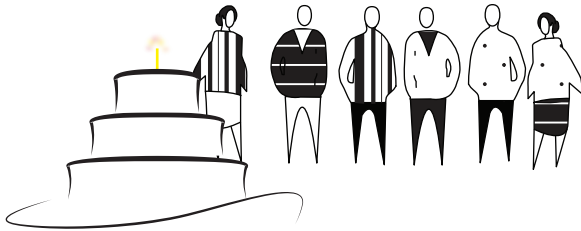


Essay

December 2014



Come Join The Party

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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**"TODAY IS A
GIFT"**



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.

Sexaholics Anonymous is a recovery program based on the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous and received permission from AA to use its Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions in 1979.

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Come Join the Party

I'm Mike, a sexaholic, and I've been sexually sober since June 3, 1984. I'm grateful to the members of my home group, who have helped me stay sober for the past 30 years. I'm also grateful for my wife, who probably should have dumped me many times over the years, but for some reason she has chosen to stay. We have a pretty decent marriage today—but it wasn't always that way.

I was one of seven kids in a middle-class, Catholic household. As a teenager, I discovered pornography and masturbation. I believe that I was addicted from the start. I experienced a tremendous high from the pornography, the secrecy, and the buildup. Thirty years later I can still re-create those images in my mind. Thank God this almost never happens to me anymore, but sometimes I do still remember the images. When that happens, I must surrender them immediately.

When I was growing up, there was a young woman in our neighborhood who was considered a "loose woman." I remember feeling sorry for her and wondering how all these guys could want to have sex with her. Then I thought, "When is it my turn?" And I took my turn. She ended up marrying a friend of mine. Every once in a while I see her. It's an

amends I just cannot make, because I can't imagine how to broach the subject.

In college I discovered adult bookstores. I'd been to X-rated movies before, but this was different. I felt like a kid in a candy store. The options in a private booth in the bookstores seemed unlimited. But the candy-store illusion was soon unmasked when I noticed someone staring at me from above my "private" booth.

At the time, I was in seminary, studying to be a priest. My religious background should have kept me away from these places. But my lust for the experience kept me going back despite my religious beliefs, and despite moments of fear and danger. Most of my acting out was in such places.

I spent many years in seminary, leaving only one year before I would have been ordained. One year after I left the seminary, I was teaching at an all girls Catholic High School when I got into an affair with a married woman. She was one of the other teachers there. One day she asked me, "Do you want to have sex with me?" We were in a bar, it was late, and I'd had quite a few drinks. Thirty seconds later we were in her car having sex. At the time I was also dating the young woman to whom



I'm married today.

In 1980 I got sober from alcohol, and I thought that would put an end to my sexual acting out. For two months I stayed out of bookstores and porn theaters, although I did not stop masturbation. Then on a trip to New York, I discovered bookstores with "live" women in them. Lust was off and running in me for another two and a half years. I became increasingly unable to stay away from places of pornography despite prayer and other efforts to do so.

I remember one night when I was with my future wife at a party. Our friends were there, many of whom I had known since college. I was surrounded by people who loved me, but I felt the need to get away. I just had to go somewhere to feed my addiction, and it had to be something live. I drove my girlfriend home, went down to a particular street in Chicago, and sat alone in that degrading place, waiting for the action.

My girlfriend was the first person who told me that my sexual problems seemed similar to my drinking. We were sitting on the rocks by the university and I was bemoaning the fact that I could not stay out of the acting-out places when she said that the behavior reminded her a lot of my drinking. I will never forget my response: I put my arm around her and said, "The two have absolutely nothing to do with

each other." But the seed had been planted.

In spite of my desire to stay faithful to my girlfriend while we were dating, I simply could not do it. I attempted to end the affair with the teacher and I tried to stay away from her. But then one weekend the high school basketball team went on a road trip, and all the teachers went along as chaperones. I begged my girlfriend to come with me so that I would not act out. Imagine telling your girlfriend, "If you don't come with me I am going to cheat on you." Needless to say, she chose to not come.

I made it through the first night of the trip without cheating, but the next morning I came into the hotel room where the teachers were staying, and the next thing I knew I was having sex with the teacher. I was filled with self-hate.

Two months later, after the closing picnic at the end of the school year, this same teacher offered me a ride home. She asked, "Do you still love me?" The real answer was no, but I knew that if I said no I would be going straight home, and if I said yes, I would get to have sex with her one more time. So I said yes. I did this with full consent of my will. At that moment I felt that I had committed a mortal sin. I felt my spirit die. I was dead. This was in the spring of 1980.



On December 18, 1982, my father dropped dead of a heart attack at the same age I am today, 57 years old. I had worshipped the ground he walked on. He was a very flawed human being but also a very loving one. I lived for him. And now he was dead.

That night, I walked into my brother's bedroom with my girlfriend, and for the first time in my life I was with a woman and did not want to have sex. I just wanted to be absolutely alone. I even prayed, "God, I want to be left totally alone, but please don't let her leave me." My girlfriend intuitively understood this. She stayed with me the entire night and never once opened her mouth. She left me totally alone.

The next morning, as I was walking downstairs to make arrangements with my six siblings and my mother, I thought: "I want to hang around with this woman for a long time." There was one problem though: I knew that I would be a failure as a husband. But a few months later, I asked her to marry me.

One night in 1983 I ended up in a place where pornography led to prostitution. I remember the shame I felt as a stranger kissed me on the cheek and shared prices. I also remember the intense lust that I felt. This was a moment of truth for me. The lust and shame cycle were so intense that I thought I might never stop.

By the grace of God I had gotten sober from alcoholism through my younger sister. And then I got sober from sexaholism through my older brother. All along he'd been telling me stories about his sexual behaviors and the meetings he went to, but I never divulged my own issues. I would just listen and play the role of counselor-brother. However, for some reason—maybe because I was about to ask my girlfriend to marry me—I finally said to him, "Me too," and I burst into tears. He took me to a meeting and I started staying sober.

This was another S-program; there was no SA in Chicago at the time. But at last I had found a place where I could tell the truth about my secret. What I heard in the meetings shocked me. Many members were worse off than I was! I resented having to be with such perverts. Yet I stayed, and by the second meeting I was staying sober.

For the next three years I attended this fellowship regularly. I met many wonderful people who helped me stay sober. I got a sponsor, called him regularly, and worked the Steps—especially the house-cleaning Steps: Four through Nine. Facing my lustful past and surrendering it was painful at first, but my Step work led me to a happy, sober life. The hardest amends I made were the ones to my wife—the woman who had stood with me through the worst of my addictions. I did that only after I was



two or three years sober.

At first I claimed a sobriety date of December 1983, but at the time my wife and I were not married; and we had been sexually active from the beginning of our engagement. Eventually however, my brother started an SA group in Chicago, and SA became my primary group. I felt that SA offered a stronger brand of sobriety, because we were all trying to stay sober according to one common definition. So three months before the wedding, we began an abstinence period on June 3, 1984. That is my sobriety date today.

My early recovery was filled with a lot of behaviors designed to reduce temptation. "Don't take the second look; don't drive down that street; keep your eyes on the sidewalk." I said frequent prayers of surrender. I used the phone frequently. I turned over lustful thoughts and images. I stopped going to R-rated movies. I cut back on TV. I kept to a minimum relationships with women other than my wife, family, and friends.

