

Essay

March 2013



Loved Back to Sobriety

A quarterly publication of Sexaholics Anonymous

The Twelve Steps of Sexaholics Anonymous

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

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March 2013



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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Loved Back to Sobriety

I'm a grateful recovering sexaholic woman, sober since October 22, 2001. I was thrilled when I was asked to share my story at the January 2013 Convention in Atlanta. The last time I was in Atlanta was for the January 2002 Convention, when I had just returned to SA after a seven-year relapse. At the time, I was afraid I would be rejected and shown the door. Instead, I don't think I've ever felt such love as I did when I arrived. I remember being welcomed by my old friends: Art, Sylvia, Roy, and many others. I hope that I can carry the message to anyone who has left this program, that it's never too late to come back. You will always be welcome here. That welcome is what saved my life.

I loved the theme of the Atlanta convention: "The Courage to Change." I believe that courage is the alternative to lust. Courage is what we get when we surrender to God. In the Serenity Prayer, we ask God to give us courage. I think I've always needed courage.

I came from a lot of fear and emptiness. My early lust and acting out were all about fear: mostly fear of not having what I needed. I was always trying to fix things or make

things happen my way, and I resorted to lust and fantasy at a very young age. I was really excited when I first saw pornography. I got it from my best friend's father's stash. I looked for it often. But I noticed that my friend was never as interested in it as I was.

The pornography and my fantasies gave me an illusion of control. I would make up a story of how things would go, and I would keep repeating the story, even though it had no basis in reality. By the time I was 14, I was into masturbation. Today I can see that this was my way of getting away from the noise of my family: mostly the noise of my parents arguing or my mother doing something that bothered me. The way I learned to escape all this noise was with fantasy and masturbation.

One thing I think I was seeking was the feeling of having "arrived." That's what I really wanted. I remember the first time I felt that way. I was 16 years old. I had just gotten my braces off and I had new contact lenses. I thought I was beautiful! Also that summer, I met a 17-year-old boy who seemed sufficiently rebellious, cynical,



and challenging to make him very attractive to me. He reminded me of a favorite character in a novel I had read. My fantasy was complete. I was also using alcohol and drugs at the time, and this contributed to my fantasy life.

The feeling of having arrived didn't last long however, and after that summer things went downhill. My disease took me into desperate lust and a frantic need for affirmation and attention. I was angry at men and felt safe with women—and I went into same-sex lust. I lived in that lifestyle for five years. This was a very dark time in my life.

Over the next few years, I got into recovery from alcohol and drugs, as well as from compulsive overeating. At age 26, for the first time in years, I was at my normal weight again. And once again, I believed I had "arrived." This was a particularly sweet victory because, thanks to my recovery, I had been able to leave the same-sex lifestyle behind. Men were attracted to me again, and I was attracted to them!

I started cruising AA meetings—although I didn't admit that's what I was doing. "Please connect with me and make me whole" (SA, 203) meant, to me "Please lust after me." That was the best high I had ever experienced. But this backfired. After one or two affairs, I found myself preying on an AA newcomer. I had been in recovery long enough to know that was a bad thing to

do. I judged others harshly for this behavior, yet now I was doing it. I was very lucky that by then I knew about SA.

I lived in New York City at the time and attended meetings of several Twelve Step fellowships. I knew SA members from some of those other meetings and even attended an SA meeting in early July 1985. I wasn't interested in SA at first because of the requirement of no sex with self or anyone other than a marriage partner. But in August, when I found myself in this newcomer's apartment telling myself that he wasn't "really" a newcomer, I knew I was lying to myself and raced back to SA.

That first meeting was held in a dark basement in Manhattan. I didn't want to be there. But they were talking about what I was experiencing, so I began attending regularly. That's when I got sober—in August 1985. I'm grateful to all of you who helped me there at first.

In April 1986, we held an SA marathon in New York. Several long-time sober men and women came, including three men from Washington DC. I had just been accepted to professional school in DC, and these men told me about their great fellowship in Washington. They invited me to visit.

In August 1986, I moved to DC and became active in the SA fellowship. I was also active in international service, and I began

attending international conventions. My first SA convention was in Bozeman, MT in 1988. That's where I met many other old-timer women, one of whom became my sponsor. That beloved sponsor took me through the Steps.

In 1989, I became chair of our tiny Intergroup and learned a painful lesson about the group conscience. In the summer of 1989, our Intergroup was planning to host a convention in Baltimore the following summer. I was sent to the 1989 convention in Milwaukee to put in our bid to host the July 1990 convention. Instead, I suggested that the convention be held in Seattle! That's when the AA convention would be in Seattle, and I thought they should be in the same place.

Because of my behavior, we almost lost the bid to host the convention. In the end, we did get the bid (no thanks to me), but members of my Intergroup witnessed my actions, and at the next Intergroup meeting I was fired. In fact, I was banned from the Intergroup! I went home and called my sponsor, expecting sympathy. Instead she directed me to work the Steps on my wrongs as a trusted servant.

I miserably wrote an inventory and surrendered to my sponsor what I had done, but when it came to Step Eight, I was horrified at the prospect of making amends to these ungrateful Intergroup members! Yet within

weeks, that is exactly what I did. I'll never forget the transformation that working the Steps with my sponsor brought about in me. I was at peace, and suddenly those people I resented were my friends again.

In July 1993, I attended the convention in Nashville. But by this time I felt that I needed to "arrive" again—and for me, that meant being married. I thought SA should arrange for me to find a marriage partner! But it wasn't happening.

Right after that convention I met a guy who was impressive in many ways. We both worked on Capitol Hill. I just knew that he was Mr. Right! But he made it clear to me that he was not interested in SA sobriety. I struggled greatly over this.

I went to another SA convention in Rochester in January 1994. I was even one of the speakers. But I spent most of the time in a phone booth talking with Mister Right instead of participating in the convention. Two months later I left SA. I would not answer the phone or return program phone calls because I was acting out with my boyfriend.

Sadly, I can chart my downslide from that moment. My depression started in March 1994. I experienced all the insanity of being back in the acting-out scene, including job problems, more job problems, and finally, losing my job. This led to treatment for depression. My boyfriend was losing interest,



so I moved in with him, thinking that would fix things. Finally, the relationship ended—but not until I had someone else in the wings. And things got much worse.

I found a new job and started acting out with a colleague. I knew what I was doing was wrong. I was uncomfortable with my behavior, and the lower I felt about myself, the less employable I became—even though I supposedly had a lot of experience. Over time, my confidence completely disintegrated. I got into acting-out behaviors I'd never been into before. I even found the Internet, which had not existed before. I thought I was smart because I only used free stuff!

I was a mess, trying to get what I needed. In fact, one day I was so desperate to meet with my latest acting-out partner that I was hit by a Mack truck! I was driving around Washington Circle in rush hour traffic, trying get to Virginia for a rendezvous. As I entered the Circle, I failed to yield right of way—and I was hit by the truck! Fortunately everyone was driving slowly, so the truck driver just sort of pushed me around the circle.

