

Essay

June 2012



Starting Again With God

A quarterly publication of Sexaholics Anonymous

The Twelve Steps of Sexaholics Anonymous

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

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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.

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Starting Again With God

I'm Alan, a grateful recovering sexaholic. I've been sexually sober by God's grace since May 10, 2004. I believe that I was born with this disease. In the past I was only able to give in to it, but today, because of SA, I can choose sobriety.

I began acting out when I was six, after I found an adult magazine in a barbershop. Pornography and masturbation followed me through my teenage years into adulthood. I would buy magazines and videos, then destroy them after I used them, promising myself "never again." Yet the next morning I was searching for more.

When I was around 35, I discovered dial-up porn on the Internet. How frustrating that was, waiting for the images to download! Yet the wait did not stop me. I spent hours on the computer.

When I got married, I promised to be faithful to my wife and I meant it. But lust was stronger than my resolve. Masturbation was my nightly sleeping pill. Over the course of our 20-year marriage, I had sex with prostitutes many times. Sometimes,

after I had sex with my wife and she was asleep, I would go cruising to act out with a prostitute. Yet nothing was ever enough. I was addicted to more. Dr. Bob described perfectly what my life was like before I came

into recovery: My whole life seemed to be centered around doing what I wanted to do, without

regard for the rights, wishes, or privileges of anyone else; a state of mind which became more and more predominant as the years passed. (AA, 172)

I always knew that what I was doing was wrong. As a religious Jew, I prayed every day for 20 years, asking God to help me stop what I was doing. Every Sabbath, every weekday, every year, every opportunity I had, I would pray. I would wake up Friday nights at 1:30 am and recite the entire book of Psalms. I would fast. I would cry. I would beg God to remove this thing. I didn't know what it was, but I wanted it removed. No more prostitutes and no more pornography!

I was so disgusted with myself



that I was actually able to stop going to prostitutes two years before I came into SA. Yet I still could not stop the pornography and masturbation. What was wrong with me?

Before I came to SA, I held a prestigious position in New York. I got caught looking at porn at work when I was 40. The head rabbi confronted me. I denied it. He said, “No one will hear about this from my lips, but you need to create a reason why you can’t come back to work next week.” He knew that I had connections with other rabbis, and he told me to pursue my career elsewhere.

I clearly remember that day. Today I know that this was the best thing that ever happened to me, but at the time, I thought it was the worst day of my life. In my tight-knit religious community, my family would have been destroyed if the word had gotten out. I went home and acted out. What else could I do? That was the only way I knew to cope. I felt lost. I could not sleep, I could not say my morning prayers. I had thoughts of suicide but no specific plans. The jig was up.

The next day, a Friday, I called a couple of colleagues in other cities. One of them called back just before the start of Sabbath that evening. He said, “You’re coming to Toronto next week. I got you a position here.” I knew he was working in Toronto, which happens to be the place of my birth. I had many questions.

He said, “Just come next week and we’re good to go.” I got fired on a Thursday and I would begin work the following Monday, so I did not miss even a day of work. This position lasted for two years—proof to me today that God never left me.

I was sharing an apartment with my colleague, and I immediately began scanning my environment for places to act out. In order to feel comfortable, I needed to know where I could go should the need arise. After what had just happened, you might think that I would realize I had made a huge mistake and would make changes so that this would not happen again. But I’m not a normal person. I’m a lust addict. And I was not ready to stop.

I started with the phone book (a familiar place in my acting out days) in my quest to act out. That first day, I saw “Sexaholics Anonymous” in the Toronto phone book. I thought this might be a great place to act out! So I dialed the number. I did not hear the whole message, but I clearly heard the word “sobriety.” This word triggered a memory for me from five years earlier.

Five years before, as I was watching a television talk show, I saw a doctor who said he was a sexaholic. He had two years of sobriety at the time. He brought a panel of people with him on the show, and they all spoke about their sexual addictions—including a priest who had lost his position. This was

my first awareness that I was not alone with my problem, and that it was a disease! I felt like a newcomer who walks into a meeting for the first time. I was shocked!

I tried to find this doctor using the Internet (before modern Internet search engines). I tried to find previous episodes of the talk show so I could get in touch with him. I had tried to find him for five years without any luck, so when I heard the word “sobriety” on the SA hot line, I thought, “Maybe this is what I’ve been looking for all this time!”

No one called me back right away, so I called again the next day and left another message. I said, “I’m a rabbi and I got caught. I need help.” A Jewish man I knew from childhood in Toronto called me back. He asked, “Will it help you knowing that I’m a religious Jew in SA?” I said that it was really helpful! I agreed to meet him and we spoke for a few minutes. He said, “There’s a meeting next Monday.”

The meeting was held in a church. That was a bit of a problem because religious Jews are forbidden to enter a Christian church. (Of course if I had wanted to go there to act out, I would not request my rabbi’s permission!) I called my rabbi on Sunday and said, “I need to go to a church for a meeting.” He asked, “Do you have to go?” I said, “I have to go.” He said, “Then go.”

I started attending meetings that Monday in October 2001. I

was scared, but I kept going every week. I went directly from work, without going home first. I would hide my White Book in my bag so my coworkers wouldn’t see it. I was petrified of being found out. My first sponsor would say “Alan, the last thing your coworkers are thinking is that you are on your way to a meeting of sexaholics.” But I was sure that’s what everybody was thinking.

When I had struggles I would call my sponsor and ask what to do. He would say, “There are three things you need to do to stay sober: call your sponsor every day and listen to his advice, go to meetings every week and share at those meetings, and pray every day for God’s will for you.”

I kept two of those instructions really well. I called my sponsor every day and I followed his advice. I was given a specific time to call him: 7:15 am. Some days I called him right back after I hung up from that call, because I was afraid I would act out. I went to SA meetings and I shared. I went with my sponsor to open AA meetings. I worked the Steps with my sponsor, and I got sober. But I wasn’t recovering, and I wasn’t humble—at all.

I had a big problem. My sponsor’s third suggestion I could not follow: I could not pray for God’s will for me. I hated God. I was angry with Him for not answering my prayers before. After a year and a half

in SA, I told an old-timer, "I'm really angry. I prayed for 20 years to stop acting out. Is God deaf?" He replied, "God answered your prayers. He brought you to SA, just not in your time." But I was not ready hear this.

I met Roy K. at my first International Convention, in Portland in 2002. He told me, "Keep seeking God and you will find Him." But that wasn't good enough for me at the time. I came into SA with a Biblical God who I felt did not work for me, and I did not want to have anything to do with Him. He had not helped me in the past, so why would he help me now? I could not get past this. Besides, I was sober, and I thought I was cured.

This attitude nearly killed me. After two years of sobriety, I stopped going to meetings, stopped making phone calls, and I relapsed. I went through eight long and lonely months of hell. My wife threw me out of the house. I went into rehab for sexual addiction. After that, she took me back. But I could not get sober. I pray I will never forget the pain I went through in those eight months.

When I got sick and tired of being sick and tired, I went to a friend in the program and said, "I can't get sober. I need help. He said, "Why don't you call someone every day and tell him that you're a

sexaholic?" I said, "Okay, can you be that person for a few months?" And he became my new sponsor. And that's what I've been doing every day for the past eight years. That's how I practice Step One today—I call someone every day and say, "I'm Alan, I'm a sexaholic."

The real turning point for me, however, was my Step Two experience: the belief that a power greater than myself *can* restore me to sanity. No matter what my experience had been in the past, today I know that with His help, I can change. But first I needed to find a Higher Power who worked for me.