I also began doing service work, such as sponsoring others, speaking at meetings, and working on SA committees. In 1986 I began attending International Conventions, and I've missed few since. International Conventions are a key ingredient in my continued sobriety. People I've met at conventions have become lifelong friends. Over the years I've also learned about group sobriety,

and I've been lucky enough to give talks at conferences and retreats on the importance of groups developing a culture that supports its members in staying sober and carrying the message of sobriety to all its members, especially newcomers.

Nine years after my first amends to my wife, around 1992, my wife and I attended a play in which an actress friend of mine was performing. After the play, the actress threw her arms around me. My wife sensed that there had been lustful energy between us, and she was right. After this woman unclasped herself from me, I felt awkward introducing her to my wife. When we got home that night, my wife wept for hours. She told me what it was really like living with me before I got sober. I replied, "I made my amends nine years ago. Where were you then?" She said, "I'm where I am now. Be quiet and listen!" And I did.

In 1993, when my wife's father was dying, everyone knew that he was dying but no one would say it; not even the doctors. I was not comfortable seeing blood or discussing medical things. But one day I looked at the doctor and asked, "Dave is dying, isn't he?" The doctor put his head down and then looked up and said, "Yes, he is." There was a lot of sadness in the room, but the relief in the room was palpable. I thought, "That isn't me; how did I do that?" Today I know it was because of SA.

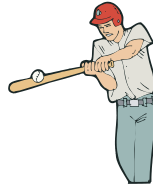
After my daughter was born in 1995, my wife and I had a period of abstinence for three months. I'm a pretty sensitive guy, and I knew that after a woman gives birth, she doesn't want to have sex for at least a few days. I had promised my wife during that during this abstinence period I would not ask to have sex, I would not bring up sex, and I would not play the nonverbal sulking game that I was so good at.

Three months went by and nothing happened. Then one day my wife said something in passing about sex and I asked, "So then I can talk about sex now?" She said, "No, I'm going to talk about it." Then we spent three hours talking—mostly with me listening and her telling me what it had been like to be with me, with all of my sexual history. The conversation was difficult for me, but it was the most real conversation I'd ever had—and this conversation would never have happened without SA.

Through both voluntary and involuntary celibacy periods, my wife and I have cleared up and out much of the dust of our sexual history. I've learned that sex is truly optional. Through our deepening intimacy, both emotional and sexual, we've learned what works for us in terms of both the importance and the limits of sex within the marriage. We've done an entire historical sexual inventory of our marriage and

benefited greatly from the process. We now have two beautiful children who, God willing, will never have an active sexaholic for a father. My family will reap the benefits of the true sexuality that recovery is giving us over time.

Sobriety has also brought many rewards outside of the program. I got a PhD in Irish history in 2001. In 2005 I went back to playing softball, which I hadn't played regularly. Since the year before I got sober. But now, in sobriety, I'm playing better than I did when I was 20. I have a book coming out in this fall about the Church in Chicago. I've chaired church committees for my city. But most important, I've become a decent husband and father.



In 2008, my wife's mother was dying. One day my mother-in-law asked the caregiver "Am I dying?" The caregiver said "Oh no, you're not dying." My wife just looked at me. I knew she wanted me to tell her mother the truth. So I said, "Well, you're probably not going to die today. But you have cancer." She said "Okay," and she had peace when she died. Only because of SA have I learned to communicate in the tough times.

A couple of years ago my son broke up with his girlfriend. After the breakup I noticed he didn't date for awhile, and he was talking about going into the seminary. I sat him down and I said, "If you really want

to be a priest, nobody will be in your corner faster than I will. But if this is about being afraid because one relationship didn't work out, you need to wait, because a lot of things don't work out." I told him about some of the relationships I had that didn't work out. I encouraged him not to throw in the towel. I told him a bit of my story. At the end he looked at me with a big smile and said, "Thank you, Dad." Where did I get the ability to communicate with my son? I got it from SA.

I'm quite proud of my daughter. When she was a junior in high school, her Catholic high school was in danger of closing. A lot of effort went into trying to save it. We were part of that effort and were told it had been saved. Then months later, the Sisters changed their mind and closed the school. My daughter took her class and marched down to the head nun's office and did an old-fashioned sit-in. The result was a compromise: the

Senior class would be allowed back to finish together. So my daughter and her 26 classmates got to spend their last year together in what was called the Senior Academy. My daughter was the valedictorian. My wife and I helped a bit with the finances. I have a healthy family today only because of SA.

Today—at 30 years of sobriety—I just want to say that life is fun. Sobriety is a gas. For anyone who is struggling with sobriety, stop struggling. Get sober and stay sober. You'll have the time of your life.



Don't spend the rest of your life acting out sexually or sitting on the fence. If you're sober, but spend your whole life wishing you weren't sober, or debating about whether or not you should be sober—you are basically wasting your life. I encourage everyone: Don't waste your life outside of these rooms. Don't waste your life inside the rooms. Come join the party!

—Mike C., Chicago, IL

July 2015 International Convention

Chicago, IL, Crossroads of Recovery

NEW DATES: July 24-26, 2015

The SA fellowship of Greater Chicagoland invites you to attend the July 2015 International Convention. Join us in a weekend of recovery as your journey continues with sharing, listening, learning, and connecting with others for lifelong relationships. For more information, visit our convention website at crossroadsofrecovery.com.

—John P. and Robert L., Convention Co-Chairs



How Surrender Healed My Marriage

I came into SA in 1993 with a desire to fix my marriage. I had heard other newcomers share this goal, and it seemed reasonable to me. But placing my marriage relationship before my personal recovery led me to significant danger. I thought that if I placed “fixing” my marriage relationship first, then when those issues were resolved—or if they remained unresolved—I might stop coming to meetings and abandon the program entirely. And that is exactly what happened to me.

When I first came to SA, I did many things wrong. I ignored “A Caution” in the White Book (SA, 3), and one Friday evening I dumped my entire secret life on my wife. As it turned out, my “recovery” was as self-centered as my acting-out life had been. I wanted her to “get over it,” forgive me, and stop being angry. That was reasonable, wasn’t it? No, it was not. In fact, my expectations were totally insane. After having heaped on my wife (throughout our entire married life) the burden of satisfying my sexaholism, I was now demanding forgiveness and forgetfulness within a few months. Just like my sexaholism, my recovery began in fantasy and was fueled by

denial.

The hard truth was that I had spent decades developing and hollowing out the well-worn rut of my addiction. And recovery meant a long period of painful change for me—focusing on my own healing—while my wife came to terms with who I really was, as well as what her options might be for the future. I needed to let go of her. I needed to not spend time with her. There certainly needed to be no sex, which would only confuse and abort the recovery process.

We were separated for 10 months after full disclosure. Only then did we begin the long process of rebuilding our marriage. This ended up taking years and in many ways, it is still in progress. After a significant illness during our separation, I moved back into our house. I began talking to my wife and listening to her as trust was slowly rebuilt. We had a brief period of abstinence. I changed careers. Things gradually improved. But I came to realize that the marriage we had was dead. If I were to be the husband my wife deserved, I would have to change.

