

Essay

December 2013



In the Hands of My Higher Power

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.
—Adapted with permission from the AA Grapevine Inc.

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In the Hands of My Higher Power

My descent into addiction closely parallels the development of the Internet. In 1992, *Newsweek* featured a cover story highlighting this developing phenomenon. Around the same time, my employer gave us Internet access, and I started reading erotic stories online. As a youth I had occasionally enjoyed letters to the editor in men's magazines, but I hadn't read those in years. Now, an idle dalliance at work gradually increased in power and time commitment until it occupied at least an hour a day in my office.

I was one of the first users of the Internet at my workplace, and one day I invited some colleagues to check out this innovative technology. During the demo, I clicked on a random site I had bookmarked. It turned out to be a porn site that I didn't remember bookmarking. I made up a lame excuse, saying that the browser must have sent me that site—but I don't think anyone was fooled.

Erotic stories led to pictures which led to videos, but my crack cocaine was chat rooms. I also

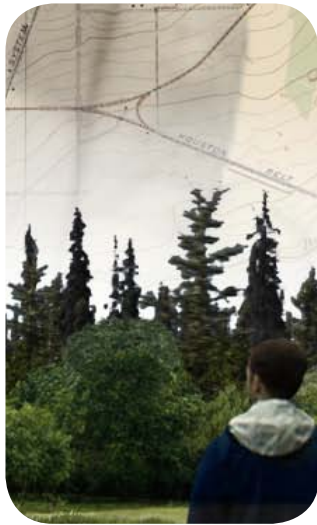
began exploring a same-sex lust, which I had been aware of over the years but which I had never yet acted upon. Now, my Internet exploration confirmed my same-sex attraction. It was strong and powerful. Chat rooms led me to sexual highs that I'd

been trying to recreate since my first orgasm at age 14.

Eventually I began chatting with other married men who were seeking same-sex liaisons. As I chatted with them, sex with another man began to seem normal and inevitable, yet I knew that taking that step would violate everything I believed about marriage and

commitment. I was not personally convinced that monogamy was the only viable option for successful relationships, but my wife believed in total commitment and monogamy, and I had made that commitment to her.

Now however, as I entertained fantasies and got closer to meeting men for sex, I recognized that I had a progressive and unmanageable compulsive illness. I sought help from a well-known therapist who was reputed to be one of the world's



experts on sexual compulsivity. Today I believe that was the beginning of my Step One—I understood that my life was unmanageable. Unfortunately, it took me 12 more years to realize that I was also powerless over my addiction.

In therapy I learned to accept my urges toward men, and to understand family-of-origin issues. But my disease continued to progress. I began a series of random sexual encounters with men I met online. I was referred to a therapy group for men with sexual compulsivity. Eventually I was able to stop all my addictive behaviors—except for masturbation, which I thought was fine!—for about four years.

Then one Sunday, when I was at work and resentful about being there, I decided to take “just one glance” at an old favorite chat room site, to see how it looked after five years of additional technology. I immediately found myself in sensory overload, bombarded with private chat windows, now with photos added. I entered my “addiction zone”: a state of total mental and body arousal with an intense need to satisfy my craving. I met up that very afternoon with another man and continued to binge for the next nine months.

I was a very ugly person in those days. I was isolated, snappish and reactive at home. I was often late to important family events because I was stuck online and couldn't get

myself to stop, and I was angry with my wife because I believed that she was driving me to this behavior! My employer received several complaints about me—something that had never happened before in my 20 years of medical practice.

I rejoined the therapy group, and the members eventually demanded that I disclose my acting out to my wife. I wanted to protect her from the pain of learning that her husband had random sex with other men, but they said she might actually prefer to be given the choice about whether to remain in a marriage with a guy who is engaging in such behavior.

Eventually, on a “date night,” my wife asked me if I was happy with our relationship. I disclosed everything. I knew that the truth was the truth, and secrecy would not change the truth. I felt some relief, along with great fear that this might mean the end of my marriage. My wife was deeply hurt—but, remarkably, she decided that she loved me enough to stay in the relationship.

We saw a couples therapist, and I convinced myself, my therapist, and my wife that in order to honor “my homosexual side,” it was most appropriate for me to masturbate with same-sex fantasy. My wife was skeptical, but since my therapist agreed, who was she to argue?

I abstained from same-sex encounters for the next five years,

but was still masturbating a lot and watching gay porn while on business trips. These behaviors had been my pattern throughout my so-called “recovery.” After awhile I started visiting gay hookup sites again. I never mentioned those behaviors to my relapse prevention group, my therapist, or my wife.

I complained to the therapist that things weren’t getting better. He suggested that I spend some time in our sessions considering what life would be to live as a gay man. I resisted the idea because, frankly, none of the sex I had with men ever made me any happier, and I did enjoy sex with my wife. I was also afraid that if I gave serious consideration to choosing a gay lifestyle, I would never return from it.

My disease progressed to frightening depths. After seven years of not acting out with men, I became obsessed with setting up liaisons for my business trips. Then I started hooking up with men in town. Cyber sex, phone sex, and masturbation were no longer satisfying. Eventually I found myself in a hotel room in New Orleans with a guy I had met before. After an evening of unsatisfying sex, I woke up and found that I couldn’t wait for him to leave. Several months later he disclosed to me that he was HIV positive.

I came home and told my therapist that I’d been lying about my

sobriety for at least a year. I asked him whether he thought a Twelve Step program might help, and he agreed that many people find these programs helpful. I also had to tell my relapse prevention group that I had not been fully honest with them for several years. Several of these men are also in SA or AA, and they encouraged me to try the Twelve Step approach. Next came the inevitable second disclosure to my wife. She wailed like a wounded animal, displaying the worst pain I could ever imagine inflicting upon the woman I loved.

I fell into a deep depression and stopped acting out on December 7, 2009—but I was reluctant to attend SA at first because I did not believe the sobriety definition made any sense. Then in late December, I attended my first SA meeting.

There I found a bunch of honest men willing to share their stories and their phone numbers with me—including single guys happily living within the SA definition of sexual sobriety. The members immediately directed me to attend as many meetings as I could, so I began attending five or six meetings a week. I cancelled all my business trips for six months.

My first sponsor told me to talk to two or three guys a day. I didn’t like making calls, but I followed his direction. One day when I was triggered in a locker room at the gym, I realized that my same-sex



lust was not any different from opposite-sex lust; in both cases, erotic energy was directed away from my primary love relationship, and was taking something from someone who probably did not want to be lusted after. I realized that I was in no way unique because of my same-sex lust and deserved no special accommodations. And I realized that my therapist had been right: as long as I fanned my lust with same-sex fantasy and masturbation, I could not know “true union” with my wife.

My wife was not happy that I had chosen a gay man as a sponsor. I was adamant that he was among the most wise and sober guys in our fellowship (true to this day), and that it was good for my recovery to have healthy, boundary-filled relationships with gay men (one of our therapists had said so!). Hearing that, my sponsor fired me. He noted that it was not accidental that I had chosen one of the few out gay men in the fellowship to be my sponsor, and that if my goal was to stay in my marriage, having a “that’s her problem” attitude was not going to help me achieve my goals.

My second sponsor (a rough-and-tumble-former-high-school-jock-serial-womanizer) worked with me on my Step One, which I shared with my home group after 90 days of sobriety. Even though I’d already read three versions to my sponsor (each version moving farther away from my

“sexalog” and more focused on my powerlessness and unmanageability), declaring who I was out loud before my group felt different.

Reading my first Step was like seeing myself in a movie—unsanitized, without airbrushing or soft-pedaling. The image was not pleasant; it was the opposite of the wonderful guy I had told myself I was. Yet during the feedback period, I felt total acceptance and extraordinary love in the room. For the first time, I felt the presence of a Higher Power. This launched me into Step Two. I believed that—just perhaps—some kind of power greater than myself could restore me to sanity.

As a lifelong agnostic, I struggled with Step Three. I felt disconnected from the guys who were earnestly sharing about their connections to a Higher Power, and I worried that I could not move forward with Step Three. But my Higher Power works in amazing ways.

