

Essay

December 2012



Finally Free

A quarterly publication of Sexaholics Anonymous

The Twelve Steps of Sexaholics Anonymous

1. We admitted that we were powerless over lust—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to sexaholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Essay is the quarterly publication of Sexaholics Anonymous

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December 2012



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; or visit SA website at www.sa.org.

Finally Free

I'm Robert, a grateful sexaholic. By the grace of God and the miracle of the SA program of recovery, I have not had to act out since October

10, 2010. I recently celebrated my second SA birthday, as well as the removal of my ankle bracelet. After three and a half years in prison and four years on parole, I am again a free man. But today, knowing that I'm a sexaholic is probably the most important fact of my life.

I had a crazy childhood. In the 60s, when I was five, my mom got involved in a religious cult. We lived together in a compound in the mountains in Northern California. The cult leader gathered drug addicts from our area and tried to "save" them with her religious philosophies. The members worked 12-hour days, then attended cult meetings at night that lasted for hours. Constant scrutiny by the elders and a poor diet added to the stress. At night there would be yelling and screaming and "casting out of demons." Often a member would be called out to stand in

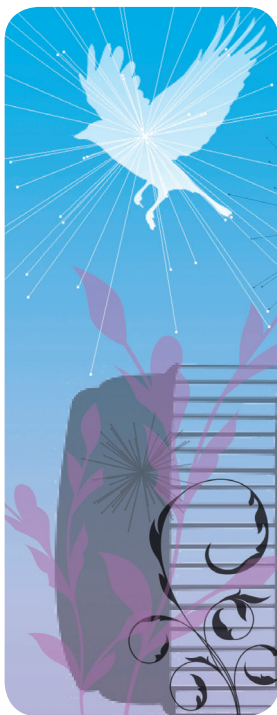
front of the cult leader to be judged. Everyone would turn on that person and reveal any signs of rebellion they had witnessed. After observing

this practice, I became terrified of telling my secrets to anyone. This fear kept me sick for a very long time.

As a youngster, I was involved in childhood sex play with other children from the group. I found this sexual activity to be fun and exciting, but I also felt that it was a bit "dirty" and had to be kept secret. One day the secret came out: the cult leader's youngest daughter told her I'd been "playing dirty" with her. I was told that without the cult's intervention, I would turn into a sex pervert. I was ten at the

time.

When I turned 12, I discovered masturbation, which became a new ritual and an even bigger secret. Guilt and shame began to bother me, and sometime before my 13th birthday, I swore off masturbation forever. I knew early on that my habit was a problem and was hurting me, but I could not stop. Around the same time, I began a pattern



of peeking in windows, which continued for the next 30 years.

When I was 14, I escaped from the cult and moved to San Diego to live with my dad and stepmom. Both of them were alcoholics. My father would come home and drink himself to sleep every night. My stepmom would try to pick fights with him, and sometimes he would beat her. I tried to stay out of their way.

When I was 16, I got my first car and I would drive around in public masturbating. Then I began exposing myself to women. I continued that behavior until I was 43. I exposed myself to women of all ages, from as young as five or six up to just about any age. I estimate that I've exposed myself maybe 600 times throughout my life. I never really wanted to do those things, but I could not help myself. Once I got the compulsion, I could not stop. I would pray "Please God, make this go away," but I could not stop.

When I was 26, I was arrested for indecent exposure. I was sentenced to a couple of hundred hours of community service, which didn't seem like a big deal to me. My fiancée, with whom I was living at the time, never knew anything about it. I went through the process of getting arrested, doing community service, and seeing a counselor—and still, she had no clue! I don't remember how I explained where I was, but by then I had become very good at lying to cover my absences.

One year later we got married. The marriage lasted for six years. By the time we were divorced, I was in a lot of pain over my acting out. For the first time in my life, I had started seeing a counselor on a regular basis. We met every week for six years. He kept asking me why I came, and I would say that I was having relationship or career problems. I was really there because of my sex problem—but I never told him that! Every week I would tell myself, "This is the week will tell him," but every week I could not do it. I thought I would die if he knew how I was acting out.

When I was 34, I went back to school to get a bachelor's degree and then a master's degree in psychology. Then I spent three more years in a doctoral program. I'm a dissertation short of a doctorate in clinical psychology. I thought that maybe if I studied and understood and dealt with all of my underlying issues, then somehow I would have the power to stop acting out. But all of that self-knowledge did not fix me, and I continued to act out.

After finishing my schooling, I began working as a therapist. Four years later I reached a point where I found that—as the Big Book says—I could not give away what I did not have. I could not connect with my clients at the level they needed for healing because of the huge, shameful secret in my life. Over the next couple of years I became very

depressed and finally quit practicing as a therapist. I could not get off the couch and was suicidal at times.

Then one day God intervened. I was arrested again, for burglary as well as for indecent exposure. This time they took my crime more seriously: I was sentenced to three-and-a-half years in prison and four years of parole. I had to get help. As the White Book says, “We had been arrested—stopped in our tracks, but we had done it to ourselves” (SA 83). During the seven-month period when I was out on bail, I finally knew I had to tell someone my secret.

My life became a blur: my wife left me and filed for divorce; we sold our house and a mutual business; the licensing board revoked my rights to practice; and my lawyer explained the cold hard facts of my imminent imprisonment. Looking for help, I found a new therapist. This time I was finally able to be honest. More important, I did some research on the Internet and found SA.

I went to my first SA meeting in September 2007. Before I was sentenced, I was able to attend a few meetings, but I didn’t get a sponsor or read the White Book. I just went to meetings and listened. Then I had to do my time.

Because my felony crime was burglary, I was with placed with the prison’s general population rather

than in protective custody, where sex offenders are usually placed. For a sex offender in that location, prison can be a scary place. I was terrified that if other prisoners knew of my sex crime, I would be stabbed to death.

I went to AA meetings, but I did not continue my SA program—I did not bring a White Book and I did not share with anybody. But I brought my Big Book and stayed sober for up to six months at a time, because for the first time in my life I was serious about stopping. I knew I had to change.

As soon as I was released from prison, I came back to the rooms of SA, because I did not want to return to the nightmare of acting out, telling lies, or going back to prison. Unfortunately, I brought myself back with me. That first year back in SA was tough. I was angry and suspicious. I fired my sponsor after four months because he tried to tell me what to do! Then I told myself, “I’ve been locked up for four years, I deserve to have sex with someone just once!” So I found an old girlfriend who was willing to act out with me. But that did not feel comfortable for me. That’s when I came to the conclusion that I needed to accept SA’s sobriety definition of no sex outside of marriage.

I got sober again and stayed sober for about six months. But



my heart was still not entirely in the program. I started to pick and choose which parts of the program worked for me. I thought that because of my “great educational knowledge” I could decide which parts of the program were valid and which were not. I wasn’t ready to surrender. Lust took over, and I went back to acting out.

Fortunately, God intervened once more. About two weeks later, I was meeting my parole officer when a detective showed up at the parole office. He asked about a crime I had committed ten years before. I was terrified—I thought they would send me back to prison for a very long time. So I fled to Mexico.

After about three months, my brother informed me that he had spoken with an attorney and learned that my crime was beyond the statute of limitations, and I could not be prosecuted! So I made arrangements to turn myself in at the border.