During our time of separation (and beyond), I had to come to terms with some key questions. First, was



I willing to live without my wife? Regardless of whether or not we reconciled, I needed to come to this place of freedom. Second, could sex become truly optional for me? Why was this necessary? I needed to relate to my wife as a free man, and not as someone driven by compulsion or dependence. I needed to accept that if she chose to leave me, this would be a reasonable decision based on what I had done to her. God would provide for me regardless of her decision. I knew that if I was unable to surrender her, I would never be free. But it took me 17 years—during which I totally abandoned SA and reached a new bottom—for me to finally surrender. I never would have designed my life this way, but apparently God was preparing for me a long, hard bottom.

I left SA around 2004 because I had never really worked the SA program. Instead I worked my own program, which was to avoid having affairs. As a result, lust continued to lurk, and when Internet porn became available, I crashed. I was watching porn three to four hours a day at work. One day I downloaded a page of thumbnails and stuffed the printed pornography sheet into my pocket, thinking that I would throw it away later. But that night while doing the laundry, my wife found the printout in the pocket of my pants. She asked, “What’s this?” A voice

inside my head said, “It’s over.”

I knew what this meant. I believed God was telling me, “If you give this to me now, I will take it away.” The date was July 11, 2010, and I have not looked at porn or masturbated since then. For the first time, I began to work the full SA program. I went back to SA, attended meetings regularly, worked the Steps, got a sponsor, sponsored others, came to terms with my character defects, served where I could, and began to enjoy life one day at a time.

When I first came into these rooms, I would talk about how my wife was acting. But this was not recovery. Today I’m in these rooms and working the Steps with my sponsor and helping others for one reason only: for my own recovery. I needed to recognize my dependent relationship with my wife and my attempts to control her.

Today I know that my wife is not my god. I needed to be willing to live on my own if that was the outcome of her decisions. And finally, after 35 years of marriage, I have come to the place of surrendering my wife to God. I would not trade the freedom we experience today for my co-dependency of the past.

Today, after over four years of sobriety, my relationship with my wife is more free and open than ever. I no longer close down or hide when



she walks through the door. I can accept whatever happens sexually without controlling it through lust or fantasy. We can sit in a room and talk with no ulterior motive.

When fear and difficult feelings arise, we discuss them, pray, and let go. It was only when I finally let go that I began to realize for the first time that the marriage I desire is possible—that is, a marriage in which two people freely choose



one another every day, without compulsion, coercion, control, or dependence. Without this surrender, my own recovery is in jeopardy. With

surrender, anything is possible. The promise of the program is that we get as long as it takes to get sober. For me, it took 17 years because apparently what needed to happen inside of me took exactly that long.

—Jay H., Jacksonville, FL

Letting in the Poison

It's 4:23 am as I write this. Before getting up to write, I had lain in bed for half an hour processing a close call. The close call was not the trip to the emergency room we made the night before, when my daughter needed medical attention. When that happened I called my sponsor, and he warned me of possible temptations resulting from the disturbance we had experienced. But I honestly had no desire to act out, and my 94 days of sobriety were serving me well. Before I went to bed, I asked my Higher Power to keep me sober through this difficult time.

The following day brought relief from the medical emergency, and as the shock and stress from the earlier night dissipated, I again felt at ease. I could relax. But then it

struck. While answering some social media requests on how my daughter was doing, I noticed an image that tempted me to look. Within seconds I was viewing the image. In the previous 94 days, when confronted with the same sort of



temptation, I immediately admitted powerlessness, surrendered the temptation, asked my Higher Power to lend me his strength just for that moment, prayed "Thy will, not mine be done" (SA, 70), and faithfully the temptation would be removed.

But this time—just for a brief moment—I drank in the poison of the image. I immediately got scared and quickly shut off the image. I admitted powerlessness, surrendered, and asked my Higher Power for strength, just as I had for

the last 94 days. But in that one moment, I had let in lust. The poison had entered my system and was now coursing through my veins. The effects would not show up until hours later.

That night, my wife and I said our prayers as usual and prepared for bed. We were both exhausted from the activities of the day before, and were looking forward to a nice long night of much-needed restful sleep. But as I lay there, I began to feel the effects from the poison I had taken in earlier: I was irritable, restless, and discontent. Lust was calling me. I breathed deeply, prayed, and asked my Higher Power to take it away. But the better time to have asked for help was before I viewed the image. I knew this from my early days of sobriety. Now I had two choices: I could act out, or I could wait for the poison to dissipate.

As I lay there suffering, allowing the poison to run its course, my wife pressed in close, seeking comfort from the events that had unfolded the preceding day. A voice in my mind was saying, "It's okay, you're married," but my heart knew that the act would be pure and simple lust, not intimacy. I also knew that no one would ever know this, and my sobriety date would remain intact because technically, I would not have acted out if I had sex with my wife. But deep inside I knew



that having sex with her at that moment would only feed my lust, and it would strengthen the poison that was coursing through my veins. I knew that if I gave in to the desire to be free of the irritability, restlessness, and discontent, then the poison would double in volume, and the intensity of the desire would increase. As much as it was killing me, I needed to writhe in the discomfort until the poison dissipated from my body. I lay there for what seemed like hours until I passed out from exhaustion.

I awoke to a peaceful bliss. The poison was gone. After contemplating the event, I realized that if I had given in to the closeness my wife was seeking, I would have lost my sobriety. No one would have ever known, but I would have known. I would have had to announce at the next meeting, "My name is Dennis, and I have been sexually sober for 24 hours."

I learned a lot from this experience. I learned that I need to seek my Higher Power *before* I drink the poison, when I'm first being tempted. Sometimes it seems that I'm walking through a jungle surrounded by poisonous thorns. Some of them I honestly do not see coming, and those are the ones that my Higher Power helps to remove immediately. But the temptations I choose to brush up against are on me—and then I must suffer one of two outcomes: act

out or suffer.

Today I have 118 days of sobriety, after having had 42 years of disease. When I stepped into my first meeting 118 days ago, my life changed dramatically. I do not need to be convinced that my disease is progressing and that I am powerless over it. I never want to enjoy it or control it again. I do not know how many days I have left on this earth, but I want to live every one with God's presence in my life. That is something I have wished for, for years.

I am faithfully doing everything my sponsor suggests. I wish I had

found SA years ago, but like they say, "You're never late to your first meeting." We get here when the time is right.

I don't know much about recovery, but I do know a great deal about my disease. I am so looking forward to each day as new insights are being revealed. The longer I travel this path of sobriety, the more aware I become of the jungle and its dangers. The more I prepare myself beforehand by asking my Higher Power for his strength, the better the chance I will have to live one more day in this beautiful journey of sobriety and recovery.

—Dennis T., Alaska



Members Share

The Hard Truth about Sponsors

I have sponsored and been sponsored. Long-sober members often describe their sponsors with reverence. But if they talk long enough, they sometimes admit that the person who first helped them get sober is no longer sober themselves. This was true of AA founder Bill W., whose original spiritual sponsor Ebby Thatcher did not stay sober for long. I myself owe my own life to a sponsor who dropped out of the program shortly after I got sober.

I've heard others say that nothing is harder work than opening the door of your first meeting. That was

true for me anyway. When I finally pushed through that door, I was met by six people. I don't know what I was expecting, but I was surprised to see how "normal" everyone looked. I may have looked perfectly normal also, but I was dying of addiction. As soon as the others began telling their stories, I experienced for the first time the hope that I could step away from addiction and—by following their examples—live in complete sobriety.