At the time, the father of one of my SA mentors was dying, and I had been helping my friend as his father’s disease progressed. When I called him to discuss my distress around Step Three, I learned that his father had died. I sobbed as if it were my own father, who died when I was 16. I realized that in helping my friend, I had been trying to save my own dad. And just as I couldn’t save my father, I couldn’t save his.

This was a magic Higher Power

moment for me—a mutual drama of healing, support, and redemption. I can't explain it. I immediately rewrote my Second and Third Step, convinced that a Higher Power was at work in my life. I became totally willing to turn my will and care of my life over to that Higher Power.

I continued my Step work with a loving sponsor and began working with sponsees of my own. My life was becoming more spiritual than it had ever been; I felt that I had experienced the promised spiritual awakening. Yet my *true* spiritual awakening surprised me. The turning point was just last year, when our local Intergroup decided to host the July 2013 SA International Convention in Baltimore.

In the beginning, we were eager to highlight the growth of our local fellowship and show off our city. Yet early on, the enterprise nearly collapsed because of differences of opinions among the members of our steering committee. I called my sponsor.

Before I even told him why I was calling he said, "It's your ego, Steve. Conventions are nice, but they aren't that important. Get over it." Then I went out for a long bike ride. As I was huffing up hill, I thought that perhaps our local fellowships weren't ready for this challenge, and perhaps we could hold a convention in the future instead. Then, once I made that surrender, amazing things



began to happen!

The steering committee was able to overcome the impasses that had stymied us, and we gelled into a wonderful working group. Rather than highlighting our local members, our program committee decided to reach out to SA members all over the world. The outpouring of volunteer support was extraordinary. So last July, a rather generic business hotel was transformed into a "City of Recovery," 800 souls strong. Hallways bustled with people, laughter, tears, hugs, spirit, and most definitely a Higher Power. I felt privileged to be involved.

That last morning, as I participated in an old-timers panel, I found myself weeping at some of the shares, including mine. During the closing session, I wept again as I shared my gratitude. I realized that apart from being a dad to my three kids, this convention felt like the greatest thing with which I had ever been involved.

The following Monday, I knew something was different when I saw a junior colleague—someone whom I had resented for many years—and all I felt toward him was love. I found myself crying with my patients, which certainly wasn't efficient for directing a clinic! So I went into our meditation room, fell on my knees sobbing, and right there had a life-altering spiritual experience. I felt myself in the hands

of my Higher Power, embraced in love. And most amazingly, I felt the presence of my father who died when I was 16. I felt nothing but his love—the one thing which I have longed most for in the 39 years since his death. I felt my God-sized hole filled. My Higher Power stayed with me that day, and now—whenever I let my ego go and reach out to others—I can tap into that Power. For a man who was a life-long agnostic, this is incredible!



Since that experience, I'm better able to feel and to give love. I have wonderful male friends in the fellowship whom I truly love, in the most healthy way possible. I still have same-sex attraction—I believe that is part of my "wiring." However, when I am visually triggered, I can use the tools of the program: I can pray for the person, pray for my Higher Power to remove my lust, and call one of my brothers to surrender my lust. If the trigger is someone I must engage with, I make sure to look him in the eyes, and address him as a person and not as an object. The lustful feelings evaporate. My relationship with my wife has never been stronger. We are emotionally open, mutually respectful, and very loving.

This past year, an incredible career opportunity found me—but it required a relocation, which neither my wife nor I wanted. Working

our individual programs, we have negotiated the first phases of a complex move with plenty of humor and love. While getting to know new SA and S-Anon communities, we will also be returning to Baltimore and our home groups on a regular basis. I believe that this is part of my Higher Power's plans for us.

I'm definitely a "work in progress." My sponsor warns me that to maintain the spiritual connection, I must continue to work Steps Ten through Twelve daily. I know he's right. I take frequent Tenth Step inventories during the day, make amends on the spot whenever possible, take brief breaks for meditation throughout the day, and frequently use the Third Step prayer when beginning my day, as well as the Seventh Step prayer when I sense my character defects coming out.

The program works, but it takes work. It takes lots of meetings, lots of phone calls, lots of Step work, and lots of service. I always believed that at heart I was a good person. But my character defects promoted a spiritual sickness leading to progressive addiction. The SA program and my Higher Power have allowed my best self to re-emerge from the diseased person I had become. I never knew the "road of happy destiny" would be filled with so much gratitude and joy.

—Steve C., Baltimore

The Nature of My Lust

The first time I was confronted with a naked picture of a man and woman, it was in an educational book my mother gave me when I was in second grade. Despite experiencing the familiar rush of the forbidden and climbing on my roof with my friend to look at the pictures, I felt uncomfortable with the images. When I tried to explain my discomfort to my mom, she suggested that I simply tear out the pages I did not like. That was the last piece of advice about sex I ever received from her.

I grew up essentially as an only child, as all of my half-brothers and half-sisters were older and were out of the house. The only brother I knew was two years older than I. When I was about three, he had an emotional breakdown and was put into foster care. I took note of the consequences of expressing emotion.

When I was five, my parents got divorced, and I went to live with my mother and my new stepfather. I quickly learned to be comfortable being by myself. This skill was useful when I moved to new schools five different times and had a hard time making friends. Somewhere along the way I became pretty good in math and most other subjects. I was adept in using computers, I had a responsible job in high school, and

I held leadership roles in several activities. Despite my problems (few meaningful friendships, a non-nurturing home life, and being more than 50 pounds overweight), I actually did fairly well.



In the summer before my senior year in high school, my father died. Eight months later, my mother died. My stepfather made it clear how he felt about me when he declared, "I love you, but I don't like you." Expressing my emotions had never been easy, so with the death of my parents and the hurt of my stepfather's comment, I suppressed my emotions and moved on with my life. Moving out of the house and going to college were easy. No strings attached. No family commitments. Nobody I needed (or wanted) to call home to.

I had many problems to overcome when I first went to college, but I successfully faced many of my new challenges. I took care of my housing, books, job, and food. I also discovered alcohol. Yet I had other problems that I did not know how to address. I was socially awkward: I was uncomfortable telling others about my life without feeling ashamed, and uncomfortable with their reaction of pity. I was not comfortable being me. To get by, I relied on two of my trusty strengths: using computers and being comfortable alone.

I quickly discovered online chat rooms. In 1992 chat was not easy, but I could use the school computer in the mainframe lab or access an early on-line community in the privacy of my dorm room. I had found a "safe" place to talk with others. Plus, I could lie to make myself more attractive.

Miraculously, I turned into an 18-year-old girl, a 14-year-old girl, or a 40-year-old housewife. (I found that posing a woman attracted the most attention from others). But eventually I realized that I had no idea who was on the other end of the conversation. It might be just another lonely 18-year-old boy trying to connect with someone who cared, even if it was just for a few messages.

At the same time, my college roommates and I discovered pornographic movies. Now I no longer had to lie to get my fix! Achieving a "connection" was always assured. We would watch movies for hours. Before long, however, the movies became somewhat boring and awkward. We all knew where we went after the movies, but never discussed it. This "solution" was not sustainable.

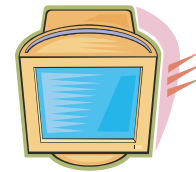
Where would I get my fix now? Computers could solve my problem. I had a real job now, I had the trust of my boss and coworkers, and I was clearly the most knowledgeable about computers at the office. I would work late—later than

everyone else. At first it was truly for work, but inevitably I would find myself in front of the one computer that had a modem. That was in 1993, and I found my first pornographic website. I no longer needed chat. I no longer needed to watch movies with friends. I had a solution. All was well.

In college I found a god, and it was me. I constructed a life loosely based on ideas from my Western Philosophy class. I took what I needed, left the rest, and developed a god of my own creation. I was feeling pretty comfortable with my place in life. I knew I was self-centered, but in my self-created world, that was where I belonged.

Then came marriage. Immediately after graduation, I moved in with my future wife. I found a new job in another city, and again moved my entire life to a new place. I brought everything with me, including my addiction.