Finally I stopped the car—and also stopped all traffic. I insisted that the police come, because I was sure that it was the truck driver's fault! But the policeman informed me that I was to blame; I had failed to yield. You'd think that would wake me up. But no—like the man in "A Personal

Story" (SA 17), I just continued on to my rendezvous. Even though there was a huge gash in the side of my car, I kept going.

A few days later, I went to my insurance company to make a claim. The adjuster looked at the car and said, "Lady, it's clear that you failed to yield." After more evidence of insanity you'd think I would be ready to quit. Yet it took more than a year, and another acting out partner, for me to return to SA.

I was still attending other fellowships, but I would hide if I saw an SA member. Then one day I ran into a man I knew from SA. I went over to chat with him because I thought he had left SA. He seemed surprised to see me, and I was surprised to learn that he had returned to SA. He convinced me to go to an SA meeting the next day.

I don't know why I agreed, because I was positive that everyone in SA would tell me to get lost. So I put on my brightest lipstick and shortest skirt and went to that SA meeting, ready for a reaction! I was ready for them to tell me to leave! Defiance is the outstanding characteristic of many a sexaholic (see 12&12, 31). But there I was in October 2001, back at an SA meeting—and much to my amazement, nobody sent me away. I was loved back into that room.

Still, I struggled at first. I remember telling an SA woman that I was planning to go to Italy with my

boyfriend. She read me the riot act! So I called another woman and complained about the first woman's attitude—but the second woman said the same thing! My thinking was still insane, but by the grace of God, I was back. And what I remember most is the tremendous amount of love in these rooms.

The reason I mentioned courage at the beginning is that I think that's what we get when we surrender to this program and work the Steps. When we ask God for courage, He grants it. I was able to do what I didn't want to do. I wrote a letter to that boyfriend, with my hand held very tightly by Sylvia. She dictated what I should write: "Do not contact me at all." And I sent the letter.

After that, I had a lot of Step work to do. I had ignored my family. My mother suffered from Alzheimer's, and I had not gone home to visit her. In the meantime my father died. I had promised him that I would help out with my mother, but I did not. So I had to go home and make amends.

When I made amends to my mother, she couldn't respond. She wasn't talking by that time. I could tell that she heard me though, and I heard her. When I asked, "What can I do to make it right?" I heard her response, even though she didn't say any words. I heard her say, "Don't stay away. Be here. Visit me." So I did.

Then I had to make amends for

work situations. Early in sobriety I had taken a new job, but I was still totally distracted by my social life. I was not doing the job the way it should have been done. My boss was in business for himself, so when I slacked on the job, it was noticeable. And I was fired, in sobriety.

Six months later I felt the need to make amends. My sponsor helped me figure out what to say, and in spite of my fears, I went to see this man. I acknowledged that I hadn't been available for the job; I had not done what he needed me to do. Much to my amazement, he was impressed! He was a man of strong moral principles, and he had never had anyone do that before. But his response didn't matter. I made my Step Nine amends because that was what I was supposed to do.

Today in recovery, I feel I'm being asked to be compassionate toward my coworkers—people whom I was happily judging before. I would love to tell you about how irrational they all are, but instead I'm being asked to be kind and loving to them. I'm grateful to have been given the enormous gifts of sobriety, recovery, and peace of mind. These gifts enable me to behave in the ways that our program suggests.

Recently a co-worker wanted to talk to me about a work situation she thought was awful. I didn't agree with her, but instead of arguing, I managed to keep my mouth shut and just listen. It's only by the grace of

God and the changes He has made in my life through recovery that I can handle these situations with kindness.

I also believe that it is my responsibility to give back. Not just in the fellowship. I'm grateful to give back to the fellowship, but our program teaches me to be compassionate toward all people, even those with whom I don't want to be compassionate. The results of following program principles are more than I ever expected. I'm experiencing the truth of the Eleventh Step prayer:

For it is by self-forgetting that one finds. It is by forgiving that one is forgiven. It is by dying that one awakens to Eternal Life. (12&12, 99)

Today I'm embarking on dying to self, and I'm amazed at how this comes back to me as a blessing. I want to *feel* God's love for others, not just be nice to them. And I'm beginning to experience the blessings of this behavior.

Recently, a woman I know from another fellowship came to me in tears. She shared that as a married woman, she was in despair because she had a crush on another man. The more she talked, the more I knew what she was talking about. I said, "Oh yeah, the intrigue, the

tease, the forbidden." (SA, 203) She looked at me as if I'd been reading her mail! She was amazed that I understood.

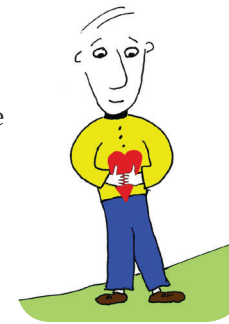
She hasn't come into the fellowship yet, but it doesn't matter; the conversation was a gift for me. Normally I would have been afraid to speak to this woman because she seems to have it all together. But by practicing our program principles, I was able to be of service—just by listening and letting her know that I understood.

I believe that God gives me these opportunities to serve throughout my life, and it's because you in the SA fellowship have taught me to look for them. So whether it's at my home group, at a business meeting, at a convention, or just in everyday living—I look for ways to be a sober woman today, and to carry the

message of a loving God to the next person I meet.

The Twelfth Step also teaches me to keep practicing these principles in all my affairs. I need all of you to keep me honest, and to love me in spite of my defects of character. I thank you all for being on this road with me and for loving me back to sobriety. I'll keep coming back.

—Anonymous



Sexual Nurturing?¹

An Excerpt from a Personal Letter

What has stuck in my mind and simply won't let go since our last phone call is the term "sexual nurturing" as something being supplied by your spouse. I'd like to share my thoughts and maybe learn some things when we talk further on the subject.

For me, these two words, "sexual nurturing," are an oxymoron; they are inoperative together. Is there such a thing as sexual nurturing for me the sexaholic? Sex may serve a lot of different things, including propagation of the species, but do we call that nurturing? I as a human being need air, water, food, others, and God; I am nourished by these and am malnourished without them. I as a (married) recovering sexaholic don't have to have sex, and yet I can, in that abstinent condition, be as fully nourished as any human ever has or can be. My experience and our growing SA experience is telling us that being single and abstinent or married and abstinent in no way leaves one deprived or abnormal.

Sex as "nurturing" was for

me another of those expressions like "committed relationship." "What is sex for?" is one of the great unanswered questions of our time. In SA we're just beginning to know what sex is not for. Let's give ourselves time to see where true recovery will lead us in seeing what sex is for. The place of sex



in our lives may turn out to be something different than what we've been programmed to imagine. Sex is what everything from worms to woolly mammoths do—as the procreative mechanism.

When I see the pair of mated ravens sitting on the telephone pole nuzzling and talking to each other,

I see what may be construed as nurturing in the animal kingdom. But when I see them nesting and having sex I see them concerned with something larger than themselves, for which they will forgo not only nurturing but their own self-preservation, that is, the destiny of their own kind! If anything, both of them in that sex act are nurturing their species, not each other in the current narcissistic self-indulgent sense of the term.

¹ First Published in *Essay*, 2003, Issue 2

What I thought was sexual nurturing in my marriage turned out to be support for my addiction. I was addicted to marital sex. I simply wanted sex and thought I had to have it; but it was a demand based on my programming and self-will. Through sexual abstinence I am only now beginning to find how the true

bases of love and nurturing have escaped me. Growing into these is the tough work of recovery and program.