I noticed one sober man in particular. He was older than I was, and he had five years of sobriety.

Only one member had longer sobriety than that. The nature of the older man's struggles matched mine, so I felt comfortable approaching him, and I asked him to be my sponsor. I was surprised when he said he had never sponsored anyone before, but he immediately accepted. I was beaming with pride to leave the meeting with such a fine sponsor.

My new sponsor did not insist that I do anything other than attend meetings and call him at any time. For six months I called him frequently, and he answered all my questions with an easy confidence. He was always there for me. No matter how busy, he always answered or returned my calls. He was humble and sincere, and very conscientious about carrying the same message that his long-sober sponsor had carried to him.

We worked the Steps briskly at first, but as time passed I decided to impress him with how seldom I called, because I seriously believed that was proving how strong my

recovery was! My patient sponsor remained friendly toward me and was quick to help me when I periodically returned to working the Steps. I struggled for years, taking only half-measures and continually relapsing. Looking back, I see that my sponsor was not the kind to use scare tactics or demand strict discipline. I had heard others

boast about sponsors who spit commands like drill sergeants and fired any sponsee who did not meet their standards. My sponsor on the other hand was pretty much "let go and let God." By taking an "Easy Does It" approach with me, I think he really helped me find my Higher Power in my own way. I doubt I would be alive if he had not slowed down and

taken the time I needed to uncover my Higher Power.

When I finally worked the Twelve Steps fully and without reservation, I got sober. I was utterly amazed, but my sponsor smiled knowingly. He could see that I had finally let go. And I had let God. After that, we talked more freely



Newcomers may view sponsors as heroes on a battlefield, but anyone can fall in the fight.

and easily. He no longer seemed like a superhuman to me. We were trudging the road of Happy Destiny, side by side.

Then one night something strange happened: my sponsor wasn't at the meeting. His absence lasted several weeks, but I was not immediately concerned because we did not talk routinely. Then one evening he came in looking more somber than I had ever seen him. When it was time for sobriety chips to be handed out, he picked up a white one to signify restarting the program.

I was stunned. He looked as matter-of-fact as ever. "I've been trying half-measures for the last few months," he said grimly, "and I slipped." The room was mostly empty that night, and his words rang with a hollow sadness inside me. My sponsor had slipped.

Matters grew worse. He failed to come back. I phoned him, but he did not respond. I followed his example of letting go and letting God—this time in his recovery instead of mine. But he stayed gone, returning only once, about a year later, to say he still needed the program very much. I felt intensely relieved, for I still regarded him as a priceless source of knowledge and wisdom about recovery. I even planned to ask him to become my sponsor again once he built up a little sobriety.

Unfortunately, I have never seen him since that one last meeting.

For a time I felt sad. I still had my Higher Power. I was still sober. I still knew how to work the Steps. Wasn't that also true for him? Eventually, I knew I needed to choose another sponsor. I called and left a phone message asking my first sponsor if he understood, but he never replied.

My new sponsor was a lifesaver. Although I was sober, I was still learning to apply the Steps to my daily life. Many times a phone call to him helped pull me back from the brink. He always said the right thing to bring my focus back onto my Higher Power. I soon came to treasure his wisdom and encouragement.

Then just as suddenly as my first sponsor, he was gone. This time, there was no follow-up appearance at a meeting. No call. No email. I could tell from social media that he had not fallen off the face of the earth. But he was gone from my recovery life.

Strangely, this second disappearance did not disturb me as strongly as the first. My second sponsor had insisted that I study, learn, and live the literature as written. When he was gone, I felt he was still with me somehow. And it seemed his influence was directly benefitting the men I sponsored.

I have since seen other sponsors who were shining examples of



sobriety, but who inexplicably flickered or vanished. Whenever that happens, I still feel genuine surprise—until I remember the one true Source of hope in my recovery. While the world may place certain people on a higher plane, the Twelve Step program is quite clear about its hierarchy. There is only one Higher Power. The rest of us—including sponsors—occupy a single, flat level below that.

I'm told that the only message I can carry is that the Twelve Steps work when I work them. That remains my sole message. My sponsors taught me that, but they also showed me the results of not working the program. I hold no ill will against these fine sponsors, and I'm grateful for everything they taught me.

Maybe my experience can benefit others whose sponsor is no longer available. I can speak first-hand that there is still hope. None

of my first three sponsors still attend meetings, but I have remained sober. The principles have worked even when particular personalities faltered.

I don't want anyone to believe that a sponsor's slip is cause for giving up hope. God as I understand Him works in mysterious and manifold ways. When I sponsor others, I make sure that they know which part of the literature I base my answers on. I do not aspire to be a book-thumping sponsor. But I want to make very sure that every sponsee has the information

needed to carry on should I ever stop working my program. Some need to hear this principle repeatedly before it sinks in: "Principles before personalities."

I have a new sponsor today, but I know that I owe my sobriety to my reliance on a Higher Power.

—John I.



January 2015 SA International Convention

January 23-25, 2015, Awakening the Spirit, Portland, OR

**Registration prior to January 15 is \$160, \$175 on or after January 15 **

Start your New Year attending "Awakening the Spirit" in Portland, OR this January. We guarantee a warm, spiritual weekend filled with fellowship, recovery, and laughter. And for the first time, we have planned a Sunday morning speakers meeting that includes breakfast (plan to depart a bit later!). This meal is included in the cost of registration. The convention will be held at the Portland Sheraton Airport Hotel. For more info visit our website at awakeningthespirit2015.com.

—Gavin C., *Convention Chair*



Learning to Face My Defects

As part of my recovery over the past five years, I've made cartoons based on recovery concepts. Translating my recovery into visual terms helps keep me focused on the solution. The cartoon on the opposite page came to me in May of 2009, while at the house of an old-timer in the UK where I was staying to work the Steps.

I had joined SA a year before and started meetings with three other members here in Belgium, but I could not stay sober. After yet another severe binge, I crossed the channel to visit this fellow. I had heard that this man led three-day workshops on SA's Twelve Steps in many countries around the world, and after retirement he opened his home to members who wanted to do intensive work on the Twelve Steps.

I was fortunate to be one of those invited to his home in England. I lived there for six days, sleeping on a thin foam mattress in his study. During my visit, I worked through Steps one through Eight with him.

One morning, while I was sitting at a table in the living room of this fairytale house, I wrote a Fourth Step. The special way he had me work Step Four came down to him, he said, from an early AA member. While focusing on my part of my resentments and being confronted

with the endless list of my recurring character defects, a primitive version of a cartoon of a ship's captain—ignoring the dangers ahead—popped into my mind. This drawing of the captain ignoring the dangers represented me. It seemed that I had always avoided looking at my defects, and I was feeling devastated and hopeless at the time.

Afterward, when I was reading my Fifth Step, I shared some painful truths about my past with this man. When I looked up at my friend sitting across the table, he looked back at me with loving eyes. I felt loved and accepted.

As powerful as these experiences were, however, the intense Step work did not keep me sober for long. Just a month later I went on another binge, which lasted two months. By the grace of God I finally recognized my powerlessness, and I've been sober since August 2009.

Over the years I've made other cartoons based on recovery concepts. These have always popped into my mind in a moment. This is one of the tangible proofs for me of a "Power greater than myself" expressing Himself as a "Creativity greater than myself," through me. He gives an idea and I am just His instrument to work it out on paper.

