

# *Essay*

*March 2014*



*Freedom through the Steps*

*A quarterly publication of Sexaholics Anonymous*

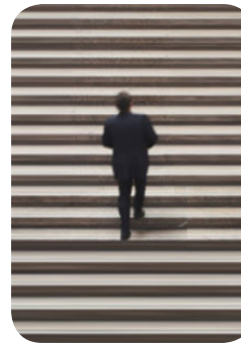
# The Twelve Steps of Sexaholics Anonymous

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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March 2014



### **Sexaholics Anonymous**

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

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### **New to SA?**

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## Freedom through the Steps

I'm Mark, a sexaholic, and I've been sexually sober since April 27, 2002. I would like to share about the disease of sexaholism in my life—but mostly I would like to share about the solution I've found in SA. And I would like to tell my story by walking through the Steps.

I'll begin by sharing some of my *Step One* experiences. Most of my acting out has been of a solitary type. My acting out behaviors included fantasy, masturbation, viewing pornography, and using non-pornographic materials for pornographic purposes. The last item became quite common for me.

I began acting out with myself sexually as a young teen. In the early stages, I was a periodic. I would try to be good and I'd stop my behavior for days or weeks at a time. But by the time I went through my last binge, I was approaching what AA calls "the chronic state." I was losing control.

In 1994, I worked through the Steps for the first time in another Twelve Step fellowship. I didn't realize it at the time, but my first Step Eight list (besides a few relatives) consisted primarily of ex-girlfriends. After coming to SA I realized that my

first Eighth and Ninth Step had been the result of my sexaholic behaviors for the previous 20 to 35 years.

After another round of Step work in 1996, again in another fellowship, I found more sexaholic behavior prior to finding these rooms. I felt



better after I got those things on paper and shared them with a sponsor. I knew that I needed to deal with my sexual behaviors. But just doing Step work on the side in

another fellowship wasn't enough, because I could not stay sober. Today I understand that sexaholism is my main problem and not a side issue. This is the reason that I need to continue to participate fully in SA—regardless of the length of my SA sobriety.

My last acting out binge—which involved computer use and sex with myself—lasted from October 2001 to April 2002. On April 28, 2002, my then-wife found my Internet porn trail on our home computer, and she confronted me. Prior to that day, no one knew what I was doing on the Internet. But when my wife found evidence, this was a new low point for our marriage.

My wife confronted me on a weekend, and I started attending meetings of another S-fellowship

the very next day. I attended my first SA meeting on May 4, 2002. It was the Friday men's SA meeting at a local hospital, and that quickly became my home group. In the first few years of my SA recovery, I also attended a Wednesday Step-writing meeting and a Tuesday night topic meeting. Attending multiple meetings per week helped me then, and I still feel that attending two to three meetings a week works much better for me than just one.

When I got sober, my wife and I had been married for seven years, and we had adopted children two years before. After my wife discovered my acting out—even though I got sober right away—she was traumatized, and I knew that our marriage was in trouble. I also knew that I could keep going to meetings and could be sober for myself. I liked the way that that felt, so I kept going to meetings.

My earliest recollection of lust was when I was about 10 years old. My mom dropped me off at my grandmother's house one morning, and I sat on the couch with her all morning while we watched TV. I remember a particular commercial that repeated four or five times.

Every time I watched the commercial, I experienced strong feelings toward the actress in it. I was transported into an overwhelming sexual fantasy experience. Today I know that those "feelings" were the obsession to lust, but I did not

know that at the time. I had not yet discovered masturbation—this was just something that happened in my brain. But I'll never forget how I felt at that moment; it changed my whole perception of life.

I'm a native of San Diego and the oldest of five children. I grew up with a caring mother and did fairly well in school. My father died of lung cancer just before I turned 10. As a result, I have some father issues, and it was difficult for me to ask a man to sponsor me at first. I was in the rooms of SA for 10 months before I asked a man to sponsor me.

I survived at first by using my sponsor from another Twelve Step program to hear my SA Steps. I also used the men's meeting and Step-study meeting to work my SA Steps. In the Step meeting, we would share our Steps during the meeting. At the men's meeting, we would read Steps afterward. So I was basically sponsored by committee in those days.

I also met many long-timers in those meetings. At my first SA meeting, I met two men who each had over 10 years of SA sobriety. I was ready for what they had to share, and they helped me a lot. I got lots of feedback from them and from other members, and that made a difference in my early recovery.

In my first years of sobriety, I clung to the message that "sex was indeed optional" (SA, 61). Before SA, I had never gotten that message.



Instead, I heard messages that sex was mandatory; that my manhood was at stake if sexuality was not part of my life. Today, I'm still digesting the message that sex is optional.

Two years into sobriety, my wife and I bought a house, and—after being a stay-at-home-dad for eight years—I began working part time in 2008. At the time, our kids were finishing middle school and going into high school. In January 2009 (my seventh year of sobriety), my wife informed me that the marriage was over. She moved out six weeks later, leaving the boys with me.

I was blessed with SA sobriety for the last six-and-a-half years of our marriage. Through all of the divorce process (from early 2009 until September 2010), I was able to remain sober as a single SA. Today I know that I was able to survive the divorce largely because I went through it sexually sober.

The divorce was particularly hard on our children. When my oldest son was 15, he was put on probation for breaking the law. He's 18 now, and he recently got off of probation. He also got his GED, a driver's license, and a job—and he moved out. He's beginning to move in the right direction and I have a lot of joy about that. My younger son is 17 and a senior in high school, and he still has similar struggles.

SA sobriety has been a lifesaver

for me as a single SA member. I believe that being sexually sober has given me the strength to deal with my sons, my own program of recovery, and life on life's terms. For me, this has meant raising two boys and dealing with therapists, probation officers, and juvenile court judges; getting unpleasant calls from teachers and principals; and having numerous contacts with law enforcement. This has not been easy. But in the midst of it all, I'm grateful for SA. SA enabled me to get through the extremely difficult divorce experience, which could have been magnitudes worse without my own sexual sobriety.

*Step Two* was a bit of a struggle for me at first, but my sense of trust in a Higher Power has progressed over time. I can't tell you much about my experience of God, but I know that trusting the SA program and working the Twelve Steps

works. I've found that praying for guidance is an action that changes my attitude, and change yields benefits. Additionally, praying and "coming to believe" that a Power greater than myself can restore me to sanity does lead to much greater degrees of sanity and serenity.

*Step Three* has also been a process for me. I was raised in a religious home, and I thought I could manage my life based on the quest for virtue. I tried to be good, and in



some ways I always was good. But today I know that I'm a pretty good guy who has a terrible problem: the problem of sexaholism. I cannot lust like a gentleman. I like the way it's put in "A Personal Story":

What was it like? I hope I never forget, for if I do I'm liable to go right back out there and think I can lust like a gentleman again. You see I'm a sexaholic, a recovering sex drunk. That's like an alcoholic, only the drug is sexual lust instead of booze (SA, 9)

That was me—guilty as charged. Today, I'm grateful for those words. I didn't know when I walked into SA that I really had no option but to stop, for my own sanity.