Early on, when I struggled with developing a relationship with a Higher Power, I went to Roy for help. He said, "Alan, you need to give up the rituals, they are blocking you from God." I did not understand this. How could I? These were the things I had been taught all my life. They were a fundamental part of my religious practice. But I was desperate. I finally took Roy's advice to seek a God of my own understanding.

I had to completely let go of my old life. I made decisions that went against the grain of my religious community, my beliefs, and my family. I would love to say that this was easy for me, but it was not. How could I let go of what I believed



to be true? Yet I had been told my rituals were blocking me from God.

I don't know why—and this may not be true for anyone else and it is certainly not a requirement for sobriety—but for me and my own recovery, I had to completely let go of my old ideas about God. I had to unlearn everything and start all over with God. One day I told my rabbi, “I can't do this anymore,” and I gave up the rabbinate. I stopped all my religious practices.

During this time I felt isolated and alone, even in our fellowship. I felt that no one could relate to my struggles. I lost spouses who were religious when they learned I was no longer a practicing Jew. I isolated from the world. But I blindly stuck close to the program. I went to lots of meetings, called my sponsor daily, and took his suggestions. And I started to get healthy. I must have been very sick because it took me a very long time.

Today I believe in a God I can trust and who has my ultimate good at heart. Since those early days, I've grown in my relationship with Him. The God of my experience does not always do what I want, or what I think I need, or what I've requested. But I believe today that everything God does in my life is for my benefit. I never thought it would be possible to feel such an intimacy with God, or to feel love and acceptance from Him.

I still struggle with lust at times, but that's because I'm a sexaholic. God doesn't reject me. I don't have to feel shame. If I struggle with lust thoughts or if I look or flirt, I can immediately call someone and share what I'm going through, and move on. When I make that call, the rest of the day goes the way it is supposed to go—because I have a loving God who has all power and who can change me, when I surrender my will to Him.

Today, I've learned to love and accept myself. I have an intimate relationship with my wife that I thought was possible only in the movies. Sex is unimportant. We have something much greater today: intimacy. I never knew there was a difference. I have a love for my wife so dear I would do anything for her, except one thing: I cannot stay sober for her. I must stay sober for me.

My disease is stronger than my marriage. It is stronger than my intimacy with my wife. All of the good feelings that I have are not enough to keep me sober for even one day. But to pick up that phone, call another sexaholic, and say that I'm a sexaholic seems to be powerful enough to keep me sober. I don't know why. I don't get it. I only know this is what works for me today.

Today, the love that I feel from God permeates my being. I've started to love my children. I even started to love my parents, whom I

previously hated and blamed. I made amends to them recently. I called my father and said, "Dad, I need to make amends for being disrespectful, and for avoiding you at times. I'm not proud of it." He replied, "Not at all son, I have the greatest love and respect for you." He didn't change. He's 83 years old. He always had the greatest love and respect for me. But I'm a sexaholic, and I don't always perceive things correctly.

I would love to say that I'm "cured," that I'm good to go and I'll see you in 10 years. But this good life and my sobriety today won't keep me sober tomorrow. Today I can stay sober because I took an action. Tomorrow I have to take another action. But that's okay, I'm not worried about tomorrow, because for today I'm okay.

Through the fellowship of SA, God has changed every aspect of my life. Instead of focusing only on what I want, today I am able to help others. I am amazed that, with my background and my struggles, I can help anyone. Yet I have had the opportunity to serve in many ways: I lead meetings, sponsor others (even religious Jews!), and have been involved in service beyond our local region (including chairing an International Convention). These



are truly some of the greatest gifts of recovery. By God's grace, my life has been transformed from a self-centered, angry human being to a loving, happy child of God.

Bill W. describes so beautifully how I feel about my life today:

Service, gladly rendered, obligations squarely met, troubles well accepted or solved with God's help, the knowledge that at home or in the world outside we are partners in a common effort, the well-understood fact that in God's sight, all human beings are important, the proof that love freely given surely brings a full return, the certainty that we are no longer isolated and alone in self-constructed prisons, the surety that we need no longer be square pegs in round holes but can fit and belong in God's scheme of things—these are the permanent and legitimate satisfactions of right living for which no amount of pomp and circumstance, no heap of material possessions, could possibly be substitutes. (12&12, 124-125)

I am grateful to God and to all of you in the fellowship for my sobriety today.

—God bless, Alan

A Program Based on Joy and Love

We began practicing a positive sobriety, taking the actions of love to improve our relations with others. We were learning how to give; and the measure we gave was the measure we got back. We were finding what none of the substitutes had ever supplied. We were making the real connection. We were home. (SA, 62)



I have been sexually sober now for 28 years. When I first came into SA, the fear of relapsing (and of the subsequent pain that relapse caused) helped me to maintain my sobriety. Fear of getting another venereal disease, fear of being arrested, fear of losing my wife and family, and fear of getting further into financial difficulties all seemed paramount to me. But today I know that fear and pain are not enough to keep me sober.

Over the years, I have watched many people come into SA full of fear and pain, convinced they would never act out again, and yet they did. I saw that fear of acting out and pain from consequences of acting out were not enough to keep them sober. Thus I realized early in my sobriety that fear and pain would not be enough to protect me from my addiction.

My sponsor would often say that God gave us all a gift. The gift was to forget pain. He would say that if we did not have this gift of forgetting pain, women would never have more than one child. But forgetting

is also a part of my disease. As I recover, my disease tells me I don't have a disease anymore. It tells me that it was not so bad. What could it hurt to loosen up a bit on my program? But I know that this type of thinking will lead to a downward spiral and into an abyss of chaos.

So if I do not have fear or pain, then what remains to keep me sober? I began to realize that, in place of fear, my program had to be based on the joy and the love of living. Although I can never forget where my sexual addiction took me and the pain of the consequences of acting out, I need to have a program of positive sobriety also. The words, "Don't do this; don't do that; no, no, no," were not enough to continue my journey into progressive victory over lust. The White Book makes this point strongly:

I was not cheating on my wife. I was not having sex with myself. I was not looking at the pictures or going to those places. Not, not, not. . . For months and months I was NOT. Until one day, NOT was

not enough, and I went back out there. (SA, 145)

Love and joy are emphasized in the AA literature as well:

The joy of living is the theme of A.A.'s Twelfth Step, and action is its key word. Here we turn outward toward our fellow alcoholics who are still in distress. Here we experience the kind of giving that asks no rewards. Here we begin to practice all Twelve Steps of the program in our daily lives so that we and those about us may find emotional sobriety. When the Twelfth Step is seen in its full implication, it is really talking about the kind of love that has no price tag on it. (12&12, 106)

We are also told:

We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous, and free. We cannot subscribe to the belief that this life is a vale of tears, though it once was just that for many of us. But it is clear that we made our own misery. God didn't do it. Avoid then, the deliberate manufacture of misery, but if trouble comes, cheerfully capitalize on it as an opportunity to demonstrate His omnipotence. (AA, 133)



When I first came into SA, I had absolutely no idea what any of this meant. I had to be taught by my sponsors and others who had gone before me in the program what love and joy were all about, and what positive sobriety meant. Following are a few of the principles I have learned:

1. *Connect with God first thing in the morning.* I tell Him throughout the day how much I love Him. I now accept his unconditional love for me and steadfastly work on having unconditional love for God.

