though I'd stacked up a pile of nice-guy actions

to justify my abhorrent behaviors, my life was basically all about me and my pleasure. The one person I thought of and whose opinion,

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satisfaction, and happiness mattered most was me.

As for the impact on my wife—well, what she didn't know couldn't hurt her. As for the women I hit on, chased, seduced, or attempted to seduce—their feelings or desires never even entered my mind except as something to be manipulated for my own personal, self-centered ends. Their needs, their lives didn't matter to me; it was all about me and my needs and my wants. Under a veneer of nice-guy giving, I was a voracious and rapacious monster of taking—endlessly seeking love, romance, sex, affection, or approval to fill up the bottomless pit of dissatisfaction in my soul.

I was full of me, me, me. Involute, self-centered, and self-involved, my life was about giving myself sexual pleasure without concern for anyone outside myself. Lost in the egocentricity of the first person singular, my life was a mess.

When I came into SA and was confronted squarely with Step One, I began to see my part. My life began to turn around when I was willing to acknowledge that I was a mess and that I was unable to do anything about it. I then acknowledged that I wasn't the ultimate power in the world,



that there might be something more powerful than me.

Notice that I said “something more powerful than me” instead of “God.” For me as a newcomer, the word “God” was a little alarming. Although raised in a mainstream Protestant faith, I considered myself an agnostic—my clever way of hedging all my bets: “Hey, you can't prove it, you can't disprove it, who knows?” That was my evasive approach to spirituality. I wanted to believe, but I wanted a sure thing. I want to have faith but I don't want to look like a sucker. I'd like to have Somebody Up There in charge, but I don't want to have to do anything. I didn't want anyone to tell me what to do, and I didn't want to be answerable for the results.

In order to come to believe, I needed to give up my ruinous self-will. Before, if I had a tough decision or a choice to make, or if I was trying to figure out what would be the best thing to do, I would consult the greatest authority I knew—myself! This is what's known as a closed system; not a very healthy way to run one's life. In recovery, I first admit that I am not the ultimate authority (that was a bitter pill to swallow), that there is higher authority.

If I don't have the answers (and

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Step One says I don't), then I have to look elsewhere. For me, one way to understand Step Two is that my Higher Power can be anything—as long as it's not me! On the ratings list of advisors, my self-serving ego ranks dead last. I need to follow the directions that my Program, my sponsor, and my Higher Power give me.

Having admitted my powerlessness in Step One, and admitted to a Higher Authority in Step Two, I needed to start practicing Step Three. So I finally took the remarkable step (unprecedented for a control freak such as myself) to “turn [my] will and [my] life over to the care” of this More Powerful Something. This turning of my will over to God is the journey from egotism to being other-oriented.

The rest of the journey happens in Steps Four through Twelve. For me, the amends Steps were key. With my sponsor's help, I made a list of all the people I had harmed (Step Eight), and figured out how I could repair the damage. In Step Nine, I stepped out of the darkness of my self-involvement and paid my debts to the best of my ability. As a result, I no longer need to hang my head and avoid people. I can “lift my head, look the world in the eye, and stand free.”

Some might say that the Spiritual Awakening happens in Step Eleven.



And I'd say, “No, it happens in the first Ten Steps.” I didn't create a conscious contact with God in Step Eleven. This contact with God developed as I worked Steps One through Ten. But in Step Eleven I learn to deliberately listen to God. I learn to use prayer and meditation—talking and listening. When I pray, mainly I pray to be given the understanding of what God wants me to do, and the ability and willingness to carry that out. I've learned that one of the keys to recovery is doing God's will, not my own, and spirituality is God's will, not my own.

As the Twelfth Step says, if I want what the program offers, I have to give it away, to carry the message to other sexaholics. According to the Promises, “No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others” (AA, 84). No matter how hurtful, shameful, or criminal the actions and behaviors were that brought me into these rooms, I can use them and my subsequent recovery to give hope to others, and in so doing give meaning and substance to my own life. This I believe is the spiritual awakening: we have been granted knowledge of God's will for us. For me, God's will is simply to pass on the wisdom of the program, and give of myself in service to others.

—Nick, *White Plains, NY*

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## Thoroughly Following Our Path

Lately I've been meditating on the reading, "Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path" (AA, 58, "How it Works"). I've found myself wondering, Why "rarely"? Why not "never"? To my sexaholic mind, "never" would seem a challenge; "I will prove them wrong!" my disease wants to say. I tend to see the fault in authorities' use of absolute or dogmatic terms, while self-righteously ignoring that I am often guilty of doing the same. I love to prove that they have wronged me, and once again let me down in my demand that they should be perfect to be worthy of helping (parenting?) me.