Another crucial White Book passage for me regarding Step Three is "The Third Option":

Before finally giving up, we had tried one or the other of two options: On the one hand, we expressed our obsession by acting it out. On the other hand, we tried suppressing it by drinking, drugging, eating, or by fighting it with white-knuckle will power.... We never knew there was another option—surrender. What a beautiful liberating word it has become to those of us who do it! (SA, 84)

In spite of my religious upbringing, I really had just bounced

back and forth between suppressing my lust and indulging in it. There was no third option. There had been times when I abstained, but that was all based on self-will. I was "white-knuckling" it. The phrase "surrender was killing the obsession" (SA, 204) still rings true for me today.

Some of my surrenders are still quite imperfect, but at times my surrenders feel clean, and I feel free. Surrendering is a skill; I just have to practice it—over and over again. That means that I must surrender lust daily, or sometimes more than once a day. Sometimes this works, and it's magnificent. Other times, there's still too much self-will in my surrender—my surrender is half-hearted—and I have to go back and surrender again. That's okay, I just I have to keep at it.

Turning my will and my life over to God means turning over the right to lust. One shorthand Step Three prayer that works for me in the moment of temptation is this: "God bless her and God help me. I'm a sexaholic and I need help right now."

Another thing that has helped is something I've heard from other program members: When I'm tempted to objectify a woman for my own sexual gratification—for the sake of fantasy or obsession to lust—I try to remember that she's someone's daughter, and maybe someone's wife or mother—a person with other family ties, talents and feelings, a mind of her own, and an entire

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history. She is not an object.

I've done many *Fourth Step* inventories, but the one that stands out for me is the inventory I did on my marriage. We'd been married almost 15 years when it ended. The divorce was quite painful for me, but I realize today that the inventory was crucial to my staying sober and moving forward in SA recovery.

I realized at the time that I was grieving. I experienced a profound sense of loss. I used some other, non-SA materials to do even more writing. There were just a lot of feelings and I had to get them out. I've done a dozen inventories in SA, but I've never taken as much time to do an inventory as this one, mostly because it was so emotionally heavy. Later on I made direct amends to my wife based on the inventory.

Regarding *Steps Six and Seven*, in my early days of SA, I heard an SA speaker on a cassette tape share something that helped me immensely. He said that when he checked in with his sponsor, he would say, "I'm fine," but his cats and dogs knew different. As it says in SA, "the ....emotional state of my wife, children, cats, and doorways are the truest indicators of the real me" (154).

When my wife left us, my 17-year-old son was really struggling, so we adopted a dog. I cannot overestimate the therapeutic value of that dog—for

all of us but mostly for my younger son. He's a great dog, but he's really sensitive. He's like a conduit—he picks up the emotions of people in the room. So if I hang up the phone after a check-in call and stomp into the living room—and the dog runs out of the living room—then I must ask myself, "Was I stomping my feet? Was I talking to myself in anger again?" My dog makes me aware of my behavior.

I have a long list of defects. I've worked on that list, but anger and resentment are still at the top. If this were "Resentaholics Anonymous," I don't think I'd be sober for more than one day at a time. This is a weak spot for me, but I'm consoled by the thought in the White Book that "Recovery is a slow process" (SA, 66). As a person who tends to be impatient, I need to remember that recovery is a long, slow process—and I'm making progress with the character defect of resentment.

I've worked *Steps Eight, Nine, and Ten* many times. In 2003, one year after becoming sober in SA, I made a formal Ninth Step amends to my wife. She received my amends, and I'm grateful for that. In 2011, based on my emotional inventory of my part in the marriage, I made additional amends to her. I was quite nervous about making these amends. However, my wife had worked her own inventory and previously made formal Step



Nine amends to me, and that helped me feel calmer. In the end, my amends were almost anti-climatic; they took all of two minutes.

I continue to use *Step Ten* to make amends as necessary. I need to admit when I'm wrong. Some of those things have made their way back up to Steps Eight and Nine, and I'm grateful today that Steps Eight, Nine, and Ten had worked in the marriage before it ended. For a 15-year marriage that was not entirely manageable, I'm grateful that I got to the end of the amends list.

In my *Step Eleven* practice, I put as much focus as I can on the second half of the Step: "...praying only for the knowledge of God's will for me and the power to carry that out." One of the best ways to keep facing the right direction is to ask my Higher Power for His will for me daily. The way this makes sense to me is this: If I've admitted that my life is unmanageable, then I really need to ask God for help. It doesn't make sense for me *not* to ask for help. Sometimes I just break it down to, "What do you want me to do today? Show me how to proceed with Your will for me."

I would like to end by sharing a *Twelfth Step* story. I call it my "personal freedom" story. I had applied for a job with an agency, and I interviewed with the director the same day. I didn't disclose my SA identity on the application, but

I identified two of my references as Twelve Step Sponsors. I know that the employer called at least one of them.

For my second interview, I met with the director and two managers of the agency. One of the managers asked me, "Some of our clients are registered sex offenders. How would you feel about working with registered sex offenders?" For a moment, time slowed down in my brain. I had a decision to make: I could answer this safely and diplomatically, or I could admit who I am. I realized that, because of the freedom I've experienced from being sexually sober in SA, my Higher Power was calling for me to share with these people.

I knew there was a risk; I had not been hired to do anything yet. But I said, "You know I stated on my application that I'm part of a Twelve Step program? It's called Sexaholics Anonymous. I had a terrible problem with pornography and I needed help, so in 2002, I started attending meetings, and I've been sober ever since. This program works very well for me, and what I understand my problem to be is an obsession to lust. In that sense, I'm no different from a registered sex offender. The only difference is that those people got arrested for their acting out and I didn't."

I knew I was taking a risk, but deep down, I knew in an instant that

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this was an appropriate disclosure—and in the end I was offered a job.

I'm grateful for the opportunity to share my story with the fellowship today. I believe that telling my story enhances my chances for continued sobriety for this 24 hours. I'm also grateful for the freedom from the obsession to lust. I'm even beginning to feel "happy, and joyous,

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### *Expressions of Gratitude*

## Everyday Gratitude

My wife and I were putting away our Christmas tree this past December. It's an artificial tree with lights wired into it, and it looks pretty in our front window at night. But packing it up for storage is a struggle.

Starting at the top of the tree, we must fold each branch snug against the upper one-third of the trunk, tie a cord around the branches, detach those branches from the lower parts, and then put it all in a box. Then we repeat the same process with the middle third and lower third of the tree.

Do you know how many hands and arms this takes? More than four, I can tell you! Branches flop down in our faces, or a hinge might come out of its socket, causing the branch to swing loose on its wires and tangle with the tree below. We called out instructions to each other, grunted, and laughed.

and free" (AA, 133). Being sexually sober gives me the confidence to be more available to others and more useful to my Higher Power. The paradox is that by admitting my powerlessness over lust, I've been blessed with the power to live a full life.

—Mark W., San Diego

What was I feeling during this struggle? I was feeling gratitude. Why? I was flashing back to my first marriage. My first wife and I could never work together. Joint projects collapsed into arguments and bad feelings. Looking back, I see that I wanted to be in control; I believed I was the one who knew how to do the job right. Now, struggling with that uncooperative tree, I didn't have to be in charge. I was able to cooperate with my partner.

This is not only about recovery in my marriage; it's about finding gratitude in everyday life. Before recovery, I expected the worst from life. If something good happened, I automatically discounted it. If I completed a worrisome task, I immediately went on to worry about the next task. It never occurred to me to pause and



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celebrate. I kept myself numb with lust and obsession. Every event and encounter was tinged with grey.

In recovery, I have a new pair of glasses. My lenses aren't grey, and they aren't pink. They're clear, allowing me to see clearly the gifts that God gives me every day. Often, as with the Christmas tree episode, I'm struck by the difference between my life today compared with the old days before sobriety.