It was not long before my wife caught me viewing pornography. Rather than addressing the problem, I suppressed any feeling of shame. I deserved pornography! I did not want to give it up, but I did not want to lose my wife, the one real person I had in my life. So I lied about the magnitude of what I was doing. I lied about why I used pornography (not that I truly knew myself). And I lied about my commitment to stop.



She bought it—or at least I thought she did—and again I solved my problem. I hid all traces of my pornography use. I never paid for pornography. I deleted all browser history and cookies. I “worked” late at the office. I found that travel was a perfect opportunity to act out for hours without getting caught.

But I kept getting caught. And I kept lying to and manipulating my wife. I tried to get her interested in pornographic videos. I kept doing what I had always done. I thought that if I lied a bit more, if I covered my tracks just a bit better, if I figured out new ways to get my fix without getting caught—then things would be okay. I even started seeing a sex addiction counselor to keep her off my back.

August 13, 2010 is the day I will always remember. The gig was up. My wife made it clear that she was not going to live with this any longer. I knew that she meant every word of it. This was a relief. I did not know if I could keep lying and hiding any longer. I had seen the boundaries of my own solutions dissolve. I had started buying magazines and had gotten sloppy about cleaning my trail. All my lies had been discovered. My addiction was unmanageable.

For the first time, I recognized the intercession of God in my life. My counselor recommended SA.

I stopped acting out through a combination of shame, fear, and willpower—and I attended my first SA meeting in September 2010. As I started to absorb the SA program, shame, fear, and willpower were slowly being replaced with self-respect, hope, and surrender. That’s when I found true sobriety.

Meetings, meetings, meetings. Sobriety was working. I could tell others about myself and my history, and not feel ashamed. I could finally come clean with my wife, the people in my fellowship, and my therapist. Well, almost everything. I did not tell them about the fantasy. Why would I need to? It was all in my head, I never hurt anybody. Why cause more damage? Of course I couldn’t tell my wife I had a long-standing fantasy about one of her life-long friends and some other women in my life—but even with program members, I kept those fantasies to myself. So, despite my intention of sobriety, I was still living a life of willpower and not surrendering to God.

About seven months into the program I went to my first regional SA conference in Harrisburg, PA. This was overwhelming—so many different meetings and different rooms. All the meeting rooms were named for trees, but I couldn’t keep the names straight. Elm? Birch? Oak? By the grace of God, I went to a meeting I



had intended to avoid. The topic was honesty, and I was confronted with the fact that I could not keep my secrets any longer. Every aspect of my life had become unmanageable.

That weekend I really connected with one person in the fellowship and admitted that I could no longer keep my secrets. I admitted I was powerless. I felt powerless. I started acting as if I were powerless, and I did something small but significant, about it. I called another member while at the conference and asked him to be my sponsor.

That call was one of the hardest phone calls I’ve ever made. I had almost never asked anybody for help, unless I was being manipulative. But I knew I could no longer use my strengths to solve my problems. God had finally given me so many challenges that I had to admit powerlessness. I came to finally see that there was a God in my life and it was not me.

Seasons have now passed. I’m in the process of making my Ninth Step amends. It was only after my Fourth Step that I began to fully see the destructive nature of my lust—especially the damage caused by the abuse of my “strengths.” I can see that I created a god of my own image, thinking that I had control of everything around me.

I can also see that I have abilities that help me be of service

to others. I’ve taken responsibility as an Intergroup representative for my home group, and as secretary of our Intergroup. I participated in planning three of our local annual conferences. I love sharing the story of my life and recovery. I speak freely of God and the mutual loving relationship I have with Him.

But even when I use my strengths to benefit others, I must be careful that I don’t allow a sense of superiority to creep back in. Sometimes I find myself giving unsolicited advice rather than sharing my experience, strength, and hope. Sometimes I still try to use my “strengths” to cover my fears. I know that no matter what the situation, I am a true lustaholic.

I’ve come to see how, as described in the White Book, lust is using a natural instinct to achieve an unnatural desire. All of my character strengths are natural instincts, just as physical attraction, sex, and masturbation are natural. I’ve used all of these natural instincts to numb any feelings I felt I could not handle. I now do my best to turn to my fellows and to God and admit my powerlessness over those feelings. I find that I’m able to accept the feelings of hurt, fear, and shame when they are present and not always try to solve them. I am powerless.

I have now been blessed with over three years of sobriety. When



I'm not vigilant, I sometimes still turn to lust. I might turn on the TV when I'm tired, or play games on my phone when I'm bored, or find different ways to isolate myself so I do not have to feel uncomfortable. I know that when I cover my feelings with other activities, it interferes with my life and my recovery. I cannot use my strengths to solve these issues. I must continuously turn to God and ask Him for His love and grace so I can let Him do for me what I cannot do for myself.

But even though I still struggle with my willpower, every day things get a bit easier. I look forward to

Surprised by Peace and Joy

My name is Marie W., I'm a sexaholic, and my sobriety date is August 20, 2005. I came into SA because I was afraid I would die if I didn't. I had started including self-inflicted pain in my acting-out behaviors. Today, because of SA, I'm learning to let go of old behaviors and replace them with healthy ones.

When I was six, my life changed forever. My parents divorced and I moved with my mom from California to New Mexico. Then she remarried, and I had a new stepdad and a new stepbrother, who was eight. My new dad was an alcoholic and mom raged against his drinking. Their fights were scary. My mom was also often angry with my stepbrother. When he defied her, she would hit

my morning reflections and my three regular SA meetings. I am constantly grateful and amazed at what God does in my life. I have a relationship with my wife in recovery that is built on a foundation of honesty. I have a group of SA friends who know me well. I'm learning to embrace the struggles of my life as well as the shame and resentment associated with my past.

I'm grateful to SA for all of these things, and I look forward to carrying the message to others so that they too may experience freedom from lust.

—Shawn N., Pittsburgh, PA

him with a belt. I felt powerless to stop her.

When I was 11, I found the solution to all my problems: masturbation! When I was 13, my stepbrother found something better than masturbation for him: he found me. At first, this seemed like an amicable relationship. He would touch me in ways that felt great. Then we would have sex, which I found unsatisfying and boring. One day he suggested that we do what our dad's pornographic magazine showed. I said no, and he accepted that. But the amicable relationship ended the night he came into my bedroom and wanted me sexually—while my two younger sisters were sleeping in the same room. My refusal did

not matter to him. I was so scared that I blanked out everything sexual that happened between us from that moment on. I still don't know what happened that night.

After my first semester in college, when I was 17, my boyfriend broke up with me. His best friend listened to me share my sad story. When I told him what a great "big brother" he was, he said that he didn't want to be my big brother. Then he kissed me. He was 20. I started dating him, and our relationship quickly became sexual. I had been sexually active since I was 11, but I never dreamed that sex could be like this!

Nine months later, we were married. I had decided I wanted him to be the father of my children. We didn't have much money in college but we were good friends, and he was always teaching me how to do fun things. I became a nurse, and when my husband graduated from college he joined the Air Force. I worked the 7 am to 3 pm shift at the hospital, and when I got off work, my husband would want to have sex even though I said no because I needed my sleep.

When we got married, we had no idea how to resolve conflicts. We would argue, and the person who yelled the loudest would win. One night when I was yelling as loud as my husband was, he slapped me. I

told him if he ever did that again I would get the butcher knife and stab him in the gut until he was dead. He knew that I meant it. One month later, my husband was scheduled to fly in a routine training mission. He was a navigator of an F-4 fighter jet. The night before, he had asked me whether he should take some medicine for a problem he was having. He knew that if he took it he couldn't fly. I told him that I could not make the choice for him.—and he flew the next day and died playing war games with the 8th Army in Germany.

I was devastated. I felt responsible for his death. When my husband died, I was 32, and we had two children—an eight-year-old boy and a six-year-old girl. Later I was able to be grateful that my husband hadn't died three years earlier in Vietnam, because my children had more time with him. And just this past year, when I shared my husband's story with a war veteran, he said to me "Your husband died doing what he loved doing!" What a gift! The remorse I had felt was lifted.

But when he died, I needed something to fill the void. I started taking classes at the local university, but my addict took over. In six months I had sexual encounters with 26 different men. I was always looking for the high that would stop



the pain. Instead, I felt used, lost, and worthless.