Thankfully, by the grace of God, our forerunners in AA had the wisdom to say that "rarely" had they seen a person fail—perhaps in a demonstration of humility and wisdom? Maybe they were familiar with the character defects we addicts tend to share, such as defiance, resentment, arrogance, self-righteousness, self-pity, perfectionism, and self-destructiveness. I can be guilty of all of these defects because I am insane.

My ego is next confronted with the words "seen a person fail." Is my sobriety or lack thereof going to

be seen? The idea that my secrets would be seen by others kept me from coming into the program for many years. After being painfully exposed as the result of getting caught while acting out, and then having nothing left to lose, I tentatively opened the forbidding doors and came limping into my first meeting. I finally confronted my worst nightmare.

I had previously imagined that I might die of mortification if anyone ever knew what I had been doing. The idea of being seen and therefore judged as "bad" (as I was convinced I actually was) had seemed an insurmountable barrier to seeking help. This kept me locked in my addiction for many years, and only after a huge amount of pain and desperation did I muster the courage to attend my first meeting. So yes, *being seen* is exactly the medicine I needed to swallow.

Probing further, it seems that being seen (and therefore accountable) is where I often find the motivation to stay sober. Taking advantage of my insecure need to receive approval and acceptance from others, the program has supplied me with a powerful motivator for continued sobriety. I am capable of going to great lengths



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to avoid becoming a “failure” in the eyes of other group members. Over time, this negative motivator has slowly begun to shift toward not wanting to lose the benefits of sobriety such as peace of mind, serenity, and increased feelings of self-worth. But in simple and honest terms, the fear of having to shamefully admit failure is still an ongoing reason for me to not act out, and thereby be able to cling to my new identity as a “sober” sexaholic.

Like a young child looking into the eyes of his mother, searching for confirmation that I am worthy, loved, and approved of, I take the look of acceptance I get from others and use this as the raw material from which I build my inner self. This necessary nourishment—the gaze of love and acceptance of others—is what I have received within our meetings, and this has begun to provide the healing I so very much need. Gratitude and a natural desire to pass on this healing gaze has been the inevitable result of having received what I desperately needed all those years in my acting out. I was “making the Real Connection” (SA, 62). Accepting the look of love has also helped me in daily meditation to imagine myself in the presence of God. It enables me to look into His eyes and allow myself to see and feel His loving

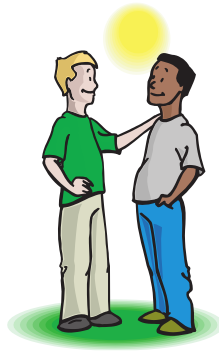
gaze, feel His love for me, and allow my heart to be touched by His heart.

Continuing with the opening sentence from AA Chapter Five, I confront the word “thoroughly.” This word has become the clarion call for me to work my program with at least as much energy, dedication, and perseverance as I previously put into my addiction. Commitment to this work is a necessary ingredient to

my success. I must place the required work, time, and energy of a thorough recovery program above all else in my life—just as I used to do with my addiction. The phrase that comes to mind is, “I need to build my life around my recovery instead of building my recovery around my life.” Without

recovery, I am in jeopardy of losing everything. Whatever life I do build will not be worth living if I continue bearing the weight and pain of my addictions. The choice is mine.

What are the actions I can take that will lead me to successful recovery? The answer lies in the next words of the sentence, “followed our path.” Here once again my rebellious nature threatens my sobriety and therefore my life. I must drop my arrogant belief in the discriminating power of my superior intellect to determine what is right and wrong and what is good or bad for me. Instead, I must follow the



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directions and successful path that others have travelled before. I must follow their lead. I must surrender my pride and my rights to choose, and ask for and follow the direction of others. What a bitter pill for this sexaholic to swallow!

Hat in hand, I am required to approach another and ask him to become my sponsor and guide me. What woeful condition my disease has brought me to! But this has become the ego-smashing course I am required to follow if I want to

recover from the horrible condition I found myself in by doing things my way. As we read at our meetings,

These conclusions were forced upon us in the crucible of our experiences and recovery; we have no other options. But we have found that acceptance of these facts is the key to a happy and joyous freedom we could otherwise never know" (SA, 4).

—Robert M., San Diego, CA



## Upcoming International Convention

January 13 - 15, 2012, Newark, NJ  
"Liberty From Self in New York"

**Early Registration Extended Until October 3!  
Register Now Online!**

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. Please sign up for the tour as early as possible so that we can reserve an adequate number of tour buses.

We want to encourage member participation, and are working hard to accommodate everyone who wants to attend. For more information, visit our website at [www.Libertyfromself.com](http://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. If you click on the "Contact Us" link, you can ask questions, let us know of any special needs you may have, or apply to do service work. We look forward to seeing you all there!