This past January my wife and I attended the SA International Convention in Nashville. On Saturday morning, I woke before my wife and thought, "Ah, this is a good time for my morning meditation!" I went into the bathroom in our hotel room, closed the door, set the timer on my watch, turned out the light, and relaxed peacefully in God's presence. I was enjoying the privacy when my wife opened the door! As light flooded the room, my heart was filled with gratitude. She had interrupted my meditation, but I realized in that instant that—in my previous life—she might have interrupted me acting out. I was



reminded of how much different my life is today.

When another sexaholic calls me, I'm reminded that I no longer have to be alone with my disease.

When one of my adult children calls me just to chat, I'm grateful to have them all in my life today. I could have been a sour old man living alone in a small apartment and masturbating myself to sleep every night. But because of SA, today my life is full of love.

I'm grateful for a thousand common, everyday things. I'm grateful that I can drive a car; that I can walk in full stride, arms swinging, breathing deeply; that I'm a warm-blooded animal. I'm grateful for the microwave oven, for the automatic dishwasher, for the sunlight streaming into my kitchen, for my dinner on the table, and for the appetite to eat it.

With gratitude all around me every day, I find that resentment, self-pity, and fear are no longer running my life. Neither is lust. Why is that? I don't know. I just know that's what works for me.

— Art B., Macon, Georgia

## Grateful for SA

Before I came to SA, lust was destroying my sense of self. My lust was always self-directed. I could fool myself into thinking I was finding fulfillment in an image or in another person, but only God

could fill that hole in my soul. My thinking that I could fill my need with another person who has my identical emptiness was delusional; it only magnified my emptiness. I was trying to find myself in another

person, but I can only find my true self in God.

What drew me to SA was the promise that sex can become optional, and that I can live a life of integrity—free from the labels that my lust wants to pin on me. What I've found in SA is a fellowship where I can become an integrated human being, not defined by the particular way in which lust has manifested itself in my life.

I'm thankful to God for providing me with a fellowship that seeks "to restore the instinct for sexual intimacy to its proper place for reproduction and maintaining healthy ties with a spouse" (see "SA to the Newcomer," under "How Can I Stay Sober Without Some Kind of Sexual Outlet?"). My lust was life-destroying rather than life-giving.

Through SA, my Higher Power offers me the gift of a God-focused sexuality rather than a person-focused sexuality. I pray to accept

this focus every day. I need SA to continue to challenge me to grow into a full, healthy, and balanced masculinity, rather than the stunted and self-seeking version that I lived for so long.

What I don't need is to be told to define myself by my own specific form of lust, for I have all of modern society telling me to do that. For me, same-sex attraction is just one of many forms that lust can take. I am grateful to be part of a fellowship where same-sex lusting and acting out is not consistent with sexual sobriety.

I came into SA freely of my own accord, because I knew it was the only program that offers me what I truly need to become the man God created me to be. Tomorrow I may freely chose to leave SA, but today what I need is SA's unique program of progressive victory over lust, in whatever form it takes.

—Anonymous



### Thank You, God



Dear God,

A simple and profound "Thank You" for this gift of sobriety (as defined in SA, 191-193)—for in the middle of a daily task, I am struck with simple and utter gratitude for not having acted out for the past nine months. This gift started and continues with living one day at a time, being guided by You, assisted by an understanding sponsor, and participating in the supportive community provided by this fellowship. One day at a time, proportionate to my working of the Twelve Steps, I am being led to "progressive victory over lust."

—Anonymous

### Program Tools

## Surrender to the Process

The other day a friend called me with a question. He said that, at an SA meeting he attended the day before, he discovered that he had the most sobriety in the room. He asked me whether he could learn anything from a meeting where he has the most sobriety. I told him that—no matter how much sobriety I have—God is able to speak to me through other members with less sobriety. Then I shared with him the following stories.

In the past I attended an AA meeting in the center of a rough area of Nashville, not far from a homeless shelter. Many homeless people would come in off the street to attend the meeting. One day a disheveled man came in—probably drunk—and he began to share.

I didn't give much thought to his share until a few weeks later, when I was driving with my sponsor back from a meeting and he began quoting from the homeless man's share. I looked at my sponsor with bewilderment. I asked, "How can you remember what that guy said? He was probably drunk and he came to the meeting only once." My sponsor said, "I never know who God will choose at a meeting to send me the message that I need to hear that day. Since I never know whom He picks, I need to listen to every

word everyone says at the meeting."

Next I told my friend about an event that happened the week before he called me. I had been at an SA meeting, and just like him I noticed that I had the most sobriety in the room. In that meeting was a young man who had nine days of sobriety. He talked about how wonderful it was to be sober, and he was excited to share his recent realization: he had discovered that the only way for him to stay sober was to surrender to the process.

I was mesmerized. God at that moment spoke to me through a nine-day-sober man. He helped me realize how I have remained sober over the past 30 years. I have often wondered why some members struggle with sobriety while others are able to stay sober. I know it could not be that God loves me more than He loves other people in the program. The God of my understanding gives grace to all. But at that moment—through that newcomer's share—I realized that the answer for me was that I have surrendered to the process. I was also reminded that I can learn new and important information from members with less sobriety.

So I asked myself, "How have I surrendered to the process during my time in sobriety?" Following are





some examples that came to mind:

- *I've prayed on my knees every morning.* Early in sobriety I was told to get on my knees first thing in the morning and last thing at night. I was instructed to give each day to God. I remember thinking that I could not do that—it was against my religious teachings. Then the gift came to me: I realized I had to surrender because that is what I was told to do. As frequently happens, once I surrendered I realized this was not against my religious principles—it was only against my mother's interpretation of the practice.



- *I got an SA sponsor.* The sponsor I chose had only a high school education and I had many advanced degrees, but I surrendered to the realization that this was the man I needed in my life. As it turned out, this sponsor often said to me "Harvey, someday your intelligence might catch up to your education." After 30 years of recovery in SA, I'm still not sure that my intelligence has caught up to my formal education, but my intelligence has certainly been helped by my informal Twelve Step education.

- *I gave up my secrets in Steps Four and Five.* I surrendered to the process when I was told that I cannot have secrets today. To my awareness, there are no secrets in my life. There is at least someone in the program with whom I have shared my

deepest, darkest secrets.

- *I've been faithfully reading program literature.* I surrendered when I was told to read one page each of AA-approved literature and SA-approved literature every day. I've continued this process for the past 30 years.

- *I've surrendered my right to lust and to sexual acting out.* I was told that to stay sober, I should make a two-way contract with my Higher Power first thing in the morning. I have surrendered to the process of making this two-way contract each day. My contract is, "God I will be sexually sober today; please help me to be sexually sober today."

- *I've surrendered to the idea that I need to attend a certain number of meetings each week.* In the beginning, I was told to attend 90 meetings in 90 days. In my case—after 30 years—I still need a minimum of four to five Twelve Step meetings a week.

- *I've surrendered to working the Steps.* I surrender to knowing that I will need to use my Steps on a daily basis for as long as I want to remain sober and comfortable.

- *I've surrendered to the process of doing service work.* If I don't give it away, I will not be able to keep it. So I'm committed to doing service work. My service work includes speaking to groups around the world, being available to

take calls from SA members around the world, and sponsoring many members.