Here's to all the blessed ravens, worms, and woolly mammoths! And to our loving wives and husbands!

—Roy K., Simi Valley, CA

Steps and Traditions

Being Restored to Sanity

Step One: We admitted that we were powerless over lust—that our lives had become unmanageable.

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

In our meetings, we often discuss Step One as it relates to powerlessness, but we seldom talk about the second half of Step One—unmanageability—in terms of insanity. Step Two states that we can be "restored to sanity"—so that must mean we are having problems with insanity to begin with! How gentle Bill W. was with us when he wrote "unmanageable" in Step One instead of coming right out and saying "Our lives had become insane!"

However, Bill does use the word "insanity" in other parts of the Big Book. Concerning Jim, the car salesman who gets drunk in a bar, he writes:

He had much knowledge about himself as an alcoholic. Yet all reasons for not

drinking were easily pushed aside in favor of the foolish idea that he could take whiskey if only he mixed it with milk!

Whatever the precise definition of the word may be, we call this plain insanity. How can such a lack of proportion, of the ability to think straight, be called anything else? (AA, 36-37)

In speaking about the jaywalker,

Bill says:

Our behavior is as absurd and incomprehensible with respect to the first drink as that of an individual with a passion, say, for jaywalking. He gets a thrill out of skipping in front of fast-moving vehicles. He



enjoys himself for a few years in spite of friendly warnings ... Such a man maybe would be crazy, wouldn't he?

...

You may think our illustration is too ridiculous. But is it? We, who have been through the wringer, have to admit if we substituted alcoholism for jay-walking, the illustration would fit us exactly. However intelligent we may have been in other respects, where alcohol has been involved, we have been strangely insane. It's strong language—but isn't it true? (AA, 37-38).

The SA literature uses the word "insanity" in regard to Step One:

...our First Step had revealed at least some of our irrational thinking and behavior. And we slowly began to realize that such loss of control was a form of insanity. (SA, 90)

What is this insanity?

I believe there are two aspects of insanity: hallucinations and delusions. Let us first examine the aspect of hallucinations. How well I know this form! For me, "hallucinations" could be auditory or visual. Before recovery, when I saw a beautiful woman smile at me, I often thought I heard her say, "Let's have sex together." In reality she was just smiling and not saying a word. Is this

not an auditory hallucination?

Especially during my early recovery, I would see men and women fully dressed, and yet for a moment would see them naked in my mind. Is this not a visual hallucination? Although this is not a medical diagnosis, it certainly must be a condition of the First Step that I accept my own insanity before I can become ready to be restored to sanity in Step Two. How can I be restored to sanity if I cannot acknowledge I am insane?

The second aspect of insanity is delusional thinking. We can also call it the obsession of the mind. Bill W. writes about this in a memorial article about Alcoholic #3, Bill D.:

So here we were, talking to Bill, the first "man on the bed." We told him about our drinking. We hammered it into him that alcoholism was an obsession of the mind, coupled to an allergy of the body. The obsession, we explained,

condemned the alcoholic to drink against his will and the allergy, if he went on drinking, could positively guarantee his insanity or death. How to unhook that fatal compulsion, how to restore the alcoholic to sanity, was, of course, the problem. ("He Kept the



Faith," from *Language of the Heart*, p. 361. Originally printed in *AA Grapevine*, November 1954)

What is this obsession? As the Big Book explains:

The idea that somehow, someday he will control and enjoy his drinking is the great obsession of every abnormal drinker. The persistence of this illusion is astonishing. Many pursue it into the gates of insanity or death (AA, 30).

In "What Is a Sexaholic and What Is Sexual Sobriety?," Roy makes an explicit parallel with alcoholic thinking. In regard to our sobriety requirement, he states:

This will and should discourage many inquirers who admit to sexual obsession or compulsion but who simply want to control and enjoy it, much as the alcoholic would like to control and enjoy drinking. (SA, 4)

On a personal level, I'm relieved to know that I am not "bad" getting "good," I am insane getting saner. How else can I explain the behavior I participated in until I came into SA? "Therefore the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind, rather than in his body" (AA, 23). If my problem is in my mind, then what can I do about it?

When an aberrant sexual

thought hits my mind, it is like any other thought. It comes in and it goes out just as easily as it came in. It is as if I am standing on a bank of a river. The water flows by, and at that moment I have a choice. Do I want to watch the water flow or do I want to jump in and possibly drown? Do I want to let the aberrant thought flow out as quickly as it flows in? Or do I want to be delusional again and think I can control and enjoy lust?

An entire chapter in *Sexaholics Anonymous* entitled "Overcoming Lust and Temptation" (157-168) is focused on this area of our malady. With each lust temptation, I have the opportunity to let go by using the tools suggested in that chapter. As Jess L. used to say: "The first thought is on God; the next thought is on me."

Today, with over 28 years of sobriety, I am convinced that I cannot successfully control and enjoy lust. There is no hiding behind technicalities of sobriety. There is no hiding behind dishonesty-to-self. Time after time in recovery I have watched people try to control and enjoy lust. I have not personally seen this work for those who try it.

Today I am so grateful that my hallucinations have lessened and that I no longer have the delusion that I can enjoy and control lust. I am truly thankful that I am being restored to sanity, one day at a time.

—Harvey A., Nashville, TN

Another Look at Step One¹

We
We admitted
We admitted that we were powerless over lust—
Who cares to admit complete defeat?
No person likes to think he is bodily and mentally different from his
fellows.
Every natural instinct cries out against the idea of personal
powerlessness.
Many of us felt inadequate, unworthy, alone and afraid,
Restless, irritable and discontented.
Terror, Bewilderment, Frustration, Despair.
We were having trouble with personal relationships
We couldn't control our emotional natures
We were a prey to misery and depression
We couldn't make a living
We had a feeling of uselessness
We were full of fear
We were unhappy
We couldn't be of real help to other people—
Our lives had become unmanageable.
We admitted that we were powerless over lust—
Lack of power, that was our dilemma.
Lusting after the Big Fix, we gave away our power to others.
Please connect with me and make me whole!
100% hopeless – our habit made true intimacy impossible.
No other kind of bankruptcy is like this one.
Fantasy corrupted the real; lust killed love.
No words can tell of the loneliness and despair.
We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we
were sexaholics.
The delusion that we are like other people has to be smashed.
There was always one more attempt—and one more failure.
There was belief in God without surrender.
That belief availed nothing!
We had never died to lust.
Our lives had become unmanageable.
We admitted that we were powerless over lust—that our lives had
become unmanageable.



¹ Adapted from passages from SA, AA, and 12 & 12

Nothing, absolutely nothing happens in God's world by mistake.
We perceive that only through utter defeat are we able to take our first steps
toward liberation and strength.
The crucial change in attitude began when we admitted we were powerless.
We discovered that we could stop.
There was hope for freedom and we began to feel alive.
We need to concentrate not so much on what needs to be changed in the
world as on what needs to be changed in us and in our attitudes.
How dark it is before the dawn!
We were to know happiness, peace, and usefulness, in a way of life that is
incredibly more wonderful as time passes.
Our admissions of personal powerlessness finally turn out to be firm bedrock
upon which happy and purposeful lives may be built.
Taking the actions of love to improve our relations with others, we were
finding what none of the substitutes had ever supplied.
We were making the real Connection.
We were home.