Many of the cartoon ideas that have come into my head over



the years are still only drawings scribbled on paper, waiting to be worked out as something that might be helpful to others. And now with the help of my ever-patient Higher Power, I hope to be able to create

more cartoons to illustrate our recovery principles. I believe God gave me this vision and ability, and hopefully my drawings will benefit others in their recovery.

—Luc D., Kortenberg, Belgium



Surrendering Myself

Is my life better today than before I surrendered to God and started working the SA program? Absolutely! Is my life in sobriety what I imagined it would be like? Absolutely not. I certainly did not know the extent of the changes I would need to make when I started working the Steps.

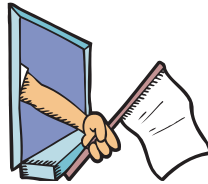
The decision to stay the course and work the Steps with a sponsor meant that I had to start facing the truth about myself with brutal honesty. That's why the result is not what I imagined. While I was still living the lie, how could I imagine what would become of me when I began facing the truth? While I was still being my own god, how could I imagine what God wanted to do with me? In coming to SA, I only wanted to stop the pain of my acting out. But God had a different agenda: He wanted me to make good use of my ongoing powerlessness over lust to move me closer to Him.

I was initially motivated by my "own enlightened self-interest" (SA, 4). I wanted to stop my sexual acting out, but mainly because I didn't like the guilt and shame I felt. I tried to convince myself that my particular forms of acting out were really okay, so I need not feel too bad about myself. But that didn't work for long.

Then I thought that if I just got

rid of my one big problem—my sexual acting out problem—I would pretty much have my life together. I'd be "good enough," and then I could relax in my state of "close-enough-to-perfection." But,

If we are content with ourselves, simply minus the compulsion, there can be no recovery. Recovery is more than mere sobriety.(SA, 87)



To achieve real recovery, I needed to turn my life and will over to the care of God. Today I know that I cannot do anything without God's grace, and God is graciously changing me as I learn to surrender to His will for me. At times this is scary, but God isn't asking for my opinion. He knows what is best for me.

The thought that I'm relinquishing control is still often overwhelming. But now there are times when letting go brings me a sense of peace, because I know that the outcome is not my responsibility. The truth is that I'm not in control anyway. My illusion of control is just as much a fantasy as the lust fantasies I previously escaped into for many hours every day. Believing that I have control is another deluded attempt to be my own god.

Today I thank the real God that He is the One with all power. He is a

loving God who can be trusted. And I've found that the more I surrender

to Him, the better my life really is.
—Ron H.

Paradoxes in Recovery



I came into SA in May of 2010 and have been gratefully sober since August of that year. At each stage of sobriety and recovery, I feel my vision is changing. Over the past couple of years in SA, I've noticed many paradoxes (also called apparent contradictions) that serve as the foundation for my continued growth in recovery. I believe that the potential list of paradoxes is endless, but following are some I've come up with so far.

- In order to complete my Second Step, I needed to trust God to keep me sober. But I could only learn to trust Him by staying sober and observing how He takes care of me in my deepest pain.

- Change in recovery is most often slow and gradual, but my sobriety date four years ago also reminds me that there was a distinct moment after which I stopped acting out (one day at a time).

- Some parts of me change in recovery through hard work and intense pain, while others only yield to effortlessness.

- I want to spend the least time possible on my spiritual routine each morning, even though I know that routine is what sustains me most.

- I must trust that God is big enough to give me everything I want, but I must accept that He loves me too much to always do what I want.

- Others' opinions of me (which are none of my business) have generally tended to improve since I

gave up my right to manipulate their opinions in my favor.

- My imperfection is the gift that allows me to depend on God, yet in the moment I rarely see imperfection as a gift.

- I seek progress in surrendering all of my resentments, but at times I depend on potential resentments to see where I may need to improve my self-care.

- In my active addiction I would say, "I'll get sober tomorrow." In my active recovery, I say that I can always act out but not until tomorrow—and that keeps me sober today.

- The decision to not regret the past (AA, 83) requires that I acknowledge that in my active addiction, I did things that hurt myself and others in defiance of God. But it is only through these injuries that God has been able to use me in healthy ways today.

—Anonymous, Cambridge, MA

How I Came to Believe in Step Two

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

When I came into the rooms of SA, I was relieved to learn that God was so important to the Program. I was always a deep believer in God; in fact, I would say that He got me here. He gave me the kick in the pants that I needed to get me to these rooms.

I always knew that something was wrong with me. I was advised twice by a trusted friend to get professional help. But I was too ashamed and too scared to do so. After all, how could I, a professional counselor, admit that in helping young men I crossed the line, abused their trust, and initiated inappropriate sexual behavior? How could I have a sex problem? I was the sex advice expert.

When I came into these rooms, I needed to confess to another human being that I had used young men to gratify my lust. I did believe that God could somehow restore me to sanity, but I struggled to believe that God *would* restore me. And I still struggled with believing that I had done anything wrong. Lots of people do weird sexual things, I reasoned—and after all, I had “never hurt anybody.” I was in major denial.

I had to come to believe that I

needed to be restored to sanity. Yet “sanity” was another difficult word for me, as there is serious mental illness in my family. My father and my brother had a lifetime of schizophrenia. I took care of them. In a family with a lot of insanity, I’m the sane one!

What I learned from SA—and from Step Two in particular—is humility. And as I listened to the many sober people in these rooms, I eventually had to admit that I did need some restoring. I had to believe that something was wrong with me. That my lust (in the midst of a very successful life) had me licked.

God had tried to get me to deal with my behavior—for years—but I always resisted. I made excuses, like: “Men don’t talk about masturbation and lust and ongoing struggles with pornography.”

But I’ve learned from the SA fellowship and from the study of Step Two that it is quite important to talk about these things, and that God is not finished with me yet.

Through SA, I learned that the keys to recovery are humility and honesty and willingness to grow in my faith. I needed let go and let God have it all—and then Step Two



can be real. No more fighting, just a lot of accepting. God does a much better job of managing my life than I did. And this new level of partnership with God—and surrender—is a much more effective way to deal with lust,

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Country Report

French-Speaking Intergroup

France, Belgium, and Luxembourg

SA's French-speaking Intergroup was founded March 2, 2013, and in December 2013 we joined EMER. Currently, there are three French-speaking meetings in Europe: one in Lille, France; one in Brussels, Belgium; and one in Luxembourg. Our meetings are still quite small (five to nine members) so we always appreciate getting input from long-term SA members from other countries.

We also have three weekly French-speaking phone meetings, bringing together French speakers from France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Canada, and Israel. Occasional speaker meetings are being recorded in order to carry the message, and these are being added to the audio section of the EMER website. A member from the USA visited in October, and he spoke at the Lille, Paris, and Luxembourg meetings. For many this was an encouraging event to see a life which is living the promises.

Our website committee is working

and in fact with all the other problems in my life.

—George Z., *Spring of 2011*

[George passed away on August 28, 2011, with over two years of sexual sobriety.]

on a French website. We also have printed cards with SA contact numbers to distribute in medical facilities and other Twelve Step groups. We have a French-speaking buddy list which currently has over 30 members. It is designed to be used by loners to connect with other members.

