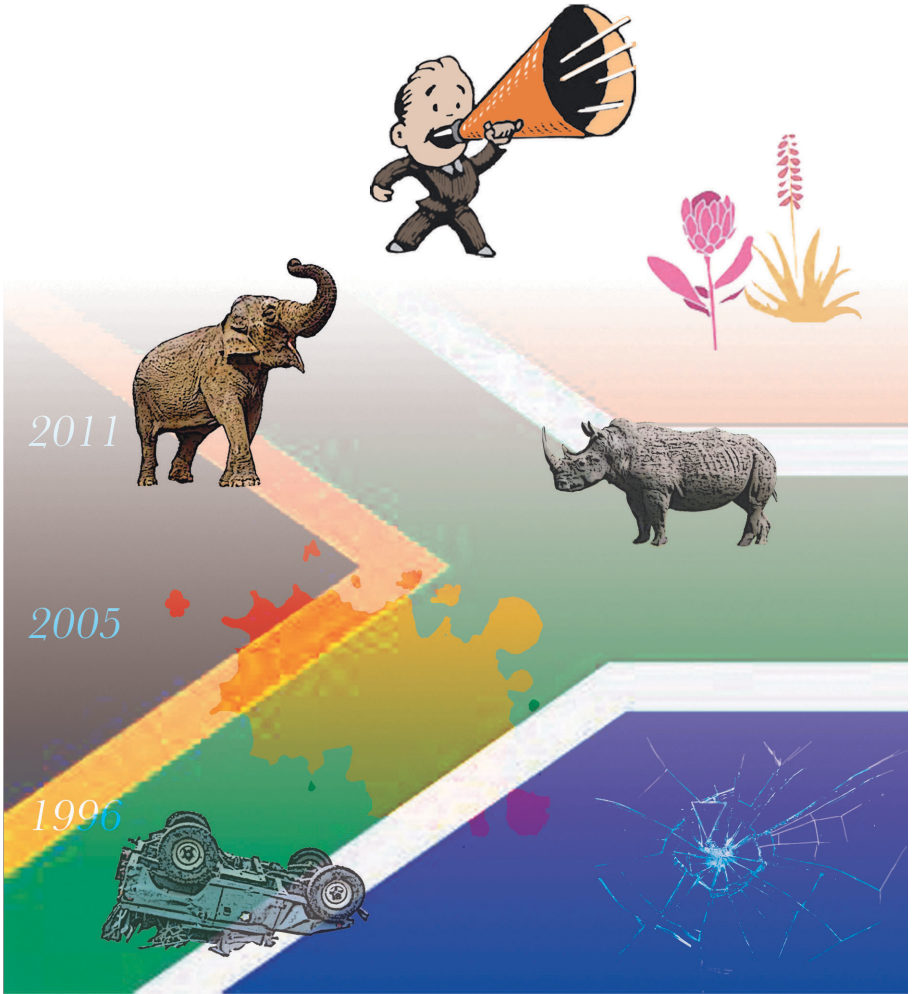


# Essay

June 2013



*A Journey of Hope and Strength*

A quarterly publication of Sexaholics Anonymous

## The Twelve Steps of Sexaholics Anonymous

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

### *Essay is the quarterly publication of Sexaholics Anonymous*

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**Sexaholics Anonymous**

is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop lusting and become sexually sober. There are no dues or fees for SA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. SA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization, or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sexually sober and help others to achieve sexual sobriety.

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

## A Journey of Hope and Strength

I'm Michael T., grateful to be sexually sober since April 10, 2011. SA has given me a better life than I could ever have imagined. I no longer fear everyone and everything. I no longer regret the past; I use my past as a tool to be helpful to others. I can practice patience and tolerance, and be a part of society. I learned all of these things from SA.

I grew up in South Africa. My family was very poor and we lived on a farm in the country, remote and isolated. By my father's design, no one could drive up the last mile of our farm road without knowing in advance where all the potholes were—and nobody ever visited.

Child molestation was a recurrent theme in my family. My great grandfather molested my grandmother on my mother's side. My grandfather on my father's side molested my father and my uncle. My father was a sex addict, and after he died, my mother married a man who had molested his granddaughters. She knew about this when she married him.

As a child I never felt accepted. When I was three years old, I developed a speech impediment, and I couldn't talk coherently from

that point on. In our schools, from ages eight to 18, we had to do oral exams in front of the class. When my turn came, I could barely get any words out. The teachers and students openly mocked me. On occasion I would be sent out of the classroom as a punishment for not being able to talk properly.

From the first grade through my senior year in high school, I had no more than 10 or 20 conversations with anyone. I tried to talk, but I abandoned conversations mid-sentence because I could not continue. This caused me immense humiliation. I started drinking alcohol when I was around 13. Drinking

soothed my speech impediment and helped me get out of myself.

Sex started early for me. I acted out from the age of three or four. When I started school at six years old, I would touch girls and get lust hits from them. I interpreted any sign of affection (physical or verbal) from any other person to be sexual.

In high school, my entire aim in life was to have sex with a woman. I would get as drunk as I could and then try my best to connect



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with someone. But time after time I failed dismally to connect with any woman. This resulted in constant sex with myself and more alcohol, as well as marijuana.

My father was an alcoholic who never worked. I was one of four kids in our family, and my mother supported all of us on her schoolteacher's salary. My mother would confide in me a lot about our significant financial worries. She also confided in me about her relationship with my father. He had talked her into agreeing to have sex whenever *he* wanted to. Thus it was instilled in me in my teenage years: being married means that the husband can have sex whenever he wants.

During the latter part of high school, I found myself lusting after men. Even though I was attracted to them, when they tried to get physical I felt uncomfortable and I would run. Still, having lust for other guys confused me, and I wondered whether I was gay. Through SA I've learned that when my mind is in the wrong place, I can fantasize about anyone.

When I started college in Port Elizabeth, my parents dropped me off and said "Goodbye and good luck." I had saved up enough money for the first tuition payment. Then I got a job and started working. I excelled in my first year of college and got a full

scholarship for the rest of my tuition and board.

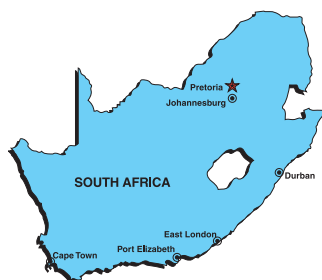
When my father died at the end of my first year, I did not feel a thing. I didn't know how to feel. Instead, I fell in with the drinking crowd. My drinking and marijuana use escalated to new highs—and drinking and drugging were always about finding someone to have sex with.

Three years later, I dropped out of college without finishing my degree and moved back home. I had some kind of psychological breakdown. After three months, I felt a bit better and got a job as a river rafting guide in the northern

part of the country. Eventually I moved to Cape Town to try and finish my degree. But I was unsuccessful, so a year later I moved to London.

My habits of drinking, drugging, and chasing women got worse. On three different occasions, I had sex with a woman who had passed out on my bed. This was a low point for me. One of these women became pregnant and had an abortion.

During the latter part of my stay in London, I stopped drinking and going to clubs, but I continued smoking pot. I masturbated many times a day and wondered why I didn't have a girlfriend. In 2004, the isolation and drugs became too much for me, so I went to a drug



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rescue center. I was referred to Marijuana Anonymous. I went, got sober, and started working the Steps. But nothing changed.

Then I thought yoga might fix me, so in June 2004, I moved to India to study yoga. I also started an AA meeting in the city. I met a woman from the U.S. who was also studying yoga there. I was attracted to her and I knew she went to meetings in the States, so I convinced her to go to an AA meeting with me. We moved in together four days later. She eventually returned to the U.S. and I returned to South Africa, but after a month or so apart, she returned to South Africa and we were married on May 19, 2005. Due to visa application restrictions, my wife had to be in the U.S. while my visa application was being processed.