I was arrested at the border and sentenced to nine months in prison for violating my parole. When I was released in October 2010, I finally surrendered. I asked myself, “Robert, are you going to do this sobriety thing or not?” I decided, “Yes, I will do this.” This time, I truly had the desire to stop lusting and become sexually sober.

Back in SA, I started listening to what the program recommends. I learned that I needed to be willing

to take direction. I also learned the most important, miraculous information about my condition: I have an incurable disease. I’m a sexaholic, and—like others who have incurable diseases—I’ll have to treat this condition for the rest of my life. I also learned the solution: if I go to meetings and work the SA program, I can stay sober for the rest of my life, one day at a time. Today I accept that is what I need to do to recover.

I set out to attend at least 90 meetings in 90 days. I attended a meeting every morning and almost every night. In fact, I went to at least 13 meetings a week for almost a year! Most SA members in my area know me now because they could not go to a meeting without seeing me. I knew I needed to work the program with everything I had.

I got a sponsor and made a decision to listen to him instead of telling him what I know. I resolved to follow his directions, whether I agreed with him or not. He’s still my sponsor today, and if he tells me to do something, I don’t ask him why. I just do what he says to the best of my ability. That has made a huge difference in my recovery. Each week we meet together and he guides me through the Step work I have completed that week. So far, we’ve worked through the first Eleven Steps together. Working the Steps has made a radical change in how I think

and live my life today.

Self-care is a key to my recovery. Only when I take care of myself can I help others. Each morning, I read program literature as soon as I get up. Then I pray and meditate, asking God to provide the power and willingness I need that day to stay sober. I ask Him to help me to be useful to others and to keep my ego out of the way.

After that, my phone starts to ring. First, my sobriety renewal partner calls. That renewal call has become important to me; it helps me remember who I am today, where I've been for the last 24 hours with lust, and what I need to do today to stay sober. Then I usually get a call from a sponsee or two. Those calls help me get out of myself. They give me a chance to listen to others and try to help—and giving something back helps me stay sober.

Today I'm filled with gratitude that I came to these rooms and found the solution. I still attend four to eight meetings a week because they truly help. When I first came to SA, all I really wanted was to stop acting out, especially in those deviant sorts of ways. However, SA has given me more than I ever imagined. Most of all, it has given me a God I can believe in, and Who has begun to restore me to sanity. The program has given me a sober life and meaningful friendships

based on shared spiritual values. For someone like me who grew up in a cult, that's a miracle!

SA has taught me that God's will is best. I believe that God loves me, and I believe that He wants me to feel His love and be happy. My responsibility is to do my part in that relationship, and that is really very simple. I need only to surrender to Him daily and seek Him in every circumstance of my life.

The real changes in my life are in my interactions with others. One of the greatest blessings for me is the ability to apply the Tenth Step to relationships. I make mistakes, but I know how to make things right. I can make amends and take the actions to correct my wrongs. That's where the program gets real for me. Today I no longer have to live with guilt and shame. Today I don't hate myself. I can love myself and be a friend to people and help them.

The circumstances of my life are slowly improving. I once had a career and I lost it. But today I have the opportunity to build a new life, a life built on sobriety, on my relationship with God, and on the relationships I've developed in SA meetings.

These things cannot be taken away from me.

When I was acting out, I knew that my life was built on sand. I remember seeing a prison bus going by one day and thinking, "It's only



a matter of time until I'll be on one of those." And I was right—it happened. But today, because of SA, my life doesn't have to be the way it was before. I have hope today, and hope is the miracle of this program. The SA program really does work. Today I can live a useful life following God's will.

As a kid, I thought that doing God's will would take the fun out of life. But through SA, I've learned that doing God's will is more about loving myself and others, and doing what's right. I've learned that God's will works best for everyone. I've learned these things by going to meetings, working the Steps, working with others, and working with my sponsor. This has all been a miracle.

I know that God has given me this miracle because He loves me and I'm His child. But I don't know why I've been so privileged to enjoy this. What are the odds of a sex offender like me ever making it into SA and actually staying sober? Why has God blessed me this way? There must have been thousands of other sex offenders in this county through the years who have never found SA. But for some reason, God intervened and brought me to SA. He enabled me to see my need. And because of that miracle, I am here today, alive, sober, and free.

I am very grateful to be here today, and to be able to share my gratitude with all of you.

—Robert M., San Diego

Carrying SA Literature During International Travel

At their July meeting, the GDA suggested that SA members who travel consider carrying SA literature to areas in need of it, since mailing costs for literature can be prohibitive. So on a recent trip to Asia, I carried in my luggage \$225 worth of literature (*White Books*, *Step in to Action 1-12*, *Recovery Continues*, back issues of *Essay*, and *SA Pocket Guides*) to the Manila SA group, as well as to a member trying to start a group in Delhi, India. I was encouraged to see the gratitude on the faces of the SA members who received the literature. I was also able to attend three meetings on my 16-day trip—and being with other sober members while so far away from home was another big encouragement.

However, as a heads up to those who want to carry literature in their travels: please check weight limits of all carriers if you are carrying literature to multiple countries. The inter-Asia carriers from Manila to Delhi and back charged me by the kilogram for my overweight luggage, so the *White Books* and other literature became costly to transport!

—In love and service, Tim S.



My Buddy Art

On a beautiful spring night in 2009, I was driving to a funeral home south of the city, listening to an old cassette tape, a gift from Art L. “My buddy... my buddy, “ he crooned. “Your buddy... misses you!” The familiar gruff voice with its approximate pitching brought back a flood of memories. I wondered what had happened to my friend.

Back in the late 80’s and all through the 1990’s, there was no more visible member of our fellowship than Art. Dating from 1987, his was the third-longest sobriety of anyone in our city. He attended every meeting, took on countless service jobs, and made countless phone calls to other members. Sometimes it seemed that Art was the glue that held us all together in fellowship. He was the first to offer his phone number to the newcomer, and to request his in return. In fact, he became known for his vast reservoir of phone numbers. As one wag commented, “There is one who has all numbers—that one is Art.”

Art experienced SA sobriety as a personal blessing, a sign from God that his past was forgiven and that he had a mission to fulfill. The first part of the First Step had a special meaning for him: he was powerless over lust, and lust was the driving force behind his sexual acting out.

And since lust was our common problem, how one acted out was irrelevant. In fact, Art used to say that even though he had never acted out with another person, lust had made his life unmanageable and driven him to the rooms of SA.

In a time when same-sex lust was not widely admitted, Art was outspoken about the nature of his addiction. He stated bluntly that it was “lust for men.” In his qualification—what some of us call a “litany”—he spoke about “drinking in men’s faces and voices,” making an explicit connection with the language of *Alcoholics Anonymous*. He counted “compulsive eating and talking” among his character defects. For me, he was an example of rigorous honesty, and a tough act to follow.

I remember one occasion when Art’s “compulsive talking” was done in the service of SA. In September of 1990, the Monday night group was looking for a new meeting place. Art volunteered to approach the rather grand church across the street from his apartment. As backup, he brought along an unsuspecting newcomer with less than a year’s sobriety—me! I didn’t know what I was getting in for! We were met by the pastor and the entire board of deacons—about



twenty in all. As I recall they asked one question—and then Art started talking about SA and never let up. They had to say yes to make him stop. I never got to say a word.