A French-speaking “What’s App” (social media) group with about 10 participants has also proven to be a useful tool for us to keep in contact with each other. Selected text messages are being edited and posted on the article section of the EMER website, with consent of the members.

Also, in October, the Franco-phone IG had their annual Recovery Day (Journée de Rétablissement) in Lille with 13 members from our different groups.

If you are interested in helping our French-speaking Intergroup grow, please contact us at sexolique-sanonymes.eu@gmail.com. We would love to hear from you!

—Marie-Paule C., *Luxembourg*



Journey to Ammerdown, UK

Twenty-five years ago, having had a first spiritual awakening, I embarked on a month-long pilgrimage to Europe, traveling alone. The trip ended in my acting out in a public place, and the final, inescapable realization that I was powerless over lust. This admission brought me to SA.

Now in 2014, I was given the opportunity to make another trip to Europe. Earlier this year, I was wondering how I would celebrate my 25th sobriety anniversary. I prayed for an opportunity to tell my story. Then in June I got a call from a friend in the UK, inviting me to the Ammerdown Convention, to be held September 5-7. At first I was full of reasons not to go—too costly, too tiring, too far to go, etc. I prayed for knowledge of God’s will and the power to carry it out.

But my objections were swept away when the UK Intergroup—by group conscience vote—chose me to speak. Their vote gave me a clear indication of God’s will. I had only to surrender and trust the plan.

I arrived at Heathrow on September 2, and the adventure began. Before the conference, I was invited to meetings at Bournemouth,

Dorchester, and Exeter, where I met wonderful UK members and a couple of newcomers. Then we all traveled together to Ammerdown.

What a spot! The retreat center is on the grounds of an old manor house. The weather was mild, and many of us gathered in the sunny courtyard. There I met members from around the UK, Ireland, and Europe. The atmosphere was relaxed and there was ample time for fellowship. I was finally recovering from my jet

lag, but I knew that I had been skimming on prayer and meditation. So I spent some time with God before my time came to speak.

Every time I tell my story, it becomes real to me again that

I have a Higher Power who has looked after me every step of the way. As I spoke, I remembered all the people who had a hand in leading me to sobriety—especially my sponsors, who showed me what sobriety looks like. I talked about the unity of our fellowship, based upon our common sobriety definition. I felt love beaming at me from all around the room.

The rest of the trip was a whirlwind of cities, SA meetings, and wonderful people. Crossing over to France in the Channel



Tunnel, we held what may be the first underwater SA meeting! Driving through Belgium, we passed many military cemeteries—reminders of two great wars.

This got me thinking about our Eleventh Step prayer: “Lord, make me a channel of your peace.” Perhaps I, as an imperfect sexaholic, could be a channel of God’s peace to my fellow members at the meetings I visited. After all, every time one of us tries to help another suffering sexaholic, we add a bit of peace to God’s world—and this became the theme of my spiritual journey. But the only way I could be a channel of God’s peace is by staying sober.

In Antwerp, we arrived during a celebration of peace commemorating 100 years since the start of World War I. At the SA meeting that night, I admired the literature table, which displayed many SA pamphlets (all translated into Flemish), as well as a generous selection of *Essay* magazines. In Lille I attended a French-speaking meeting with eight other members. I was delighted to be able to Twelfth-Step a newcomer. In Paris we assisted in the first-ever official SA meeting in the City of Light. In Luxembourg we participated in an SA information meeting in three languages: German, French, and English.

My doubts about the journey had been resolved, my prayers were answered. I do have something

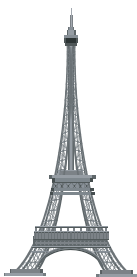
to offer: I can share the gift of my sobriety, and the Steps that brought me to it. I can be a channel of the love I’ve received—and the love I bring today is worth something because it is clean and blessed.

Twenty-five years ago, traveling alone in Europe, I tried to connect with the people I met, but the only connection I knew how to make was one of lust. Now I was given a chance to make a new trip, on a different footing. This time I traveled from meeting to meeting flanked by sober members, surrounded by love. While before I was taking from others, this time I had a new Source of strength, and I was able to give. On this journey my eyes were opened to see a bigger world, and I saw my Higher Power at work in every meeting, every share, and every member’s sobriety.

Thanks to all of the members in the UK and Europe who welcomed me to your meetings and your homes. I am now a part of you, as you will always be a part of me. Your struggles are my struggles; your pain, my pain; your victories—what wonderful victories!—are my victories too.

As I celebrated my anniversary on October 22, I was grateful for the many gifts given to me by the European fellowship. May God bless you all in the measure with which you have blessed me.

—Mike F., Rochester NY



Russian-Speaking Convention

I'm Leo, a sexaholic, just back from the fourth annual convention of the Russian-speaking fellowship in Moscow, held October 31 to November 2. This was the second one I've attended. Although I've been in SA for 10 years, I haven't been able to stay sober. The fellowship gives me acceptance and support, but I'm not always honest or consistent. I'll work the program and then pull away. So I decided to attend this recent convention, remembering how much the first one had inspired me.

Forty-seven people from Russia and Belarus attended. The program included Step meetings, public First Steps, and an open meeting for inquirers. Long-term sober members shared their experience. We celebrated the 15th anniversary of SA in Russia.

I decided to approach working the Steps there like a scientific experiment, without prejudgment. Could the program really benefit me today? Initially I felt anxious and alone. But as I worked the Steps, my heart began to change.

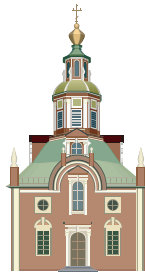
After giving away my First Step, I discovered that I had forgotten much of my history. My story sometimes strikes me not as painful, but as a fun adventure. Only when I'm honest can I clearly

see my insanity. This First Step experience was truly sobering and helped me return to reality.

When I worked Step Two, my eyes opened a bit further. Then Step Three gave me new hope. I felt grateful that God has appeared in my life, although I still struggle with discontentment and mistrust toward Him. But how can I expect to gain sobriety if I can't believe in God? I had to set aside my old ideas about God and find new ones that could lead to a change in me. This was a moment of rebirth!

Suddenly, members who once seemed distant now seemed dear to me. Just yesterday I was ready to fight with others for my portion of love, looking down my nose at them. But now I wanted to help them however I could. I felt warm feelings toward people I barely knew. I felt lightness and sensed light.

That evening after I worked on Steps Four and Five, a member said something that bothered me. I could resent and act out, or I could choose to work the Steps and reach forgiveness. I chose working the Steps—and miraculously, the resentment disappeared. I not only talked with the “offender,” but I discovered that he was really a great guy! Another miracle. I will never forget this encounter, where each one could open up and be



understood and accepted

This convention was a turning point for me. I found new connections with God and others. I no longer need proof that I'm exceptional. Instead I want to look for what unites us and to help others

and see our fellowship grow. I would like to remain sober and recover, and for this I need the support of my fellows.

Thanks to the organizers who made this unique gathering possible.

—Leo, Moscow

My First SA Convention

I just returned from the fall Mid-Atlantic Region convention held in Pittsburgh in October, and I would like to share my experiences. For the past two years I've been attending SA meetings sporadically. I've had periods of sexual sobriety, but lately I've had trouble staying sober.

Then recently a family member was arrested for distributing pornography. That made me want to sober up quickly! But I have not yet felt comfortable attending local SA meetings, so I decided to look online for an SA convention. I found one in Pittsburgh and I registered.