It took nine months for me to get my visa and move to the U.S. During that time, my wife came back to South Africa for a visit and became pregnant with our first child. When I arrived in the U.S. in February 2006, she was on partial bed rest due to complications with her pregnancy. Before marriage, we had sex constantly, but because of her pregnancy, I didn't push her for sex.

I got a job in California, but because of health insurance rules, my wife had to have the baby in Illinois. When she moved back home after the birth, I immediately

started pressuring her for sex again. I cringe today when I think of how I constantly pressured and manipulated her for sex. I also started drinking again, because I had always believed "I'm really not an alcoholic."

In 2008, my wife got pregnant with our second child, a boy. Throughout that pregnancy—and over the next several years—nothing much changed. I was still drinking and drugging, and I was constantly pressuring her for sex. Finally, my wife decided she could not take this any more! She was extremely frustrated by my constant pressure for sex, and in 2011, she insisted that we seek marriage counseling.

Right away the marriage counselor told me I was a sex addict! A light went on inside of me. I already knew about Twelve Step programs. I understood the need for "something." I used to sweat and shake to get drugs. But I had never associated sex or masturbation with addiction. I thought that's just what men do! Now I was told that I had an addiction, and I had to find help. Our counselor recommended SA.

I began by attending one meeting a week. The first few meetings were tough! Even though I identified with the other members, the thought of staying sober was unbearable for me. There was no way I could stop masturbating. The pain was too much. There had to be an outlet!



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One of the SA men (who didn't have much sobriety) told me to use my wife for an outlet. But this was no different from my old behaviors.

At the fourth meeting, a man I hadn't seen before walked into the room. He started talking about recovery and spiritual growth, and what SA was doing for him. He said that the longer he stayed sober, the more things in his life kept getting better. After the meeting I asked him to be my sponsor. He agreed—and he told me to stop masturbating and stop using my wife for relief.

About the same time, my wife told me she was pregnant with our third child, a daughter. This seemed overwhelming to me, and I could no longer pressure her for sex to soothe my emotions. I experienced horrendous pain for several weeks. But I stayed sober and started working the Steps, and I've been sober ever since April 10, 2011.

I was still drinking and drugging, however, and I was not feeling much better. SA was saving my marriage and I was connecting with other sex addicts, but I was unsundered regarding drugs and alcohol. At the insistence of my SA sponsor, I went back to AA meetings at the end of 2011—with serious intentions this time. I've been sober from drugs and alcohol since January 3, 2012.

That's when staying sober really hit me. For 30 years, my addictions had enabled me to block out all of my feelings. All the emotions that I

had bottled up throughout my life—the humiliation about my speech impediment and about my family being the poorest in town, my father being a drunk, and the enmeshed relationship with my mom—all of this started coming up. Now I had to deal with these feelings sober, and this was painful! I immersed myself in both of my programs—SA and AA. I started calling people (up to 20 people a day!), working my Steps in earnest, going to more meetings, praying, and getting service positions.

Working the Steps was a turning point for me—especially Step Three, which was a huge spiritual awakening. I always felt that my speech impediment had ruined 30 years of my life. But while I was working Step Three, my three-year-old son developed a speech impediment, and—because of my struggles—we got him into therapy within a week. This quick action helped him make a full recovery. So then I could see that my own experience benefited my son! God had a plan for me, and it was the best plan! This realization had a huge impact on my ability to surrender in Step Three.

I call Steps Six and Seven my “intentional living” Steps. That is, once I am aware of a defect, it's up to me to intentionally surrender it to God whenever it comes up again. Because of working these Steps, my home and work life are much

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improved.

Letting go of resentment was also a huge part of my early sobriety. My biggest resentment had always been toward my dad. I blamed him for teaching me unhealthy ways to deal with life and for not dealing with my speech impediment. In recovery, I needed to make amends for my attitude, but he had died 17 years earlier. So my sponsor suggested that I write him a letter and read it at his grave. This was extremely powerful! Part of my amends was making a decision to remember the good things he did during his life.

A few months later my sponsor suggested I write another letter to my dad. He said, "Say what you always wanted to say to him." A few years ago the letter would have been full of anger and accusations, but now the letter was totally compassionate. Letting go of what he did to me—and accepting my part in the relationship—released me from my most deep-seated resentment.

In early 2013, I made an amends to my wife. After making that amends, I immediately became accountable for practicing the living amends I had promised. That was when I stopped pressuring her for sex, and that was the turning point in my life. My life truly began to change after making that amends.

When I got to Step Twelve and read that a spiritual awakening is a change of attitude, I realized that I was already experiencing a

spiritual awakening! This isn't a one-time affair—it's a lifelong practice of surrendering each day, each moment, every aspect of my life to God. Without God in my life I have a selfish attitude; with God I have a spiritual attitude—one day at a time for the rest of my life.

Today I work Steps One, Two, and Three on a daily basis. I pray in the morning, remembering my powerlessness, accepting that God can restore me to sanity, and turning my life and my will over to Him. I also read Big Book pages 86 through 88 daily. This exercise frees me up to allow life to happen around me without worrying about the results.

In 2012, I went back to South Africa for my nephew's christening. I took our 13-month-old daughter with me. This could not have happened without my SA and AA sobriety. But today my wife knows that, in sobriety, she can trust me to properly take care of our children.

Before I left the U.S., I was concerned about what might happen to my program while I was away, as I could not attend meetings (I was taking care of the baby!), make phone calls, or make progress on my Steps. What would be left of my program? Well, I committed to pray every day. I prayed morning, noon, and night. Whenever I was disturbed—which was a lot!—I prayed. And my Higher Power protected me and my sobriety the whole trip.



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My life today is very different from what it was a few years ago. I work as a consultant, so sometimes I have work and sometimes I don't. In the past, if I had work, I would stress about doing it correctly. When I didn't have work, I would stress about whether I would get work. Today I leave the results up to God and I have serenity.

Because of SA, my wife and I are best friends today. We can joke around with each other without me getting my feelings hurt or making inappropriate sexual references. Today I know that sex is completely optional. If I desire sex and she does not, I move on without any further thought or emotion. The freedom from this obsession is huge! I could never have imagined this freedom before. It's a totally different way of life.

I can also be close emotionally with my wife. In the past I was never emotionally close with anyone. I did not want to feel vulnerable or be hurt. But now my wife and I connect on an emotional level. She is also more vulnerable with me. Before, if she opened up, she knew this meant we would have sex. Now I can listen and support her without her wondering what my motives are.

Because of SA I have a relationship with my Higher Power that I've never had before. I had always acknowledged a Higher

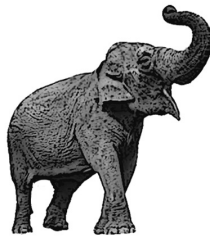
Power out there somewhere, but He never seemed to do anything for me. Now I know that I was the one blocking Him. Today my Higher Power gives me amazing strength and hope! Last November, He gave me the strength to talk in front of a group of approximately 50 SA members and invited guests at a local speakers meeting! This could have never happened without the fellowship of SA.

My Higher Power also enables me to be kind and useful to others. I can serve others, share my experience, and be there for my family. Being of benefit to others is what I've wanted my whole life, but I've only been able to do this because of SA.

If it weren't for SA I might still not be sober from drugs or alcohol. Now I can drive my family safely without the fear of getting a DUI. Because of SA I got help for my speech impediment. And only in SA did I find a Higher Power. But the most important thing SA has given me is the fellowship.

Throughout my life I never really had any friends, but now I'm surrounded by friends in the program. SA is the place where I'm completely accepted. It's where I learned how to live life. SA saved my life. And without all of you, none of this would have been possible.