Art was dedicated to carrying the message of SA, the message he said had saved his life and brought him back to God. He monitored the Intergroup phone line. He addressed information letters to doctors and counselors. He organized the Intergroup tape library, placing the tapes in plastic boxes and labeling each one by hand.

But it is as our social secretary that Art will be fondly remembered. Art loved parties and social gatherings, and reveled in the “meeting after the meeting.” At the get-togethers I hosted in my tiny downtown apartment, Art was the first to arrive and the last to leave. For him, after a lifetime of isolation, the “Fellowship of Sobriety” was a precious gift—he couldn’t get enough.

Art was the chair for our Tenth Anniversary Banquet in 1992, when we had our own private “club car” in a restaurant devoted to trains. He loved playing the host. Good food, conviviality, and elegance were combined on that memorable occasion.

I don’t remember whether he sang that night—but he would sing at

the drop of a hat. At Christmas time, he would make the rounds of area nursing homes, dressed in a Santa costume, and sing Christmas carols. His message machine had a new song every week (“bypass by pressing the star key”).

Of course, Art’s humor and taste in music didn’t appeal to everyone. It was easy to make fun of his manic way of talking and his off-key humor. He was so vain about his blue contacts and his black toupee! But we who heard him share at meetings knew his commitment to the God of his understanding, and his devotion to SA.

Then in the late 90’s something changed. We began to miss him at meetings. He cut back his schedule to one meeting a week, and then none at all. His friends called, concerned. The weight he had lost had started to creep back, he said, and he didn’t want to be seen. He would come back soon, he assured us.

But it was not to be. He moved away from the little apartment across from the church, and got an unlisted phone number. He stopped calling.

That’s all I knew as I drove to his wake that night, 10 years later. I and another member of his old home group were the only friends to sign the guest book. There was a little group waiting for us. I met the people Art called his “second



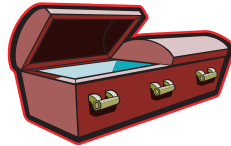
family," who lived downstairs from his parents when he was a child. In the end, they said, he had isolated even from them, and became a recluse. He had put on weight and stopped shaving. He had died of a heart attack. He was 60 years old.

The body in the casket bore little resemblance to the slim, fastidiously groomed figure I had known. Gone were the colored contacts and the black toupée. I recognized only the religious medal he always wore around his neck.

As I stepped out into the warm spring night, I thought of how lucky I am—lucky to be alive, and free, and sober. And I can live a free man today because when I was ready to quit, there were men already sober in this city who

reached out to share their sobriety with me—men like Art L.

He taught me so much. He taught me how to care for people, how to have fun in sobriety, how to throw myself into service work. He showed me how to reach out to the newcomer, the unlovely, still reeking of lust. He taught me the importance of our slogan, "Keep coming back"—and he showed me what my death



might look like if I failed to heed it.

Thanks for everything, Art. Thanks for your service, and your wacky humor,

and the cassette tapes you made with your karaoke machine. Goodbye, my buddy. Your buddy misses you.

—Mike F., Rochester NY

Members Share

Letting Go of My Secret Life

As I travel to many states and countries sharing my recovery message, I'm often asked the same question: "When and how should I tell the people closest to me that I'm a member of SA?" While each situation is different, I try to pass on general principles. The suggestions I offer are based on my own experience, strength, and hope as a member with 28 years of SA sobriety. These suggestions may not work for



everyone, but they have worked for me.

When I first came into SA, I was married and had four teenage children. When I went to a meeting I would casually say to my family that I was going to an SA meeting. Since then, I've also told my sons' wives and eventually my grandchildren that I am involved in SA.

I've shared with my in-laws as well as my daughter-in-laws' parents,

and I've shared with bosses and coworkers. I've spoken frankly about this issue to clergymen at my places of worship and with physicians who have treated me. Last but not least, I've shared my SA involvement with certain friends whom I see socially. However, when I say that have I told them about my SA involvement, I do not mean that I told them my entire story. Most often I would merely say that I had a problem with lust and that the program was helping me overcome this problem.

When I get frightened about breaking my anonymity, I remember what my sponsor would often say: "I've never had anyone lose respect for me for my recovery, but I surely had people lose respect for me when I was in my active disease." Following are some principles that have worked for me in sharing my recovery with others.

1. *Practice Honesty.* "The old me will act out again" is an axiom I've heard in recovery rooms. I had to be willing to change my old ways if I expected to stay sober. The old me lived a secret, double life. I cannot continue living a double life in recovery (although I've seen others try to do so). Some members tend to keep their membership in SA secret from their loved ones. When they go to a meeting, they don't even tell people close to them where they are going. If asked, they will lie about where they are going or

avoid answering the question. This behavior often leads to more distrust from others.

Some members ask, "If I say I'm going to an SA meeting, won't they then ask me why I need such a meeting?" Perhaps they will, but my experience is they don't. If they do ask, I have some suggestions in the following sections regarding what to say.

2. *Let Go of the Shame.* I've accepted Step One in my life, which means that I acknowledge I have an illness. I've accepted myself as a sick man who's getting well. Without this acceptance, my only explanation for attempting sobriety is that I'm a bad man who's attempting to get good. But that thought brings me back to shame, and if I'm in shame, I will have trouble being happy, staying sober, and telling others that I'm in recovery. If I believe that I'm bad, I won't be willing to tell others about the malady.

3. *Tell Only the Simple Truth.* My sponsor taught me the concept of "the simple truth." He would say that addicts either lie or say too much—but in recovery, we learn how to tell the simple truth. My wife often reminds me to answer the question I'm being asked, not the question I think I'm being asked. Let me give an example.

A few years ago we took a trip to an SA International Convention in Salt Lake City. The day before the

convention, we decided to tour the Mormon tabernacle area. After the tour, our guide asked, "What brings you to Salt Lake City?" I replied with the simple truth: "A conference." "What type of conference?" he asked. I said, "A recovery conference." He asked what type of recovery conference, and I said, "A Twelve Step conference." He persisted: "What type of Twelve Step conference?" I continued to give him the simple truth: "I'm attending a conference of Sexaholics Anonymous."

The guide replied joyfully, "Thank God! I have finally found someone who knows about SA. I have a friend who desperately needs help and we have not been able to find SA here in this city." By giving this man the simple truth, I was able to carry the message to someone who needed it.

4. *A Note of Caution About Disclosure.* With my wife and children, I did not tell my whole SA story. I would just merely tell them where I was going when I left the house. From the beginning, I would say I was going to an SA meeting. My teenage children never asked me what that was. This was all done in a natural way. I told my wife the simple truth: that I was in SA because I had a problem with lust. This was no surprise to her!

Regarding full disclosure, I've

heard some members say, "My therapist told me I have to tell my spouse everything." While a therapist might suggest this type of disclosure, I have seen that full disclosure can cause irreparable harm to a marriage. I am relating this from a Twelve Step viewpoint. In our literature, we are told to not say too much, especially when we first come into the program.