—Brad M., Nashville, TN



Our Common Welfare

*Tradition One: Our Common Welfare should come first;
personal recovery depends on SA unity*

Recently, I volunteered to lead a meeting in my home group on the topic of Tradition One. I felt quite confident of my ability to explain the Tradition. After all, I've been sober in SA for six years (I'm a member of another Twelve-Step fellowship)—and I can recite the Traditions by heart! But in preparing for the meeting, I came across a list of Tradition One Questions from AA *Grapevine* (see next page) that caused me to take a closer look at my own behaviors: how I behave as a group member, as a husband, and as I do service work. And much to my chagrin, I discovered many areas

where improvement is still needed in my life.

For me, recovery is more than just sobriety; that is, not sexually acting out or not lusting. It's about addressing all the character defects in my life that still cause me problems. And if I'm not actively pursuing their correction or elimination, it's easy for me to become resentful, and resentment "is said to be the number one killer of addicts" (SA, 51). As I reviewed the list of questions, I became painfully aware of defects that are still active in my life. For example, I all too often gossip and take others'

inventories, and I'm not always seen as a peacemaker. In order to get my way I can be abrasive (more than I care to admit!), and sometimes I will tout my length of sobriety as a way to get my way. All too often I am not as considerate of other members as I want them to be of me. And (I *really* hate to admit this) sometimes I spout platitudes about love while indulging in and justifying behavior that bristles with hostility. Even though at times I have been a peacemaker or considerate and



gentle with others, I still have a lot of work to do in those areas.

Because these questions have been an eye-opener for me, I offer them here in case they might be helpful for others. I must continuously ask myself: is it "*Our Common Welfare*" or "*My Common Welfare*" that is most operative in my life? In fact, It might be helpful for me to review all Twelve Traditions to see where I stand.

—Steve C., San Diego

Tradition One Checklist ¹



1. Am I in my group a healing, mending, integrating person, or am I divisive? What about gossip and taking other members' inventories?
2. Am I a peacemaker? Or do I, with pious preludes such as "just for the sake of discussion," plunge into argument?
3. Am I gentle with those who rub me the wrong way, or am I abrasive?
4. Do I make competitive AA remarks, such as comparing one group with another or contrasting AA in one place with AA in another?
5. Do I put down some AA activities as if I were superior for not participating in this or that aspect of AA?
6. Am I informed about AA as a whole? Do I support, in every way I can, AA as a whole, or just the parts I understand and approve of?
7. Am I as considerate of AA members as I want them to be of me?
8. Do I spout platitudes about love while indulging in and secretly justifying behavior that bristles with hostility?
9. Do I go to enough AA meetings or read enough AA literature to really keep in touch?
10. Do I share with AA all of me, the bad and the good, accepting as well as giving the help of fellowship?

¹ Available at www.aa.org/en_pdfs/smf-131_en.pdf.

Members Share

Chronic Conditions

I once worked in a nursing home, with senior residents who were trying to cope with the limitations of aging. At times many of them became disillusioned with their physical and mental limitations. One woman in particular had to go for dialysis two or three times a week. I told her that although I understood her discouragement over her condition, the dialysis was the very thing keeping her alive! It was the reason she was able to see her grandchildren and friends who came to visit her. She said that remembering my comments helped her to be a lot more positive.

Now that I'm a senior citizen myself, I need to take my own advice. In recent years I've developed an asthmatic condition that makes it necessary for me to stay indoors in cold weather. I have medication and exercises that help me manage my condition. But I find that I must now listen to the same counsel that I gave to so many of those nursing home residents about keeping positive.

As I've grown older, I've noticed that others my age encounter chronic health conditions that need to be continuously managed. These conditions are different from acute illnesses or accidents, such as colds and muscle sprains. Those illnesses

are treated and the sufferers soon get back to their regular routine. But accepting a chronic condition takes a different set of mental skills—much like the grieving process after experiencing a significant loss in life.

My own struggle to accept my asthma as a chronic condition is much like the struggle I went through in accepting that I was a sex addict. Even after I'd been through a rehabilitation program and was an SA member for many years, I still had the notion in the back of my mind that eventually I would be "cured" and would someday be "normal." I

have always liked to be in control. I would take great pride in being able to see a problem, come up with a solution, and then fix the problem. Accepting that I have a condition that I must live with and manage—with the strength of my Higher

Power—was not easy, especially because pride is one of my main character defects.

Some years ago, a member of our local fellowship shared a powerful experience he had at an International SA conference. He attended a session led by a panel of SA members who had very long-term sobriety, but who had experienced a slip and lost their sobriety. They shared that their length of sobriety



became an excuse for complacency, which led to their acting out. Today I try to keep that sharing in mind whenever I find myself starting to take credit for any long-term sobriety.

A spiritual mentor once told me that of all the people who come to him for guidance, addicts like me have a special advantage. The people who come to him with a situational condition, like a divorce or a recent death, eventually are able to get over the pain and move on with their lives. He may not see them again until the next crisis occurs. But we addicts know that we have a lifetime condition which makes it necessary for us to accept God's strength and power every single day

I am like a person walking on

Getting Lust Out

Newcomers often ask, "How do you get lust out of your head?" My honest reply is, "I have no earthly idea." You see, for me, I have never been able to get lust out of my head. I've tried. I've tried really hard. I tried for three decades and I failed. I have failed every time. Then I noticed something. When I can bring my Higher Power into my thoughts, then lust leaves. I focus on humility by asking God to have mercy on me. I imagine how big God is and how little I am. I visualize the faces of members at my last meeting and ask God what I can do for each of them. Lust, it seems, must flee in the presence of my Higher Power. I simply must make the choice to invite God into my head. God gets the lust out, I do not.

—Mark E., San Antonio, TX

the edge of a cliff. Every day my journey is a constant awareness that God alone can keep me from falling off the edge. My friend helped me see that such a realization is itself a blessing and a bridge to connect with my Higher Power on a level many people never reach.

Now I'm happy to identify myself as a recovering sex addict at the beginning of our SA meetings. This also helps me learn to accept the physical limitations that come with aging. Both of these conditions have helped me to develop the humility needed to ask for God's strength just to get through each day. I have found that my attitude is crucial to my sobriety.

—Anonymous



Masturbation Was My Drug of Choice

Since I first discovered masturbation before puberty, it has been like a drug for me. It was my drug of choice: I used it when I was tense, happy, or feeling anything or nothing. I used masturbation to wake up, go to sleep, speed up or slow down, or to pass the time away.

Like a drug addict who might progress from marijuana to cocaine to heroin, I progressed from masturbation to bookstores to prostitutes. Ultimately, at age 45, when I was in an insane one-year relationship with a woman half my age, I was brought to my knees in powerlessness and pain, and I found SA.