—Michael T., San Diego



## Healing through Bringing the Message

I am a low-bottom sex drunk who has been sober now for 29 years. Yet today I'm writing about a most glorious spiritual journey that I only recently made. The purpose of my journey was to bring the message of recovery and the miracle of my sobriety to fellow sexaholics throughout Europe. It's a message of what God, the Steps, and the fellowship can bring to our lives. It is a message of how this very ill sexaholic is no longer a slave to lust, resentment, or fear, and can now share this design for living to others around the world.

My journey began with an email request from the SA fellowship in Belgium, asking whether my wife and I could give a weekend workshop in Belgium. The group, with the help of other groups in Europe, said they would take care of our airfare. We agreed.

Then suddenly a voice came into my mind: "Harvey, as a Jewish man, you have lived with anger and resentment toward the Germans and Polish people concerning the Holocaust. You are now an old man. Are you willing to die with this resentment or are you ready to let God release it from you?"

I immediately knew the answer.

I was ready to have the resentment removed. It was the only answer. It was the Twelve Step answer. I knew it could only be removed through action. And I knew at that moment that I needed to also bring the message of the joy of recovery to Germany and Poland. I realized that to really do this from deep within myself, the travel to Germany and Poland had to be at my own expense. I needed to visit those countries for my own recovery.



Months went by as I tried to contact people in Germany and Poland. Bit-by-bit, the month-long journey took form. First we would go to Antwerp to speak, then on to a weekend workshop outside of Brussels. After that we would do a Step workshop in Amsterdam, and then a workshop in Munich, Germany. From there we would conduct workshops in both Krakow and Warsaw, in Poland.

Snow followed us everywhere we went, but so did the love we received. Wherever we went, we met caring and wonderful people. We never felt alone. The different groups would set up SA tour guides for us. We were invited to stay at many people's homes. Here I was,

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a low-bottom sex drunk in recovery, treated with respect and admiration. My wife was also given much love. I want to share just a few examples of the love and respect we experienced.

A man from Belgium—who also lives in Poland part of the year—flew from Belgium to Warsaw to pick us up on Easter weekend. He changed his very important Easter religious plans to make this trip. He wanted to drive us—in the snow—from Warsaw to Krakow so that we could try to find the towns where my ancestors lived, before they emigrated to the United States 122 years ago. He spent the entire weekend with us finding my family's three ancestral towns.

For our Passover Seder, we were in Munich and our gracious hosts (who were not of our religious background) let us have a Seder in their home. They invited six other members from SA and S-Anon (also not of our religion) to attend the Seder that evening. The ten of us shared

a recovery Seder with our family of choice that night. I will never forget it. It was possibly the best Passover I ever celebrated.

In Poland, I learned a new word to use in recovery. They call each other brothers there. They don't say, "I went to a meeting with some fellowship members." Instead they say, "I was with my brothers." When

they say it, you clearly hear the love they have for each other.

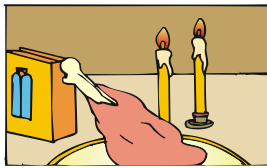
People were willing to inconvenience themselves to be able to put us up in their homes. One member in Warsaw and another in Krakow each spent days walking with us in the snow to show us their cities. One man was willing to spend his afternoon with me at a dentist in Krakow to translate for me when my tooth filling popped out.

There was a couple who drove us all around Warsaw to find a pharmacy to help my wife with a foot problem. The stories don't end. These scenarios happened time and again whenever we met our SA and S-Anon brothers and sisters.

Yes, as we drove toward Munich, we did have an uneasy feeling when we saw a sign for Dachau, the infamous concentration camp. And

yes, we did have a pensive day visiting Auschwitz and Birkenau, the two death camps in Poland. However, nothing was able to dampen the love and care we received from our SA and S-Anon families.

My life has been significantly changed as a result of this trip. In our journey—especially to Germany and Poland—God was able to remove from me any resentment I had toward a group of people who were not involved with any issues of the Holocaust. In fact, most of the



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people we met were not even born at that time. Did I get healing? You bet I did! Not only did I get healing from resentment, but from prejudice and from a judging spirit. I saw God again through the love we received from our recovery family. Most of

all, I saw God through the love I had for all these fellow sufferers of our disease. God greatly blessed me by allowing me to carry the message to so many people that this program does work.

—Harvey A., Nashville, TN

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*Program Tools*

## Amends to My Stepdaughter

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

I'm grateful that I was led to SA about a year before I got married. Otherwise, I believe I would be in a horrible place today, and my family might have been torn apart. But even though I found SA before I got married, my behavior caused my family much grief. I still had a lot of maturing to do and a lot of denial to break through. Today, seven years later, things are slowly improving, and that has brought me much happiness. I'd like to share one aspect of my recovery that has left me amazed at how what used to baffle me has become a gift.

When my oldest stepdaughter was around 13 years old, I had a few years of physical sobriety but was in complete denial about my inner recovery. I was filled with pride about my sobriety. I would think, "I've got this thing figured out. Let

me tell you all about how recovery works." I was mostly blind to the



lust and objectification I was directing toward my stepdaughter. After going through her parents' divorce, she needed a healthy father figure to lift her up, not an angry hypocritical

lust addict to do further damage. She needed a healthy connection. She needed to feel safe and protected, and not fearful toward her new stepfather. But lust is what I brought to the table at the time.

When she was younger, she would push my buttons just to make me mad—or at least that was my judgment of her behavior! That judgment gave me an excuse to hate her. We chose to live disconnected from each other. We lived in the same house but didn't speak to each other for three years. If we did connect, we yelled and hurt each

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other verbally. I thought maybe silence would be better than yelling. It wasn't. The disconnection created a vacuum between us that allowed lust to come in. I have since learned that lust can be an act of hatred, so it makes sense that lust and hate traveled together within me.

One day, when I was reviewing some home videos to see what I could overwrite, I found about five minutes of video where my stepdaughter had left the camera recording in her room without knowing it. Instead of turning the video off to protect her privacy, I sneakily watched the whole five minutes. Thankfully, there was nothing inappropriate on the video, but there easily could have been. It was like peeping through a window. By doing that, I put my stepdaughter's safety and privacy at risk. She was no longer safe in her own home.

She once told my wife that she had a "creepy feeling" around me whenever I looked at her. She felt lust coming from me. The lust I indulged in during those few years gives me great pain to this day. I cannot fix what happened. I am completely powerless over the wreckage of my past.

During all of this, I thought I was sober. My shame-fueled denial was so thick that I could not see straight. My wife could tell something was

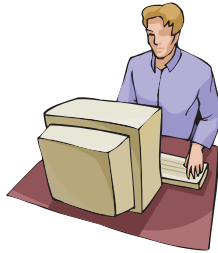
wrong but since I was "sober" and "going to meetings," she doubted her own instincts. We began attending a couple's therapy group for sex addiction. I quickly took my five-year chip out of my pocket in that first meeting—just to show everyone how healthy I must be! "I could really help these people," I thought.

After some lengthy and rigorous individual therapy, my denial began to crack. At first I thought our therapist was out to get me. I thought he wanted to destroy my marriage and family by making me sound worse than I was.

I thought I would die because of the pressure. My assignment was to make another inventory of everything I had done during my marriage. I made the inventory and included everything, even

my lust toward my stepdaughter—my wife's precious little daughter.

The plan was to share this inventory with my therapist and wife together. Instead, my wife woke me up one night and demanded that I share the whole thing with her immediately. She felt that I was doing something to put our children in danger and she couldn't wait another minute to hear it. I read it to her. She told me that I needed to leave the house. We had two younger daughters at the time and I didn't know what to do or how to say goodbye to them.