2. *Cultivate enjoyable activities.* I will never forget when Jesse, my sponsor, asked me what my hobbies were. "What is he talking about?," I thought. "I am a busy man. How can I have time for hobbies?" He quickly set me straight. With his support I developed many fun hobbies. I now create multi-media videos for family events. I do family tree research. I garden. I write articles for *Essay* at times. I am a movie buff. These are just a few examples.

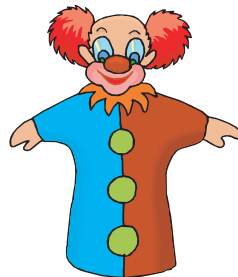
3. *Make gratitude lists throughout the day.* I begin my day writing a gratitude list of 20 items. Throughout the day I continue my conversation with God by thanking Him for all the wonderful things in my life. My sponsor would say that God is very busy and does not

need to hear complicated prayers. He would say that God loves short prayers, and the short prayer God loves most is "Thank you." I joyfully thank him for all the gifts he has given me, especially the gift of sobriety.

4. *Have fun.* As we read in the Big Book,

But we aren't a glum lot. If newcomers could see no joy or fun in our existence, they wouldn't want it. We absolutely insist on enjoying life. ... So we think cheerfulness and laughter make for usefulness. Outsiders are sometimes shocked when we burst into merriment over a seemingly tragic experience out of the past. But why shouldn't we laugh? We have recovered, and have been given the power to help others. (AA, 132)

One day when I was very upset, I called my sponsor. Instead of trying to solve my problem or soothe my injured pride, he asked me a ridiculous question (at least in my opinion!). He asked, "Harvey, what do you do when you go to a circus and see the crazy antics the clowns perform?" I begrudgingly said "I laugh." He then said that is exactly what I needed to learn to do about



the crazy antics I do each day. I needed to learn to laugh at myself. He suggested I buy a toy clown and place it where I can see it each day. The clown was to remind me to not take myself so seriously. I have used that clown now for the past 27 years.

I emphasize laughing a lot at our SA meetings. I have often said prior to officially starting our meetings: "We seem so quiet. You know we are not at a funeral." We really are not at a funeral! In actuality we are at a festive occasion where we can celebrate our new-found freedom.

5. *Bring the joy of our recovery to others.* This in itself becomes fun. Service work is such a good way for me to get out of myself. When I am not preoccupied with self I automatically feel more joyous and loving.

I could go on and on about how much fun life has become in sobriety. As my sponsor told me, "It only gets better. Yes, the outside can turn into a mess but inside us it only gets better."

I used to be so serious about everything. Now I actually make jokes and playfully tease my wife. Her response is, "Wait a minute. I'm the only one in the family who can make jokes around here!" Then I say to her, "Not anymore."

As we read in *Recovery Continues*,

This is very new for me today, but I like the feeling: acceptance, gratitude, and joy are better than fear. And I'd rather have this than the mood-altering pills I took before sobriety. Real joy, and without a hangover! I'm not naturally a very joyful person, but now I have a way I can

actually bring joy into my life—through every temptation and trial! Whenever I “count it all joy,” I have joy! What a gift. (*RC*, 40)

Join us in the love and joy this program can bring to us all. Jump on the wagon of positive sobriety. Experience the joy of living a sober life. If it works for me, I know it can work for you.

—Harvey A., Nashville, TN

How “Self” Blocked My Sobriety

Six months ago, after having been sober for a little over two years, I acted out. I am writing this in the hope that it may help another sex drunk—so that you don't have to go through what I did.

Immediately after I lost my sobriety, my thoughts turned to denial. I went back into my own world and decided it didn't really matter that much because I had only acted out with myself and, after all, that was never really a problem for me...right? And I wouldn't do it again, so why reset my date? Why tell my sponsor, my sponsees, and everyone in my group? I was justifying everything I did. My ego didn't want to be embarrassed. My self-righteousness caused me pain around admitting my weakness.

But as I thought about this, I felt shame creeping up. And then

fear. I was afraid that if I didn't talk about what had happened, I would be lying to people who had always been open with me. Then I came to the conclusion that keeping this secret would keep me *in* myself, hiding in the dark again. The exact thing I was trying not to do anymore.



In SA, I had experienced the joy, peace, and serenity that comes from being willing to be open and honest—so I knew what I needed to do. I got on my knees and prayed, then I called my sponsor and reset my date. I felt embarrassed and let down. But at the same time, I was free from the secret, and once again open to the sunlight of the spirit.

Following is my analysis of how “self” caused me to lose my sobriety. Perhaps my experience will benefit others.

S = Surrender. There were so many things I hadn't surrendered. Even though I had immersed myself in the program, stopped acting out, and surrendered my character defects daily, I was still holding on to the belief that I wasn't exactly like everyone else in the group. I had allowed myself to take gulps of lust, justifying it because I wasn't really "acting out." What's wrong with admiring a handsome man? I didn't surrender my obsession with pornography and masturbation. I stayed sober from porn and masturbation, but I never surrendered my obsession with them, because I had never really admitted they were part of my addiction.

I decided that I could pick and choose which parts of the program I wanted to work. I would go to meetings, work the Steps with a sponsor, do service at meetings, sponsor others, and pray daily. I didn't think I needed to make phone calls to other members. I didn't even call my sponsor on a regular basis. I hadn't completely surrendered. I wanted to control and enjoy lust.

E = Ego. Until I came to SA, I never realized how full of myself I was. I had a huge ego. It was a cover for insecurity, but I couldn't see that at the time. And two years into sobriety, I was still feeding my ego. Not by acting out, using, or manipulating people, but by allowing pride to run amuck. When I would say my sobriety date at the start of

the meeting, I would say it not to celebrate or inspire, but to say, "Look at me! I'm still sober!" I had jumped into the program with both feet and took off running, and I thought that I had this sobriety thing under control. I was getting positive feedback about my shares in meetings. When a new woman came into the group, I made sure she knew that I was the "senior" woman in the group. I was writing my story to be published in *Essay*. I was taking on new responsibilities in the group and at work, and all of this was feeding my ego. I never took the time to give credit to God. Today I realize that I am nothing without God.

L = Lust. When I lost my sobriety, I learned a lot about what lust really is, the many forms it has, and how it is the driving force behind my acting out. Even though my ego told me that I knew what lust was, I actually had no conception of how truly cunning, baffling, and powerful it is. I thought that as long as I wasn't acting on my feelings and wasn't giving in to lust, I was okay.

I was still looking in cars at stoplights to see if there was a handsome man. I would participate in the language of lust, flirting with my customers and making comments about the men who walked past the storefront. I would objectify men all the time, trying to prove myself worthy of desire. I would watch movies and TV shows with lustful content, allowing myself to drink

in the images of the beautiful men and women on the screen. I never admitted I had a problem with porn or masturbation, so when I lost my sobriety by sex with self, I was forced to look more closely at these behaviors.

I had only stopped masturbating because “sex with self” is ruled out in our sobriety definition. I had minimized and completely ignored most of my lustful behaviors. Now I began to realize how my behaviors continued to fuel the lust in my life. I remembered that I started masturbating when I was 10 years old. I would fantasize that my “partner” was a famous rock star. And all throughout my adulthood I would masturbate.

Right before I hit bottom I was watching porn, having cybersex, and masturbating every night while everyone in the house was asleep. And I was oblivious as to how lust was entering my life. I wanted to control and enjoy lust.

F = Fall from Grace. The real reason I acted out—and I believe the reason behind all the reasons—is that I fell from the grace of God. I had not completely turned over my will and my life to God. I only turned over the parts I wanted to turn over, or that I decided were a problem for me. The reality is that

I’m powerless over everything in my life. True recovery for me comes from true surrender of ego and lust. I prayed daily but it had become mechanical. I wasn’t really making conscious contact.