These are but a few of the surrenders I have realized I needed to make. Each of us needs to see what areas we hold on to and be willing to let these things go. As the Big Book says,

Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely (AA, 58).

So as I learned from the new member through whom God chose to speak, the term "surrender to the process" is how I have stayed sober over the years with God's help.

Surrendering to the process is simple idea, but it is not always easy



to practice. "Surrender" often sounds negative. This is the true paradox of our program: it is through surrender that we win.

Such is the paradox of A.A. regeneration: strength arising out of complete defeat and weakness, the loss of one's old self as a condition for finding a new one. (A.A. Comes of Age, 46)

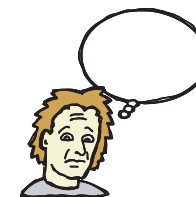
It is through surrender that I have been set free from being a slave to my addiction and character defects. If you are struggling in this program, then be sure you are actually surrendering to the process.

Try it; you might even like it!  
—Harvey A., Nashville, TN

## Coming to Grips with Step Two

*Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity (Step Two, SA 89).*

As hard it was to admit that I am an addict, it was equally hard to admit that I am insane. However, based on Google's second definition of insanity—"extreme foolishness or irrationality"—I clearly am. Everything about my addiction has been foolish or irrational.



To think that I could continue to lust as much as I wanted to without masturbating (and without it affecting my relationships or my outlook on

life) is foolish and irrational. To think I can live inside my head, fantasizing about sexual relationships without it affecting my schoolwork, my occupation, or my relationships with people around me is foolish and irrational.

This addiction obviously has a physical aspect, but the mental aspect has been more damaging to me. At 28, I've had to start retraining my mind to be able to concentrate on one subject



without the buzz and noise from my addiction. As I work to put this addiction in its place, the constant noise slows down and becomes a minor irritant instead of a mind-boggling gong that shakes me out of any concentration. I would classify myself with the person described in *Step into Action One, Two, Three:*

Still others believed in God and participated in a faith community, but continued to struggle in the addiction's stranglehold (60).

Because of my participation in my faith community, my own insanity resulted in a lot of guilt throughout my life. I experienced a lot of confusion and misunderstanding of my God. I had many questions, such as: "Why can't I be delivered from this struggle?" "Why did I fall into this addiction if sexual desires were natural and were created by God?" "Why can't I pray my way through times that I wanted to act out?" "Why did He allow some of the sexual things to happen to me at such a young age?" and many more.

After attending many meetings, working through Step One, and observing men who had gone before me and remained sober, I realize that there is a solution and that it is God. After completing Step One and admitting I'm an addict and thus insane, the following line from the White Book really hit home:



There's no place left to go except to face the truth about ourselves, stop resorting to other addictions and forms of lust we think we can get away with, and surrender to our God. (*SA*, 92)

I still find myself thinking that I can get away with certain lusts—only to find myself trying once more to control my addiction. A glance here and there, a website or two that are not officially porn, and pretty soon I'm in that uncontrolled downward spiral. Since I started with SA, I've found myself in a couple of these downward spirals. These experiences have reminded my stubborn self that I can't overcome this addiction under my own power. If I don't surrender to God and the program, I'm right back where I was—a slave to my addiction. As I've learned from the words from Step Two:

We saw that we could not save ourselves. If we were to escape our bondage, we needed more power than we alone possessed. (*SIA*, 60)

I've been thinking about the Serenity Prayer a lot lately. I don't know why God has allowed tragedies to happen or addictions to form in my life, but I find peace and strength in knowing a God Who wants me to be sober and Who gives me the strength that I need to overcome lust.

—Chuck T.

## Members Share

# A Spiritual Awakening

When I came back to SA in 2010, I think I was spiritually dead. The White Book's description of spiritual death described me exactly. Although religious, I was deeply depressed and isolated. I had just crashed my way out of yet another career and yet another marriage. I was ready to die. I had survived a suicide attempt. Meditation only opened me up to more darkness. Therapy brought some understanding, but no relief.

I had already experienced SA—in fact, it was through SA that I had been miraculously relieved, 20 years earlier, of my obsession with cross-dressing and masturbation. But now I was in a stable relationship. On the surface, everything looked fine. I had a wife, another successful career, a retirement home, and financial security. But I still wanted to die.

And then out of the blue, my old obsession with cross-dressing and masturbation returned, and it was worse than ever. To cap it all I was in a fantasy affair with a co-worker and justifying it, thinking, "What's wrong with a little flirtation? We're all Latins here aren't we? Isn't this what we Latins do?" The same old same old was back again.

I called my old chums in the fellowship (even though I had

stopped going to meetings, I never lost contact with them completely). Now, living in Romania 2,000 miles away from the nearest English-speaking meeting, I booked myself into the annual SA UK Convention in Pantasaph, North Wales in January 2010. Once there, I was immediately given a sponsor (previously I had always chosen one myself), and I got down to following his directions as I began working the Steps for the *n*th time. Also, here in Europe we have frequent two-day intensive Twelve Step workshops, and I attended as many of those as I could.

I now understand that in doing all of this, I was finally completing my Step Zero—for the first time! As the White Book defines Step Zero, "We participated in the fellowship of the program" (*SA*, 63), I was finally joining the SA fellowship. Although I had worked the Steps many times, I had never really joined the fellowship.

Before, in my desperation to live life to the fullest (recovery is supposed to be a "bridge to normal living"—right?), I had been so busy with the so-called "successes" that I cherished—money, power, marriages, influence, and public recognition—that there was simply no time or space for God in my life.



This time, as I worked the Steps, my sponsor encouraged me to leave my whole former addictive lifestyle behind. This meant my job as well as all of the trappings of success. I willingly walked away from it all, and I have gone through the dark night of withdrawal. As I did so—as the Steps themselves promise—I am being blessed daily with a spiritual awakening: the progressive ongoing healing that is ours when we really work this program and make carrying our message of recovery to the still suffering sexaholic our primary purpose.



As long as I remained attached to the externals in life—the so-called trappings of worldly success—the promised spiritual awakening eluded me. Today I have let those externals all go (although I can still take them all up again at any time and am frequently tempted to do just that). I am blessed with an inner life and a spiritual awakening that even at this early stage is already beyond my wildest dreams. Thank you to my dear fellow SAs, and above all to my Higher Power for never giving up on me!  
—Indrei R., Bournemouth, UK

## Deliverance in Deutschland

Hamburg, Germany at Christmastime! I had the good fortune to visit this beautiful city in early December, as part of a trade delegation of about 35 folks—mainly elected officials, business people, and government types from our region. Our mission was purely business in nature, but the working itinerary would not begin until Monday. We arrived on Saturday evening, clearly jet-lagged but ready to take in German food, culture, and fun. I'd traveled armed with a shopping list from home that focused on known German Christmas items, and Sunday was the day we

would all descend on the open-air Christmas markets for which Hamburg is famous.



I arrived in good spirits and was fortunate to get a good night's rest that effectively erased the jet lag. I bounded downstairs Sunday morning for breakfast in the hotel restaurant and joined my traveling companions. As we talked about our plans for the day, I quickly realized that all of my fellow travellers were pretty much headed out on their own. While we anticipated seeing each other in the markets, the fact was that I would have the day to myself, accountable to no one. Heady but dangerous

stuff for a recovering sex addict.