When I first met this woman, she told me she was in a "day program." A bus would pick her up every day and take her to a program for dealing with mental illness and chemical addiction. I thought, "This will work for me!" I took her to drug dealers in a bombed-out looking ghetto at night for heroin or crack and then used her for sex and companionship.

I learned a lot from her about drug addiction. I learned the concept of "gateway drugs": If she drank one beer, she had to have six. If she drank six beers she wanted crack or heroin. She said the one beer was not the problem; she just needed to

stay away from heroin. But the one beer was the problem, because she was powerless! She would jump out of my moving car if I did not drive her to get drugs. Beer, a gateway drug for a heroin addict.

Then I could see that masturbation was a gateway drug for me. I masturbated during my marriage, and this left me with no real desire to connect with my wife. When I masturbated in marriage I was always committing adultery in my head—thousands of times with an unending multitude

of partners. How much of a step is it from adulterous masturbation to adulterous sex? For me, it was not a long one at all. I would masturbate with phone sex or by thinking about someone I knew at work or saw on the street. But it was never enough. Then I would move on to the real thing. Interestingly, sex with these women was never enough either.

In 1990, at the age of 34, I flew to Minnesota to attend a sexual addiction clinic. When I arrived at the hospital, the nurse said I needed to sign a sobriety contract, which stated that I would not have sex with myself or anyone else while at the clinic. I said, "No masturbation? That wasn't in the brochure!" She just smiled at me and said, "Paul, just sign it." So I did. But I resented



it! And I could not get 30 days of sobriety even at the clinic, with the best therapists and a 12-hour-a-day inpatient program. The longest I could go was 10 days (twice) before I reached for my drug of choice, masturbation.

For the next 10 years, I tried to manage my addiction. I spent four years in a relationship with the drug-addicted woman. She had been hospitalized five times for drug addiction and mental illness. I knew she would probably die in her addiction, but because I needed her for sex, I knew I would always enable her chemical desires. We were two addicts in a symbiotic dance of death. I knew if I didn't get away from her we both might die. I learned a few years later that she did die of an overdose in a cheap motel.

In 2001, I was in a sexual recovery therapy group with singles and couples. I heard one man ask another, "Why don't you consider SA's sobriety definition: 'No sex with self or outside of marriage?'" The addict husband replied indignantly (with his wife next to him), "If I didn't masturbate I would not have any sex at all!" I thought to myself, "That man is sick." Then it dawned on me, "Why don't I consider SA's definition?"

I went to my first SA meeting in 2001. I had never had more than 10 days free from masturbation since I was very young, but in SA I found what therapy, inpatient, and

outpatient help had never given me. I found sobriety and a spiritual awakening. Several months later, I ran into the man from the therapy group who had first suggested SA to me and I said to him, "Remember that time you suggested SA at the therapy group? You actually saved my life!"

Before coming to SA I was agnostic. I did not believe that anyone could know there is a God. But in SA, I learned that lust was my God. And by listening to other members share about their Higher Power, I have found God, as well as a religious home outside of SA.

In my years prior to SA, I was looking for a psychological cure. In SA I saw that I needed a spiritual solution and a connection with my Higher Power. If I'm lusting, I'm spiritually disconnected. But if I practice regular spiritual readings, prayer and meditation, and attend services, I'm less susceptible to lust.

One day I told a psychiatrist that I was thinking of calling the heroin addict. He said out loud and wrote in his notes "addictive cravings and delusional thinking." Now instead of saying I am having "euphoric recall" (which sounds like fun), I say I'm suffering with "addictive cravings and delusional thinking." Addictive cravings, delusional thoughts, and drug dreams are a part of my lust addiction. I don't need to give them an attractive label.

In 2005 I was blessed to marry

a wonderful woman who knows the details of my addiction, but who can see the man I have become. I have real friends instead of being isolated in my addiction. More than 100 people attended our wedding; over half of them are our friends in SA.

I used to think my path was getting narrower. Now I see that the



path is wider. I no longer wander through the wilderness. The vapors I was living in have been burned away by the light of a new day.

No matter what I am experiencing in life, SA is my new drug of choice! I have found God, peace, and serenity. I am home.

—Paul S., Philadelphia, PA

Finding Friendship

After more than 50 years of addiction to lust, I discovered the SA fellowship about 18 months ago. I can't say it's been any easier since that first meeting to deal with my defects and all the harm they've caused; but after years and years of half-hearted attempts at "controlling" myself (more accurately minimizing the harm I've done, justifying it, or simply wallowing in self-pity), I'm convinced that SA and working the Steps will lead me to recovery from this illness.

I've started to work the Steps, I have a sponsor, and I'm beginning to come out of the shell I've built for myself. I've read lots, shared lots, and heard lots at meetings. What has surprised me most, however, is that I've suddenly learned what friendship means.

Growing up, I never really had

anyone I could call a friend. That carried on into my adult life. Sure, I met and knew lots of people—at school, then at work, and in other groups (like church). But none of these people really "knew" me, warts and all. Actually, I was desperate to keep those warts hidden. After all, I thought, who in their right mind would want to be friendly with a perverted creep like me? So I always kept my distance and pushed everyone away from the "real" me—even my wife and children. Making things worse, I was so wrapped up in selfishness and self-pity that I left no room in my heart to think honestly about others; it was always, "What's in it for me?"

SA meetings were a revelation. Here was a place where I met others who suffered from the same addiction and who had lived



through the same temptations. We understand each other on a really basic level. But since we recognize each other's suffering in ourselves, there is unquestioning acceptance and no judgment. All of sudden, I've discovered a group of men who are truly my friends, because:

- They know me better than anyone else (at least when I'm honest enough with them)
- Even after I've share the things I'm the most ashamed of, they don't reject me
- We even talk about non-addiction things, just like "normal" men, and I'm accepted for that too!

I can talk with my sponsor and others about the things that trouble me most, like my relationship with my wife and sons and the impact my acting out has had on them and on me. His reaction is never disgust or embarrassment; instead he listens

and then gives me honest advice from his heart.

Both he and all the other men I can now count on as friends are a real help in keeping me sober, since they know the same kind of temptations I face when my sobriety is threatened. I can call them up, and just being able to share these troubles keeps my sobriety going. I can't pretend it's easy, and I admit I've slipped more than once. But I've found that the more I can trust and rely on my friends, the easier sobriety becomes.

What a blessing and joy! I came to SA on the advice of a therapist, hoping to find a way to control myself.

Instead, I'm being led to give up all control and have found, in the process, real friendships.

— Jim J., Toronto, ON Canada



Upcoming International Convention

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

Join us for a weekend of recovery, peace, and Higher Power, sponsored by the SA members of the MD, Washington DC, and Northern Virginia area. We are 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. The convention will be held at the Sheraton Baltimore City Center, four blocks from our famous Inner Harbor. Come enjoy your stay with us! The group rate of \$119 per night will be available until June 24, 2013 (subject to availability). To register or for more information visit www.changeonthechesapeake.com

— Steve G. and Brad S., SA Co-Chairs



A Word About Essay



I've been a sexaholic most likely since the age of 11. I'm 64 now. I've been in recovery, through the grace of God and SA, for almost 16 years. For reasons too long to go into, my sobriety over the last two years has been spiritually weak.