In "To the Newcomer" (at the very front of the White Book) we read:

A note of caution: We suggest that newcomers to Sexaholics

Anonymous not reveal their sexual past to a spouse or family member who does not already know of it

without careful consideration and a period of sexual sobriety, and even then, only after prior discussion with an SA sponsor or group. Few things can so damage the possibility of healing in a family as a premature confession . . . Great caution is advised here. (SA ,3)

Input from the sponsor is crucial:

The sponsor could see better than we whether we were merely trying to dump our guilt or were sincerely trying to undo the wrong and make it right (SA, 124)



The AA literature also insists on discretion, and specifically warns against telling too much:

We cannot, for example, unload a detailed account of extramarital adventuring upon the shoulders of our unsuspecting wife or husband. And even in those cases where such a matter must be discussed, let's try to avoid harming third parties, whoever they may be. It does not lighten our burden when we recklessly make the crosses of others heavier. (12&12, 86)

The Big Book also discusses this principle:

Perhaps we are mixed up with women in a fashion we wouldn't care to have advertised... If we are sure our wife does not know, should we tell her? Not always we think... If she knows that we have been wild in a general way, should we tell her in detail? Undoubtedly we should admit our fault. She may insist on knowing all the particulars. She will want to know who the woman is and where she is. We feel we ought to say to her that we have no right to involve another person. We are sorry for what we have done and, God willing, it shall not be

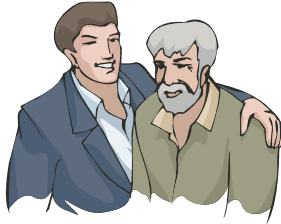
repeated. More than that we cannot do; we have no right to go further. Though there may be justifiable exceptions, and though we wish to lay down no rule of any sort, we have often found this the best course to take. (AA 80-81)

When the time came for me to tell my family the reason I am in SA, I read "The Problem" from the SA brochure to them. I gave the brochure to anyone who wanted one. One day when my 35 year-old son came to visit with his girlfriend, he asked me why I am in SA, and I offered him the brochure. He responded, "I don't want you to read the brochure to me; I want to know your story." His girlfriend was present at the time. I asked whether he was sure he wanted me to say this in front of her. He said yes. I was frightened. I did not know what to say! Then I prayed and asked God to speak for me. Out of my mouth came my qualifier that I say at the beginning of meetings: "I'm Harvey, a sexaholic, and my disease took the form of compulsive sex with self, abusive sex with my wife, and promiscuity, predominately gay."

There was a deafening silence. You could have heard a pin drop. Then I asked, "Do you have any other questions?" All of a sudden this grown man began to cry. He said, "Dad, I want to tell you how proud of you I am for what you are now doing with your life." As the Big

Book says, "The alcoholic's past thus becomes the principal asset of the family and frequently it is almost the only one!" (124).

I believe that for those of us who are really willing and wanting to live a sober life, the God of our understanding will give us the strength to break free from the double life. Tell the simple



truth to your loved ones when it is appropriate. And when you plan to share with your family, check with your sponsor first. Ask at meetings how others have done it. Experience the freedom of letting go of shame and standing tall in sobriety. Then we can all "lift our heads, look the world in the eye, and stand free." (AA, 164)

—Harvey A., Nashville, TN

Sex and the Single Sexaholic

"I'm in a serious, monogamous relationship. I love him, and I'm certain that we're going to get married. Why doesn't SA support sex in this type of committed relationship? I'm able to stay present during sex, and it's about connection, not escape. I don't have religious convictions about waiting until marriage. Plus, it's not as if I'm a virgin! Yet sex outside of marriage is not allowed within our sobriety definition. While everyone is free to do exactly as he or she wishes, we are not considered sober if we have sex with anyone other than a spouse. This seems unfair to the single sexaholic!"



As a single sexaholic woman with other single friends in recovery, I've heard arguments like the ones above more than once. Early in recovery, before I began to experience lasting sobriety and progressive victory over lust, I would say things like that myself. But my sponsor would always tell me to take a year off from dating to concentrate on sobriety and Step work, and a year ago I finally took

her advice. Today I'm experiencing a new freedom as a single woman in sobriety. Now I can embrace SA's sobriety definition in its entirety: "any form of sex with one's self or with partners other than the spouse is progressively addictive and destructive" (SA, 202). This means that married sexaholics can have sex with a husband or wife, but for the single sexaholic it means it means "freedom from sex of any kind"

(192), that is, no sex until marriage. Now that I accept this definition, I would like to try to articulate why I believe it applies to single sexaholics as well as those who are married.

1. *Sex in a dating relationship threatens my objectivity.* As I'm getting to know a potential husband, it is very hard (impossible, really!) for me to be honest and objective when I am being sexual. Sex while dating clouds my thinking. When I date, I want to be able to see my partner for who he truly is and make clear-headed decisions about our future.

2. *Sex is meant to reflect an intimate bond, not create one.* Sex introduced too early in a relationship can create a false sense of intimacy, rather than reflect the real intimacy cultivated through emotional (not sexual) connection.

3. *By choosing not to have sex until I'm married, I demonstrate to myself (and remind my partner) that sex is truly optional.* The best way I can remind myself that I don't have to have sex is by not having sex!

4. *Accepting SA's sobriety definition takes the pressure off me to decide when I am "ready" to be sexual with my partner.* I've often heard in the program: "My own best thinking got me here!" Looking at the track record of my "best thinking" (or self-will), it makes sense for me to accept the wisdom of those who have gone before me rather than think it will be "different" for me.

Even if I think I'm entering into a sexual relationship in a healthy way, I know that my disease is cunning and baffling; I can deceive myself just as easily as I could deceive others.

5. *Accepting SA's sobriety definition is an act of surrendering my self-will and letting go of old ideas.* The Big Book says, "Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely" (AA, 58). My old ideas about sex included the following: (a) that I could control it (when in truth, sexual addiction was having its way with me!), (b) it was an indicator of being loved and important, (c) my sexual behaviors did not affect anyone but myself, (d) intensity meant intimacy, (e) I was "different" than other people and just had a higher sex drive, and (f) waiting to have sex until I married my partner was simply unrealistic and impossible. Choosing to embrace SA's sobriety definition challenges all of these old ideas and frees me to discover new ideas about sex and sexuality.

6. *When I ignore SA's sobriety definition, I affect other people.* In the past I thought that my sexual behaviors only affected me. But now that I have a home group, a sponsor, sponsees, friends in recovery, and renewed relationships with family, other friends, and especially my Higher Power, I know

that if I jeopardize my sobriety, I risk harming all of these relationships. Freedom from lust keeps me emotionally, mentally, and spiritually available for a healthy connection, and it gives me experience, strength, and hope to offer to others.

7. *Accepting SA's sobriety definition reminds me that I have no guarantees about my future and need to live in the present.* Currently, I'm not married, so accepting where I am in life means living as single person, not a married person. If I justify having sex with my partner by thinking, "I'm sure we're going to get married anyway," then I'm living in the future, not the present. In fact, I used this flawed logic ("We're going to get married so it's okay") in my last relationship—which is now over. And also in the one before that! Two men who told me they wanted to marry me and would love me forever...and both relationships fell apart in the end.

8. *I can think of many negative consequences that might result from having sex with a partner while dating, but I cannot think of any negative consequences that would result from abstinence.* Negative consequences of sex outside of marriage might include: awakening lust, creating dependency, secrecy, shame, unplanned pregnancy, and fear. On the other hand, abstinence

can bring self-respect, freedom from guilt and fear, and more opportunities to work my program by surrendering lust.

9. *Refraining from sex while dating gives me time to keep working through the Steps with my sponsor.* It also gives me time to learn about what healthy sex looks like (from listening to the experience, strength, and hope of married SAs) and to develop a plan (in conjunction with my sponsor and outside help) for introducing sex into my life in recovery, when and if I get married.