This trip coincided with a vulnerable time in my recovery. After nearly eight years of sobriety from acting-out behaviors that had nearly cost me my family and everything important to me, I had gone back to viewing Internet porn this past summer, and my wife had caught me. I felt awful, but the pattern had been set. I returned to the sites several times in the succeeding days, with accompanying masturbation. Shortly thereafter, my wife was able to trace my Internet history (despite my best efforts to conceal it), and then it seemed that all those years of rebuilding trust with her had been nullified. Plus, I had to tell my new SA sponsor of my relapse.

Even though I had been sober since that incident, by the time the Hamburg trip rolled around, I was still dealing with a lot of shame, plus considerable fear for the future of my marriage (and my recovery). Here I was in Germany, sans spouse, and I was being pulled into the same ugly whirlpool that had sucked me in so many times in the past.

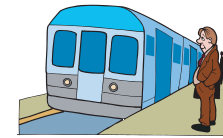
After breakfast at the hotel, I bundled up and went to one of the open-air markets and noticed that none of the vendors seemed to have the holiday carousels that were on my list. I strolled to another market and the result was the same. Feeling frustrated, I decided to ditch the

shopping for awhile and headed over to the Hamburg railway station. I'm a train nut, and I always enjoy spending a couple of hours watching the fast European bullet trains arrive and depart.

As I strolled the huge terminal, I realized that it wasn't just the trains that had set my head turning. I was beginning to obsess about the sexual attractiveness of the people passing by. That, combined with the knowledge that I had the next several hours left to my own devices, ignited the familiar triggering mechanism that had sent me down a devastating path so many times before.

Because I had visited Hamburg during those days, I knew all too well where the sexually oriented businesses were located, and I knew that I could walk there in a half hour's time. Nobody would ever know! I could go to an adult video parlor and watch X-rated movies and get back to the hotel in time for dinner with my group, who would be none the wiser! My resistance began to turn to jelly, and giving in to temptation seemed easier than using the tools of our program.

I stood on the train platform agonizing, preparing to put my brain on autopilot in favor of acting out. As I pondered my options—and my wobbly resolution began to melt—a quote from Program literature leaped into my cerebrum with terrific force:



“Either God Is, or He Isn’t.” Where this came from, I had no idea. Upon returning home, I was able to find the entire phrase in the Big Book:

... we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or else He is nothing. Either God is, or He isn’t. What was our choice to be? (AA, 53).

At that moment, it suddenly seemed abundantly clear that yielding to temptation and acting out would constitute a clear statement and belief that God isn’t! Did I really want to do that? After all, God had clearly done a lot of good things in leading me to SA, getting me a sponsor, and furnishing me with an occasional measure of peace, acceptance, and serenity. Did I want to deny that God?

And just like that, the compulsion was lifted! I left the train station, took a leisurely route back to the hotel via a few more holiday markets and rejoined our group. I was able to look them all in the eye at dinner and enjoy their company—something which would have been impossible had I decided to act out.



Best of all, my enjoyable social time that evening turned up inside information on where I could find the holiday carousels that were burning a hole in my shopping list, and by bedtime I had my purchases in my room, ready to take home.

Although I’m still working on regaining my wife’s trust, I thank God today for the spiritual life He’s given me through the SA Program!

—Steve J., Freeport, FL

## I Want to Quit!

This autumn, I’ve been raking leaves in the yard and on the driveway. As I pull the piles of leaves together and get ready to put them in the wheelbarrow, I find the same refrain running through my head: “I want to quit doing this!” In practice, I just keep raking. However, at the same time I can feel myself forcing the raking to continue. I’ve come to recognize that “I want to

quit!” thoughts are predictable, and I can surrender them to God and ignore them if I want to get the job done.



I’ve also come to realize that I often have the “I want to quit!” thought whenever I’m doing something that involves discipline. I swim for exercise, and at some point about halfway through my routine I think, “I want to quit!” As with the leaf raking, I just keep

going, and the thought goes away.

When I get in the car to go to my SA meetings, I’ll have the same thought, although the timing is a bit different. It’s about half an hour before the meeting that the “I want to quit!” thought comes along. “I’ve gone to enough meetings this week.” “I’ve gone to meetings for over 25 years—maybe it’s time to quit.” “I’m not struggling with lust today—I’ll skip the meeting.” And so forth. All are variations on “I want to quit!”

Once I’m on the road to the meeting, the thought begins to ebb. When I sit down in a chair at the table, I’m just glad to be there. It’s a gift! And the “I want

to quit” thought does not return after the meeting. It won’t reappear until a short time before the next meeting.

There are several other regular appearances of “I want to quit!” Before going to meet with a program person or someone in my profession, I’ll have the thought. When the mail arrives and there are bills or letters to



deal with, I’ll have the thought.

What helps is realizing that from time to time I simply have the “I want to quit!” attitude. I have come to realize that this happens when I’m doing something that takes discipline or demands that I keep active for awhile. I still have a default desire of wanting to do less or just loll around. So “I want to quit!” really confirms that I’m doing something that matters and that finishing it will benefit me. In other words, “I want to quit!” only

comes to my head when I’m doing something important.

Although “I want to quit!” can still rattle my brain, today I recognize that it’s a gift from my Higher

Power, reminding me that I’m doing something that matters. All I must do is to keep trudging and let the thought drift away. And I thank God for the reminder of what’s important. Whenever I do the next right thing, it turns out to be what I really wanted all along.

—David M., Portland, OR

## Learning to Live with My Defects

I’m now eight years sober, thanks to the grace of my Higher Power, the help of my sponsor, and the encouragement of program meetings. I have not seen many beatific moments in my recovery, but there has been steady, plodding growth as I work my program one day at a time. Indeed, I subscribe to

the idea of “spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection” (SA, 207). As I get further away in time from the last incident of acting out—and the moments of indulging in lust become fewer—I find that more of my daily conscious thoughts and habits are free from lust.

I was recently asked to speak

on the topic, “What Does Long-Term Sobriety Look Like?” at a marathon meeting in my home city. In preparing for the talk, I had to take my own inventory (the only inventory I’m entitled to take!). In doing so, I recognized that I still have many defects and I still struggle with lust. The difference today is that I’m more aware of my triggers, and I’m also more aware of the character defects that make me susceptible to triggers

After making a list of my character defects (in Steps Four and Five), I surrendered them to my Higher Power and asked to have them taken away (Steps Six and Seven). While I still have many defects, today I’m more aware of when they start to affect me, so I am better able to take action than I was at first.

Following are some actions that help me stay sober when I’m confronted with specific triggers. Perhaps some of these actions will be helpful to others.

• *Fatigue.* I’m more apt to indulge lust when I’m physically, mentally, or emotionally exhausted. My memory is short when I’m tired, and I forget that I really don’t want to indulge lust. I forget the sad effects that happened in my life when I indulged in lust. So today, when I recognize that I’m getting tired, I try to take a 10- or 15-minute catnap. Afterwards, I receive new



energy, and lust loses its attraction. Then, what seemed tempting to me before appears in its true guise as something I really don’t need or want.

• *Resentments.* A big character defect for me is holding grudges. I’ll find myself thinking, “How could that person do or say that to me?” or “I don’t deserve such treatment,” and so on. When I become aware of these feelings of resentment, I turn to prayer. I pray for myself that I may let go of the resentment, and I pray for the individual I’m resenting, that he or she may be blessed. Sometimes it takes awhile for me to truly let go of the resentment. Even though I’ve turned it over to my Higher Power, my emotions lag behind. But I’ve learned that “Time heals all.” This seems to be true even with my emotions.