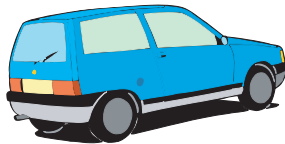


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We worked out a schedule of visits over the next few months. The children had an early bedtime, so they didn't know that their daddy didn't live with them any more. I experienced recurring thoughts of suicide. I was again powerless over my life and its wreckage. I had no choice but to surrender everything to God. There was nothing left for me to control.

I felt so alone during those months. I felt that God was far off, and I doubted my every move. Maybe His distance helped me work through my denial more quickly than if He had coddled me through the hell I needed to walk through. I counseled with my sponsor, group, therapist, wife, and God to know how to validate my stepdaughter's creepy feelings about me without revealing anything to her that would cause further damage. I cannot express how impossible that amends seemed to me. I had to surrender it to God just like I had to surrender everything else during that time.

God worked miracles in my life. He allowed me to make awkward yet very careful amends with my stepdaughter. He provided about an hour for me to drive her to the airport one day. At that point, we were speaking again and our relationship was beginning to heal. I was healed just enough for me to apologize again for being a jerk and



to let her know very generally about my addiction, without including any details about her. I also explained how being immersed in such an addiction affected those around me and how it kept me from maturing. This amends was tailored by God specifically for my stepdaughter and me at exactly the right time and place. A heart is an impossible thing for me to heal—only God can do that. And He did, for both her and me.

Now, a few years later, I have a younger stepdaughter who has turned 13, and while both my wife and I have some anxiety, anger, and flashbacks from years ago that are still healing, things are different this time. Recently I heard my older stepdaughter tell her younger sister that if her biological dad ever lets her down, "Our stepdad is a good guy and will be there for you."

God turns the most impossible and horrific situations into gold for me when I let Him. I don't know how or why He would do this for me except that He must love me more than I love myself. If I can just get out of His way, He works wonders. He makes me walk through fire and then comforts and heals me on the other side. With Him, nothing is impossible.

—Anonymous

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## An Amends to My Son

I'm Tom, a recovering sexaholic, grateful for seven years of sobriety—although as they say, I'm never grateful enough! I know that I must continue to work the SA program. My sponsor tells me I need to keep working Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve. As a result of working these Steps, a recent opportunity occurred for me to make a new amends to one of my sons, in response to a question he asked me by email (he lives across the country now).



Although I've made direct amends to him in the past, I know that he (along with the rest of my family) still suffers from the harm that I did to him when I was in my addiction, and that additional opportunities for amends may present themselves. Following is the letter I sent him in response to his question.

—Tom

Dear Son,

I'm glad you asked about the rekindling of the relationship between your mom and me. It's something I've thought about a lot, but I haven't put it into words before. I'll try not to be too wordy, and I'll focus on my side of the situation—or, in other words, the junk that I brought into our relationship and the changes that have occurred in my life. First, a little history.

I was first exposed to pornography when I was in first grade. Another boy had some playing cards with nudity on them. I was fascinated by the cards. I was probably hooked on porn at that point, but it took years for the fascination to grow and take hold of my life. Also, as I was growing up, there were some sexual improprieties in my family, although I don't remember much about them.

My father was often angry and my parents did not get along well. I suppose that describes how you grew up too (interesting how the pattern repeats).

When I was an adolescent, I lived way out in the country, away from everything. You'd think I would be safe out there, but somehow I came across hardcore porn. I've read that porn can really damage an adolescent boy who is exposed to it. I tried to stay away from the porn but I couldn't. And I didn't have anyone to help me navigate through those issues.

As I got older, I joined the Navy, got married, and the Internet came along. Through all of those events, my addiction continued to grow and become more and more of a problem. When I got married I really wanted to stop my addiction, and sometimes I did for a while.

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But it would always resurface, and each time it was more severe. I was addicted for sure, and my addiction continued to get worse for many years until I took the next step and had a series of affairs starting in 2005. I was 45 years old. Two years later, when everything was falling apart and I was desperate to get help, I got involved in SA. I have been sexually sober since then.

True recovery from my addiction began when I was finally desperate about getting help and getting well. I knew that I was about to lose everything that was dear to me. I could see that I was powerless over my addiction and that if I didn't get help, my life would continue to spiral out of control.

I went to a friend who I knew had suffered from a different sort of addiction, and who was now enjoying years of sobriety and recovery. I knew that he would try to help me. For the first time in my life I was truthful and open about my addiction and stopped trying to hide it. That friend became my sponsor and gently walked me through a Twelve Step program of recovery. He also encouraged me to get involved in SA, which I did. The changes that occurred in my life over the days, weeks, and months that followed were amazing! I have come to know a new joy and freedom that I had never known



before.

In my addiction, I lived a frustrated life because I could never get enough. My frustration produced anger, blame, and selfish acts, and you and the rest of the family grew up in that environment. I thought I was hiding my addiction, but I was an angry person and I often took it out on our family. Families often struggle with finances and sometimes kids are a challenge, but mixing that with an addiction is what creates the problems. Your mother didn't know exactly what was going on, but she knew that something was wrong and she reacted and then I reacted to her. It was always a downward spiral.

Your mother tried everything she could to make me happy, to satisfy me, but it was never enough. Nothing worked. I would do anything I could to deflect any blame back to her. She got to the point that she thought she was going crazy and even tried to leave because she felt there was no other option. She was deeply devoted to you kids, and I know she suffered greatly watching me hurt you and your brother and sisters. She made many difficult sacrifices for the sake of the family, but nothing she did could make up for the damage that my diseased attitudes and actions were doing to the family. We often argued and tried to hide it from you kids, but I know that these



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events often left me angry or aloof and that you still suffered from this turmoil.

I always took my faith seriously and I wanted to live right—but I couldn't seem to kick the addiction. The double life was a terrible thing to endure. My life was filled with guilt, shame, and feelings of hypocrisy. These feelings grew continuously worse; toward the end they were especially awful.

However, when I came to SA and started dealing seriously with my addiction, then healing, restoration, and recovery began to take place—and your mother and I were able to have a fresh start. For the first time, she felt loved and accepted, and I didn't have the addiction dragging me down. It's amazing how our marriage changed when I was able to relate to your mother with complete commitment and devotion!

I used to be quite resentful (a major factor in my addiction!), and I have made some headway with that too. Things aren't always easy because we have had (and still have) some things to work through, but now I have much more peace and serenity in my life, as well as the tools to deal with life on life's terms.

I know the move to a new city when you were 13 years old was hard for the family and especially hard on you. You were in turmoil

(as many teenagers would be), but my addiction just exacerbated the situation. I made a lot of serious mistakes that hurt you and the rest of the family. I'm very sorry for that. I hope I can make these things up to you and the rest of the family some day. If I could do it all over again, I would try to do everything differently. At the time, I think my motive for moving was to make more money (which didn't work out!). That was not a good reason to move.

About a year ago, we achieved another milestone. Your mother and I had a special weekend together. I bought her a new diamond wedding ring (she had stopped wearing her old ring because of broken vows), and I asked her to marry me again.

She said yes! We are really enjoying our new relationship. I just wish I could have gotten sober when I was younger and avoided so much of the

hurt that I caused you and the rest of our family. But today I'm grateful for SA, my sponsor, and my SA group for leading me to sobriety and recovery.

Son, I hope this answers your question but please, if you have any other questions let me know. It helps me to talk about these things, too.

I love you and think of you and pray for you often.

—Love, Dad



## Being There for Others

*No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others (AA, 84)*

During my years in SA, I've been both a sponsor and a sponsee. My drawing on the opposite page is about both of those experiences.

First, I was a sponsee. I often felt that I was drowning. Literally. My dreams and thoughts were filled with large bodies of water or rising water. My sponsor didn't exactly rescue me. It's more accurate to say he kept calmly repeating, "Just work the Steps." When I listened, that kept my head above the imagined water.