I have read, periodically, a few *Essay* quarterlies over the years. I even took an annual subscription a number of years ago. I had good intentions, but I never read most of them. Then last summer we moved across the country for my job, and I found an SA group about an hour from my home. After one of the meetings, I picked up an *Essay* on the literature table and took it home. As I read it, cover-to-cover, over the next week. I was amazed that the stories seemed to be almost custom-made for several of the issues I was dealing with. I was so intrigued that I grabbed another issue the following week, and I got the same results.

I could not believe how pertinent, insightful, and wise each article was. It was an affirmation that my Higher Power cares for me. I realized that I needed to make some changes soon, or I was quickly heading for disaster. In fact, I was so taken that I went on-line and ordered all the *Essays*! Now I read *Essay* articles each day as part of my morning devotions. I underline and comment on specific sections that speak to me. I just finished one a few minutes ago and was so moved by the author's gratefulness for her sobriety that I dropped everything to write this note to *Essay*. I now encourage my fellow recovery community to not wait as long as I did to read *Essay* and glean the pearls of wisdom it has to offer.

Thank you, *Essay*, for another tool that helps me stay in healthy sobriety!

— Tom P., Central Virginia

Five Before Five

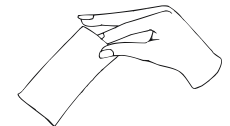
Following are five things I try to do every day before 5 pm—or "5B45." This is the recipe that I developed for Sobriety:

Ingredients:

1. White Book
2. Pen or Pencil
3. Index Card

Directions: Open the White Book to *Step Zero* (SA, 63-64). Read said passage and write down five actions that you can do every day on the index card. Do these five actions before 5 pm every day for 30 days.

Result: Sobriety!



You Don't Have to Slip¹

The newcomer has not been in the group very long but he has heard a good deal about slips and has begun to worry about himself. Someone should inform him emphatically and authoritatively, "You don't have to slip!"

There are a few other members, not newcomers but men and women who have been around six months to two years who periodically—every few months or every few weeks—go off on a little binge. Nothing serious, understand, but they evidently are not getting the program, and certainly are not getting all the benefits of continuous sobriety. These lapsing members are worried and perhaps a little ashamed. Someone should take them aside and shout politely, "You don't have to slip!"

One of the persuasive bits of evidence that slips are unnecessary is the simple fact that thousands of members have two, six, ten, and more years of uninterrupted sobriety. Some of them are not very smart—maybe not as smart as the slippers—but they are sober.

While it is easy to say that slips are unnecessary, how do you avoid them? After observing hundreds of AA members over a period of nine years, I have the feeling that continuous sobriety is, in part at least, a matter of attitudes and that those attitudes can be cultivated by the member who really wants to stop drinking. The member who does not want to stop drinking should go elsewhere for advice.

What are those attitudes? They may vary with the individual but the following pattern should fit a good many cases.

ATTITUDE I. Sobriety Must Come First—For Me. The member who tries to make AA a second or third class hobby usually has trouble. We have a Number One problem and we have to treat it as such. Sobriety cannot defer to job, family, friends, neighbors, pain, embarrassment, anonymity—or to anything else! If we do not have sobriety we ultimately will not have any of the things we hold



dear. While the "high bottom" drinker may not have lost much of anything—yet—some day he may lose everything if he continues to drink. If he gets sober and stays sober then everything else usually falls into place and the more he has of other things the more he can enjoy them.

Hence, the member who really wants to stay sober should place sobriety as his first objective and then rearrange his life accordingly.

Slips often occur when a member does not feel well. He is nervous, jittery, about to explode. A second situation that prompts a drink is one of expected personal embarrassment. The alcoholic is out with friends or business associates and he just cannot say "No." The next two attitudes relate to these frequently-encountered situations.

ATTITUDE II. I Will Suffer This Pain. It Will Pass. Even If I Die Now I Will Die Sober. The nervous situation is the basis of many slips. The alcoholic begins to shake mentally and sometimes physically. He gets so excited he nearly loses his reason. He feels as though he might go right through the ceiling. Physical pain may also be in the picture. Relief from physical pain sometimes seems to be an excuse to drink—not a sufficient excuse of course—but it serves the alcoholic who wants a reason.

This kind of nervous or painful condition is familiar to most alcoholics. Some who have been

dry many years have to put up with it from time to time. They recognize the situation, however, and know that the feeling will pass. Newer members may not be so sure, but they should resolve not to drink even if they are going to die on the spot. Not many alcoholics actually die in this manner, but when you are willing to die for your sobriety you will probably stay sober.

ATTITUDE III. I Will Suffer Any Embarrassment For My Sobriety. Fear of what friends or associates will think or say has led many alcoholics to take a drink. They fear the pink ears and burning cheeks. They conjure up in their minds all the accumulated ridicule of their colleagues. This type of situation is a great mental hazard for many new members and others not so new. They can survive these situations if they will cultivate the following line of thought:

"I've suffered terrible embarrassment in the past because of my drinking. If I drink again I will suffer still greater embarrassment in the future. So why not suffer a little embarrassment for sobriety? I will refuse that drink even if a dozen people point to me with scorn. Even if I fall down in confusion and disgrace, I will not drink!"

Actually, the frightful embarrassment with which the alcoholic mentally wrestles practically never occurs—but the alcoholic must be prepared for it. If he resolves to die

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of embarrassment rather than to take a drink he will almost certainly stay sober.

ATTITUDE IV. Sobriety Must Be Earned. Sobriety cannot be bought with money. Many of us tried that to no avail. But sobriety has its price and if we try to buy it too cheaply it may elude us.

Hence, if I attend two meetings a week and do not get sober I will step up my program to four or five meetings and also increase my other AA activity: work in the kitchen, chauffeur others to meetings, go to lunch with other members, help at Intergroup, make hospital calls, read AA literature a few minutes each day, use the telephone more (particularly if I am debating about a drink) and so on.

This intensification of activity has particular applicability to members who have been around some time but with limited success. They may be trying to buy sobriety too cheaply. It usually can't be done. Sure, Joe stays dry without going to many meetings. Some few stay dry on their own . . . but what has that to do with me?

If a member finds he is not "getting the program" he should consider whether he ought to increase the volume of his AA activity. In other words, give—not money—but of himself, more generously. Naturally this fuller scope of activity may mean some

sacrifice. Perhaps that too is necessary.

ATTITUDE V. Try To Put Greater Emphasis on Personal Contact with That Higher Power. Some new members may not be ready for those Steps which relate to the Higher Power. For them the cultivation of Attitude V may have to be delayed; but they can probably read this short section without doing violence to their principles.

Some of us who enjoy sobriety ask that Higher Power each morning for grace to get through another day. "No matter what happens, don't let me take that first drink today—no matter what happens!"

At night we give thanks for the day just gone and look forward to the morrow, humbly asking Him "for twenty-four more hours of sincerity, sobriety, and serenity"; asking His help tomorrow to "improve the quality as well as to increase the quantity" of our sobriety.

We don't feel compelled to limit our requests to the morning and evening. When we enter that restaurant with the boss and two VPs; when we walk off the eighteenth green and head for the clubhouse; when we feel alone in that distant city; what is wrong with repeating, "No matter what happens, don't let me take that first drink!"