• *Anger.* Anger can overpower me, especially when I don’t allow myself to feel it. Growing up, I did not allow myself to express anger. I would make excuses for those who

offended me, bury the emotions, and tell myself that everything was all right. Sometimes I still react this way. However, I know that anger is a trigger for me, so when I feel anger today, I try to express it in a way that is respectful to others. When that is not possible, I let the energy out by exercising or working on a hobby.

• *Frustration of my will.* I often

want things to go my own way—perhaps not so much in the small things, but especially when I think something is important. When my will is frustrated, I find the Serenity Prayer to be helpful. I pray to detach from any particular outcome and accept God’s will for me. This helps me find acceptance.

• *Boredom.* When I’m bored, I look for something to give me a “kick.” I did this in the past when I indulged in lust by viewing pornography sites on the Web, and I got a kick out of taking the risk of being caught by my wife. Eventually, the pictures I viewed also became boring. The process of tolerance kept me continuously searching for newer and different stimuli.

Today, when I feel bored, I look for different ways to engage with the world. I paint, play my mandolin, start a new book, or start a new hobby. Four years ago I took up bird watching, and this has helped keep my mind active and boredom at bay.

• *Entitlement.* After I complete a



task that I don’t enjoy doing, I want to reward myself. Formerly, I would reward myself with pornography and acting out. I still get feelings of entitlement when I complete tasks that I do not enjoy doing, but my rewards have changed today. Sometimes when these feelings come up, I call my sponsor or a friend in the program. If there is a reward that seems safe, I might let myself relax and enjoy myself. For example, I might watch a movie with someone who can discern its appropriateness for me.

Today I recognize that there is no magic, no trick, and no single action that keeps me sober. But I’m grateful that—even though my reactions to life can sometimes still be triggers for me—today I am able to recognize triggers and their threat to my sobriety, so that I can better respond to them in healthy ways.

Working my program in the SA fellowship has given me sobriety, hope, and a “reasonably happy” life.

—Anonymous

#### USA

Cambridge MA (additional mtg)  
Denver CO (additional meeting)  
Ft Collins CO (additional meeting)  
Honolulu HI  
Mattoon IL  
New Haven CT

#### New SA Groups

Titusville FL  
Virginia MN  
**International**  
Cusco Peru  
Portage La Prairie MB, Canada  
Zwolle, The Netherlands





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## Changing the Things I Can

My name is Tom M.; I've been sexually sober since December 2007. As I work the Steps and continue in the SA fellowship, I find that my life is so much better. An important part of my recovery has been the serenity prayer. A key concept of this prayer is that I need to "accept the things I cannot change"—and, since I can change very little around me, I need to focus on acceptance.

When I was living in my addiction, I was usually on a collision course with someone (AA, 60). Anger and resentments fed my addiction. I left many damaged lives in my wake, including those I loved the most: my wife and children. I was quick to blame others and slow to take any responsibility for my attitudes or actions.

During the 25 years after I got married and before I came to SA, my marriage experienced many problems. Most of them were directly related to my addiction. If anyone or anything threatened to interfere with my addiction, I would react in anger and do whatever I could to deflect the threat.

My wife and I tried counseling on a variety of occasions, but I was not honest with the counselor and did not reveal my most basic issues. Instead, I would try to "win" the

discussions so that I could come out looking like the victim. Of course that did not do much good.

But through SA, I've learned that I can only look at my part of any problem, and so I have learned to communicate with my wife (and others) in a more loving way. Nowadays, whenever I feel a disturbance or if I experience

a disagreement, misunderstanding, frustration, or anger, I remind myself to turn to program principles. I look for my part—even if I think my part is small—and I try to work on that. I'm usually tempted to think, "What about *her* part?" or "*He* was the one actually in the wrong!" But it is more helpful for my serenity to look at myself and ask questions such as the following:

- Could I have communicated better?
- Was there a bit of selfish motive on my part?
- Was I less than 100% truthful and transparent?
- Was I acting out of fear, pride, or embarrassment?
- Am holding on to resentments and anger?

Through SA, I've found that if I take a good look at myself, I can usually find that I had some part in any situation, and that is where I need to put my efforts. I may need to change my attitude, make



amends, work the Steps, talk with my sponsor, or read program literature. I try to do whatever it takes to regain my serenity and restore relationships.

If I focus on the other person and try to exert control or "fix" the person, this usually leads to frustration, anger, and resentment—which then become a threat to my sobriety. When I describe these types of situations to my sponsor, he sometimes listens to me gripe but eventually he'll ask, "Is the issue worth losing your sobriety over?" Of course the answer is "No." Then I have to humble myself, get back to working the Steps, and surrender the particular issue.

One passage that has helped me immensely to focus on my part during the past few years of my sobriety is this reading from Step Ten:

It is a spiritual axiom that, no matter what the cause, there is something wrong *with us*. If somebody hurts us and we are sore, we are in the wrong also. But are there no exceptions to this rule? What about "justifiable" anger? If somebody cheats us, aren't we entitled to be mad? Can't we be properly angry with self-righteous folk? For us of A.A. these are dangerous exceptions. We have found that justified anger ought to be left to those better qualified to handle it. (12&12, 90)

Another passage that I refer

to often is in "Acceptance was the Answer" from the AA Big Book:

And acceptance is the answer to *all* my problems today. When I am disturbed, it is because I find some person, place, thing, or situation—some fact of my life—unacceptable to me and I can find no serenity until I accept that person, place, thing or situation as being exactly the way it is supposed to be at this moment. Nothing, absolutely nothing, happens in God's world by mistake. Until I could accept my alcoholism, I could not stay sober; unless I accept life completely on life's terms, I cannot be happy. I need to concentrate not so much on what needs to be changed in the world as on what needs to be changed in me and in my attitudes. (417)

I need to avoid the trap of trying to direct other peoples' behavior or expecting others' programs to look like mine. I need to surrender to God to help me along in my recovery and accept the fact that He will work in others' lives in the way that He sees is best. I need to surrender to God, asking Him to help me along in my recovery and trusting that He will work in me in the way and at the pace that He deems best. This is how I gain serenity, today.

—Tom M.

## A New Horizon

I'm Dennis and I'm an alcoholic. I'm sharing with you in this issue of *Essay* because I have the extraordinary honor of serving you as a trusted servant—as a Class A (non-sexaholic) Trustee. I've believed for some time now that trusted servants are those who earn the trust of those they serve, rather than the other way around. With that in mind, I would like to share a bit about myself, in the hope of earning your trust.

I attended my first meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous on November 5, 1978. By God's grace and the principles embodied in AA's Twelve Step program, I have not found it necessary to take a drink since that meeting. However, my experience with a Higher Power has convinced me that God is a practical joker. I say that because—on the day of that first AA meeting—I was actually bringing a friend of mine to an AA meeting to get *him* sober. It turned out that I was the drunk, not him. My friend had problems, but they weren't alcoholism.

I would never have gone to an AA meeting for myself. By that time, I had done many horrible things that I couldn't bear to think about. There was no person on earth whom I loathed or feared more than myself. But I still loved my friends,

and so my Higher Power used my love for that friend to get me to the meeting where I needed to be. Only a truly Cosmic Power could have orchestrated that kind of practical joke!