—God Bless, Alan N., Convention Chair



## Note from the Delegate Chair

*Report of the General Delegate Assembly, Portland, OR*



Dear Fellow SA Members:

The General Delegate Assembly met on Thursday and Friday, July 14-15 prior to the July convention in Portland. Attendees included 13 Delegates, seven Alternates, five Trustees, two Trustee nominees, one representative from SAICO, and several observers. Throughout the meetings, I felt God directing our discussions and decision making. What a gift for this fellowship to be able to let go and let God direct us!

### **General Delegate Assembly Actions**

The GDA:

- Tasked the Trustees to study overarching questions related to SA and the virtual world.
- Reaffirmed the current Trustees for another year of service, elected George F. as a new Trustee, re-elected Mike S. for another two years as GDA Chair, and elected Gary L. for two-year term as GDA Vice-Chair. Welcomed four new Delegates: Mike A., Dennis P., Dimitri P., and Nicholas S.
- Approved 2012 Operating Budget (*shown on opposite page along with budgeted and actual Expenses year-to-date; see “Note from the Finance Committee Chair” on page 30*).
- Revised the SA Service Manual regarding Procedures for International Convention planning.
- Tasked the Trustees with implementing a procedure permitting the purchase of all SA literature in electronic format.
- Tasked the International Convention Committee to study a motion to approve one International Convention per year and encourage regions to have regional conventions opposite the annual International Convention.

More information regarding other reports and concerns discussed at the meeting can be found in the full minutes report, to be published after approval at the October GDA Teleconference. See your Delegate for a copy.

### **Recognition of Members Rotating Off**

The fellowship thanks Steve S. and Laurens A., as they step down as Delegates, for the service they have given to SA over the past few years.

Thank you all for carrying the message and for your suggestions and feedback. Topics to be brought to the GDA should come from your groups through the Region. The written topic should include the Region’s research,

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considerations, conclusions, reasons, and recommendations.

May you all find miracles wherever you go! May you create miracles wherever you go! May you always look for miracles wherever you go! And never leave before the miracle happens! May you insist on enjoying your life as you progress through lust recovery.

—Mike S., GDA Chair

SA Financial Snapshot 2011

<b>Budget Item</b>	<b>2011 BUDGET Jan-June</b>	<b>2011 ACTUAL June YTD</b>	<b>2012 BUDGET</b>
<b>Revenues</b>			
Contributions	71,000.00	73,741.47	155,000.00
SACFC	4,100.00	4,497.74	11,000.00
Convention Donations	10,000.00	14,039.12	25,000.00
Literature Sales	30,000.00	37,269.36	62,000.00
Lit Volume Discounts	(3,250.00)	(5,108.96)	(6,800.00)
Interest	600.00	1,174.71	2,000.00
Essay	3,700.00	4,845.00	8,000.00
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>116,150.00</b>	<b>130,458.44</b>	<b>256,200.00</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
Bank Charges	50.00	100.00	200.00
Credit Card Fees	2,100.00	2,664.82	8,400.00
Liability Insurance	700.00	530.00	2,300.00
Professional Fees	1,000.00	1,000.00	2,000.00
Legal	1,000.00	717.00	2,500.00
Accounting	2,450.00	2,312.00	3,900.00
Literature Expense	9,000.00	5,243.53	19,000.00
Labor	65,000.00	64,293.49	134,100.00
Postage and Freight	5,000.00	3,854.30	11,900.00
Office Expense	1,300.00	3,878.81	2,600.00
Printing	3,500.00	4,300.97	8,900.00
Rent	9,000.00	8762.53	18,500.00
Repairs & Maint	250.00	141.80	500.00
Taxes & Licenses	300.00	358.36	600.00
Telephone	3,900.00	2,987.73	5,900.00
Internet Services	2,500.00	2,533.67	4,900.00
Travel	11,250.00	10,856.44	30,000.00
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>118,300.00</b>	<b>114,535.45</b>	<b>256,200.00</b>
<b>Revenues-Expenses</b>	<b>(2,150.00)</b>	<b>15,922.99</b>	

For Additional Budget Info Contact SAICO@sa.org

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## Note from the Finance Committee Chair

Hi all,

A personal highlight from this year's GDA was sharing how our Higher Power has once again ensured the financial health of our fellowship. In quiet that morning, I'd read "We have ceased fighting anything or anyone. . . . We feel as though we had been placed in a position of neutrality—safe and protected" (AA, 84-85). Then I read the news headlines. What a contrast!