I once heard sex described as a by-product of sharing, commitment, trust, and cooperation in a partnership. I believe that the best way I can ensure that sex is unselfish is to build a foundation of sharing, trust, and cooperation with my partner, and to wait for the decisive commitment of marriage before having a sexual relationship. Marriage is no guarantee of lust-free sex (my married SA friends talk openly about that!), but I believe I will have a greater chance of sexual health—before and after marriage—if I trust the wisdom of SA literature and the experience of those who have gone before me.

—Shannyn H., Nashville, TN

My Akron Miracle

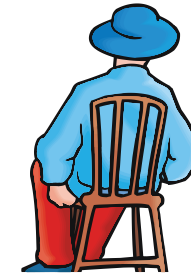
I'm certain that I've experienced miracles from God throughout my recovery. I'm also certain that I'm blind to most of His handiwork. So the times when I can emphatically state "That was a God thing" are very special to me. One such time occurred at my first SA International Convention.

It was in Akron, Ohio in 2008. I was a very shaky, recovering lust addict with six months of sobriety. My wife was overwhelmed and distraught; I feared she would never leave our hotel room. Fifteen minutes before the start of the first meeting, I was sitting in a large hall full of empty chairs and round tables. I was all alone. "All alone" was a feeling with which I was very familiar. I travel in my profession and the past six months had been the absolute loneliest of my life. My family could barely tolerate me, and my old friends were not safe for me in sobriety. So I often sat alone in hotel rooms. And now here I was again in a hotel, feeling alone. I began to whisper a prayer, "God, why am I here?" Then I felt my Higher Power turn the question back to me, "Mark, why are you here? What do you hope to get from this conference?" I thought of some great recovery insight, but I chose to be honest. "I'm tired of being lonely," I

whispered as I choked back a strong emotion. "Can I please have some SA friends on the road, God?" In my mind I thought of the cities to which I travel frequently: Philadelphia and New York. With a dismissive chuckle, I also thought about the city I visit in Germany. Well, two out of three wouldn't be bad! After all, finding an SA member with whom I could meet in Germany was asking a little too much! I closed my prayer.

As if on divine cue, a German accent drifted over to me from a different area of the room. It was like a warm embrace from God. "I'm from Dusseldorf," the voice said. I became overwhelmed with gratitude. Dusseldorf is less than 30 minutes from my hotel in Cologne! In my heart I felt my Higher Power smile as my eyes moistened.

There was a time when I would have ended the story there. But for me today, the next part of the story is the really best part. It is where the real lesson was found. You see, my Higher Power did not put that man from Dusseldorf at my table. No, God put him two tables away. I heard that same voice in my head say, "Now you do the work." I would need to get up out of my safe, lonely seat in the back. I had to do the work of my own recovery. I met



Stefan that day and he continues to be one of my dearest friends in the fellowship. Since 2007, this is the best illustration of how my journey with God works. He shows me a

path, but never makes me walk it. I must do the work. I must take the steps.

—Mark E., San Antonio

The Flimsy Reed

The AA Big Book contains a number of gripping phrases or metaphors. In describing the panic felt by anyone who has hit rock bottom, Bill W. wrote:

We, in our turn, sought the same escape with all the desperation of drowning men. What seemed at first a flimsy reed, has proved to be the loving and powerful hand of God. (AA, 28)

That phrase sounded like some sort of Biblical reference. If it is one, I've never located the passage. I've even googled the phrase and found no other obvious reference dating to Bill W.'s era.

In preparation for creating my drawing, I turned my thoughts to my own experience. When my wife

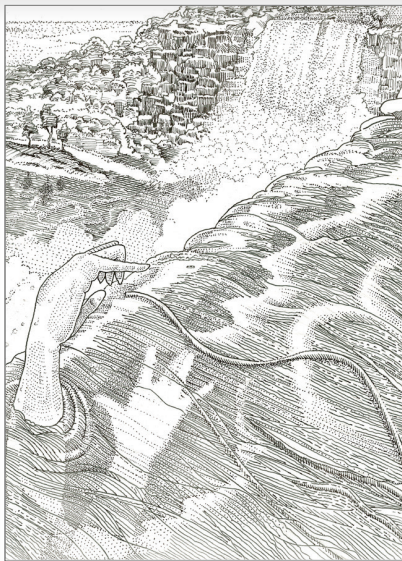
discovered my addiction, she moved out and we were soon divorced. My kids were soon gone. My business was failing. My reputation was gone.

Figuratively speaking, I was drowning.

Numbed, I made my way to an SA meeting. I wasn't impressed at first. It was located in the cramped kitchen of a local church. At that time, the group consisted of mostly baffled people like me sitting in

folding chairs reading from a dog-eared meeting folder. If I expected a large and robust meeting, this was not it. Instead, what I found was a very flimsy reed.

But that first meeting led to another. A week turned to a



The Flimsy Reed
We, in our turn, sought the same escape with all the desperation of drowning men. What seemed at first a flimsy reed, has proved to be the loving and powerful hand of God. —THE BIG BOOK, P. 28

month, then a year. It took time and willingness to cling to that flimsy reed. Once I found some lasting sobriety, I came to see the truth. There, in that unadorned room filled with desperate, drowning people like me, I had been pulled to safety by the loving and powerful hand of God.

My drawing of the “flimsy reed” doesn't add anything to Bill W.'s words. It is merely my sincere thank-you to a compassionate Higher Power who I believe will never let go of me as long as I continue to hold onto Him.

—John I.

Overcoming Expectation and Resentment

I'm Steve, a recovering sexaholic, sober since December 14, 2002. I am living a much better life today, thanks to SA and the Twelve Step program of recovery.

Resentments have always been a big problem for me. I used to let them hurt me a lot. They were like burdens strapped on my back; I could not get rid of them. I took them with me to work, to the store, and everywhere I went. Thoughts of people I resented were in my head when I tried to get to sleep at night.

That's when I decided to stop expecting things to happen the way I imagined they should happen. I found two passages about expectations in the White Book that helped me a lot. I had skipped over these readings before, even though I read though the White book many

times! Now they started to make sense to me:

My continuing freedom is based on attitude; if it isn't open to the grace of God

and others I'm in big trouble. I can take that first drink again any time I want, inside my head, without so much as batting an eyelash! That's why my continued sobriety is predicated on

maintaining a spiritual program—right attitudes about others and myself.

...

For me the key was finally giving up all expectation of either sex or affection, and working on myself and my defective relations (SA, 24)

So I started to put these ideas into action. I stopped expecting



things. If I loaned money and did not expect to get it back, then I was not upset or resentful if I did not get it back. If I did get the money back, then I knew I could trust that person with more. Sometimes I would lose money the next time, but I still was not expecting a return.

I had apologized many times for what I did to several people but never got forgiveness from them. Expectations again! I had to realize that others have the right to not forgive me, not trust me, and even not be around me. So I could not carry resentment for them.

When I was on my way to prison for a sex crime (for which I turned myself in), I left my wife in a pitiful state. She did not even know what was going on. There were people I thought were close to me, and whom I trusted, who said they would check in on my wife and encourage her, but they did not. This took some time for me to forgive and let go. Then I saw that my expectations were to blame. I had to forgive them and go on with my life



After I got out of prison and was back with my wife, sometimes she would tell me she would want to be intimate, and then it would not happen. This was a letdown for a sexaholic! But I was okay because I was not expecting anything. Life is better without expectations and without resentments. I learned this

from SA.