As I walked up to the convention hotel the first day I felt shame and embarrassment. I thought, "What am I doing here?" As I registered, I tried to avoid eye contact with anyone, but I was met only with kindness. Then I went to my first meeting, and I immediately felt comfortable. My second meeting again proved comforting. My nervousness decreased.

Then came dinner. The food was great, and better yet were the

speakers. Their open sharing of their brokenness had a huge impact on me. I also heard a spouse share at a speakers meeting, and I regretted not bringing my wife. My wife would love to see me sober, and here I had found a place to heal! The day continued with great meetings and open sharing. I was quite blessed with everything!

At lunch on Saturday, I again heard great speakers, and throughout the rest of the afternoon I attended many more meetings that gave me hope. Then we had more speakers at dinner. I loved it all.

When I had made my hotel reservations, I chose to stay at a cheaper hotel nearby, so that if I decided the meetings were not for me I could leave earlier without wasting too much money. But I loved the whole thing. Next time I will stay at the convention hotel!

Thank you for allowing me to bring my weakness into the light. And thank you MAR for a wonderful convention.

—Bill P., Buffalo



The Hallway: A Family Member's Perspective

A funny (?) thing happened at this year's Unity Convention in Irvine, CA in October. The hotel where the event was held also booked another major conference. That in itself is not noteworthy, except that the other conference was an international ballroom dancing competition.

The halls that led to our breakout rooms were filled with men and women in incredibly skimpy attire—not the ballroom dancing gowns I remember! Even the public restrooms and lobby were filled with competitors with lots and lots of exposed skin, tight-fitting clothing, and exaggerated makeup. This created a minefield of danger for conference attendees.

But an amazing thing happened. As a member of S-Anon, I noticed that the men and women working hard to recover from lust took extraordinary measures to maintain their sobriety in the face of this unexpected challenge. They found other ways to get to the breakout rooms; they avoided The Hallway at all costs. It was inconvenient and even silly to go outside the hotel and walk all the way around it to get to a door leading directly into the desired room. But they did.

I learned an important lesson: men and women in SA recovery are willing to go to any lengths to stay

sober. I know from my own recovery that a single lapse in judgment can lead to a relapse. For a sexaholic, a momentary lustful thought, a small window of porn viewing, masturbation, or one visit to a strip club can lead to a binge of out-of-control behavior. For those of us who do not struggle with sex addiction, this may seem extreme. But for those who must contend with the disease of sexaholism, it can be their reality 24/7.

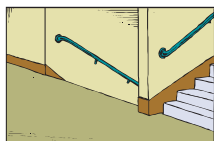
Staying away from The Hallway means that people don't:

- Underestimate their severity and complexity of this disease or over-estimate the ability to control it.
- Minimize the power of temptation or inflate their ability to resist.
- Deny that the Hallway exists or deceive themselves into believing that it is safe for them to enter.

So hats off to brave men and women who daily choose the long way around rather than risking the dangers of The Hallway. Yours is a courageous battle with huge implications for failure. Your struggle to maintain sobriety gives me hope.

I'm grateful for the opportunity to know you: brave hearts who daily prove that addiction can be beaten with courage, trust in God, and a tenacious commitment to staying out of the Hallway.

—Brenda R., Whittier, CA



Would You Like to Host an SA Convention?

As Chair of SA's International Convention Committee (SA ICC), one of my many blessings comes at the convention "wrap up" meeting. I try to arrive early so that I can watch the members of the host committee filter in. The joy on their faces says it all. After many months of negotiating, planning, and executing, a collective sigh of relief is heard throughout the room, and it becomes obvious that these people have shared one of the greatest spiritual experiences of their lives.



Tradition Five tells me that each group has but one primary purpose: to carry its message to the sexaholic who still suffers. When the group is an International Convention Committee, miracles happen. As an attendee, the breakout topics seem to be just what I need. As a meeting facilitator, I get an opportunity to share my experience, strength, and hope. As a member of the host committee the experience has at times been quite overwhelming.

I remember one recent convention wrap up meeting in particular. Many of the committee members had already arrived when the SA Convention Chair came in. As soon as he laid eyes on the other members, the tears came. As he wept, his smile grew bigger. This was a man

who had truly been touched by a Power greater than himself. These people worked really hard, but it was evident that the measure they gave was the measure they got back.

Has your Intergroup ever considered hosting an International convention? This process is not as hard as you may think. All you need to get started are six key people. We've found that people in recovery really want to help. When asked, they jump right in, and before long, those six people turn into 10 or 12.

Our next convention will be held in Portland, Oregon, in January 2015. July 2015 will find us in Chicago, IL. January of 2016 we will be in Sunny San Diego, and Denver, CO will be our destination in July of 2016. Dates are available for January 2017 and beyond.

So if your Intergroup is ready to take the plunge, don't hesitate. The SA ICC has an abundance of information available to help local Intergroups get started and to answer questions along the way. Hosting an International Convention could be one of the greatest adventures of your life.

For more information, contact saico@sa.org, and we will help get you started.

—Tom K., Palm Spring, CA

Alone for the Holidays ¹

AA Grapevine Reprint

When I was new in sobriety, the holidays downright scared me. I didn't even know if my family was willing to speak to me. I couldn't afford anything—not even Christmas cards. Plus all my new AA friends were flying home for the holidays. I was miles away from the ones I loved. Now came the pressure to stay sober.

Could I make it through the holiday season and stave off the horrid memories of selfishly ruining family get-togethers in the past? I began having total recall from last Thanksgiving, when I was so drunk I overdosed in the living room in front of my mom and uncle. They had to rush me to the hospital. The guilt and shame began creeping up as November reared its ugly head. My first Thanksgiving came before my first Fourth Step, and I was a walking character defect.

My sponsor began to calm me down. She taught me about self-care and the things I could do to prepare myself for the next busy holiday season. I took my sponsor's advice and doubled up

on my meetings. Every night I increased my prayer time by five minutes, and in the morning I did the same with my meditation. I knew my mother was feeling depressed, so I called her once a week starting in November and tired to cheer her up as best I could.

On Thanksgiving a local clubhouse was having meetings around the clock with tons of food and fellowship.

So I went and checked it out. What an outpouring of love and acceptance, a complete gift on a beautiful holiday. All of us drunks gave thanks together; I found the warmest family I could ever wish for.

Between Thanksgiving and Christmas I got plenty of rest, went to as many meetings as I could, and took care of my spiritual condition. I checked in with my sponsor often and got involved in service. On Christmas day I was headed over to the clubhouse to help serve food and clean up. I even chaired a marathon AA meeting that ended at midnight.



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The rewards of doing service for others, connecting to God, and taking care of myself paid off. My heart was full, and although I missed my family back home, I found more than I ever bargained for. By the time

the New Year came, I felt like I had earned my place in AA. I was right where I was supposed to be. I have never forgotten my first sober holiday season.

—Ali B., Delray Beach, FL

Willing to Be Vulnerable

Thanksgiving 2010 was a sunny day in San Diego, and I had nowhere to go for dinner. This scene was scary. It fed into my history of isolating and living inside my head, away from family and other relationships. I usually made plans to be with friends on holidays, but it didn't work out that year. Of course I could go see a movie, make a meal for one, or just pretend the day didn't hold special meaning. But that wasn't true.