Between school during the day and meeting men at night, I don't remember who was taking care of my children. I do know that they had to walk home from school by themselves, unlock the door, turn off the alarm, and go inside—not knowing when their mamma would be home and knowing their daddy would never be home. Sometimes my son couldn't turn the alarm off fast enough. Then a neighbor would come and turn it off.

One day I focused my anger on my son and used a belt on him—just as my mother had used a belt on my stepbrother. That lasted three weeks before I stopped. He never cried. As an adult he has said he doesn't remember this, but that is a very shameful part of my past.

Eventually my acting out behaviors began to scare me. I was seeking pain in my acting out, and there was never enough pain to get the high I wanted. I knew my behavior would kill me. So I went to my first SA meeting in 2005.

Eight men were sitting around a table when I arrived, and they moved over and made room for me. Right away I felt at home. I felt comfortable with them. Amazingly, there was no lust in their eyes. They accepted me as a person, just another addict—and not an object.



Soon after that I asked an SA woman at a near-by meeting to be my sponsor. Her first assignment for me was to use the "Daily Sobriety Renewal" questions with other women. She told me to read and answer the questions with as many different women as possible every day for 30 days. She added, "Don't visit; just do the Renewal! If you want to visit, call back at a different time. And don't worry if you miss a day, just start your counting all over again!" This helped me focus on my sobriety and connect, and I enjoyed talking with other SA women.

Writing my First Step was especially painful for me at first. Looking at all of my acting out behaviors brought up all sorts of feelings, and I feared that I would act out to stop the pain. So I went to my sponsor's house and sat at her table to write, while she was in another room. Eventually I could write at home, but my sponsor told me to "bookend" my writing sessions by calling another member before and after each session. That helped me feel safe. If I got too scared I would stop and call someone.

As I continued working the Steps, each one brought me new insight. Steps Eight and Nine were especially powerful for me. I remember making amends to my son and daughter for my neglect of them when they were very young.

I told them that I had placed my wants above their needs, that I was selfish and inconsiderate, that I put inappropriate responsibilities on them, and that I abandoned them physically and emotionally. Much to my surprise, they accepted my amends, and today my relationships with my children are so much better than before. Because of SA, I am able to be loving rather than abusive, and my children frequently show their love for me. My daughter has asked me to give her "job notes," suggesting things she can do for me when she comes to visit. And recently, my 45-year-old son swept my floor without being asked!

God has even used my experience to benefit others. Once, when I shared on an SA panel about my abuse of my children, an audience member spoke with me afterward. He said he had struggled with making amends to his parents because of the abuse that he had suffered from them. "But," he said, "a piece of the puzzle came home today. I never heard my mother's part of story; thank you for that." He accepted my expression of grief as his mother's amends! This was a powerful example of how God can transform my life through SA, and how He can use even my worst experiences to benefit others

As I continue working the SA program, I find that my life becomes progressively more joyful and more

peaceful. Early in sobriety I found myself lusting after the men in my meetings; now they are brothers and friends who I love in a healthy way. I have healthy relationships with both men and women friends inside and outside the program. In the past I would isolate from my family. Now I invite my four adult children and their families to my home. We eat and talk or play games. I can listen to them now and enjoy what's going on in their lives. We are connected. What a gift!

Today I know that I don't have to be sexual or change who I am in order to be accepted or loved.

I know who I am. I am no longer that wooden Indian standing on the corner, smiling and waving at the kids at school as they walked by. I am a sober 72-year-old woman who finds joy in loving life, people, sky, trees, flowers, and all the other gifts that God has given us in this world and in my life.

I could have never done this alone. I am so grateful to my sponsors who said "Do what I tell you" (and I did), the SA program, and all the SA fellowship members who have encouraged me with their criticism, praise, experience, strength, and hope. But most of all, I am grateful to my Higher Power, Who, through SA, has surprised me with peace and joy.

—Marie W., Tacoma



On Sponsoring Others

When I was sober just over three months, a younger man asked me to sponsor him. He was shy and new to SA and I didn't want to say no, so I said that I would be his temporary sponsor. When I called my sponsor to tell him what happened, he seemed skeptical and emphasized that I should definitely think of this as only temporary, since I myself was new to sobriety and Step work. I ended up sponsoring this man for about two years, and we are still friends in recovery to this day.

I believe that I needed that sponsee very much at the time. Just days before, I had asked my sponsor's blessing (now that I was finally 90 days sober!) to date my ex-girlfriend, and he had advised against it. Though I wanted to lie to myself as I had so many times before, I knew I couldn't truly work my Third Step and ignore his advice. I remember sitting in my car after that call, crying tears of painful surrender and thinking I wasn't going to make it in recovery. That was just days before this young man approached me about sponsorship.

I believe God was helping me. And like the flawed human being

that I was and still am, I thought, "Heck, when I do eventually get back together with my ex-girlfriend, she'll be pretty impressed that I have a sponsee and will be convinced of how well I must be doing."

At first I thought that sponsorship was pretty straightforward; I just acted the way my sponsors acted toward me and tried to speak only from my experience. But I soon discovered that, even in sharing from my own experience, I brought my own personality and character defects into sponsorship. I could not just be a carbon copy of my own sponsor; I would have to develop my own identity as a sponsor. It's still quite a work in progress.

I have now been gratefully sober for three years. Since I met my first sponsee almost three years ago, over a dozen men have asked me to sponsor them. Though not all of them have stayed with the program, I learned something from each one. I would like to share five lessons I've learned about sponsoring in SA. My real purpose in writing this article is the hope that we can create a forum in the *Essay* for sponsors to share their experience, strength, and hope. I need all the help I can



get from those of you with far more experience as sponsors (and I suspect my sponsees will be grateful as well).

1. *Use the Slogans.* "First things first" applies to sponsorship in more ways than one. When I'm approached by a potential sponsee and he asks me what comes next, I say, "Call me tomorrow." In the past I would make a number of other suggestions, but I've learned to keep it simple. It's amazing how many don't even call the next day! If they do call, I recommend they call me every day (after all, those words were the greatest gift my first sponsor ever gave me). And if they call the day after that, I may recommend some literature such as the White Book and *Step into Action: Steps One, Two, Three*.

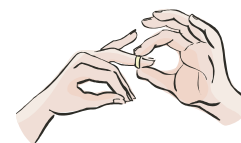
But it's easy for me to get carried away; I need to remember how overwhelmed I felt when I came into these rooms. If my first sponsor had moved too fast, I might have run in the opposite direction. So I remember to practice "Easy Does It." "First things first" also reminds me that I'm in recovery so that I can live and be present in all aspects of my life. I'm careful to balance taking calls from sponsees with being fully present with my wife and friends. (I did marry the girl I had wanted to impress, and a week ago was our 18-month wedding anniversary!) This has taken practice.

2. *Sponsoring keeps me sober.*

This is true in the larger spiritual sense as service is essential to recovery, but it's also true for me from a purely practical standpoint. I can't tell you how many times I've had the thought, "I could act out, tonight" followed by the thought, "But then what would happen to my sponsees?" I have to be in recovery for myself first and foremost, but there's no bad reason for me to stay sober today (it's just that some reasons are a little better than others).

3. *I cannot be a sponsee's only support.* I remind my sponsees that they should seek a broad network of support from within the fellowship—and I try to practice that myself when seeking advice about tough situations with my sponsees. I also emphasize that they should develop a list of guys they can call who each have a few years of sobriety. I love to hear what they're learning from others in the fellowship because I usually need to learn or relearn it myself.

4. *I can't keep my sponsees sober.* Lately I've been learning the painful lesson that I can't want sobriety for my sponsees more than they want it for themselves. The desire has to come from them. As Tradition Three states, "the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop lusting and become sexually sober." It's so simple, yet for me



codependency is one of the most challenging aspects of this work.