Once, when I had several years of sobriety, I wanted to be a speaker at our regional convention. But instead of me, the organizing committee picked several other members who had only one year of sobriety. I was resentful! I thought I could have done a better job than they might do. Clearly, I was still working on my pride. I had been through the Steps but had only skipped lightly over some of my defects. I did not work on surrendering them daily until much later.

Once, some members of my SA group said they would open the doors of our meeting place and lead the meeting for me while I was out of town. So I gave them the key. But they never showed up and the group had to meet outside or go to a cafe. Yet I felt no resentment, and this is a so-much-better way of living!

Today I realize that a lot of things I was expecting from others were too much for me to expect. When I was finally able to let these disappointments roll off of me (like water off a duck's back), then I was able to surrender resentment. That was progress in my character defects. Some of these character defects have been slower than others to get rid of, but I'm still making progress, one day at a time.

—Steve-e

Working the Steps

Reflections on Step Three

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

For my Step Three, my sponsor suggested that I answer a standard set of questions that we use in our local groups. The answers I found were illuminating for me, and I shared my Step Three with my SA group. The feedback I got from the group was positive—several members even encouraged me to submit my Step to *Essay!* Following is an abbreviated version of my Step Three that I read to the group

1. *In what ways are you aware that lust and problems in your life are a result of the acquired thinking of your mind?* This is new awareness for me. At my first SA meeting, I was aware of my attitude toward the men in the room. They weren't people; just objects that I might or might not use for sex. I learned this attitude from my dad. Throughout my life he objectified women, describing them in terms of their sexual appeal. He also had all of the men's magazines, from which I absorbed my ideas about women's sexuality. I learned to objectify myself. I've always identified myself and all other women in terms of sex appeal.

The images I grew up with made me a harsh critic of men, other women, and myself. I felt I must be perfect and others must be perfect, and I would hate those who I thought looked better than me. As

early as kindergarten, I didn't want any boy to like any girl but me. This attitude made it hard to make friends! I would try to get other girls' boyfriends to like me—not to steal them, just to prove to myself that I could have them if I wanted. I flirted and aroused all kinds of jealousy just to keep my fragile ego puffed up.

2. *In what ways does Step Three call for action on your part?* After I turn my will and my life over to the care of God, I must seek to do His will always: "Thy will, not mine, be done." This involves taking the actions of love and service to others and thinking less about myself.

3. *How have you blocked God from your life? Give examples.* I've blocked God from my life by trying to run the whole show—trying to get the man I think I need, or the clothes, or the job, or whatever—instead of seeking God and trying to understand His will for me. I



often try to implement my own plan without God's help, or even against His guidance. I will ignore it or cover it over it with "good intentions," while hiding my secret motive underneath.

I have little experience trusting that God loves and cares for me, and that He has a much better plan than mine. Also, I don't appreciate other people as children of God. I think only of myself, how I'm affected, what other people might do to me or for me, and how I might manipulate them.

I've used the material world and its "noise" to block God from my life. I get caught up in the haves and have-nots. I've always felt like a have-not; I could see no way out of that. I must learn to accept and receive what God wants for me instead of struggling and feeling sorry for myself because I think others have more. I've been so completely wrapped up in myself that I could not see anything with God's eyes or heart. I catch tiny glimpses—but they are crowded out by the noise of the world. Today, I want to experience Him and His peace.

4. *Explain your understanding of God at this point.* I think that God is perfect calmness and peace. He's the trust I feel deep inside and all around me when I can block out the world and make a connection with Him. That's how I usually feel at a meeting, at church, or when I've shared myself with someone

else in some small way. At church about two months ago, I had a new understanding of my Higher Power as an advocate who is there to defend me. He is there to represent me, as I'm incapable of understanding and accepting myself.

I've always felt that God was too big for the human mind to comprehend, and I've been leery of religious people who claim to know all about Him. But I've been influenced lately by the women in my SA group who trust in God, and I've become more open to allowing His love to enter my heart. Today I know that I can safely turn to Him. This changes everything I ever thought about life.

5. *What do you think self-will is?* My not trusting God. My thinking His plan is not going to be a good one, and that mine is better.

6. *List some of the ways self-will has caused havoc in your life.* Thinking that if only I had some certain thing I was looking for—enough money, the right clothes, the right job, the right friends, the right hair, the right sex partners and the "right" kind of sex—then everything would be perfect. I wanted someone to make all my fantasies come true, so I had to keep looking online. "There must be someone out there!" I would think, "I'm just not looking hard enough!"

7. *"Dependence on God is really a means of gaining true independence." What does this*

mean to you? This means that if I realize my powerlessness and stop trying to control things, then I can relax and enjoy my life, knowing that I'm not in charge. If I stop planning outcomes, then I'm free. Lack of power is my dilemma. But when I give up control and realize God is in control and that He has all power, then I'm free.

In SA I've learned to leave all judgment to God. It's not my job to judge others' attitudes, appearance, behavior, or treatment of me. Being relieved of my duties as judge is quite freeing! When I stop judging others, I'm much less critical of myself.

8. *How did Steps One and Two prepare you for Step Three?* In Step One I admitted I have a problem and need God's help. I can't fix myself. My warped thinking and hostile attitudes cannot make me better.

Step Two was harder for me. I've always believed God could restore me to sanity, I just didn't know that I was insane in the area of sex. Now I understand. I've also come to believe that all aspects of my life (both good and bad), are under the power and control of God. It is insane thinking on my part to believe I can do anything better than God can. I used to believe that it was enough for God to handle my alcoholism, while I retained control of my social life, job. Today I realize that God is the boss of it all, so it's better to stop

trying to run the show and surrender everything to God.

9. *Do you feel you are now truly willing to turn your will and life over to the care of God as you understand Him?* Yes. Lately, I've been reading and learning more about God. I've come to believe that we are all involved in a battle between good and evil. I want to be on the good side, not the evil side. The pursuit of pleasure ultimately leads only to pain. Today I know that good wins over loneliness and pain. I know those feelings, and I don't want to let them get me anymore. The 12&12 discusses the seven deadly sins of greed, pride, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and sloth (48). These are the paths that lead away from God. I want to walk toward God and away from these paths. And He will help me. Today I am ready to say the Third Step prayer:

God, I offer myself to Thee—to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may be a witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always. (AA, 63)
Amen

—Denise, San Diego



Step Nine: My Indirect Amends

Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

When I met with my sponsor to discuss my work on Step Eight, I was surprised that he crossed out several names on my list. He approved of my making direct amends to my wife (who knew about my acting out), but he said it might be hurtful for me to make direct amends to some of the other people on my list. He pointed me to a White Book passage that gives suggestions for making indirect amends (126). He also said that he had read another member's indirect amends published in *Essay*, and he suggested that, as an indirect amends, I write a letter to all those I had harmed and send it not to them, but to *Essay*.

So, at the suggestion of my sponsor, I hereby make a living amends to the following people by never doing these things again; by living a good, sober life; by showing respect to others in my thoughts, behavior, and attitudes, guided by a loving God; and by following other suggestions such as praying for them whenever they come to mind.