Feeling prompted through meditation, I chose to wear a black outfit to demonstrate that SA was "in the black." Imagine my surprise and delight when my co-presenter, Trustee Carlton B., came forward in a white outfit. So there we were, in black and white, sharing stories of God's provision for SA throughout a year of financial and economic turmoil!

The "Financial Snapshot" on the previous page shows our 2011 budgeted versus actual year-to-date expenses, as well as the 2012 approved budget. If you have questions, please email me at [saico@sa.org](mailto:saico@sa.org).

Thank you for your continuing support in helping SA reach the addict who still suffers.

—Dave Mc., Finance Committee Chair



### USA

Albany, OR  
Bennington, VT  
Biloxi, MS (additional group)  
Dover, DE (additional group)  
Houston, TX (additional group)

### New SA Groups

North Miami  
Beach, FL  
Westminster MD  
Wilmington NC (additional group)



### SA Correctional Facilities Update

The CFC is always in need of more sponsors to work the Steps with prisoners by mail. If you would like to learn more about the sponsor-by-mail program or would like to assist us in any other way, please join us on our next teleconference meeting, on October 15, 2011, at 5pm EST. The conference call number is 641-798-4200 PIN 6460229#. All members are welcome to attend. You may also contact me at [saico@sa.org](mailto:saico@sa.org).

—Tim S., CFC Chair



Please submit articles for *Essay* to [essay@sa.org](mailto: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.	CFC, Internet
Mid-Atlantic	Mike A.	
	Dennis P.	
	Nancy S.	Nominations
	Lia F., <i>Alt</i>	International, Literature, CFC
North Midwest	Gary L., <i>V. Chair</i>	Literature, Legal, RAC
	Tony R.	International
	Lee W.	Internet, RAC, Service Manual
	Dmitri P., <i>Alt</i>	International, Conventions
Northeast	Terry O.	Internet
	Peter T., <i>Alt</i>	H&I
Northwest	Farley H.	Internet, RAC, Nominations
	Marie W., <i>Alt</i> .	International
	Will D., <i>Alt</i>	
Southeast	Dave Mc.	COMC, Finance
	Jon B.	Conventions, COMC, Literature
	Robert M.	H&I
	Ed R., <i>Alt</i>	International
South Midwest	Joe M.	International
	Steve L.	
	Glenn J., <i>Alt</i>	International, Conventions, Public Info
UK, Ireland	Nicolas S.	International, Internet, RAC
	Mark P., <i>Alt</i>	



### Trustees

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
Bob H.	H&I, Public Info, Service Manual
Art C.	H&I, Public Info, Conventions
George F.	Finance, Internet, COMC

**Trustees and Delegates can be reached at [saico@sa.org](mailto:saico@sa.org)**

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## Calendar of Events



**October 1, 2011, SA Learning Day**, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. Info at 204-795-3189, email: sawinnipeg@gmail.com

**October 1, 2011**, 5th Annual SA Retreat, St. Louis MO, USA. *A New Freedom & a New Happiness*. Info at: 314-995-2687

**October 14 - 16, 2011**, SA Fall Retreat, Plano, IL. *Willingness is the Key*. Info at 630-415-0341, www.chicagosa.org, or greatretreat2010@yahoo.com

**October 14 - 16, 2011**, Southwest Regional Unit conference, Irvine, CA.

*Keep It Simple*. Info at www.sasanonunity.com

**October 21 - 22, 2011**, SA Ontario Fall Marathon, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Help us celebrate 20 years of SA in Ontario! *A Whole New Way of Life*. Info at satoronto@reptiles.org

**October 21 - 23, 2011** South Midwest Regional Family Reunion, Wichita, KS. *Unity in Recovery*. Info at 316-942-9041, www.sawichita.org, or contact@sawichita.org

**October 22, 2011**, One Day Cleveland Fall Marathon, Westlake, OH. *Stepping into Serenity: a*

*New Way of Life*. Info at 216-456-2233 or email rca2@centurytel.net

**November 4 - 6, 2011**, Sixth Annual Fall Weekend SA Retreat, Greenville, SC. *The Steps We Took*. Info at www.org-sites.com/sc/upstatesa

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

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

*Please submit dates, theme, place, and points of contact. Please contact an international operator for guidance on making international calls. Events are listed here solely as a service, not as an endorsement by Essay or SAICO.*

### 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. You can ask questions by clicking on the "Contact Us" link on our website.



#### July 27 - 29, 2012, SA Nashville, Tennessee

*Three Legacies*. The Sheraton Music City. For information contact us 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.*

# 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.

***TAKE THE ACTIONS OF LOVE***

Easy does it !

**Progress,**

**Not**

**Perfection .**

TAKE THE  
ACTIONS,  
EMOTIONS WILL  
FOLLOW

Bring the inside out ...



*My affirmation:*

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