Later, I became a sponsor. I was often dismayed to realize that my sponsees were drowning before my eyes. My words and actions seemed ineffective in the face of the crises I saw looming inside them. I could never save them using any thought or word or deed that sprang to my mind.

It took a long time for me to realize why my sponsor was so helpful to me. It wasn't because he had the answer I needed. To the contrary, he would sometimes look at my situation and say, "Man, that looks like an awful situation to be in." This man—someone I hardly knew—was not there to fix my situation. But he was willing to remain with me throughout my struggles.

As a sponsor myself, I found that simply being present was the most helpful thing I could do for my sponsees. I could listen to their situation, point out any applicable literature, and share my own experience. They seldom said, "Wow, that fixed it!" They would instead say, "Thanks for being there." That is an act I cannot define beyond answering some phone calls and meeting to talk about recovery. Whatever it is, it seems very important to recovery.

The promise that starts with the words "No matter how far down the scale we have gone..." was a welcome one for me. I knew I had gone far down the scale into sexaholism and was relieved to hear that my awful experience might have some redeeming value. Most people would never want to go as far down as I went. Never.

And yet when a sponsee described an immeasurable moral abyss that he had fallen into, I found myself leaning toward him rather than leaning back. I would just let him talk, knowing it was very hard for him to admit how low he had sunk.

I can be there for a sponsee. "Being there" means that I am able

to listen with surprising ease because this low place is very familiar ground for me. I cannot really measure how far down the scale someone else has gone. It is a scale that has no units of measure. But I can go there with someone—be there—until he touches the bottom.

In this way, the Promise has come true for me many times. No matter how far down the scale I have gone, I can see how my experience benefits others.

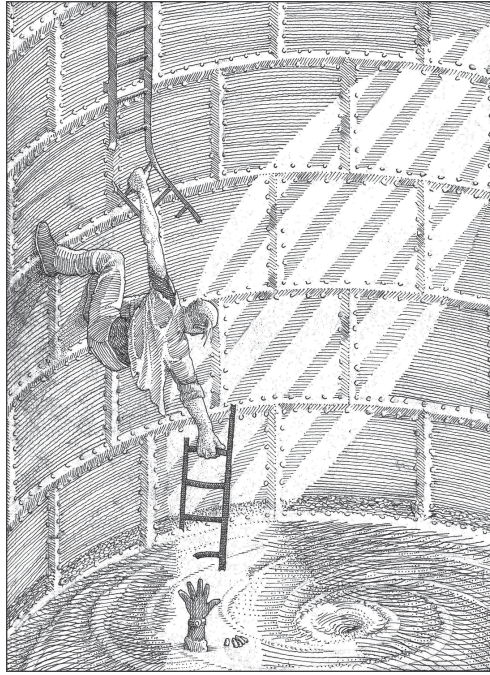
So who is that guy on the ladder in my drawing? The one with the torn shirt and drooping hair, trying so hard to win an apparently unwinnable

battle for the man who is sinking? That is every sponsor I have ever had. He is doing more for me than I deserve—perhaps paying back his debt to a sponsor before him. He is not able to reach me, but he is able to “be there” with me even at that depth of despair.

When I finished the drawing, I showed it with some pride to my father. He looked at it for a long time and then he said, “I find this situation terribly hopeless.” I asked him why. “Because,” he said, “the man is not going to make it. The

drowning guy is going to drown.”

I looked again at the drawing and saw what he did not see. It’s not really sponsors who save sponsees. It’s that Higher Power who we find at that bottom rung of the scale. The sponsor is there to share his hope, even when we think no



*Promise 5 – No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experiences can benefit others.*

one has been that far down the scale before us.

“I see it differently,” I said to my father. “My father correctly saw a hopeless situation. But I saw a powerful Promise.

—John I.

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## You Haven't Seen Anything Yet!

I was raised in an alcoholic home that was fraught with violence, incest, and molestation. In the past six months, my older brother and my twin sister both passed away. They were finally at peace (although they never found recovery). Their deaths brought home to me something I had read in the *AA 12&12*:

In many instances we shall find that though the harm done others has not been great, the emotional harm we have done ourselves has. Very deep, sometimes quite forgotten, damaging emotional conflicts persist below the level of consciousness.

At the time of these occurrences, they may actually have given our emotions violent twists which have since discolored our personalities and altered our lives for the worse. (79-80)

Thus after 6 1/2 years of SA sobriety (and 28 years in AA), I have only recently realized that I need outside help to work on some painful emotional issues that are decades old. This past April, at a spiritual retreat in Colorado, I came face to face with these issues: trust and shame. Then an even deeper issue surfaced: I wondered whether I really trust God the Father.

I have an existing back problem

that flared up during the retreat. Treatment requires a hot bath, a massage, and an ice pack. My wife usually does these things for me. Therein was the problem. This was a men's retreat and I was traveling with a grand-sponsee. I am 72 years old and he is 27. I was physically unable to take care of myself, and I had to permit this young man to care for me. With my background of sexual abuse by men, and then by my mother, this was a huge issue for me of trust and overcoming shame. My grand-sponsee showed deep compassion, respect, and care as he gently but firmly took control—and, with God's help, I was able to let go of my need for control, let myself be vulnerable, and accept his help. This resulted in more than two hours of cathartic crying. The epiphany I had was that God was present throughout this entire weekend.

When I got back from the retreat, I shared this with my SA Sponsor. He suggested that I get the AA booklet, *Came to Believe*, and read one article a day. He also suggested that I possibly still struggle at some level with the question: "Have I in fact had a spiritual awakening?" One morning, as I read a meditation from that booklet entitled "In His Own Individual Right," the reading seemed to clearly address



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my question and I had a sense of knowing that indeed I have had a spiritual awakening. Finally, I am now in counseling and have found

a spiritual director. God is good in all things; and in all things, God is good.

—Steve C., San Diego, CA

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## In His Own Individual Right<sup>1</sup>

Spirituality is an awakening—or is it all the loose ends woven together into a mellow fabric? It's understanding—or is it all the knowledge one need ever know? It's freedom—if you consider fear slavery. It's confidence—or is it the belief that a higher power will see you through any storm or gale? It's adhering to the dictates of your conscience—or is it a deep, genuine, living concern for the people and the planet? It's peace of mind in the face of adversity. It's a keen and sharpened desire for survival.

It's a man or a woman. It's gratitude for every happenstance of the past that brought you to a moment of justice. It's the joy of being a young man in a young world. It's awareness—or is it realization of one's capabilities and limitations? It's concentration—or is it an easy sensing of the universe? It's seeing a mystical power for good in each and every human being. It's patience in the face of stupidity. It's feeling that you want to knock somebody's head off—and walking away instead. It's when you're down past your last dime, and you know you still have something that money can't buy. It's wearing dungarees that feel like a tuxedo. It's wanting to go home, yet being there. It's a rocket ride that goes far beyond the world your eye can see. It's looking at something that superficially is ugly, but radiates beauty. It's a majestic skyline or a western desert. It's a young child. It's seeing a caterpillar turn into a butterfly. It's the awareness that survival is a savage fight between you and yourself. It's a magnetic pull toward those who are down and out. It's knowing that even the bad times are good.



Don't look back—you haven't seen anything yet.

When people look at you and wonder what's with you, the look in your eyes will answer them: "Because I can cut it!"

The singular thing that is spirituality cannot be given to a fellowman by word of mouth. If every man is to have it, then every man must earn it, in his own way, by his own hand, stamped by the seal of himself, in his own individual right.

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<sup>1</sup> "In His own Individual Right," reprinted from *Came to Believe* (July, 1973), page 5, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc. Reprinting of copyrighted material does not imply affiliation or endorsement by Alcoholics Anonymous.