I heard a slogan that fits me perfectly: “Without God, I can’t; Without me, God won’t.” I have to be willing to have complete faith, complete trust, and complete humility. I had developed faith, but trust and humility didn’t come easily. I must remember that I am simply a conduit through which God’s love and kindness enters this world. The grace of God is what keeps me sober today.

Today I feel that I have better recovery than I had those first two years when I counted myself sober. And I know that *recovery* is the key to staying sober. My “selves”—self-pity, self-righteousness, self-seeking, and self-justification—are all very dangerous places for me to hang out. Whenever I find myself hanging out there, I try to see where I am struggling, then I turn that over to my Higher Power.

I am not perfect today, but I would say that I’m better off than I was for the first two years in SA because of this slip.

—Wendi F., Colorado Springs



Happy Mother's Day

About ten years ago (three years before I came to SA), I was looking for a card to give my wife on Mother's day—more out of obligation than anything else. I hated Mother's Day. As I began to read the different cards, I was filled with a mixture of pain, sadness, and rage. I wanted to be able to honestly say, feel, and experience what was described in those cards. But I could not feel those feelings, and I was angry. I found a card expressing love and gratitude for being there through the struggles of life. That seemed okay, since we were struggling. I wasn't sure about the love part, and I didn't know whether I was grateful, but I bought the card. I had done my Mother's Day duty.

Lost in my addiction, full of resentment, with no sobriety and no recovery, all I could feel was what I know now to be the pain and wreckage of my addiction. I was lusting for something that I was unable to experience. I wanted love. I wanted connection. I was a love cripple, although I did not know that at the time. I had a vague suspicion that I was an addict. I had no clue about recovery. I was beyond unhappy.

Then I found SA and began working the Steps. And this year—

after seven years of active recovery, hundreds of meetings, countless phone calls, and the clarity of sobriety—the stage was set for Mothers Day 2012. It was beautiful!

Weeks before the event, I found the perfect gift. I made plans to cook and serve dinner. Days before the event, I found the perfect card. As I read through all the different cards I saw the silly, the sarcastic, the mushy, the lustful, and the loving. I found a card that expressed what I genuinely felt: my gratitude

for a loving, wonderful, beautiful wife and for her commitment to being an amazing mother. As I read the card, I felt genuine love for my wife. It is so nice to feel again and especially to be able to feel love again.

I could not wait to give her that card.

Because of recovery, my wife, my children, and I have much to celebrate. We had a beautiful Mother's Day. We attended church together. We ate together. We prayed and played together. A feeling of love and gratitude was present. I am especially grateful for my wife. She is a partner in my recovery. I am spiritually connected to her. My recovery has brought new life, hope, and healing into our marriage.

Words cannot express the gratitude in my heart for recovery. Once again I praise God. Without



the grace of God and the blessings of recovery, Mother's Day 2012 would have been just another day with plenty of "really good" reasons to go

act out.

Recovery is a beautiful thing!
—Jon, a grateful recovering lust addict

Prison Stories

Celebrating Two Years



I am a convicted felon and a registered sex offender, and I'm very grateful to have passed through my second anniversary of SA sobriety this past December. I am thankful that there is such a fellowship and that I am able to attend two meetings a week, with a group of wonderful people who I can call my friends.

In December 2001, I was caught in a sting operation run by the local Postal Inspector. In February 2005, I was convicted and sentenced to three months in federal prison, three months home detention, and three years of supervised release for the possession of child pornography. That was the lowest point in my life.

I was forced to attend federally sponsored counseling once a week, beginning on May 5, 2005, and I was required to take a lie detector test every month, witnessed by my probation officer. But nothing helped me much until I came to SA in June 2005. I knew I was in the right place after that first meeting! I

started attending SA meetings regularly, reading the literature, and working the Steps with my sponsor. I was beginning to learn a lot about myself.

In the beginning, I was happy to find that this was a spiritual program rather than a religious one. I could live with that. I came from a family that did not attend church but made me go to Sunday school and even sing in the choir. I

knew there was a God, and I thought He had helped me out of a couple of life-threatening situations, but I couldn't really trust Him.

For the first few years in SA, I struggled. I half-surrendered my defects and "white-knuckled" it. I did things my way. I would fall off the wagon every so many days, weeks, or months. Once I had 364 days of sobriety before acting out. I believe I acted out deliberately so that I would not get a one-year chip. I was still insane. The program was not working! I was a bit better, but



there was still something very sick within me.

Then one of the fellows in our group reminded me of an italicized passage in the White Book: “*I couldn’t just surrender my lust, I had to surrender me*” (SA, 80). I then came across another quote on page 96: “Without God, I can’t; Without me, God won’t.” I began to understand that something was missing.

I realized that I had not passed through Step Three, and that without turning my will and my life over to the care of God as I understood Him, I would not make any more progress down that Road of Happy Destiny. I had not been ready to give up and give in, so of course I was still sick! Up until December 17, 2009, I had not surrendered *me*, and without a Higher Power that I could trust, I was never going to stay sober or live a meaningful life with loving relationships.

As I was working Step Nine with my sponsor, I realized that I had unresolved issues with my mother. Since her death, I had written several letters attempting to make amends, but the resentment was still there. My sponsor told me that I could ask for God’s help in my relationships.

One morning during my prayer and meditation time, I wrote a final letter to her. I read it to God, and turned to Him for help. I felt warm

and safe in the arms of my Higher Power (and my mother!). I felt my mother telling me that she forgave me, and that everything would be okay now. It was a wonderful, loving feeling—unlike anything I had felt before. I had actually passed through Step Three and had turned my will and my life over to the loving care of God as I understood Him! That was December 18, 2009. I have been sober ever since.

Nowadays, I start my day by reciting the Third Step Prayer (AA, 63), the Serenity Prayer, and what I call “the way to true sobriety”:

Lust is the driving force behind our acting out. True sobriety requires progressive victory over lust. Positive sobriety is achieved by taking the actions of love to improve our relations with others. (SA, 202)

I journal daily and talk to God through my journal. I also do Twelfth Step work by sponsoring others in the program. I find that I am helped as much by my sponsees as they are helped by me. I go to meetings twice a week and call my sponsor nearly every workday. I enjoy the fellowship of the program. And I surrender *me* to God frequently each day.

Today I am a better person and much more comfortable around



people I don't know. I make an effort to be more positive and less judgmental. I don't get angry as often as before, and when I do, I surrender me and the anger goes away. I still have a pile of character defects that I am consciously working on, but they are losing their power over me. I will continue working to improve myself, with a

lot of help from my Higher Power.

I expect my recovery will continue for the rest of my life. I will attend meetings, enjoy fellowship with my newfound friends, and work with my sponsor and sponsor others as best as I can.

Thank you God, for this wonderful program of recovery!!

—Merv D.

Dealing with Life¹

As a sexaholic, I have a hard time dealing with life. I look at other people who seem to have it all together and wish somehow that my insides could look the way they look on the outside. Of course, I'm just kidding myself because I know that most people do not always look on the outside as they feel on the inside. When I was still active in my addiction, my capacity to deal with life's ups and downs was severely impaired. I tried to smooth the bumps in the road by acting out. Psychologists call this "medicating," and that's exactly what acting out was for me.

Learning that "unless I can accept life completely on life's terms I cannot be happy" (AA, 417) has been an important tool on my road to recovery. This is not something I will ever get perfectly, because regardless

of the power of recovery, I am still an imperfect being. However, the SA program of recovery helps me deal with life's challenges.