Still, my lonely shame stopped me from making a reservation for one and eating alone. It feels awkward to go out alone when all others are together. So I went to a movie and felt tense until I could blend into the dark there. It was a very lonely day.

Since then, I've noticed that a number of our members trace their sobriety date to some past holiday. I can interpret that in two ways: either people see the light and get sober in those eight or nine days a year—when most things are



closed—or, more likely, they don't plan for the impact of the day on their life, give up, and act out. I know because it has happened to me.

But since 2010, I've realized the importance of planning for the holidays, and of making sure I have camaraderie during those days. Since then, I've spent each holiday with friends or fellow SAs. Not doing so could be a threat to my sobriety. But when I'm not too ashamed to make it known that I have nothing planned and I'm single, I'll get two or three invitations for the day. Others seem more willing to open up their homes to me than I had ever imagined.

In the past, I felt shame for not having anywhere to go—and I would hide the shame of being alone, much as I hid my addiction before SA. Today I know I that I can let myself be vulnerable and let others be part of my holiday. I've benefited, and stayed sober.

—Joe A., San Diego, CA

Note from the Finance Committee Chair

Dear SA Fellowship:

Following is a summary of SA fellowship revenues and expenses for Third Quarter 2014. 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.

—Carlton B., Finance Committee Chair



SAICO Financial Update Third Quarter 2014	
Donations	\$66,302
Other Revenues	\$23,157
Expenses	\$75,797
Revenues (less Expenses)	\$13,662
Total Prudent Reserve	\$180,336

Want to Connect With SA Members Around the World? Join the SA International Buddy List or Sisters List

The Buddy List is a directory of 350 SA men from around the world who wish to share their experience, strength, and hope with one another. To join the Buddy List, please contact sabuddylist@gmail.com. The International SA Sisters List is a worldwide sisterhood of SA women who wish to find SA sponsors, sponsor others, or make SA outreach calls. There are currently 92 women from 24 countries on the list. To be added to the list, contact SAICO at 1-866-424-8777 or email saico@sa.org.

New SA Groups

USA and Canada

Hyderabad, India
Helsinki, Finland
Chihuahua, Mexico
Juarez, Mexico
Sucre, Bolivia
Durban, South Africa (additional)
Edinburgh, United Kingdom
Lima, Miraflores, Peru (additional)
Zagreb, Croatia
Bellevue, Kentucky (2)
Boise, Idaho (additional)
Boston, Massachusetts (add'l)



Fort Dodge, Iowa
Fort Lauderdale, Florida
Greensboro, North Carolina (add'l)
Medford, Oregon
London, Ontario, Canada
Sioux City, Iowa
Marion, Illinois
Blue Ridge, Georgia

International

Buenos Aires, Argentina
Johannesburg, South Africa
Bet Shemesh, Israel (Additional)
Tsfat, Israel (Additional)
Jerusalem, Israel (Additional)

Delegates and Trustees December 2014

Gary L., <i>GDA Chair</i> Tom K., <i>GDA Vice-Chair</i>		Literature, Legal (Chair), COMC Conventions (Chair), Nominations
Region	Delegate	Committees
North Midwest	Scott S. Dimitri P. Jon H.	Information Technology, Conventions International (Chair), Conventions RAC
South Midwest	Joe M. Dave T. John I., <i>Alternate</i>	RAC (Chair), Legal Nominations, International
Northwest	Brian W. Yvon L. Kathy R., <i>Alternate</i> Scott W., <i>Alternate</i>	Literature, CFC CFC, Conventions Literature
Southwest	Eric S. Steve C. Jim C., <i>Alternate</i> Cal H., <i>Alternate</i>	RAC, CFC PI, Service Structure Finance, Conventions, IT
Mid- Atlantic	Carl N. Mike S., <i>Alternate</i> Ben L., <i>Alternate</i> Hugh S., <i>Alternate</i>	H&I, Conventions Nominations, Chair Conventions, IT
Northeast	Gary M. Suzanne S.	Finance, Conventions
Southeast	Art S. Manse B. LB B., <i>Alternate</i>	CFC, Literature Finance, Conventions Literature, RAC
German spkg	Hans L.	Literature, CFC
EMER	Francis C., Ireland Cathal M., Ireland AJ A., Israel Daan L., <i>Alt.</i> , Netherlands Luc D., <i>Alt.</i> Belgium Artemes, <i>Alt.</i> Spain	H&I, International, Literature PI H&I

Trustee	Committees
George F., <i>Chair</i> Mike S., <i>Vice Chair</i> Mitch A. Bill S. Dave H. Gene T.	IT, Finance COMC, Conventions, Service Structure IT, Service Structure, Literature International, Serv. Structure, Nominations, COMC Finance, Legal, RAC PICFC, International

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

Calendar of Events



February 2015

11, Jerusalem, Israel: SA Winter Conference: *The Joy of Recovery*. Celebrating 18 Years of SA. Info at events@sa-israel.org. Flyer from saico@sa.org.

4-11, EMER's annual Gratitude Week. Make an extra donation to SAICO in Gratitude for the foundation of SA and to help its continuation. Paypal: sa.org/donate.php

March 2015

13 - 15, Esker Galway Ireland: SA Convention. Info at fjcofm@yahoo.com

21, Southlake TX USA: Dallas Area Round-Up. Info at 817-995-7877 or orgsites.com/tx/dfwsa.

Special speakers (old-timer couple).

20-22, Cracow, Poland: SA Poland Convention. Contact saico@sa.org

April 2015

10-12, Germany: Convention, Bad Teinach-Zavelstein. *Honesty*. Contact: www.ehrlichkeit2015.de

17 - 19, Sumas, WA USA: SA Northwest Spring Retreat, *Healing Shame through Grace*. Info at 604-290-9643, savancouver.org, or info@savancouver.org. Registration and flyer available from SAICO@sa.org

May 2015

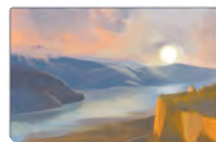
15 - 17, Birmingham UK: EMER Assembly and

Convention, *Putting Sobriety First*. The Royal Angus, St. Chad's, Queensway Birmingham B4 6HY. Largest SA convention outside North America. Speakers from 10 countries. Members from USA welcome. Ask about opportunities to extend your visit in the UK, Europe or beyond. Contact: +44 1202 763 570, sexaholic-sanonymous.eu, or email emeregion@gmail.com

To submit events or for more info, contact [saico](mailto:saico@sa.org) at saico@sa.org or visit sa.org/events.

Upcoming International Conventions

January 23-25, 2015, Awakening the Spirit, Portland, OR. Sheraton Portland Airport Hotel. For information or to register, contact awakeningthespirit2015.com. Cost is \$150 if registered or postmarked before January 15, 2015; \$165 for walk-ins or registration on or after January 15. Registration includes: Friday Dinner, Saturday Lunch, Saturday Dinner, and Sunday breakfast AND speaker!



July 24-26 (New Dates!), 2015, Chicago, IL, Crossroads of Recovery. For Info contact crossroadsofrecovery.com or info@crossroadsofrecovery.com

January 15-17, 2016, Reflections in San Diego, San Diego, CA, USA. For info contact reflectionsinsandiego.com



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The Twelve Traditions of Sexaholics Anonymous

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

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



GOD

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