The most recent example of God's practical joking was that I was asked to serve as a Class A (non-sexaholic) Trustee for SA. I've given some AA presentations in my region on the idea that AA no longer needs the Class A Trustees on its General Service Board! So I could almost hear the Cosmic Laughter when I was asked to serve in that capacity for SA. I suspect there is something I need to learn that only SA can teach me. There is a prayer that I use in difficult situations: "God, do not let me out of this situation until I learn from it!" Okay, the student is willing to learn.

One question often asked of Class A Trustees in AA is: "Why do you want to do this?" The answer, at least for me, is because my Higher Power appears to prefer that I carry out this task. I have long had the opinion that, when I am asked to carry out a task, I am being given an opportunity that involves two things. First, it is an opportunity to build on experiences I have already been given. Second, I'm being given the opportunity to prepare for my



future. I am a firm believer that we are where God makes an investment, and it's only when we are of service that His investment can grow!

I've watched others who, when asked, decline to take on service roles—only to find later on that they failed to acquire a skill needed to move forward in life. I don't want to make that mistake!

Today, my main focus is to study and learn more about the principles that drive the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts of our program. The opportunity to serve in both SA and AA gives me a wonderful horizon from which to see those principles at work, as well as to see what happens when they are not at work. What I find most interesting is that, in either case, the result was because of love—either love of self, or love of a higher calling. In my experience, that

is the point where the road divides. I must decide whether I will invest my faith in my own way or my Higher Power's way.

There's a phrase in another Big Book that means a lot to me: "We see as through a glass darkly." I have come to understand that this description, "glass darkly," was a way of describing a mirror in old languages. So when I hold the glass up to the darkness, it turns into a mirror in which I see myself, and it becomes where I will focus my love. However, if I hold the glass up to the light (my Higher Power) I see through the glass clearly, and in that view are all the miracles available to me. One of those miracles, at least in my case, is the opportunity to serve SA. Thank you so much for letting me serve!

—Dennis B., Farmington, Minnesota, Class A Trustee



### Upcoming International Convention

July 11-14, 2014, Detroit, MI. *Miracle in Motown*



The SA fellowship of Detroit invites you to join us in a weekend of recovery—sharing, listening, learning, and connecting with others while building long-term relationships. The convention hotel is the Novi Sheraton in Detroit. Our special convention rate is \$99 per night (rate guaranteed only until July 3, 2014). For reservations within the U.S. call 248-349-4000 and reference "Miracle In Motown." For reservations worldwide, call 866-837-4180, or contact [starwoodhotels.com/sheraton/reservations/index.html](http://starwoodhotels.com/sheraton/reservations/index.html) or [sheratondetroitnovi.com](http://sheratondetroitnovi.com).

For additional information, visit our website at [miracleinmotown.com](http://miracleinmotown.com)

—George H., Convention Chair

## Meeting at the Crossroads

In December 2013, after months of planning and anticipation, eight SA members finally gathered in Istanbul, Turkey, at the intersection of Europe and Asia, in the shadow of St. Sophia Cathedral and the Blue Mosque. Four more unlikely countries coming together would have been hard to imagine—we were three from Russia, two from Iran, two from the UK, and one from the US. The stated reason for the gathering was to reach out to Iran and Russia, where SA is active but not yet integrated into SA worldwide.

By day, we talked service structure, Step work, and seminars. By night, we revealed our hearts in SA meetings through shares that echoed in three languages. We were seven men and one woman, plus an Iranian member who joined via Skype.

Despite our different nationalities, we instantly formed a new family. Our group of eight love cripples was joined together through a bond of love that we all dared to let ourselves feel. Two of our group—both former army officers trained to fight one another—had breakfast together in perfect brotherhood.

We did not always perfectly understand each other's languages, but we all knew the language of recovery. Throughout those three days, we encouraged one another and

forged genuine ties that have since extended to others back in our home countries.



For me, going to Istanbul was like going home, twice. This is where my father was born and raised, and I have cousins there and many memories of spending time there as a kid. But now, I was going home in another sense: to be with brothers and sisters in SA, most of whom had never met but who instantly formed a new family.

We felt like we were walking slightly off the ground—as if God had lifted us together to a higher place, onto that spiritual plane that forms through honesty and mutual vulnerability. You can't create this if you try; it just happens. We were witnessing the transformation that recovery brings.

By the end of the weekend, we saw that beyond all the practical discussions and the seeming challenges, God had planted in us a love for each other that would sustain us after we parted. Roy K. had foreseen it. We had made the real connection. We were home.

—L.A.

*Postscript:* Following our gathering, the seven SA Iranian Intergroups met and resolved to convey to AS's General Delegate Assembly their collective desire to establish a new

Farsi-speaking region within the SA Service Structure. That petition is now under review by the Regional Alignment Committee. The Iranian fellowship began in March 31, 2003, and today is some 2,000 members strong, with over 100 meetings and four country-wide meetings per year. The Iranian members are eager to carry the message to linguistically related Afghanistan and Tajikistan.

The Russian-speaking SA fellowship is also growing, with a Moscow Intergroup in complement to the Russian-speaking Intergroup that encompasses members in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Estonia, Lithuania, Kazakhstan, Israel, Poland, Belgium, and the US. Founded in 1999,

there are at present 11 face-to-face and virtual meetings, and an active meeting-on-line, with a membership of approximately 100. The fellowship holds an annual fall convention. Russian-speaking SA is examining options regarding representation at the international level, while focusing efforts on strengthening the fellowship from within.

We urge members around the world—especially Persian- or Russian-speaking—to contact SAICO (saico@sa.org) to connect with these two fellowships, offer sponsorship or other service, join virtual meetings, or visit face-to-face groups if you travel.

—L.A.

## Trusting God to Provide

SA's International Committee will sometimes receive a request from a member to fund an expensive meeting location, because of difficulties finding an affordable space in a desired location. I've heard the reasoning that affordable meeting places cannot be easily found outside the USA.

After receiving one such recent request, I felt that (besides my concern as to whether the idea complies with the Seventh Tradition) an inexpensive location could be found with a bit more searching. This was based on my own experiences in setting up new SA meetings in

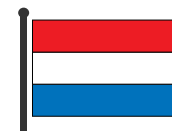
Utrecht and Mexico City.

About two years ago, some of us members of the SA Amsterdam group decided to set up a new meeting in the nearby city of Utrecht. At

the time, we had only one SA member living in Utrecht, and he did all the work of locating a meeting place: making a list of churches and contacting

them. The general response from the churches was, "You can rent a room but you will have to pay the competitive price"—which, in the city center of Utrecht, is around 50 to 100 euro (\$65 to \$130) per hour.

Utrecht has the most expensive real estate in the country, and





we could not pay that unless we could quickly get 30 fellows in the meeting—and that's more than the total amount of members in The Netherlands. We were discouraged; we had hoped for a bit more compassion from churches.

Still, this fellow simply continued looking, a bit further outside the of the city center, and one day he got "lucky" (I use quotes, because my view about what luck is has changed). There was a lot of publicity those days because of the movie "Shame," and one clinic decided to allow us to meet in their location, at a fee of 10 euros per month. We still meet in that clinic.

The same thing happened when I was visiting Mexico City last summer. There was no SA meeting in the city when I arrived, but with the help of my Higher Power I found a couple of suffering sexaholics who wanted to start one. Mexican members contacted various locations with no response—except for facilities that charged an unfeasible rent.