5. *I just keep volunteering.* When the meeting chair asks for available sponsors in closing, I just keep volunteering no matter how many “active” sponsees are on my roster. I know this isn’t practical for everyone in SA. My own sponsor counsels me to ask myself whether I can give a new sponsee the attention he deserves. But so far God has been taking care of me, placing a

sponsee in my life just at the moment when another sponsee stops calling, or when my own program is feeling vulnerable in some way. I’ve seen the number of my incoming calls fluctuate drastically from day to day and from week to week, so I never assume that being rich in sponsees today is any guarantee for tomorrow. For the time being, I just keep raising my hand.

—Anonymous, Cambridge, MA

Uselessness and Self-Pity Will Disappear

Every person in recovery is different; every person in recovery is the same. That’s my conclusion after being among many fellow addicts in all stages of recovery.

Unfortunately, I spent years stuck in the “white chip” stage of recovery—referring to the poker chip that many Twelve Step members pick up when starting or renewing the program. I started only once, but “renewed” a thousand times. Literally, a thousand times. I would wake each day thinking, “OK, yesterday’s slip was the last straw for me.” But each night would find me feeling utterly hopeless and defeated.

The phrase “Keep coming back” was the one flimsy reed I clung to as waves of addiction continuously washed away my sobriety.

As a sober sponsor today, I know exactly what my sponsees need—

they need to work the Twelve Steps and have a spiritual experience. Imagine my frustration when no two sponsees ever work the Steps exactly the way I recommend, nor do any of them have a spiritual experience exactly when I think they should.

When I first came to SA, I was just like them. My sponsor told me exactly and precisely what I needed to do to get sober, but I completely avoided doing it. I heard him say, “Work the Steps,” but I ignored the Steps for weeks or months at a time. I heard, “Half measures availed us nothing” (AA, 59), yet I tried half measures for years. I heard that I should regularly call my sponsor and that I should describe where I really was in recovery, every day. Did I listen? Nope. I wanted to be sober but I avoided doing anything I was told to



do. I acted as if I were following my sponsor’s instructions, but addiction was still my master. After many years (yes, years!) of coming to meetings and not following the program, I became convinced that the Twelve Steps were useless. I felt sorry for myself. After all the time and effort I had put into recovery, I had nothing to show for it! Poor pitiful me!

At that low spot, I received suggestions from two other people. First, a relative sent me Joe and Charlie’s “The Big Book Comes Alive” (these are recordings which include a discussion of how the Twelve Steps were worked in the 1930s and 40s). Then my sponsor asked me to stop praying to “a God” that I had no understanding of or personal connection with. He urged me to search my childhood for any time I had ever felt the presence of a Higher Power.

At first, his suggestion seemed absurd. How could an adult rely on a childhood understanding of God? To my surprise, I found I could reopen a long-forgotten connection to a God I personally understood. Only after that could I really start to work the Steps fully and without reservation.

With the help of my newly found Higher Power, I gained the willingness to work the Steps instead of relying on the absurd hope that sobriety chips would somehow get me sober.

Placing aside my pride, I humbly worked Step One. I persisted in working the Steps, with help from more experienced people in recovery. I took each Step, “thinking it would be off the edge into oblivion” (SA, 61). I no longer obsessed over my next white chip. I wholly surrendered myself to what the Steps might offer.

I cannot honestly say I worked harder after that—slipping every few days for years is brutally hard. I cannot say I worked smarter after that—lying, evading, cheating, denying, and manipulating required much more intelligence than telling the truth. But something definitely changed in me. I know, because those tired old “bumper sticker” sayings for which AA is well-known suddenly came true for me in very personal ways:

- “Easy does it” replaced my attitude of “I must not be working hard enough on recovery yet.”
- “Keep it simple” replaced: “The Twelve Steps are a complex set of psychological theories.”
- “First things first” replaced “Tackling everything at once proves that I’m productive.”
- “One day at a time” replaced: “I must earn a 10-year sobriety chip immediately!”

These changes did not happen overnight, but in time my emotional numbness began to thaw. I experienced a great

moment of grief when I realized how much of my life had already been wasted in addiction. But then almost immediately, the grief was replaced by a tidal wave of happiness that the rest of my life was still mine to enjoy.

I was already attending church—unsuccessfully trying to “bleach” away the moral stains of my addiction—but I began to let my friends there see my real brokenness. I no longer built relationships on secrets. I stopped



judging other people. I started to relax about tomorrow. I took better care of the people whom my Higher Power placed in my life. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity disappeared!

Thus, the promise that says, “That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear” came true for me as the result of working the Steps. And when I stay active with my recovery, that promise continues to come true with each new day.

—John I.

The Gifts of Recovery

In May 2002, I was separated from my wife of 17 years because of my addiction to pornography. We had two children: a 13 year-old daughter and a 15-year-old son. A professional counselor told them about my addiction.

A few weeks later a friend who had been to an SA meeting before told me about some meetings in our state. The next meeting was a 2 1/2 hour drive away, so we hopped in the car and drove. I knew I was in the right place immediately. My friend and I went to three meetings that first week, the closest being an hour and a half away. After putting hundreds of miles on the car, we decided to start a meeting in our own city, in



which I am still active. During this time, my daughter spent as little time as possible with me. It was difficult to find things to do together, and our communication was strained.

Eventually we were able to communicate on a deeper level. When she left for college, we started the habit of talking on the phone at least once a week, which we still do five years later.

She gave me a poem during one of her visits, and it had a deep impact on me. The poem also helps me to be extremely grateful for the gifts of recovery. I've shared it with others in the program, and it has brought hope to many who have had strained relationships with family members. I would like to

share her poem with the fellowship today, in the hopes that it also might

also be useful to others.

—John W., Yakima WA

Peace Instead of Bitterness

I remember how it used to be: how proud I was of our family tree. I knew nothing of the rot inside and all the things you used to hide.

I remember the day it fell apart and I set the table without your fork. I spoke the lie I thought was true, “Good Christians didn’t sin.”

Do you remember what it did to me? How I took all the pain and changed it into blame and tried to keep you far from me?

But you’re not who you used to be. Time has now intervened. The mistakes you made have left you changed: they’ve given you humility.

And I’m not who I used to be. I have power of life and death in me. With words I speak I can forgive and choose peace instead of bitterness.



Attitude of Gratitude

I recently attended the 2013 international convention in Baltimore, and before the experience fades, I would like to take the action of expressing my gratitude in words to God and the fellowship.

The decision to attend the convention was difficult at first. My desire to go was strong, but my financial picture said, “Maybe next time.” Instead of listening to this voice, I reached out and asked for help. I sent scholarship applications to both my local intergroup and the

program organizers. My diseased pride would rather not admit any weaknesses, but I needed to be with “my people” (thank you Roy K.!), and I was determined to go.

After sending in my requests I felt a very powerful and healthy sense of self-worth. I took the action and felt at peace. Both applications were approved! Later when I called to express my gratitude, I asked, “How can I ever repay these gifts?” I was told. “Bring back the good word.” I took this to heart, and

following are a few of my takeaway thoughts to pass on.

1. *I cannot work my program alone.* I never could and never will recover without the support of other recovering sexaholics. As one SA speaker shared, “The fellowship is where the action is.” I’m slowly learning to give and receive love in this fellowship of the spirit.

2. *In SA, I’m accepted for who I am—a sex drunk—even when I cannot accept myself.* This admission in Step One allows me the courage to continue to be honest about who I am, and to recognize additional defects in Step Six. Sometimes I’m a rage-aholic, a fear-aholic, a dishonest-aholic, etc. The list goes on. And that’s okay, just for today.

3. *I need to be involved in service.* The scholarship committee

Introducing New GDA Chair

Arrest and Surrender

“Arrest and surrender in order to be set free—what a paradox!” (SA, 83). Thus began my story of recovery on April 7, 1989, when my secret life lived in bondage to lust was shattered by an actual arrest, the resulting publicity, and the necessity of facing the literal question of whether to live or die.

I was at a turning point. I could continue along the familiar path,

requested that I perform some service at the convention. I’m ashamed to say that my first thought was, “I’ll only be there for one day and I want to go to as many meetings as possible!” But, surrendering to a Power greater than myself, I scheduled service into the day. After five minutes at my service position, a flood of positive feelings hit me. I underestimated the power of service. I can be of real usefulness to another person. The connection is awesome!