- To my daughter, whom I neglected as a baby by immersing myself in porn while she lay crying in the next room.
- To both of my children, for acting out whilst I was with them during their early months and years, so that I was not there with my whole self for them. I often had a headful of lust, "cruising" for images and lust-hits whilst I was supposed to be looking after them, not caring properly for their safety but only for my own lust.
- To my parents, for acting out in their home, including communal areas; for using money they gave me to buy pornography; for using their phone for sex lines.
- To my brother, for invading his

- privacy and stealing from him.
- To an unknown girl whom I used voyeuristically when I was a young teenager.
- To my first girlfriend for my painful emotional ambivalence, my taking her for granted, and my inability to commit to her lovingly.
- To my second girlfriend, for exactly the same behavior toward her. May God bless them both and give them loving and committed partners.
- To the friends I acted out with whilst they were in relationships with other friends.
- To the colleague I acted out with whilst she was in a relationship.
- To the friend I started a lust and romance relationship with,



while never intending to make a commitment to her.

- To my ex-landlady, for acting out in her home, bringing pornography into her home, acting out in communal areas, using her phone for sex lines.
- To my cousin, for acting out in her home, watching pornography whilst she was in the next room with her children.
- To my uncle and aunt for acting out in their home, including using their telephone for sex lines.
- To business owners and the public, for many hours looking at pornography in Internet cafes.
- To my ex-colleagues, for acting out in the bathrooms.
- To the young people in my care for whenever I have looked at them with lust and as fuel for sexual fantasy.
- To my colleagues for whenever I have looked at them with lust.
- To my close and extended

family, for the day I drove them around all day after using the night before. I was not safe to drive and risked the lives of my daughter, my unborn child, my wife, my brother, my sister-in-law, and my mother-in-law.

- To my entire family, for recklessly risking my life, driving unsafely whilst cruising for pornography.
- To my family, especially my wife and children, for risking my reputation and livelihood, and hence their own welfare, through my acting out.

To all of you, I admit that I was wrong, and I am truly sorry. I ask my Higher Power to bless all the people I have harmed, to show me other ways I can make amends to you, and to be willing to do whatever it takes.

— *With thanks to my sponsor and the whole fellowship of SA, T.W.*

Upcoming International Convention

January 11-13, 2013, Atlanta, GA. The Courage to Change



Join us for a weekend of recovery in Atlanta, sponsored by the SA / S-Anon members of the Atlanta area. The convention will be held at the Sheraton Gateway Hotel, at a conference rate of \$85 per night plus tax. Room availability and rate cannot be guaranteed after December 19, 2012. To be sure you get the convention rate, please mention that you are attending "The Courage to Change 2013 Convention." To contact the hotel call (770) 997-1100. For convention registration and additional information, please visit our website at www.couragetochange2013.org.

—*John F., Convention Committee*

Prison Politics¹

If you think your group's business meetings are tense, try having one behind bars.

If not for the last part of the Twelfth Tradition, "place principles before personalities," I would not have managed to stick around the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous. I'll explain. I have heard members say, "Don't leave before the miracle happens." I have seen many miracles occur in the rooms of AA over the last 15 years.

For a fact, I am evidence that miracles do occur; however, I refuse to allow my ego to tell me that I am a miracle.

Once upon a time I was antisocial, but I stuck around until AA turned me into a social butterfly. That alone is a miracle, indeed, since my natural tendency when confronted with difficult issues--during a group conscience, or in the context of any large group of people I don't care to be around--is to say the hell with it, and to then get the hell out, rather than to participate in working out the issue. Many times when I had

had enough of the political B.S., God sent his messenger to change my direction. You see, I learned AA in a men's prison, and since prisons are dominated by people with personality disorders, myself included, you can imagine how



political meetings can become when fueled with testosterone and sometimes driven by megalomania, with a touch of more severe mental conditions.

One of the people God used on more than one occasion was

a hospitals and institutions (H&I) worker and retired school teacher named Jack, who came into the meetings at the federal penitentiary in Lompoc, Calif. He came in to share his experience, strength and hope on a regular basis. His favorite saying was, "Sometimes you've just got to stop and feel the pain." Many of us loved him and several other H&I workers who came in to carry the message of hope to us scoundrels. Jack knew I sponsored several men whom I sometimes got frustrated with for not following

my advice, and for then coming to complain when other issues developed when they didn't follow what I suggested. About four times, as I reached to give him a hug at the end of our meeting, he said to me, "Wayne, you're doing a good job with these guys. Don't give up on them."

It was a miracle that he could read my innermost thoughts. My response was always the same. "I'm not doing anything. If any good is coming from me, it's just God using me, because I am a sinful, wicked creature."

His words never failed to make me stay. I didn't want anyone giving up on me, so when he put it like that, I never gave up on them or myself. After all, doesn't the Big Book mention that love and tolerance is our code? Aren't we supposed to practice humility? My ego had always tried to kill me, and it continued to do so after I entered the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous. I had to learn to let others try it their way. Just as I had to learn that my way wasn't working, so did they. All I did was voice my honest opinion and refer to some part of the Big Book or Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions for them to read in search of an answer to their dilemma.

Jack died a few years ago, but his words remain ingrained in my mind and soul. His, and the words of many others, shaped the direction of

my life. If not for his words, I would have placed personalities before principles.

The Fifth Tradition reminds me why I am there and that I have a job to do: to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers. The Third Tradition tells me that only I can decide whether I am a member, a privilege to me as well as to others. I can't determine who needs to be there other than myself; nor can anyone else determine whether I qualify as a member. It's my decision! Should I choose to be judgmental and decide I know what's best, or who should or should not be there, the Second Tradition reminds me of who's in charge: a loving God as he may express himself in our group conscience. Not Wayne D.

My focus needs to remain on being the student. If I do not remain teachable, I will remain ignorant. God gives me lessons in humility when my ego gets out of control and wants me to believe I am the teacher. He does that on a consistent basis to keep me humble.

Five years into my sobriety, I commented to my sponsor, Curtis L. (now deceased), that I had finally figured out that it's not about me and how many meetings I need. It's about being there for the next person. He said, "You got that right, my man." And it's true. It's not about me in the context of the meetings, nor is it about how many meetings I

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need to attend; it's about being there for the alcoholics who still suffer. I get blessed with another day of sobriety when I lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in my fellow members, thus being selfless by showing up at a meeting when I have other things I may prefer to do. The Promises in the Big Book assure me of that, in my opinion.

Many of the H&I members commented on how, in there, we did "AA as it's supposed to be done." Several other members from that group are now free citizens living the AA way of life. Lives changed because, as a group, we followed the Traditions and practiced their principles; as members, we learned to live the Steps.

I am proud to have been part of a life-changing experience. I continue to be active in the program by practicing its principles in all my affairs, mostly. I am also grateful to

all of those who have played a part in my sobriety by teaching me how to be a better person, by example and by loving me in light of my many character defects. I now have numerous friends I met through AA. We share the common bond of recovery and have lots of love for each other.

I started serving a 35-year federal prison sentence on Aug. 18, 1988.



I have several years to go, and, since I am a recidivist, I know how easily one can return to prison. I also know—through the examples of my brethren who have been released and are doing OK out there by going to AA meetings and conventions, having sponsors, sponsoring others, etc.—that AA will work as well for me out there as it does in here, providing that I place principles before personalities.