That is conscious contact with God! It is as simple as that. And it won't do the slipping agnostic or

atheist much damage. Who knows, it may get him sober. Nothing else has, so what has he to lose?

These five attitudes by no means tell the whole story. Some members may have to think through other approaches for themselves but these five are basic to a wide range of cases. They emphasize to us that sobriety must be our first concern and that to obtain it we should be willing to suffer any pain

SA Business

SA News Worldwide¹

SA's International Committee (IC) supports international loners and fosters the development of SA Groups, Intergroups, and Regions outside of North America. Our committee members are scattered around the globe. Following are some of our activities.

Overall International Membership. The number of SA members outside of North America has doubled in the last 18 months and now exceeds 25% of our total membership. Today there are SA meetings in 43 countries outside of North America. The majority of the new overseas members do not speak English. In Iran, where our 1,527 members speak Farsi, there are 99 groups and seven intergroups.



¹ This information was submitted by SA's International Committee and shared at the Atlanta Convention in January 2013. It has been edited for *Essay*.

or embarrassment. We try to earn our sobriety by giving of ourselves generously rather than stingily and we maintain close contact with that Higher Power through supplication and thanksgiving.

You don't have to slip and if you cultivate these five suggested attitudes, you probably won't!

It's worth a try, anyway.

—Anonymous, Scarsdale, NY



Other members speak Polish, German, Hebrew, Swahili, French, or Spanish.

Europe and Middle East Region. Our first full-fledged International region, EMER, actively supports the seven national intergroups in Belgium, Ireland, Israel, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, and the United Kingdom. This new region enables 137 groups to participate actively and fully in SA's worldwide service structure.

Shanghai, China. In January, three SA loners met for the first time in Shanghai for a one-day SA roundup. They sent their regards to everyone at Atlanta.

Israel. Israel now offers 26 meetings per week for a membership nearing 200. The Israeli Intergroup

sponsors 42 Hebrew-speaking phone meetings per week, with up to 70 members participating in a single meeting. An "SA House" has been leased in Jerusalem, which provides permanent space for meetings and workshops.

An active Public Information program has led to briefings for scores of counsellors and therapists in Israel.

Russia. SA members in Russia held their second national convention in Moscow on November 23-25, 2012, and are pleading for all Russian-speaking members around the world to come to their third convention in late 2013. Russian speaking members in Belarus, Estonia, Lithuania, Israel, Russia, Ukraine and the United States are grateful for the experience, strength, and hope already given by IC members Laurens A. and Dimitri P.

Loners. Many of our international members are loners who stay in contact with the fellowship via Skype. These "VoIP" or Skype meetings operate worldwide, year round. The languages used include Russian, Farsi, French, Spanish, Polish, German and English. Although call quality is not always good, these meetings are a boon for international loners and are, of course, free of charge. A meeting list is available at sa.org/docs/phnflyer.pdf.



French-Speaking Countries. The first ever French-Speaking Recovery Day was held in Belgium in October 2012. At that event, the group in Lille, France volunteered to organize a meeting to plan creation of an Intergroup for French-speaking groups. The proposed Francophone Intergroup could affiliate with French-speaking meetings in Quebec or with the new EMER. We hope to one day see a French-speaking region, which will include the Francophone parts of Africa and the Far East.



The Luxembourg group volunteered to organise and host the 2013 "Journée de Rétablissement" (Recovery Day). An IC member has been invited to give a Twelve Step Workshop Weekend in Luxembourg in July 2013, with simultaneous translation into French. Any French-speaking members who would like to help with this outreach, please contact us via SAICO.

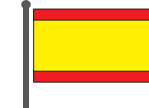


Kenya. The latest country to start an SA meeting is Kenya. Several IC members, including Dave T., Nicholas S., and Cameron B., have visited the new group in Nairobi, providing literature, workshops, and experience, strength and hope. (See following article.)

German Speaking Countries. Our German-Speaking Region, supporting 48 meetings in

Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Luxembourg, is evolving its service structure to more closely follow the SA service structure. German-language telephone meetings occur daily. A German SA newsletter is being circulated. Both male and female German-speaking sponsors are urgently needed. Please contact us via SAICO if you can help.

Spain: After many years of little growth or development, the fellowship in Spain has sprung to life. The fledgling Spanish Intergroup asked the IC to fund a Twelve Step workshop in Barcelona in late 2012. We were blessed to have 20 members attending. We have held other conventions in Spain, but this was the first time we were able invite members from outside to share with us, thanks to the financial support of the IC and guidance from EMER. The workshop was given in English with live translation into Spanish, along with a translation of the 24-



page workbook. On the last day, members from the UK, Romania, and Belgium aided us in electing a complete board of members for the Spanish Intergroup, along with coordinators for loners, translation, public information, email and telephone. We are grateful to all who participated and made this opportunity possible.

The Spanish IG was officially formed in December 2012 and subsequently joined EMER. We are grateful to be of service to those who still suffer in the Spanish-speaking community. We would like to translate articles from the *Essay* newsletter as a service to our community, as we find *Essay's* messages powerful and uplifting.

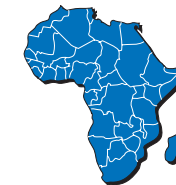
We are grateful to the entire fellowship for your support in our international endeavours, and for giving us the opportunity to serve.

—Submitted by Nicholas S. for the International Committee

Greetings from Kenya

Dear Friends in SA,

Greetings from the new group in Nairobi! Five years ago, we tried to start an SA group in Kenya, but it only lasted two months, with just one regular member. Then in May 2012, an SA meeting started again and we have been alive and well for the past eight months! We now have eight



regular members and several others who have expressed interest. We have been carrying the message to these people, and have also made inroads to the helping professions, such as psychologists and counselors.

Literature is key in helping our meetings stay on course. We recently launched a local website (www.sakenya.org). We would

like SA pamphlets to be available online, so that more information about recovery can be accessed in our country. We will purchase a mobile phone for one member who has volunteered to serve as helpline operator.

We would like to have one or two of our members attend a live SA international convention to see what goes on there, and perhaps to replicate the same in Kenya. We hope to translate some SA literature

into Swahili, which is spoken in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Zanzibar, South Sudan, Congo, Burundi and Rwanda.

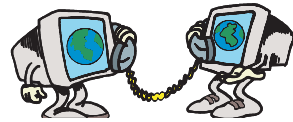
Thank you so much for your work of service, without which SA would not have reached those out here who need help. Please help us to show people here in Kenya that joining SA is not a crime and should not be seen as something shameful.

—Franklin, for the Nairobi Group

Service Opportunity: Skype Meetings!

One of the most exciting service opportunities I've found in SA is my participation in Skype meetings. I belong to two groups—one on Monday at 12:30 pm and one on Saturday at 7 am, both New York time. We have members from the US, Europe, Asia, Guam, and Tasmania! I even picked up a sponsee from Germany from the call, and he's one of my most active sponsees! The meetings are conducted just like a face-to-face meeting but we don't use the video feature. Other Skype (or VOIP) meetings are listed at www.sa.org/docs/phnflyer.pdf. So think about becoming a "global ambassador" for SA recovery. You might get addicted to it! What a great, healing way to use the Internet!