I enjoy listening to speaker CDs (both AA and SA). I enjoy hearing people who have long-term recovery share their powerful stories of experience, strength, and hope. One of these speakers shared a story that was a moving metaphor for my own experience. He compared his inner self to a trash container. I could



relate! I pictured Oscar the Grouch on Sesame Street—he's a fitting example of me when I'm having a bad day! When I entered the program, my trash can was full to overflowing with all the old junk life had thrown at me. I was full of resentments, hurts, mishaps, and my own injuries toward others. I carried this mess

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

around as a huge weight on my back. Whenever a problem came along, I had no way to get rid of it because my trash can was already full. I would try to cope by stuffing the new junk on top, but that never seemed to work. So I acted out.

That's a pretty bleak image, but there is good news to follow. When I finally gave myself up to my Higher Power and to the SA program of action, I was able to take the trash out to the curb for pickup. In the first three Steps, I recognized that all of the mess I was carrying around was too much for me to handle on my own. I came to believe in a Higher Power who could take it away. In the Fourth Step, I put a name on all the junk and learned to recognize who was really responsible for it (most often I found that it was me). In the Fifth Step, I threw out this trash by admitting it to God and another human being. I learned that I could be forgiven.

As I worked the rest of the Steps, I gained a set of tools that helped me to identify the problems in my own character that create trash, and I learned how to avoid filling my trash can back up with the junk I create. Now, when life throws me a curve—a relative dies, a relationship ends, jobs are lost, health problems begin, etc.—I don't have to carry around the "trash" anymore. I have a

Higher Power to whom I can give it immediately, plus a supportive group of other sexaholics who will love me back to wholeness. Before, outside of my marriage I rarely had good friends who knew me well enough to really help me when I had problems. That was mostly because I was not open enough to allow them in.

When I was charged with a crime and facing a lengthy prison sentence, I was already participating in SA. My circumstances really freed me to take the plunge and surrender to SA. Even though I lost a tremendous amount of things, including relationships, possessions, and career potential, I gained something priceless in return.

Here in prison, I am no longer bound in the chains of addiction and I'm freer than I have ever been! I have the support of a number of true friends in SA. Their support has been unwavering and they continue to love me through what seems like one disaster after another. They visit, write, pray, and accept me for the imperfect man that I am. I had never experienced friendships like that before, and I'm overwhelmed with gratitude for them. I also have a new relationship with my Creator. I have placed my trust in His will for me and continue to learn how to seek it and act on it.

Things in the world—and here



in prison—are not perfect, and they never will be. Learning to deal with life on life's terms continues to be a major part of my work in recovery, and it likely always will be. But I know without a doubt that as I continue to work my SA program, and take the suggestions of those who have gone before me, I no longer have to be chained in the bondage to self that characterized my past. I am free to love my God and the people around me with my whole heart, knowing that I can get through whatever life may bring.

I particularly like Bill W.'s

thoughts related to “real maturity”:

I think that many oldsters who have put our AA “booze cure” to severe but successful tests still find they often lack emotional sobriety. Perhaps this will be the spearhead for the next major development in AA—the development of real maturity and balance (which is to say, humility) in our relations with ourselves, with our fellows, and with God. (“The Next Frontier: Emotional Sobriety,” AA *Grapevine*, January 1958)

—Chris C.

Upcoming International Convention

July 27-29, 2012, Nashville, TN: “Three Legacies”

Come join us in Nashville this summer! The convention will be held at the Sheraton Music City, five minutes from the Nashville airport. Highlights of our program include the following breakout sessions:



- History of Early SA
- Beginners Breakouts
- Traditions Breakouts
- Women's Breakouts
- Three Legacies SA/S-Anon Panel (Open Meeting)
- Strengthening our Fellowship (Open Meeting) (Lessons from AA's Experience)
- Fetishes and Shameful Secrets (3 breakouts)
- Recovering from Shame, more Fourth Step healing
- International Growth of SA (report by International Committee)
- Carrying the message into Prisons (Open Meeting)
- Hosting Three-Day Regional Conventions

Come share your recovery with all of us! To register or for more information, call +1 (615) 345-4334 and leave a message, send an email to sanic2012@gmail.com, or visit our website at sanashville.org.

—Jon B., Convention Chair

Working the Steps in a Business Meeting

I finally had the answer: the reason I felt hostile when confronted with hostility was because I AM hostile. . . (“Defects Continued,” RC, 5)

Recently, while sitting in an SA business meeting, I began feeling uncomfortable. It seemed that others were not sufficiently valuing my opinion! I began feeling hostile, but I was unwilling to admit it to myself. In that moment, a lust image I thought I had given up came to the forefront of my mind. I said a half-hearted prayer of surrender to my Higher Power, but in reality, I was still holding on.

I suddenly realized that I was slipping into dangerous behavior. When I was new in recovery, I would have nurtured the image into a fantasy, and the fantasy would have led me back to acting out. Today I can see the image for what it is: a symptom of my underlying disease. I am the problem. Until I can sit and listen to others in a business meeting without feeling hostile (or without truly surrendering my pride and my own agenda), then my recovery will be incomplete. More than mere sobriety, I need recovery over myself and my defects.

It was sobering for me to see my sudden powerlessness. The

moment of blindness passed, and I was able to bring my hostility to the light of my loving Higher Power. I quickly went through Steps One through Twelve in my mind. Just a 30-second version of the Steps (I call them “Speed Steps”)— and God took the image away.

Then I remembered Traditions One, Two, and Twelve. Tradition One tells me that the group comes first, and that my own personal recovery depends on group unity. Tradition

Two says there is but one authority: a loving Higher Power, and He speaks through the collective group conscience. I need to listen to other people in the meeting and hear what they have to say. Tradition Twelve tells me to place principles before personalities. I was making the meeting all about me and my fears, instead of listening to others and hearing what they had to say.

Through my practice of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, I can more successfully put the group’s welfare above my own agenda—and then my “individual welfare follows close afterward” (Tradition 1, 12&12, 189). I am



grateful for my SA service work because through service I get to see what still needs to be changed in me. Then I can work the Steps and



Traditions on my defects and get closer to God's will each time I do.

Thank God for SA business meetings and thank God for SA!

—Peter N., Ontario,
Canada

Letter to My Anonymous Partners

Step Nine: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others. (SA, 123)

In my addiction, I harmed many people whose names I don't even remember. As I was considering how to make amends to these people, my sponsor pointed me to a passage in the White Book:

There is always some way to make an amends, even when the injured person is dead, lost, or nameless. . . . Some members, for example,

have made amends to the prostitutes they had abetted in their destructive way of life by praying for every one they see on the streets. . . (SA 126).

My sponsor suggested that I write a letter to the people I was unable to reach, and send it to *Essay*. Perhaps this idea will be useful to others.



December 28, 2011

Dear Anonymous,

Forgive me for not using your name. If I once knew it, I've forgotten it now. There have been so many of you: couples I peeped on inside cars along "lover's lanes," women I met while cruising bars on business trips, women I hired for sexual services, men I met in gay bath houses and adult video bookstores, and the many of you with whom I chatted by telephone and electronically (sometimes while pretending to be a woman online). I spent thousands of dollars over the years on you, but more important, I spent many hundreds of hours using you for my selfish purposes.