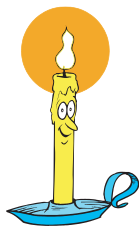
— Wayne D., Edgefield, S.C.

Holidays

Grateful for the Fellowship

The holiday season can be the most most difficult time of year for many of us, myself included, but it is important to remember that we truly are blessed. Blessed with friends who care about what happens in

our lives—friends who care about us in spite of our past, not because of it. If I have learned nothing else during my time in SA, I have learned that I never need to be



alone again.

Yes, blessed indeed! I am honored to be associated with such a fine group of folks that I would not otherwise have had the opportunity to know. Regardless of how I feel physically, emotionally, or spiritually, there is always someone I can reach, either by phone or just by sending up a prayer on the wings of love. If I can remember to ask God, as

Greetings On Our 10th Christmas¹

Yes, it's in the air! The spirit of Christmas once more warms this poor distraught world. Over the whole globe millions are looking forward to that one day when strife can be forgotten, when it will be remembered that all human beings, even the least are loved by God, when men will hope for the coming of the Prince of Peace as they never hoped before.

But there is another world which is not poor. Neither is it distraught. It is the world of Alcoholics Anonymous, where thousands dwell happily and secure. Secure because each of us, in his own way, knows a greater power who is love, who is just, and who can be trusted. Nor can men and women of AA ever forget that only through suffering did

I understand God, to help me to reach out to another sexaholic, I stand a good chance of remaining sober today.

As I thank God tonight for another day of sobriety, I pray for all of you who have shared your sobriety with me in this great fellowship of SA.

— Anonymous



they find enough humility to enter the portals of that New World. How privileged we are to understand so well the divine paradox that strength rises from weakness, that humiliation goes before resurrection; that pain is not only the price but the very touchstone of spiritual rebirth.

Knowing its full worth and purpose, we can no longer fear adversity, we have found prosperity where there was poverty, peace and joy have sprung out of the very midst of chaos. Great indeed, our blessings!

And so,—Merry Christmas to you all—from the Trustees, from Bobbie and from Lois and me.

— Bill Wilson

¹ A 1944 Christmas letter written by Bill Wilson and sent to all the members of AA at that time. see <http://www.austinrecovery.org>

Note from the Delegate Chair



Dear SA Family:

With a heavy heart, I'm sharing the sad news of the deaths of Roy K.'s son Howard, Howard's wife, and their son. Thank you all for your prayers, respect, love, and kind thoughts now and in the future for the family. I visited with Iris, sharing SA's concern, prayers, and thoughts for her and her family. She expressed her love and appreciation for the fellowship and how we have rallied around her family.

Through the SA fellowship and getting to know Roy, Howard became a personal friend of mine. After Roy's death, Howard was a champion for our fellowship and for the legacy that Roy left. He was a brother in the recovery family. The passing of Howard and his family members has caused me to reflect on my own mortality—and I was able to feel peace, happiness, and joy. This is due in part to Howard's ability to share himself with me, as well as his love of life, his personal relationship with God, and his recovery process. I will miss him and the joy he brought me, and the way he taught me to insist on enjoying life and to not take myself too seriously.

May all of us remember the great times we've had with Roy and his family; especially those of you who knew them personally. Remember to continue to do the next right thing in your own personal life and journey of lust recovery. And may all of you find peace during this storm.

Thanks again for the comforting thoughts you will continue to give Iris and her family, and for all the service you render to the SA fellowship.

—May God bless you, Mike S., GDA Chair

SAICO Financial Update

Following is a summary of SA fellowship revenues and expenses for Third Quarter 2012. A detailed donations report is enclosed with mailed issues of *Essay*. The report is also available from SAICO. To request your copy, please call SAICO at 866-424-8777 or write to saico@sa.org.



SAICO Financial Update Third Quarter 2012	
Donations	43,000.00
Other Revenues	21,080.00
Expenses	67,998.00
Revenues (less expenses)	-3,916.00
Total Prudent Reserve	182,559.00

Delegates and Trustees

Delegate	Region	Committees
Mike S., <i>Chair</i> Tom K. Eric S. Jim C., <i>Alt</i> Steve C. <i>Alt</i>	Southwest	COMC, Conventions, Sv. Manual, Finance Conventions, CFC, Nominations CFC, IT, Public Info (PI) Finance, Conventions, IT CFC, PI, Service Manual
Mike A. Dennis P. Mike S., <i>Alt</i>	Mid-Atlantic	Finance, Legal, Conventions COMC
Gary L., <i>V. Chair</i> Scott S. Dmitri P.	North Midwest	Literature, Legal, PI IT International, Conventions, Literature
Terry O. Gary M., <i>Alt</i>	Northeast	IT, PI Finance, Nominations
Brian W. Marie W., <i>Alt.</i>	Northwest	International, Conventions
Jon B. Ed R. Art S. Dick B., <i>Alt</i>	Southeast	Conventions, COMC International, IT, Literature COMC, Literature International
Joe M. Steve L. Glenn J.	South Midwest	RAC, Finance COMC, PI International, Conventions, PI
Hans L.	German Speaking	Literature, CFC
Francis C.	EMER*	H&I, International, PI

*EMER = Europe & Middle East Region

Trustee	Committees
Bob H., <i>Chair</i>	CFC, RAC, Conventions
George F., <i>Vice Chair</i>	IT, Finance, COMC
Betsy T.	Legal, Service Manual
Jerry L.	Nominations, Literature, International
Nicholas S.	International, IT, RAC
Laura W.	Literature, H&I, PI
Mike D.	COMC, H&I, PI



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

Calendar of Events



January 4 -6, 2013, SA
Winter Convention, Traf-
ford Hall, Chester, United
Kingdom. *Our Higher*
Power: Info at sauksecre-
tary@gmail.com

April 26 - 28, 2013, SA
Ontario Spring Retreat,
Wyevale, Ontario, Canada.
Living in the Solution.
Info at 416-410-7622 or
sa@saontario.org

*Please contact an interna-
tional operator for
guidance on making
International calls.*

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

March 15 - 17, 2013, SA
Workshop, Bonheiden,
Brussels, Belgium. Info at
info@sexholics.be

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

New SA Groups

USA

Austin, TX
Bradenton FL
Idaho Falls ID (add'l meeting)
Leeds, Yorkshire, UK
Littleton, CO (add'l meeting)
McMinnville, TN
Minneapolis, MN
(add'l mtg)
Nashville, NC



Opelika, AL
Seward, AK
Waynesville, MO

International

Antwerp, Belgium (English lang.)
Manila, Philippines (add'l meeting)
Plymouth, UK
Tokyo, Japan (English speaking)
Aberdeen, Scotland (add'l mtg)
Szdloweic, Poland
Vienna, Austria

Upcoming International Conventions



January 11 - 13, 2013, Atlanta, GA. *The
Courage to Change*. Join us for a weekend
of recovery in Atlanta sponsored by SA / S-
Anon members of the Atlanta area. Sher-
aton Gateway Hotel, Atlanta, GA 30337. For

more information visit our website at www.couragetochange2013.org.

July 19 - 21, 2013, Baltimore, MD. *Change
on the Chesapeake*. For more information,
visit our website at [www.changeonthechesa-
peake.com](http://www.changeonthechesa-
peake.com) or email us at [info@hangeon-
thechesapeake.com](mailto:info@hangeon-
thechesapeake.com)



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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. Essay 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.