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## Lesson From a Chess Tournament

In the years of my addiction, I liked to play in chess tournaments—but my self-worth was attached to how I fared in a tournament. When I won, I felt great. When I lost I felt like a failure. I would feel depressed, inadequate, and insecure. I believed I did not belong at a chess tournament; that the members should revoke my membership and ban me from the game for life.

This past Saturday, after six years of SA sobriety, I once again played in a chess tournament. This was my first time to play in sobriety and recovery. My plan was that, if I lost a game and felt those old feelings resurface, I would make a call so that I could stay connected to my recovery. An incredible thing happened! I lost, but I did not feel those awful feelings! I was relaxed. I accepted the fact that losing is part of the game.

This change of attitude can only be attributed to a spiritual awakening as a result of working the Twelve Steps with my sponsor. I continue to have a spiritual awakening daily (since I work the Steps daily). The Big Book says, “we have ceased fighting anything or anyone” (AA, 84)—even lust—and God has granted me the ability to experience

this new attitude, one day at a time. Lust always wants more, but by having a new attitude, I don't have to lust and I don't have to win. Today, I can accept life on life's terms.

I won two games and lost two games last Saturday. After my first loss, it occurred to me that I could review this game at a later date (I had written down the moves), and see where I could improve on my game. Chess players often review

only the games they lose, so that they can see where to improve. The spiritual lesson for me was that I can learn by mistakes. I grow from learning about what works, instead of continuing to do what

doesn't work. Who knew that that chess tournament would give me a spiritual lesson? It made losing that much sweeter.

Losing a game isn't a tragedy anymore; it's an opportunity to improve. In the same way, I've learned in SA that I need to “surrender to win.” I will lose to lust every time unless I admit that I am powerless over it. So I need to surrender lust to my Higher Power and ask Him to help me improve spiritually.

The funny thing is that my new chess rating after this tournament is



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1212. How cool is that? Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions! I have an alarm set on my cell phone for 12:12 so that when it activates, I can stop and thank God for the



Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions and then pray for someone in the program.

—Peace, Ed R.

## Calling on My Higher Power

I was on my way to an SA International Convention, less than a half an hour from home, when the traffic started to back up. I was already fighting a resentment about the traffic problems I usually encounter when I drive to this particular city. I was becoming more and more frustrated, certain I would be late. I had committed to speak on a 3:00 pm panel discussion of how to develop a deeper relationship with my Higher Power!

Finally, in desperation, I cried out to my Higher Power. I prayed, “God, I am really frustrated with this traffic situation. If you want me to be on time for that panel to talk about You, it’s going to be Your job to get me there!” Then I thought, “Okay, that’s settled.” I felt relief.

It wasn’t long, however, before my feelings of restlessness, irritability, and discontent with the traffic resurfaced. These are sure signs of my wanting to control things again. I reached for my phone, then put it back down. I reached for it again, opened it up then put it back down. My mind was churning: Who I could

call at the conference, to tell them that I might arrive late?

The truth was I didn’t trust God to get me to the conference when I needed to be there, even after I’d asked for His help and supposedly surrendered my will to His. My turbulent soul affirmed that I wasn’t fully trusting and wasn’t fully surrendering the outcome to God.

About that time I saw a big, blue sign on the side of the road. There was a lot of writing on the sign, but the only words my brain computed were “Call HP.” I laughed out loud. God was in control! Needless to say, I left my travel in God’s capable hands and arrived at the conference with an hour and a half to spare—even in record time!

It’s been a long road for me to learn to trust my Higher Power, but sober experiences like this one make me continue to desire to develop a deeper relationship with the God of my understanding, who keeps me sober, one day at a time—sometimes one hour or one minute at a time. Thank you God for SA!

—In love and service, Jeana W.,  
Asheville, NC



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# Forgiveness and the Fifth Step

A few years ago I was having lunch with a sponsee while he shared his Fifth Step with me. One thing he struggled with, he said, was perfectionism, a character defect—rooted in a deep sense of inferiority—that he felt his father had passed on to him.

“He could make you feel about that big,” he said, holding up his thumb and forefinger so that they nearly touched. He said that his father would stand over him while he performed some task, waiting for him to make a mistake. “If I started to do something wrong, he would say, ‘Get out of the way. You don’t know what you’re doing.’ Then he would just take over.” Listening to him describe these painful experiences with his father, I began to understand what made him tick.

As we talked, our server, who also happened to be my guitar instructor that summer, brought our food. As he was leaving the table, I said, “I’ll have that Eric Clapton solo ready when I come see you next week.” Hearing this, my sponsee

looked at me and said, almost gleefully, “You’ll never sound like Eric Clapton!”

I looked at him blankly, not sure how to respond. But before I had a chance to get resentful, my mind rushed back to his description of his father’s disheartening words, his way of making him feel two inches tall. In that moment, I saw clearly that my sponsee’s comment had nothing to do with me; it had come from his own pain, his sense of not-enoughness.

Immediately, compassion for him filled the space in me where defensiveness and hurt pride might have festered. Forgiveness came to me then as a gift, born of the understanding I had gained from listening to him share his Fifth Step. These thoughts passed through my mind in a moment, and then I realized (with an inward chuckle) that my sponsee was right, even though the words he used were harsh. “You know, you’re right,” I said, smiling. “I probably *won’t* ever sound like Eric Clapton!”

—LB B.



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## *In Memoriam*

### Remembering Frank S.



My first SA sponsor, Frank S. (also known as Francis), passed away on Sunday, March 3rd at the ripe old age of 90, about one month

away from his 91st birthday. I first met Frank in early December 2000, around 6:30 on a Saturday morning in San Diego. He was 78 at the time,



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and he had just returned earlier that week from visiting China. Frank traveled a lot and knew people all over the world.

That Saturday morning was my first SA meeting, and Frank gave me my orientation. He told me a little about what it was like, what happened, and what it's like now in his life. He said that he had found sobriety at age 70, and that he (like most of us) had come to SA by circumstance, not by virtue. I could tell that this man had had a life-changing experience. I decided I wanted what he had, and I asked him on the spot to be my temporary sponsor.

Frank told me that sponsorship is critical, as is working the Steps. I believed what he said and began following his direction from the start, at first mainly because I was desperate but later because what I was doing was beginning to change my life—and boy did it need changing! My wife of five years had just moved out to live with her mother. She told me she could not live like this anymore. I was at the end of my rope. And God, SA, and Frank were there for me when I was in despair and needed help in a bad way. For this I can never be sufficiently grateful.

Frank suggested I go to as many meetings as possible—90 meetings in 90 days if I could, and I came

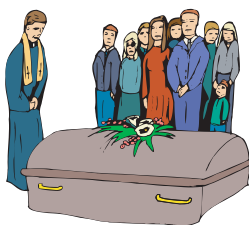
pretty close. On Thursday nights (the one night we don't have meetings in San Diego), Frank would faithfully meet me for dinner. The name of the restaurant was "Frank's Happy Chef!" I shared many of my Steps with Frank there, and I even heard a few Steps from his other sponsees.

Frank was a wonderful sponsor and helped me get a great start in SA. He was also a great example of the value of International conventions. I don't think he missed one convention in more than 10 years of attending them. He made many friends at the conventions, and they still ask about him—even

at the recent convention in January 2013. Frank told me that a convention can be a life-changing experience if I want it to be, and that was true for me when I went to my first International convention in January of 2001 in Orange County.

Here in San Diego, Frank's dedication helped keep the daily morning meetings going. He was often the only one who showed up to keep the doors open. His service helped keep him sober and helped many others to stay sober as well. I am one of those people, and I hope I can pass on even a portion of the help I received from Frank. Maybe I'll see him again one day as I trudge the road of happy destiny.