Over many years you have been my "friend," a consolation when I was afraid—afraid of being sexually or socially incompetent, of the potential loss of anyone I committed to love, or of not being acceptable to others. In the SA program I have become aware of how much I hurt and abused all of you, pandering to your lust and enabling your own

pain and fears. I pretended to care for you, to be romantically interested in you, and then I always left you suddenly without explanation or excuse. Though I cannot make amends to you personally, I want you to know that I am truly sorry for having harmed you, perhaps by abetting your own self-destructive way of life.

I intend this letter to the SA community to represent my deepest apologies to each of you. And since some of you may also be sexaholics like me, I am making a donation to SA in the hope that when you are ready to stop, the hand of SA will be there for you, as it was for me.

May God bless you and keep you in His love, now and forever.

—Stan

Another 1-2-3 Approach

I know all about doing a quick “1-2-3” when I am confronted with an obvious threat to my sobriety. For example: Should I go to the party when I know “she” will be there? In those moments, I mentally go through Steps One, Two, and Three, which I summarize as: “I can’t, He can, so let Him!” Then the threat is neutralized, just for a time, just for today—and so the miracle happens time and time again.

A bigger problem occurs in more subtle situations, such as when I’m feeling an emotion that I absolutely do not want to surrender—such as anger, resentment, entitlement, self-pity, depression, or sadness. I don’t always appreciate in the moment that those feelings can equally threaten my sobriety. For both the obvious and the more subtle threats, I have learned to ask myself the

following three simple questions:

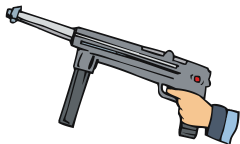
1. Does this event, place, or emotion get me closer to sobriety or closer to relapse?
2. What part of God’s will is in this event, place, or emotion?
3. Do I need this event, place, or emotion in my life more than I need my Higher Power?

When I force myself to answer those three questions and I am rigorously honest in my response, I get immediate answers and am forced out of my fantasy and back into reality.

Often the more subtle threats are more dangerous. Many times the disease is like a sniper, dressed in camouflage, patiently sitting there with his rifle ready: cunning, baffling, and powerful. It will wait for days, weeks, months, or even years. It waits for me to relax and



take off my helmet and body armor, thinking that everything is fine now and that the sniper does not exist. That is exactly the time the sniper lines up the crosshairs between my eyes and fires a bullet that jerks me from the



Road of Happy Destiny, kills my sobriety, and drags me down into the ditch.

Hopefully, this little technique will help others to stay sober, just for today. See you down the Road!

—Dennis D., Youngstown, OH

Meditation on Step Two

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

We needed to ask ourselves but one short question: "Do I now believe, or am I even willing to believe, that there is a Power greater than myself?" (AA, 47)



Only one question? Too simple. Or so I think when I'm trying too hard to solve all my problems at once. Physical pain and discomfort, problematic personal relationships, a nagging account at work: I want to fix them all. Now! So I construct complexities.

So many questions I can form, even after I've worked on this Step several times in the past 15 years! Who is this Power? What do I call it? Where do I find it? Why do I need it? And even: Do I still deserve to be restored to sanity?

I realize, by capturing this self-constructed craziness and talking to my sponsor, that I've been getting way ahead of myself. So I simplify: I can, with the aid of this ever-evolving Higher Power, complete Step Two again.

I reflect on the questions posed in Twelve Step material and conclude that, before joining SA, I had believed in such a power for others but that I felt undeserving of such love and sanity. No more.

Today, I enter the harbor of simplicity, that sacred mental space to again ask this question: "Do I now believe, or am I even willing to believe that there is a Power greater than myself?" Today my answer is "Yes."

Prayer: *God, please make Thy will, my will...one difficulty at a time.*

—J.D. in MA

The Doll Collector

Writing and journaling have helped me process the emotions of the end of my 30-year relationship with my wife. I am powerless over what happens to me and I'm powerless over the resulting emotions, but I am not powerless over how I deal with my feelings. Through friendships in SA and from hearing members share in meetings, I have learned that journaling is a helpful way to process emotions. As I wrote the following short story, sadness, grief, and pain flowed out. This was a healing experience for me.

There was once a man who was a doll collector. He collected all kinds of dolls: tall, short, thick, thin, blond hair, black hair, green eyes, blue eyes, brown skin, fair complexion. He was a lonely man. His dolls kept him company.

One summer day, he ran across a particularly special doll. She captivated him. He knew at once that he had to add her to his collection—she would become the centerpiece of his menagerie. But he could not have her. The harder he tried to take possession of her, the more she eluded him. His frustration grew over the years. He knew he simply must have her, but how?

About to give up and return to what had now become a very mundane collection, an idea struck him. He had met a man years before who had offered him any doll he could ever imagine. The meeting with the man was short—he was an unsavory character, and what he asked for in return seemed

unthinkable. The doll collector would have to give away his very self—his identity—in small payments over time. But with this man's help, maybe the doll could finally be his, and he would be forever happy. He could even stop collecting.

The opportunity was irresistible. He went to the man and made the deal, which the man made even more enticing: "Not only will I give you the doll, but I will make her come alive before your eyes, and you will enjoy her beauty and presence forever." It was too good to be true: the most beautiful doll he had ever seen would be his, and as a real person, she would bring him happiness and take away his loneliness! No price was too high. The lonely man would pay anything.

The day he had been waiting for finally came. This special doll came alive and was his! They danced together, laughed together, embraced, and cried together. They



shared life: the ups and downs, the highs and lows, the joys and pains. It was a fairy tale dream. They were made for each other. Their story was special. It was too good to be true.

For many years, they loved and laughed. Celebrated and mourned. Rejoiced and sobbed. Everything life brought them they endured together. They were partners, soul mates. They were a team. There was nothing they could not do together. It was so good. The lonely doll collector finally had all he ever dreamed of.

One day, the unsavory man came calling. He had come for the final payment. But the doll collector could not pay. The unsavory man became dark and evil. "Then I shall take the life out of your doll, and she will forever remain a mere statuette in your collection." The lonely man ached with pain and anger, but the price was too high. He simply could not afford it.

As the awful man left him, the

lonely doll collector sat on the floor holding his lifeless doll, sobbing as the memories of the life they shared together played like a film in his mind. The wonder of seeing her alive for the first time, the excitement he felt when he was with her, the ache he felt in his heart when they were apart. The dancing, the laughter, the moments they shared, the hurts they experienced together. He rocked her as he held her, his tears wetting her wooden face. She could no longer share his emotion or his life. Her empty green eyes stared back at his. Silence. She was gone.

He would remember everything. She could not. He was alive. She was gone, the life they shared together a memory in his heart. His aching heart longed to have her back, but it could not be. The lonely doll collector grieved, the waves of sorrow doubling him over. He struggled to catch a breath between sobs. The fairy tale was over.

This "doll collector" is me. I used women and even a 30-year relationship with my favorite "doll" to try to "satisfy what essentially is a spiritual drive" (SA, 55). That passage goes on to say, "So, we used sex or lust or relationships to satisfy this drive, letting them take the place of God as source of our lives." Over those 30 years, I had developed a pseudo-intimacy with my wife, a relationship based on control and taking. The intimacy I thought I had was not based in reality. However, one of the unexpected benefits of immersing myself in the SA program has turned out to be strong and lasting bonds of friendship with others in recovery. Today, through my friends in SA, I am experiencing true intimacy. I'm letting my Source write the rest of the story.

—Brian K.

New Region on the SA Map: EMER



We are happy to announce the emergence of a new SA Region, the first to be formed with the support of the SA International Committee. The “Europe and Middle-East Region” (EMER) is fully operational and will hold its first face-to-face Regional Assembly and Convention at Ammerdown, UK from 30 August through 1 September 2012.