As I journeyed home from the convention, I was filled with hope. I still sometimes feel dishonest when I call myself a “grateful” sexaholic. Well, just for today—and even though I still have many problems—I am a grateful sexaholic!

—Anonymous



though separated from those I love. That path was punctuated by the highs and lows of sexual addiction, lived largely as a denizen of adult bookstores, dependent on masturbation and anonymous sex to medicate the pain of living.

Or I could choose the unknown life—lived in the light, without duplicity, with my brokenness in plain view and open to God and those who love me. That I chose the

second path was without doubt a matter of “circumstance rather than by any virtue” of mine (12&12, 38).

That choice led me to SA. While I was at a treatment center, another patient told me about finding SA before he entered the center and the hope he had found there. He also told me that the next SA International Convention would be held in Milwaukee a few weeks after I left treatment—only three hours from my hometown.

Thus Twelfth Stepped, I walked into my first SA meeting at the Milwaukee convention in July 1989. It was a gathering of hundreds of sexaholics, happy to be with one another and openly sharing their lives. I heard others tell my story, except that they had found a solution. Right away, I felt the love and acceptance of those around me, and I knew I belonged.

Returning home, I knew that if I wanted to stay sober I would have to start an SA meeting. Led by my pastor to another fellow who wanted what I wanted, the two of us held our first meeting in August 1989. I had no idea that starting that meeting had anything to do with service, I just knew I wanted what I saw in the folks at the Milwaukee convention—and to have that, I had to do what they did. I had to admit defeat and surrender pride and ego. I needed a new relationship with the God of my understanding. I had to ask for help and make myself vulnerable and

available to others.

SA has restored me to life in ways I never imagined. I’ve found a way of living based on the Twelve Steps and the examples of other members who have what I want. I have not had a perfect recovery since beginning in 1989, but by the grace of God, I never gave up, never quit, never left SA. I am presently sober and experiencing progressive victory over lust since March 12, 2003.

Service has been the lynchpin of my recovery. It has tethered me to the safe harbor afforded me by SA. I serve today as GDA chair for the same reason that I first served in starting my home group. I serve because I want SA sobriety and I have found it to be true that I can’t keep it if I don’t give it away.

There are countless ways to be of service at the local level, in Intergroups, regional assemblies and as Delegates, Trustees, or members of the various committees that serve the fellowship as a whole. My hope is that each of us will find ways to contribute our diverse talents, experiences, and knowledge so that the next person who wants our solution will find a thriving fellowship offering them the same hope and new life that I have been so fortunate to have found.

Let’s continue together along the Road of Happy Destiny!

—Gary L., Chair, General Delegate Assembly

Spiritual Fornication

When I used to nourish lust thoughts, there was something going on inside me we might call spiritual fornication. Within my spirit I was shutting God out in rebellion, perverting the reality of the lust object to suit my sick need (splitting myself to create and then imagine that inner partner), and then having sex with her, which was really having sex with myself. My soul is fornicating whenever it turns from God as Source of life to the substitute (Augustine).

I'm discovering that the same is true with resentment thoughts and those negative judgments against people, where I select the actors, write the script, and direct the action so they come out looking bad. When I nourish these, I'm also having intercourse with myself, the only difference being that sex is not involved. The instant I start nourishing that thought against that person, I've shut God out. I'm creating something that doesn't exist. It's all in my mind and thus "spiritual," a closed-loop within the self. It's as though I'm trying to nourish the self on the self by projecting wrong onto the other person. I'm actually fornicating with my created image of that person, relishing getting into him or her and

messing with them.

This is just another technique to shut God out of my consciousness. When that happens, the ego is all alone, totally isolated, the same as in lust. The real high is the total isolation from reality and from God into the self. The naked self plays with the self in a cycle feeding on itself under the guise of something happening "out there," in or with another person, which isn't true at all; it's really happening within me. I'm arranging it in my mind so it seems like it's all "out there" somewhere, in the other person.

What I am seeing increasingly today—and many of us seem to be going through this resentment phase in SA now—is that I must still be carrying my own guilt. For me to make the other person continually wrong means I'm projecting my wrong onto that person, which means that my guilt is not resolved. So I take my salvation into my own hands every time I do this. I reject God and I'm on my own every time I'm playing that negative tape and that person comes out guilty or wrong, (The dialogue is scripted so that always happens.) And when the person may truly have wronged us to begin with, we have the



perfect excuse to commit spiritual fornication.

Ours is the ego disease par excellence, no doubt about it. For through such an exercise we are in essence pure gods. The human spirit, without benefit of drugs, sex, food, or any other kind of stimulation, is rising up against God and is becoming its own god. When man shuts God out, he becomes the one and only god. So for the time while I'm doing this, there's a feeling of omnipotence and control, because when I'm writing the script and directing the actors on the stage to make them come out wrong, I'm in control. And I think the part of my life that's out of control is refusing to see my own wrong and surrender to the Wrong-Bearer. The scenario is written so the other person is wrong; so, in effect, I transfer my sin and guilt onto him or her. The great control is that I make them the sinner so I come out clean. Whereas the key is that I have to acknowledge that I am a sinner.

Today I could feel the isolation and spiritual fornication beginning. It's a poisonous feeling. You're having that imaginary conversation

with the one who's crossed you, and you're relishing putting them down. You're all alone, you've shut God's presence out, and the inside of you turns dark and negative. And it's scary. And when you've been out of the dark and in the light for so long then go back into it, you know there's a drastic change of state, that it's different. I used to live in that darkness all the time. When you live in the light and then go into the darkness, you feel it; it gets your attention sooner as sobriety and recovery progress.

What gives me release now is this: I feel the darkness and poison and the destructive effect within me—the spiritual fornication, the dwelling on the self, the creating an object for resentment by splitting the self, the perversion of the reality of that person, the driving of the self into the self in that terrible isolation and darkness. If I can see my wrong and let God bear that instead of me, that's the best way out of it for me today.

—Roy K.

[footnote to original article: This inventory was written some years ago, and does not bear an exact date. Roy K.]



Members: Please Share Your Experience, Strength, and Hope

Sharing your ES&H encourages the addict who still suffers as well as members in recovery. In sharing your story, Please describe what you were like before, how you became involved in SA, what happened, and what is working for you today. For info contact essay@sa.org

¹ Reprinted from March 1996 Essay

EMER Convention Draws 150 to Warsaw



EMER held its first Regional Convention in Warsaw, Poland last October 25-27, with great results! We had approximately 152 participants, including 125 SA members (116 men and nine women) and 27 members of S-Anon. Of these, 117 participants were from Poland and 35 from other places in the world.

Participants included 11 representatives from EMER's seven participating Intergroups (Flanders/Belgium, Netherlands, Spain, Poland, Israel, UK, and Ireland) as well as trusted servants representing the Region. A Regional Assembly of all Intergroups and EMER officers was held on Friday.

The conference program included daily early-morning check-in meetings, followed by a group meditation. Other sessions, held in parallel, addressed particular topics with a lead share by a speaker from the region, followed by open sharing. Every session was translated (Polish to English as well as English to Polish). There were two general sessions for all attendees, followed by a Q&A session and open sharing. A Saturday night talent show gave members an opportunity to sing, play, dance, or just tell jokes. The closing session gave an opportunity

for those who wished to express gratitude to the group as a whole.

We each built many personal connections with other members, especially among members who came from other countries. If not for the fact that we shared the same problem and the same solution, we would probably never have met. Yet at the conference, we embraced.

During our regional assembly meeting, each of us briefly shared news from our own country, as well as what was happening with each of us personally. This was a great format, as we got to know each other better that way. One thing we learned is that our fellowship is growing. Poland currently has 160 members (and they have translated the White Book into Polish); Spain has 25; Belgium/Flanders has 15; Netherlands has 15; UK has 130; Israel has 300; and Ireland has 85 members. We discussed how to carry the SA message worldwide. We also elected an EMER Secretary and a Treasurer. Each elected member serves for two years and can be re-elected once. EMER can also choose three Delegates to represent EMER at SA's annual General Delegate Assembly, and two have already been appointed (Francis and Cathal,



both from Ireland). We are looking for a third representative from Israel, because of the size of the fellowship there. If anyone is interested, please contact SAICO. Requirements are five years sobriety, English language proficiency, and time available to focus on this particular service role.