—Brian K., San Diego, CA



## In a Cell, Yet Isolated No More

"I'm a recovering sexaholic and I'm making a program call." These words are a bit harder to say from the inside of a jail cell. Nevertheless, even in here I can get current, I can reach out, and I can get out of isolation—just by writing this letter. Even though I'm stuck in a cell 21 to 23 hours each day, I still have the tools to grow in recovery and have a positive sobriety—by doing all I can for the sexaholic who still suffers.

I can connect with my Higher Power. I can practice daily Bible reading, prayer, and reading of recovery material. I can attend any type of meeting (various Twelve Step meetings, religious meetings, and other meetings) whenever possible. And I can speak the language of recovery to my "cellie," who is a struggling alcoholic.

Because of the nature of my charges and those of the others here in protective custody, we have very little fellowship and very little openness. This is in stark contrast to the openness and camaraderie of SA meetings (which I experienced for a year and a half before going to prison). Nevertheless, I choose to thrive here, and I choose to continue to grow along spiritual lines.

Moment by moment, one day at a time, I can surrender every temptation to "numb out" or "act out" with memories or fantasies. Surrender is still the key—whether in here or out there. Instead of "white knuckling" or giving in, I choose to surrender. I want to stop lusting and stay sexually sober. Thus, any television shows, magazines, or memories that might be triggering for me are immediately surrendered.

Daily journaling is a useful tool. Maintaining a positive attitude, avoiding all resentments (and surrendering them immediately if and when they occur), and fostering a spirit of gratitude are also key tools.

Honestly, some days are harder than others, and some days are easier. On hard days or nights, I try to use the tools of the program. I pray daily for sobriety. I must admit that sometimes I feel that my time here is wasted; that there seems to be no point to it all—but then I surrender that "feeling of uselessness." I try to focus on the Promises.

No one ever said this would be an easy path. But as I trudge this road of happy destiny, I can only



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hope that my experience can benefit others. And so I write, praying that this letter can help someone, somewhere, stay sober for just one more day.

Today, as I celebrate day 595 of my sobriety, I thank you, the reader, for letting me be of service. Every

person who reads or hears these words helps me stay sober. So I thank you. Thank you for bringing me out of isolation and helping me be part of the fellowship of SA.

I love you, appreciate you, and value you.

—Y., Milpitas, CA

## Can You Sponsor an Inmate By Mail?

SA's Sponsor-by-Mail program, sponsored by SA's Correctional Facilities Committee (CFC), is our primary means of carrying the SA message to prisoners. Unfortunately, at the CFC meeting this past May, we learned that the number of SA members available to sponsor prisoners by mail has been dwindling. For every 20 sponsees in prison who need sponsorship, we have approximately one sponsor! We also learned that SA members who have been serving as local CFC Chairs (at their local and Intergroup levels) have been carrying the bulk of the load.

We need your help desperately! In order to encourage more members to volunteer, we will offer a Sponsor-by-Mail workshop at the upcoming Baltimore convention. We would like to share with you what has worked for some SA groups. In particular, two fellowships in Northern California use a sponsor-by-mail meeting format. In those meetings, prisoners send letters containing Step work to members of the group. These letters are read in the meetings and then responded to by group conscience. In this way we sponsor prisoners as a group! We would like to share this experience with others.

Also, we recently learned that the first SA Women's prison meeting has started in Duval County, Florida. While we are supporting these women as best we can, we are looking for an SA woman to serve on the CFC as leader of the Sponsor-by-Mail effort for women.

If you would like to help by sponsoring those less fortunate than us—who are trying to work the Steps while incarcerated—please contact me at [sacfc1@gmail.com](mailto:sacfc1@gmail.com) or by phone at 518-232-2210

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



## Carrying the Message via Letter Writing

I just returned from visiting a loner who lives in Slovenia. This man has 21 years of SA sobriety, but because of the nature of his profession, he has been unable to attend meetings—although we did have two meetings whilst I was visiting there. This member subscribes to *Essay*, and for many years he participated in a letter-writing circle within our fellowship. However, with the growing availability of email, this circle has gradually reduced in size and activity, until it ceased to function altogether.

My friend impressed upon me his concern that the fellowship is failing in its primary purpose by making no provision for loners like him, who do not or cannot have email. He has asked that the fellowship's letter-writing activity be restarted and that he and similarly situated loners be allowed to participate. He also showed me

copies of two AA publications, "Hello World" and "Loners-Internationalists Meeting," which seem to cater very effectively to loners in that fellowship.

Within the SA fellowship we have a number of loners who either have no access to the Internet or simply prefer to stay in contact by mail. Others, called "homers," are unable to leave their homes to attend meetings. Still others simply enjoy writing with pen on paper.

If you are a member who enjoys letter-writing and could help by writing to others, please send your name and address to [saico@sa.org](mailto:saico@sa.org). Also, if you are familiar with our former letter-writing circle, could you please let us know how this worked in the past? This service would be a great encouragement to many of our members around the globe.

—Nicholas S., U.K.

*International Committee Member*



## ¿Hablas español? Report from Spanish-Speaking SA

¡Hola amigos! Jim D. here—"Jaime" to those of you who speak Spanish. I've recently joined SA's International Committee, to help coordinate outreach efforts in the Spanish-speaking world.

In addition to SA presence in Spain, we currently have meetings in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Columbia, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Puerto Rico, Spain, and Venezuela. I would like to share a few reports from some of our members in South America:

- In Caracas, Venezuela we have three members attending meetings.

- In Colombia, we have 30 SA members. We recently held a regional meeting with members from five cities in Colombia. In June we'll have a national meeting.
- In Peru, five members currently attend meetings in Miguel. One member has six years of sobriety and another has more than a year. Members are available for sponsorship in Peru or abroad.
- In Guatemala—even though we have a population of 15 million—we still have no SA group. We are seeking SA sponsors to help us. Sponsors could be English-speaking, as most people here speak English.

Are you a Spanish speaker? Or a frequent traveler to Spanish-speaking countries? You can help our international members by visiting them, attending meetings, and perhaps bringing SA literature. You can also offer sponsorship by phone or VoIP. Perhaps most important of all, you can offer friendship and sober support. If you'd like to help in our outreach to Spanish-speaking members, please write to me at jimd.essay@gmail.com. ¡Gracias!

—Jim D.

## EMER Update



The Europe & Middle-East Region (EMER) combines the former UK and Ireland Region with Intergroups in Israel. EMER comprises seven Intergroups: Belgium (Flanders), Ireland, Israel, Netherlands, Poland, Spain and UK. It includes 120 SA Groups and 530 members. We are also building strong fraternal links with the German-Speaking Region and with the Iran Intergroup.

Our first year has witnessed many exciting developments, bringing new growth and hope. Our first-ever EMER Convention will take place in Warsaw October 25-27, 2013. Our second annual face-to-face EMER Regional Assembly will be held at the same time, cohosted with the local Polish Intergroup. The need in our member countries is great, but we believe that working together and by the grace of God we can bring the SA Solution to those who still suffer.

—Francis C., Vice Chair EMER

## Connect With Members Around the World!

**The International Buddy List** is a directory of SA men from around the world. To join SA's Buddy list, write to sabuddylist@gmail.com.

**The International SA Sisters List** is a directory of SA women who wish to connect with other SA women. To join the Sisters List, call SAICO at 1-866-424-8777 or email saico@sa.org.



## Greetings from SA's International Conventions Committee (ICC) Chair

At the last meeting of the Board of Trustees, I was appointed as the new chair of the International Convention Committee. I'm excited to serve in this position because of my great love for SA conventions.

I remember my first convention: the Southern California Unity Conference, in September 2002.

What a spiritual experience it was for me! I met people from all over our region. We shared a commonality and encouraged one another in our progressive recovery over lust.