EMER has evolved out of the “Ireland and United Kingdom” Region, in the natural way that our service structure evolves. SA groups join together to form Intergroups, Intergroups band together to form Regions, and Regions send delegates to the General Delegate Assembly.

EMER now includes six Intergroups, and may soon be joined by a seventh. What’s unusual is that each of these Intergroups operates in a different country! Member countries at present are: Belgium (Flanders), Ireland, Israel, the Netherlands, Poland, and the United Kingdom. English is used for business meetings and correspondence, but our native languages now include Polish, Flemish, Hebrew, and Dutch. Other countries and languages may possibly be included in the

future. EMER’s treasury deals in five currencies: zloty, shekels, euros, pounds, and dollars.

For countries that have only one Intergroup, joining EMER is especially beneficial. By joining the larger region, these Intergroups can truly be incorporated into the worldwide service structure. They can participate actively in a wider group conscience and avoid the pitfalls of “going it alone.”

The Israeli Intergroup is one example of this benefit. This Intergroup is of course focused primarily on the needs of its member groups. However, through

participation in the EMER, the Israeli Intergroup can now help carry the SA message into Jewish communities in London, Manchester, Rotterdam, Amsterdam. and Antwerp!

Hosting an annual Regional Convention is another way for member Intergroups to carry the message. This is a great way for a country to boost the experience, strength and hope of its fellowship. While this year’s EMER Regional Assembly and Convention will be held at Ammerdown, our hope is that each year a different country will host the Convention, so that



this benefit will be spread to all our member Intergroups.

We have many exciting ideas for the future. For example, EMER might have the opportunity to carry the message into the Vatican or to some of Europe's 109 Health Authorities. We would love to champion the translation of SA literature in minority European and Middle-Eastern languages. However, most of what we do now is more down-to-earth. We are learning how

best to serve our member groups and Intergroups.

EMER plans to make quarterly donations to SAICO. We hope to send at least two Delegates per year to the GDA, at our own expense, and through them to participate yet more fully in the life and work of our growing international fellowship.

—*In fellowship, Nicholas S.,
Chair, Regional Assembly, and
Delegate to the GDA*

Phone Meetings Are Saving My Life!

I am a true “loner” living in a remote area in northern Maine. The closest SA meeting to me is about a five-hour drive away. Yet for the past four years, I have attended an SA meeting almost every day. I have been sober for more than two-and-a-half years and I have sponsored several people. How? I

go to meetings, have a sponsor, and work the Steps. What meetings?! Phone meetings! They are not quite the same as face-to-face meetings, but they work for me. Don't get me wrong, I prefer face-to-face meetings. But there just aren't enough people up here who admit to being sexaholics to start one.

Phone meetings have connected me to recovering sexaholics from all around the globe. Some are in situations similar to mine. Others are

in places that have a few meetings a week, and they use phone meetings to help achieve a “90 in 90.”

Still others check in first thing every morning year after year.

There are Daily Sobriety Renewal meetings, book study meetings, Step study meetings, and a “special topics” meeting where I have talked about things I normally don't share in SA meetings. There are at least eight meetings of some kind every day!

Recognizing that phone meetings are saving my life, I have started to give back. I regularly chair meetings, have served as group secretary, and currently serve as my home group's Group Service Rep (GSR) to the phone “Virtual Intergroup” (VIG). The VIG operates very much like a face-to-face Intergroup. We discuss issues that affect all of the phone



meetings and make recommendations for solutions. We also maintain a centralized point of contact with the teleconference services that provide our meeting “locations.”

The VIG is part of the SA regional service structure, and sends a representative (usually via our teleconference service) to the Mid-Atlantic Region meetings.

Because of my remote location, the only time I get to face-to-face SA

meetings is when I travel. Nevertheless, I always print out a fresh copy of the list of phone meetings, which I download from denversa.org/Misc/phnflyer.pdf and carry it with me, just in case I need a meeting at an odd time.

I am so thankful for the phone meetings and for every caller who has shared his or her recovery with me over the years.

— *In gratitude, Jeff from Maine*

International Sponsorship



Because of SA, I have opportunities to work with sexaholics from all over the world. I (a Russian who lives in Chicago) am sponsoring Roberto (Mexican), who in turn is sponsoring an Orthodox Jew. Both of those men live in Chicago. I also have a couple of long-distance sponsees; one lives in Israel and the other lives in Russia.



Don't let technology stop you from carrying the message! I am very low-tech; I don't even have Skype. A basic cell-phone goes a long way these days.

—*Dimitri*

New Skype Meeting

I recently started a new Skype online White Book Study, on Thursday nights Australian time, for those who are looking for a meeting in that time frame. These meetings last for one hour, and members have the opportunity to share on the reading and participate in general sharing if the time permits.



We have had members from Germany, New Zealand, Australia, and Tasmania. Once, we had a Skype meeting with video with two of us here in Tasmania connected with a member from Germany—so, the three of us enjoyed a face-to-face meeting! At times the meetings are small, but this is still a great way to carry the message and connect with those who (because of distance or other constraints) can't make a meeting. *Please join us!*

For meeting information, please contact me at dabetsa@hotmail.net.au

—*David W., Tasmania*

Twelve Things I Do Before Leaving on a Trip

At times I travel far away from my home group. Over the years, I have discovered tools that help me to travel in a sane and sober way. From these tools, I have developed a list of “Twelve Tips for Travel,” which I share with my sponsees whenever one of



them is about to leave on a trip. My sponsees have found the list to be helpful, so I thought I would share it with the fellowship.

Following are actions that work for me when I travel. May we all find recovery during our travels this summer.

— Anonymous

Twelve Tips for Travel

1. Call your sponsor. He or she will no doubt have lots of ideas about how you can stay connected while traveling. The sponsor might even have an SA contact in the place you're visiting.

2. Write to SAICO (saico@sa.org) for updates on meetings available in the area. Ask for the name of a contact person—this may be a “loner” who would love to have an SA visitor!

3. Call the SA contact and find out if he or she is available when you'll be visiting. If you can't go to a meeting, arrange to meet for coffee or a meal.

4. Tell the members of your home group how long you'll be away. Let them know you may be calling them from your destination!

5. Review your cell phone policy to make sure you can call your sponsor and sober support team from your destination.

6. Arrange to have an SA friend cover your service assignment(s).

7. Join the International Buddy List (sabuddylist@gmail.com) or the International Sisters List (isasisterslist@gmail.com) to be connected with SAs around the world.

8. Check on-line for open AA meetings in the places you'll be visiting. These can be a lifeline where there are no SA meetings.

9. Download a schedule of SA phone meetings at www.denversa.org

10. Pack your White Book as well as some travel-sized aids to sobriety, such as the pocket Big Book, the pocket *Twelve & Twelve*, and *Daily Reflections*.

11. Select some SA conference CDs to take along. To buy CDs or download talks, go to www.leestapesandcds.com or www.glennkaudiotapes.com.

12. Slip a couple of *Essays* into your carry-on bag. These are handy to read in airports or on the plane. They never go out of date. Don't leave home without “our meeting in print!”

SAICO Financial Update

Following is a summary of SA fellowship revenues and expenses for First 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 First Quarter 2012	
Donations	38,095.86
Other Revenues	19,986.23
Expenses	66,331.95
Revenues (less expenses)	-8,249.86
Total Prudent Reserve	180,032.00

Does Your Group Have an *Essay* Rep?