On a personal note, I am from Israel, and I was thrilled to feel so much connection with members from so many different backgrounds. This is the same feeling of solidarity and connection that I've felt with those I grew up with, or those who are my age or share my religious beliefs. At the convention, I felt only warmth and acceptance from my fellow SAs. Everyone was respectful of our Orthodox religion and customs. The organizers provided kosher food, as well as a special room with a refrigerator and a place to keep our food warm—so that we might feel more comfortable. They were also respectful of those of us who could not participate in certain tasks on Saturdays, for religious reasons.

In all, seven Jewish members attended the conference, including three of us from Israel. Everyone was impressed with the growth and development of our fellowship in Israel, and they expressed a desire to attend the next regional conference (to be held in Israel, in May 2014). Every Intergroup representative found much to learn from other members. I took the email addresses of several members who serve on the various regional service committees, such as a prison committee and a public relations committee. I'm hoping that we will be able to collaborate with those members to more effectively carry the message in Israel.

Overall, the convention was a great success. The income from this convention (mainly from the Seventh Tradition) was about 550 Euro. I believe that most of it will be donated to EMER. Most important, however, the whole organizing committee stayed sober!

—AJ, Israel, EMER Delegate



Upcoming International Convention

January 10-12, 2014, Nashville, TN. *The Three Legacies*

Join us for a weekend of recovery in Nashville, TN, sponsored by SA and S-Anon members of the Nashville area. The convention will take place at the The Sheraton Music City in Nashville. The entire program/session schedule for the convention is posted on our convention website at threelegaciesnashville.com. The Early Bird Hotel Registration Discount closes on December 26, 2013.

We are looking forward to a great Convention!

Russian Speakers Meet in Moscow

I just returned from the Russian-speaking Convention held in Moscow on November 22-24. What a great experience!

Two years ago, when a member pushed for the first-ever Russian-speaking convention in Moscow, I did not think the people were ready. They did not have much long-term sobriety, and the meetings were sparse and stagnant. But now—two years later—several members in Moscow have two years of sobriety, dating back to that first SA convention. They still remember exactly what inspired them in 2011, and they quote from the 2011 speakers sessions. This was quite inspiring.

At the 2011 convention, we had a panel discussion about the culture of sobriety. The panel was comprised of two Russian-speakers from the US and one from Poland. This year the panel was five people—including three Russian speakers who live in Russia! This is a great trend.

This year, 40 people attended the convention, including members from Kazan, Izhevsk, Saratov, and Vladivostok (the Pacific coast of Russia, near the Koreas), and from Kyiv (Ukraine), Minsk (Belarus), Tallinn (Estonia), Washington, DC, and Chicago.

Friday night we held an open

meeting, which included four guests who were not sexaholics. Two of them then attended the convention, because they recognized that they shared the problem. At the convention, the latest edition of the Russian translation of the White Book was unveiled. As a native Russian speaker, I can confirm that the translation is excellent.

Today, Moscow has three SA meetings each week, with at least 12 members attending each meeting. Interestingly, many of the SA members are women—possibly up to half of the members. I have no explanation for this (we do not have such attendance here in Chicago). In Moscow I met two women SAs who each had two years of sobriety, and three others with one year. And in Moscow and St. Petersburg there are two men with two years and three with over a year. Very cool!

Even though it might take a few years to see results, the convention here has been a great way to carry the message—as long as there are members to organize such events and members willing to sponsor and carry the message. There is strength in numbers! I'm grateful to the fellowship and to all of you who participated in this experience.

—Regards, Dimitri



Kiwis Hold First National Conference

The first S/AS-Anon New Zealand Conference was held on November 9, 2013 in Auckland. Attendees came from the New Zealand cities of Christchurch, Auckland, and Napier, plus some members from “across the ditch” in Australia. A good 24 people were present with equal numbers of SA and S-Anon members.

SA began in New Zealand in 2004, when one of our founding members found SA in Brisbane, Australia and started a meeting in Auckland. Membership growth has been slow, with about 20 SA members nationwide. In Auckland we have a strong group of about 10 regular members and a few floaters. Recently we've had interest from

three female newcomers. Wellington has a weekly meeting with two members. Whangerei has a weekly meeting with three members, and two men in the Bay of Plenty region plan to start a meeting next year. The first-ever meeting on South Island started this past April.

Christchurch now has one weekly meeting with two to four members.

With the success of the Inaugural New Zealand Conference, we feel that we have a good foundation for future recovery. Our deep gratitude to our founder Roy K. and his family, the SA worldwide fellowship, and all the workers at Central Office.

—Best Regards, Rushad A.,
Secretary Auckland Group



New SA Buddy List and Phone Meetings for French-Speaking Members

In the beginning of the year a rather special intergroup was established between groups of three different French-speaking countries: France, Luxembourg, and Belgium. Two members of this Intergroup created a Buddy List for French-speaking members, inspired by the International Buddy List initiated some years ago. Another member started French-speaking phone meetings, held once a month on the 3rd Thursday, 07:30 pm Paris time. This is a free teleconference call, which anyone can call at the local cost of his or her own local country. The phone number for the US is: 001 424 203 8405. Access code: 430834#. Our purpose is to strengthen the contact between French-speaking members in France and Quebec, as well as loners all over the world. For more information about the Buddy List or Phone meetings, contact igfrancophone@gmail.com.



SAICO Financial Update

Following is a summary of SA fellowship revenues and expenses for Third Quarter 2013. 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 2013	
Donations	\$36,191
Other Revenues	\$21,632
Expenses	\$75,541
Revenues (less Expenses)	-\$15,718
Total Prudent Reserve	\$131,121



Step Into Action to be Finalized

At the request of SA's Board of Trustees, the Literature Committee is working to combine material from the three current *Step into Action* volumes into one final SA Twelve Step book. When the existing *Step into Action* books were released as "Works in Progress," suggestions for improvements were requested from the fellowship. We are now reviewing comments that have been submitted over the past ten years, as we work to update and consolidate the existing books. If you have additional comments on any of the *Step into Action* books, please submit them to SAICO@sa.org (subject line: Step Into Action Book Project) by February 28, 2014. We look forward to incorporating your input during our final editing process, and to publishing this long-awaited book on SA's Twelve Steps.

— Thank you for all of your ongoing feedback!



USA New SA Groups
 Brooklyn, NY (add'l meeting)
 Carson City, NV
 Dayton, OH
 Deland FL
 Denton TX (add'l meeting)
 Hanover, PA
 Irving, TX
 Monroe, NY
 Port St Lucie, FL



Rapid City SD (add'l meeting)
 Statesboro, GA
 Temecula, CA
 Tempe, AZ (add'l meeting)
 Vero Beach, FL

International
 Campbell River BC Canada
 Copenhagen Denmark
 Portage, La Prairie, MB, Canada
 Sudbury ON Canada (add'l mtg)
 Swinden, Wiltshire UK

Submit articles or ask questions at essay@sa.org

Delegates and Trustees

Region	Delegate	Committees
North Midwest	Gary L., <i>Chair</i> Scott S. Dimitri P. Jim S., <i>Alternate</i>	Literature, Legal, COMC International International, Conventions H&I
South Midwest	Joe M. Steve L. Glenn J.	RAC, Legal Nominations, PI Conventions, PI
Northwest	Brian W.	Literature, CFC
Southwest	Tom K., <i>Vice Chair</i> Eric S. Steve C. Jim C., <i>Alternate</i>	Conventions, Nominations CFC, IT PI, Service Structure Finance, Conventions, IT
Mid-Atlantic	Carl N. Dennis P. Mike S., <i>Alternate</i>	H&I, Literature Finance, Legal Nominations
Northeast	Terry O. Gary M., <i>Alternate</i>	IT, PI Finance, Nominations
Southeast	Dick B Ed R. Art S. LB B., <i>Alternate</i>	International Int'l, Conventions, Service Structure International, IT, Literature Literature, RAC
German Speaking	Hans L.	Literature, CFC
Europe & Middle East Region	Francis C. Cathal M. AJ A. Daan L., <i>Alternate</i> Luc D., <i>Alternate</i> Artemis, <i>Alternate</i>	H&I, International, PI PI H&I
	Trustee	Committees
	Bob H., <i>Chair, Class A</i> George F., <i>Vice Chair</i> Laurens A. Jerry L. Dennis B., <i>Class A</i> Laura W., <i>Class A</i>	CFC, RAC IT, Finance, COMC International, Nominations, <i>Essay Liaison</i> Nominations, Literature, International Finance, IT, PI, Service Structure Literature, H&I, Conventions



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

Calendar of Events

March 2014

1, Norcross GA USA: Atlanta Area SA Marathon. *The Journey Continues / Unity, Recovery and Service.* Contact AtlantaMarathonSA@gmail.com

21 - 23, Aldersgate, Turner, Oregon: SA Spring Retreat. *Improving Our Relations.* On-line registration available at SAICO online store or Contact AldersgateRetreat2014@gmail.com.