Over the years, the bonds I formed at that first conference have grown into deep friendships. Today, that conference, along with other spiritual events, has turned into more of a family reunion for me. Year after year we come together and share our experience, strength, and hope as we carry the message of our recovery.

Something else happened to me at that first conference: I was introduced to the S-Anon experience. The honest shares from the S-Anon members helped me take responsibility in clearing away of the wreckage of my own past. Their stories touched me inside, and I found that I related to much of what

they had to say. I've come to believe that if you take away my addiction, you've got an S-Anon here. I called my wife from that conference and asked her if she wanted to join me on this recovery journey. Two weeks later she attended her first S-Anon meeting and has been a grateful member of S-Anon ever since.

After that I attended my first International Convention in San Diego in January 2004. Wow! It was just like the Unity Conference—only bigger! More spiritual experiences!

Over the years, through the international conventions, I've been blessed to meet people from all over the world. More than ever, I've come to know that I am not alone.

These experiences and more are available to all SA members. One does not have to travel great distances. They can be had in your own backyard.

The mission of the ICC is to select sites to host International Conventions. Our hope is to gain and provide insight into the numerous monumental tasks associated with facilitating an international convention. We also help intergroups put together three-day regional conferences. We know



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that an international convention can be put together with only six key people. The same is true for a regional conference.

A wealth of experience, strength, and hope has been accumulated to help you. Each host city of an international convention is encouraged to send a series of reports to the ICC. The reports are analyzed and the information is passed on to future convention cities. These data help local convention committees to not have to reinvent the wheel, and also help with budgeting.

Conventions are already set for Baltimore in July 2013, Nashville in

January 2014, Detroit in July 2014, Portland in January 2015, Chicago in July 2015, and San Diego in January 2016. We have also received bids for July 2016 and dates in 2017.

Have you considered having an International convention in your city? Whether it's been a while since your Intergroup hosted a convention or your Intergroup has never hosted one, maybe it's time. Hosting a convention can be a very deep, spiritual experience! And if you're anything like me, it can be one of the greatest adventures of your life.

—Tom K. Palm Springs,  
SA ICC Chair

## Upcoming International Convention

*July 19 - 21, 2013, Baltimore, MD. Change on the Chesapeake*

As we say in Baltimore, "Come on down to Balmer" this summer! Join us for a weekend of recovery, peace, and hope sponsored by the SA and S-Anon members of the MD, Washington, DC and Northern Virginia area. We're preparing an exciting program with powerful speakers, multiple break-out sessions, and lots of opportunity for fellowship, sponsorship, meditation, and fun. Baltimore is a great town, and we're delighted to showcase our city. Convention events include a special night of entertainment after the Saturday banquet.



The convention will be held at the Sheraton Baltimore City Center, four blocks from our famous Inner Harbor, home of the USS Constellation, National Aquarium, and Fort McHenry (a key part of the War of 1812). Come enjoy your stay with us! The group rate of \$119 per night will be available until June 24, 2013 (subject to availability). For reservations call 800-325-3535. For more information or a link to online registration, please visit [www.changeonthechesapeake.com](http://www.changeonthechesapeake.com)

—Steve G. and Brad S., SA Co-Chairs, and Geoffrey J., SA Publicity Chair

## SAICO Financial Update

Following is a summary of SA fellowship revenues and expenses for First 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 First Quarter 2013	
Donations	48,030.77
Other Revenues	17,871.16
Expenses	74,906.91
Revenues (less expenses)	-9,004.98
Total Prudent Reserve	161,863.21

### Essay Service Position Available: Artist Needed to Develop Essay Cover Illustrations

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### New SA Groups

#### USA

Eau Claire, WI (additional meeting)  
Fremont, NE  
Pampa, TX  
Reading, PA (additional meeting)  
St. Meinrad, IN  
Sierra Vista, AZ  
Turlock, CA

#### International

Brisbane City, Australia (additional meeting)  
Buxton UK  
London UK (4 additional meetings)  
Charlottetown, PEI Canada  
Christchurch, New Zealand





## Delegates and Trustees

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

\*EMER = Europe & Middle East Region

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



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

# Calendar of Events



**July 2, 2013.** Israel summer convention in Beit Shemes, 9am to 5pm. More info at [sa.eccisrael@gmail.com](mailto:sa.eccisrael@gmail.com)

**July 6 - 7, 2013.** Twelve Step SA Workshop, Luxembourg. Info at: [maloubi27@hotmail.com](mailto:maloubi27@hotmail.com), or 00352 691540084 (Marie-Paule) or 00352 621502814 (Tom).

**July 19-21, 2013.** SA/S-Anon Convention, Dublin, Ireland. *Happy, Joyous & Free.* The Dublin summer convention will be held in the Emmaus Conference Centre, Swords, Dublin. Contact [jamesghoey@eircom.net](mailto:jamesghoey@eircom.net)

**September 13 - 15, 2013.** Alberta Canada Fall Retreat, Battle Lake, Alberta. *Taking the Actions.* Info at [essayedmonton@yahoo.ca](mailto:essayedmonton@yahoo.ca)

**September 14, 2013.** Fifth Annual Central Illinois Fall Marathon, Germantowne Hills, IL (Peoria). *Willing to Go to Any Length.* Info

at 309-210-2469, [solutionsandanswers.com](http://solutionsandanswers.com), or [answers@solutionsandanswers.com](mailto:answers@solutionsandanswers.com)

**October 11 - 13, 2013.** Southwest Regional Unity Conference, Irvine California USA. *Improving Our Conscious Contact.* Info at [www.sasanonunity.com](http://www.sasanonunity.com)

**October 18 - 20, 2013.** Fall SA Retreat. Post Falls Idaho USA. *Pathway to Serenity.* Info at [www.sanorthwest.org](http://www.sanorthwest.org) or [retreat@yakima1.com](mailto:retreat@yakima1.com).

**October 18-20, 2013.** German SA/S-Anon Convention in Münster, Germany. *Durch Vertrauen zur Genesung.* Info at 0049 - 1787747003

**October 25 - 27, 2013.** EMER First Regional Convention, Warsaw Poland. *God, Fellowship & Love: In spiritual Fellowship, We grow in Recovery.* Info at [sa.convention.poland@gmail.com](mailto:sa.convention.poland@gmail.com)

**November 2013.** Second French speaking Journée de Rétablissement, Luxembourg. Info to follow

**December 6-8, 2013 (Tentative date).** SA Convention, Toledo, Spain. Info at [artemeslds@gmail.com](mailto:artemeslds@gmail.com)

**May 11-13, 2014.** EMER's Second Regional Assembly and Convention, Jerusalem, Israel. Info at +972 523 772 002 , +972 528 604 347, or [saec.israel@gmail.com](mailto:saec.israel@gmail.com)

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

**Submit events to be listed in Essay to [saico@sa.org](mailto:saico@sa.org)**

*Submit info to be listed in September 2013 Essay by August 15, 2013. Please include dates, theme, place, and points of contact.*

## Upcoming International Conventions



**July 19 - 21, 2013,** Baltimore, MD. *Change on the Chesapeake.* Please join us! Registration will open at noon on Friday, and the first "Early Bird" meeting will begin at 2:30 (subject to change). For more info, visit [www.changeonthechesapeake.com](http://www.changeonthechesapeake.com) or email us at [info@changeonthechesapeake.com](mailto:info@changeonthechesapeake.com)

**January 10 - 12, 2014,** Nashville, TN. *The Three Legacies.* More info to follow.

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## The Twelve Traditions of Sexaholics Anonymous

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

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

God,

*Grant me  
the serenity  
to accept the things  
I cannot change,  
the courage to change  
the things I can,  
and the wisdom  
to know  
the difference.*