—Art S., Southeast Region, General Delegate Assembly



New SA Groups

USA

Anchorage AK (add'l meeting)
Cedar City, UT
Ft. Worth, TX
Hammond, IN
La Mirada, CA
Modesto, CA (add'l meeting)
Middleburg Heights, OH (add'l meeting)

Mt. Airy, MD
Mt. Vernon, OH
Paducah, KY
Phoenix, AZ (additional meeting)
San Antonio, TX (add'l meeting)

Africa
Nairobi, Kenya



How Do I Get Involved in SA's International Fellowship?

Perhaps you are saying to yourself, "This International fellowship is all very exciting—but how do I get involved?" There is much to be done—certainly enough to keep dozens of us sober for many years to come! If you are a world traveller or if you can speak or write any language other than English, perhaps you could help with translations, offer sponsorship, or travel to one of these countries and offer assistance. Also, please consider sharing your experience, strength, and hope at one of the 18 SA conventions that will be held outside North America in 2013 in your vacation plans! In particular, we would be delighted to see you at the EMER convention in Krakow, Poland on 25-27 October 2013, where more than 10 nationalities are expected to be present. Let's hope that the 75% of our members who reside in North America will rise to this challenge. For more information, contact SAICO at 1-866-424-8777 or email saico@sa.org.



Want to Connect with Members Around the World? Join SA's International Buddy List or Sisters List

The International Buddy List is a directory of SA men from around the world who wish to be in contact with one another. The Buddy List is managed by SA's International Committee and has been in operation since 2009. There are currently 246 members—men who are willing to share their contact details so that other list members may connect with them. List members are currently available to sponsor others in the SA programme. To learn more about becoming a member of the Buddy List, please contact sabuddylist@gmail.com.



The International SA Sisters List, established in July 2011, is a worldwide sisterhood of SA women who wish to find SA sponsors, sponsor others, or make SA outreach calls at any hour of the day or night. As of January 2013 there were 77 women from 19 countries on the list. To be added to the list, contact SAICO at 1-866-424-8777 or email saico@sa.org. Reach out to SA sisters in our global fellowship!



Finance Committee Report

We are grateful to our members for our excellent 2012 financial results. We finished the year on target compared to budget! Five years ago, the fellowship used Prudent Reserve to meet payroll. Since then, members have stepped up to meet our needs and replenish the Prudent Reserve. I'm excited to see members spread the word in many so directions: globally, through literature, and into the digital world. But this outreach requires service and contributions, so we need to set our sights even higher. To celebrate your sobriety, consider serving on a local, intergroup, or international committee. And make a special annual contribution to SAICO on your anniversary date.

Thank you all for your continued support in spreading the word.

—Carlton B., Chair, Finance Committee

SA Financial Snapshot 2013

Budget Item	2012 Budget	2012 Actual	2013 Budget
Revenues			
Contributions	155,000.00	146,963.67	150,000.00
SACFC	11,000.00	10,807.77	10,000.00
Conventions	25,000.00	21,945.73	20,000.00
Literature Sales	62,000.00	72,801.32	78,000.00
Discounts	(6,800.00)	(6,474.20)	(9,400.00)
Interest	2,000.00	299.63	2,000.00
Essay	8,000.00	8,883.50	9,400.00
Total Revenues	256,200.00	255,227.42	260,000.00
Expenses			
Bank Charges	200.00	178.84	200.00
Credit Card Fees	8,400.00	8,783.52	8,400.00
Internet Services	2,500.00	2,589.78	2,600.00
Liability Insurance	2,300.00	1,456.00	2,300.00
Legal	2,500.00	3,135.50	2,500.00
Accounting	3,900.00	5,328.98	6,000.00
Literature Expense	19,000.00	10,154.39	20,000.00
Payroll and Benefits	134,100.00	134,111.24	138,000.00
Postage and Freight	11,900.00	11,680.05	12,500.00
Professional Fees	4,400.00	4,400.00	4,400.00
Office Expense	2,600.00	3,854.71	2,600.00
Printing	8,900.00	5,063.20	9,000.00
Rent	18,500.00	17,841.66	18,500.00
Repairs & Maint	500.00	891.54	500.00
Taxes & Licenses	600.00	448.25	600.00
Telephone	5,900.00	7,042.49	6,500.00
Travel	30,000.00	31,275.62	33,000.00
Total Expenses	256,200.00	248,235.77	267,600.00

For Additional Budget Info Contact SAICO@sa.org

Delegates and Trustees

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

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



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

Calendar of Events



April 5 - 6, 2013, Open Meetings, Workshops, and Stories, Nashville, TN USA. *Happy, Joyous and Free*. Contact sanoon-meeting@gmail.com

April 5 - 7, 2013, SA Convention and Workshop, Warsaw, Poland

April 6, 2013, Twelfth Annual Akron Spring Marathon, Akron, OH. *Keeping a Newcomer's Spirit in a Sober Life*. Info at 330-940-8040 at sanortheastohio@gmail.com

April 12 - 14, 2013, Twelve Step SA Workshop, Kremmling, CO USA. *Pencil to Paper*. Contact saico@sa.org.

April 12 - 14, 2013, SA convention, Dusseldorf Germany. *Gott, ich gebe mich in deine Hand*. Info at as.fruejahrstreffen2013@gmail.com

April 12 - 14, 2013, NW Regional SA retreat, Raymond, WA USA. *The Gifts and Promises of Recovery*. Info at 360-888-0995, www.pugetsoundsa.org, or gregsrecovery@gmail.com

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

April 20, 2013, 11th Annual Mountain Spring, Asheville, NC. *Renewing Our Recovery*. Info at 828-699-5695, MountainSpringAsheville.com, or SA.MountainSpring@gmail.com

April 26 - 28, 2013, South Midwest regional retreat, Wichita, KS. *Just for Today*. Info at saico@sa.org

April 27, 2013, Annual SA Marathon, Richmond, VA. Info at 804-639-7699 or sagrouprichmond@gmail.com

May 4, 2013, Annual SA Marathon, Rochester, NY. *The Importance of Sobriety*. Info at 585-613-1656

May 4, 2013, Twin Cities Annual Marathon, Shoreview, MN USA. *Spiritual Awakening and the Twelve Steps*. Info at www.orgsites.com/mn/sa_mpls

May 17 - 19, 2013, Find God Men's Retreat XIX, Big Bear, CA USA. *Catalpulted into the 4th Dimension of Existence*. Flyer at saico@sa.org

June 1, 2013, SAUK Intergroup Recovery Day, London, GB. Info at sauksecretary@gmail.com

June 8, 2013, One Day Marathon, Chattanooga TN. *Bridges to Recovery*. Info at 423-402-0274 or chattanoogaabridges@gmail.com

July 5 - 7, 2013, Twelve Step SA Workshop, Luxembourg.

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

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

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

Upcoming International Conventions



July 19 - 21, 2013, Baltimore, MD. *Change on the Chesapeake*. For more information, visit our website at www.changeonthechesapeake.com or email us at info@changeonthechesapeake.com

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

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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.