April 2014

4 - 5, Nashville, TN. *Happy, Joyous, and Free.* Info at sanoonmeeting@gmail.com. More details to follow.

26, Asheville NC. SA Mountain Spring Marathon, Info at mountain-springasheville.com

October 2014

17-19, Pittsburgh, PA: SA Retreat Weekend. *Change of Heart.* Info at atacoh2014.org or atacoh2014pgh@gmail.com. More info to follow.

International Events

December 2013

14-17, Istanbul: EMER Meeting. For more info contact sa.org

January 2014

24-26 Pantasaph, North Wales: SA/Sanon Winter Convention. *Progress not Perfection.* Contact sauksecretary@gmail.com or sa@saico.org

16, Location TBA. Nicholas will lead three workshops: *Steps, Traditions, and Tools of Recovery.* Info at sa.org

24-26, Pantasaph, North Wales: SA/Sanon Winter Convention For more info contact Ed SA : sauksecretary@gmail.com

February 2014

4-11, Locations Worldwide: EMER Gratitude Week. All members, groups, and IGs are invited to donate directly to SAICO. As stated in *Beginnings of SA*, February



4 and 11 were the first two real SA meetings.

April 2014

4-6 Bad Teinach-Zavel. Contact sa.convention.israel@gmail.com, Shachar H, +972 523 772 002 saecc.israel@gmail.com, Shaul: +972 504 145 937, Aliad: +972 524 875 563

May 2014

2-4. Wyevale, Ontario Canada: SA Spring Retreat. Info at events@saontario.org.

11-13 Jerusalem, Israel: EMER's Second Regional Assembly and Convention. Contact +972 523 772 002, +972 528 604 347, or saecc.israel@gmail.com

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To submit events or for more information about events, contact saico at saico@sa.org or visit sa.org/events.php

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.

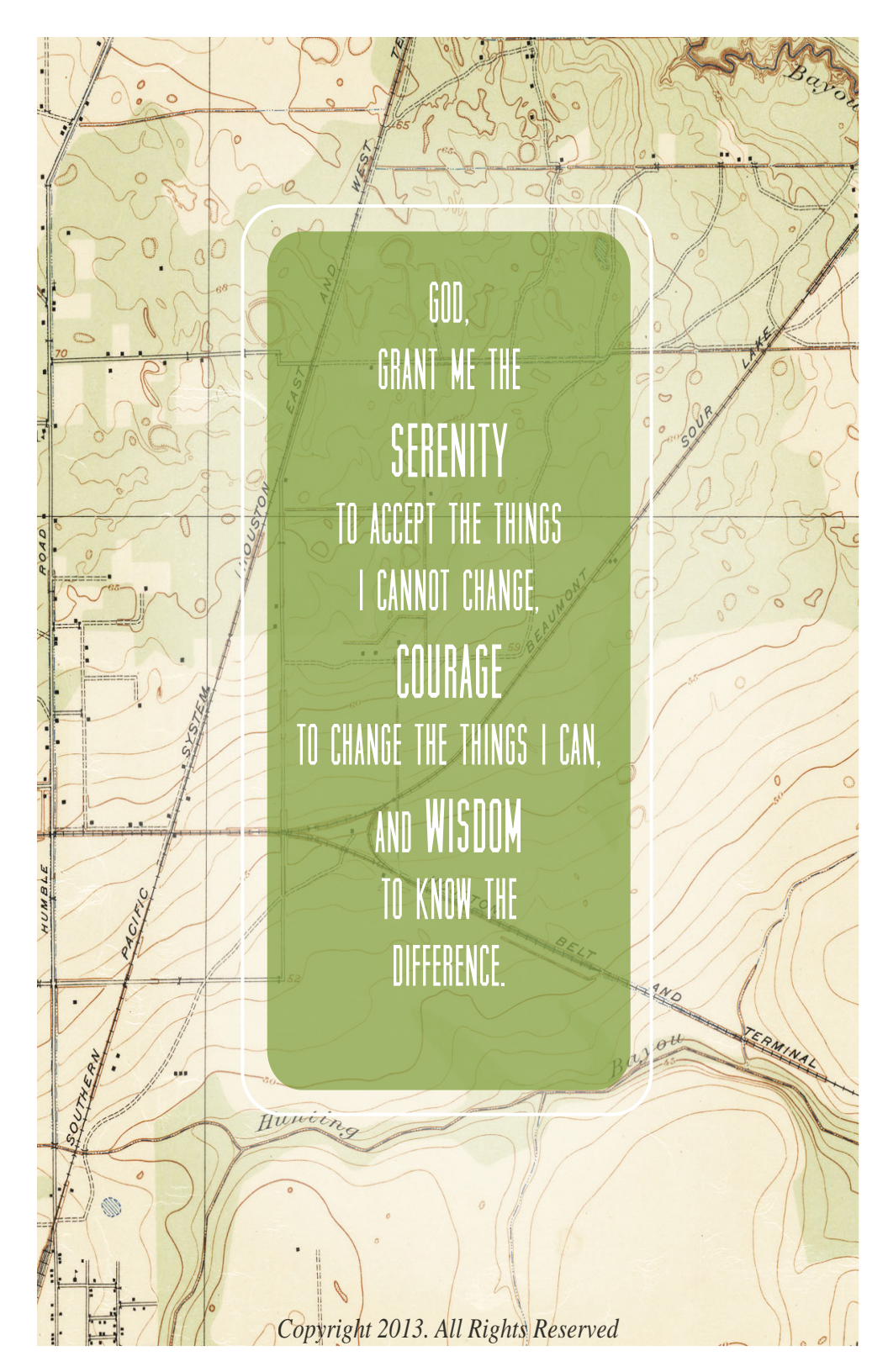
Essay presents the experience, strength, and hope of SA members. Opinions expressed in Essay are not to be attributed to SA as a whole, nor does publication of any article imply endorsement by SA or by Essay. Manuscripts are invited, although no payment can be made. All articles submitted are assumed 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.

Upcoming International Conventions

January 10-12, 2014. *The Three Legacies*, Nashville, TN. For more information, visit our website at threelegaciesnashville.com, or contact sa.org

July 11-13, 2014, *Miracle in Motown*, Detroit, MI USA. See you in Summer of 2014 in Motor City, the home of Motown music and lots of eager, welcoming SA members. For more Information contact 313-528-3006, miracleinmotown.com, or sa-registration@miracleinmotown.com



A topographic map of a region in Texas, featuring contour lines, roads, and water bodies. A prominent green rounded rectangle is centered on the map, containing white text. The map labels include 'HUMBLE ROAD', 'SOUTHERN PACIFIC', 'HOUSTON EAST AND WEST', 'SOUR LAKE', 'BEAUMONT', 'BAYOU', and 'Hunting Bayou'.

GOD,
GRANT ME THE
SERENITY
TO ACCEPT THE THINGS
I CANNOT CHANGE,
COURAGE
TO CHANGE THE THINGS I CAN,
AND WISDOM
TO KNOW THE
DIFFERENCE.