Many AA groups have a “*Grapevine* Rep” (GvR). The AA Service Manual describes that servant’s role as follows: “The GvR’s job is to make sure that members are aware of the Fellowship’s international journal and the enhancements to sobriety it offers... It is anticipated that each AA group would have a GvR and at least one subscription to the magazine” (AA Service Manual, Rev 1991, S85).

Our White Book recommends that the Literature chairperson of each SA group make sure that the group is supplied with copies of *Essay* (SA, 176). Some SA groups have “*Essay* Reps” who report to the group on each issue, and encourage other members to subscribe—and perhaps to contribute as well! Or the group itself might have a subscription, which may be passed around to its members. Travelers find it helpful to pack our “meeting in print” when they go on trips.



If your group doesn’t have a subscription to *Essay*, suggest it at your next business meeting. If your group doesn’t have an *Essay* Rep, step forward and volunteer! Making *Essay* available to your group—and to newcomers—is another way we carry the message of SA sobriety.

Subscribe to *Essay*

Individual subscriptions \$12 per year; \$10 per year for each additional year. Group rate \$10 per subscription per year for 10 or more subscriptions mailed to one address. Order at www.sa.org/essay.php, or contact SAICO at 866-424-8777 toll free, outside North America call 615-370-6062.



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, Svc. Manual, Finance Conventions, CFC, Nominations CFC, Information Technology (IT) CFC, Public Information
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Terry O.	Northeast	Internet, Public Info
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Hans-Friedrich	German Speaking	
Nicholas S. Francis C. Mark P., <i>Alt</i> Luc D. <i>Alt</i>	EMER* Ireland UK Flanders	IT, International Literature, RAC Literature, International, Public Info International H&I, Public Information

*EMER = Europe & Middle East Region

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



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

Calendar of Events



July 20 - 22, 2012, Dublin Convention, Dublin, Ireland. *Celebrate Recovery*. Info at saico@sa.org.

September 7 - 9, 2012, SA Alberta Canada Fall Retreat, Battle Lake, Alberta, Canada. *The Gifts of Sobriety*. Info at 780-988-4411 or essayed-monton@yahoo.ca

September 28 - 30, 2012, Southern California Unity Conference 2012, Irvine, CA. *We Won't Regret the Past Nor Wish to Shut the Door on It*. More Info at sasanonunity.com or email

Registration@sasanonunity.com

October 26 - 28, 2012, A Change of Heart 2012 Mid-Atlantic Regional Convention, Harrisburg, PA. *Use of 12 Steps to Change the Attitude & Disposition of my Heart*. Info at www.achangeofheart2012.com or email sainfo@achangeofheart2012.com

November 9 - 11, 2012, Northwest Regional Fall Retreat, Turner, OR. *We Are Going to Know a New Freedom*. Info at saporlandmetro.org

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

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

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

USA

Carson City, NV
Chicago, IL (Spanish) (add'l group)
El Paso, TX
Houston, TX (additional group)
Lawrence, KS additional group
Lynchburg, VA (additional group)
Meridian, MS
Oakhurst, CA additional group

New SA Groups



Palm Beach Gardens, FL
Sioux Falls, SD
Spring Valley, NY (additional group)

International

Utrecht, The Netherlands
Nanaimo, BC (additional meeting)



Upcoming International Conventions

July 27 - 29, 2012, Nashville, TN. *Three Legacies*. Sheraton Music City. Conference rate \$119 per night plus tax (up to four people per room) if you register by July 22 and mention you are attending "Three Legacies Convention." To make hotel reservations, register for the convention, or for more info visit sanashville.org

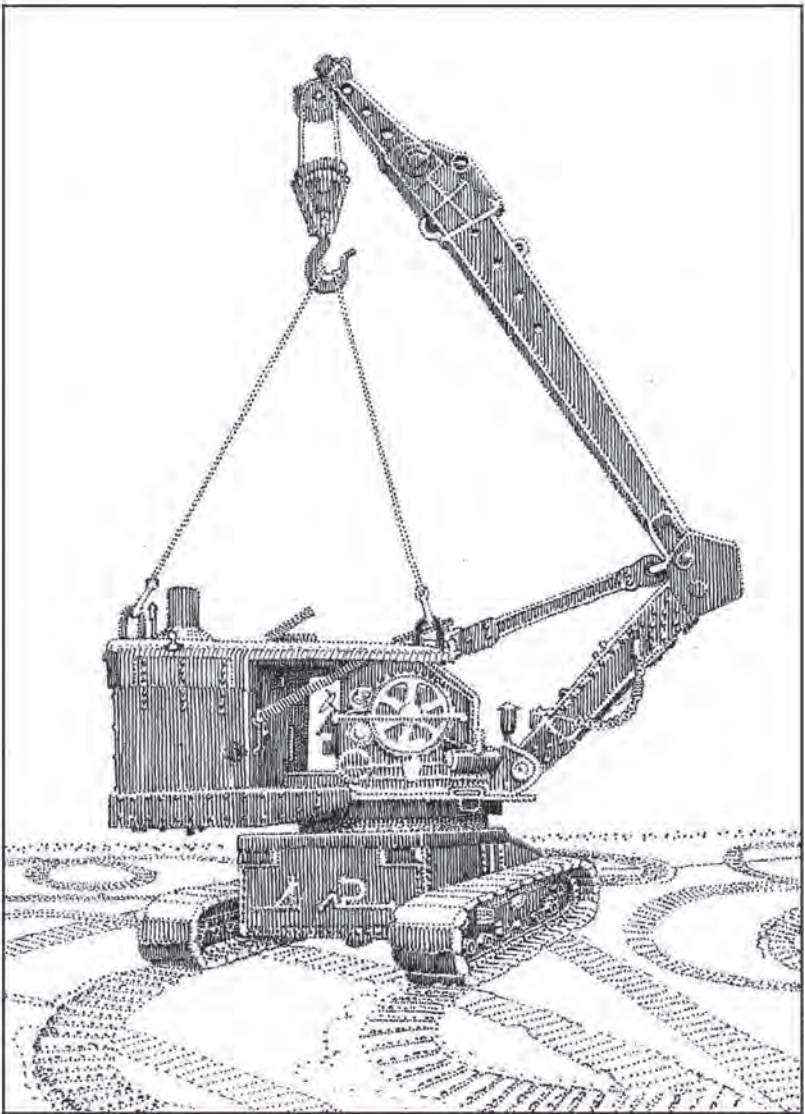
January 11 - 13, 2013, Atlanta, GA. *The Courage to Change*. Sheraton Gateway Hotel, Atlanta, GA 30337. For more information visit our website at www.couragetochange2013.org.

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

The Twelve Traditions of Sexaholics Anonymous

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on SA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for SA membership is a desire to stop lusting and become sexually sober.
4. Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups or SA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the sexaholic who still suffers.
6. An SA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the SA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every SA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. SA should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. SA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. SA has no opinion on outside issues; hence the SA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, and TV.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Essay presents the experience, strength, and hope of SA members. Opinions expressed in Essay are not to be attributed to SA as a whole, nor does publication of any article imply endorsement by SA or by Essay. Manuscripts are invited, although no payment can be made. All articles submitted are assumed intended for publication and are subject to editing. All materials submitted become the property of Essay for copyright purposes. In submitting articles, please remember that SA's sobriety definition is not debated, since it distinguishes SA from other sex addiction fellowships. SA is not a forum for non-SA sobriety. In submissions, please do not reference unadjudicated illegal actions.



1. Powerless

adj. Destitute of the ability (whether physical, mental, or moral) to act. — WEBSTERS 1934

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.