Having no regular SA meetings, I attended an English-speaking AA meeting that took place in a local Mexican church—but I had no time and no courage to contact the church and ask them (in my broken Spanish) for an SA meeting space. However, one rainy day I forgot my umbrella at the English AA meeting. I saw this as a sign from my Higher

Power to get me to go back to the church, pick up the umbrella, and talk to the priest about SA. And so I went. I summoned all my courage and asked for the priest. I spoke with him in Spanish, and everything went perfectly! The priest was quite interested; in fact he was wondering why he had not heard of SA before! He offered us a meeting room for just a voluntary contribution.

Some International SA members and groups do struggle to set up sustainable groups and achieve sexual sobriety. In looking for explanations, I've heard members say things such as: "It doesn't work here because things in our country are different from the U.S. We are poor, there is a macho culture here, our churches are different, we are..." etc. But my experience is that the externals do not matter, only the internals. The questions are: How are the SA members and groups organized and functioning? Do they persist in working the Steps—

meeting or no meeting, setbacks or no setbacks? That is what really matters.

This morning, during a service of my faith tradition, I heard: "Persist, and you will receive your life." I'm certain that sexaholics who desire recovery will be rewarded if they continue searching and trying to set up an SA meeting wherever they are in the world. God always comes through.

— M., *The Netherlands*



## Gratitude Week

I need to tell you something about myself: I'm a tightwad, a penny-pincher, a moneygrubbing cheapskate. There, I've said it. I used to prefer sex with self, mainly because that was the cheapest option.

And then a few months ago I was confronted with "Gratitude Week." Gratitude Week is meant to commemorate the first two consecutive SA meetings, which were held on February 4th and 11th, 1979. The motion to celebrate Gratitude Week originated at an EMER Assembly in March 2013 and was passed unanimously.

During EMER's Gratitude Week, individuals, groups, and Intergroups are invited to contribute money directly to SAICO. Members are encouraged to find creative ways to raise money, like passing the hat a

second time at meetings or making a personal donation online.

One idea is for members to make an extra contribution to SA's "expanding worldwide Twelfth Step work" (SA, 183), equaling the amount they spent on their addiction in a 24-hour span. The idea has caught on in many EMER groups. In fact, last year the amount raised by EMER was over \$4,300!

I sometimes like to think, "Sex with self cost me nothing!" But it actually cost more than that; it cost me my work, my wife and my family. I won't tell you how much I donated to SAICO this year, but I will say it was enough to make a penny-pinching miser like me feel uncomfortable. And I encourage all members to do the same each year, as we celebrate Gratitude week.

—A Grateful Member



### New SA Women's Skype Meeting

At the EMER convention in Warsaw last year, a few of us SA women decided to start a women's Skype meeting, to support women who attend mixed meetings where there are as yet no other women. Currently, ten SA women attend the meeting—from nine different countries and four continents! Our group includes two women from Luxemburg and one woman each from Vienna, Sweden, Austria, Germany, Kenya, Israel, Spain, and Asia. The meeting takes place on Saturdays at 6pm GMT, and all SA women are welcome!

For more information contact [rosesunbeam29@gmail.com](mailto:rosesunbeam29@gmail.com)





## Finance Committee Report

We are grateful for a significant increase in the fourth quarter fellowship contributions. As a result, 2013 income came in slightly under budget. Expenses exceeded income by \$18,749. The Prudent Reserve ended the year 2.2% (\$3,544) below its requirement. The outlook for 2014 is not encouraging. The approved budget is \$10,870 underfunded and there is an outstanding unfunded commitment of \$12,472 for new literature. Combined the Prudent Reserve is at risk to be underfunded by 20.0% by the end of 2014. We thank our members for your continued support and service to the Fellowship of SA.

—Carlton B., Chair, Finance Committee

### SA Financial Snapshot 2014

Budget Item	2013 Budget	2013 Actual	2014 Budget
<b>Revenues</b>			
Contributions	150,000	151,136	150,000
SACFC	10,000	11,992	10,000
Convention Donations	20,000	23,800	20,000
Net Literature Sales	68,600	60,530	68,500
Cost of Goods Sold	(19,000)	(19,656)	(19,000)
Interest	2,000	1,527	1,200
Essay	9,400	9,291	8,800
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>241,000</b>	<b>238,620</b>	<b>239,500</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
Bank Charges	200	91	200
Credit Card Fees	8,400	10,891	8,800
Credit Card Recovery	(5,000)	0	(2,500)
Accounting	6,000	7,225	5,800
Liability Insurance	2,300	1,767	2,300
Taxes and Licenses	600	411	600
Legal	2,500	1,891	500
Payroll and Benefits	138,000	138,558	138,420
Professional Fees	4,400	5,500	5,900
Office Expense	2,600	4,453	3,100
Literature Expense	1,000	849	1,000
Printing	9,000	5,259	9,000
Postage & Freight	12,500	13,074	12,650
Telephone	6,500	5,946	600
Internet Services	2,600	6,044	2,606
Rent	18,500	18,377	19,000
Repairs & Maintenance	500	330	500
Travel	33,000	*36,703	38,000
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>243,600</b>	<b>257,369</b>	<b>250,370</b>
<b>Net</b>	<b>(2,600)</b>	<b>(18,749)</b>	<b>(10,870)</b>
*Travel approved for International included here, \$5,686			

## Delegates and Trustees

Region	Delegate	Committees
North Midwest	Gary L., <i>Chair</i> Scott S. Dimitri P.	Literature, Legal, COMC International International, Conventions
South Midwest	Joe M. Steve L. Glenn J.	RAC, Legal Nominations, PI Conventions, PI
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German Speaking	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, PI  PI H&I



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

## Calendar of Events



### April 2014

**4-5, Nashville, TN USA:** *Happy, Joyous, and Free.* Contact sanoonmeeting@gmail.com

**4-6 Bad Teinach-Zavelstein, Germany:** *Spring-time Deutschland treffen.* Contact as-stuttgart@gmx.de. Plötzlich wird uns bewußt, dass Gott für uns das erledigt, wozu wir allein nicht in der Lage sind. English meetings can be provided.

**5, Belfast, Ireland:** *Gratitude Day.* Flyer available from saico@sa.org

**26, Asheville NC, USA:** SA Mountain Spring Marathon, *Renewing our Recovery.* Contact mountaintainspringasheville.com, or SA.MountainSpring@gmail.com

### May 2014

**2-4, Wyevale Ontario, Canada:** SA Spring Retreat, *A Roadmap to Recovery.* Contact 2014

SpringRetreat.eventbrite.ca or events@saontario.org

**3, Richmond VA USA:** *SA Marathon.* Contact sagrouprichmond@gmail.com

**3, Rochester NY, USA:** All-Day Marathon Meeting: *A Design for Living.* Contact 585-613-1656, 585-747-2725 or saico@sa.org,

**11-13, Jerusalem, Israel:** EMER Assembly and Convention, *Different Languages, Same Solution.* Contact tinyurl.com/EMER2014 or email sa.convention.israel@gmail.com

**16-18, Big Bear California, USA:** Find God XX Men's Retreat, *Fitting Ourselves to be of Maximum Service.* Contact Tom at 760-275-3431

**31, Chatanooga, TN, USA:** *Bridges to Recovery,* A day of fellowship, speakers and meetings in the Scenic City. Contact 423-402-0274 or chattanoogabridges@gmail.com

### June 2014

**20-22, Düsseldorf, Deutschland:** Traditions Workshop, *God will Restore our Innocence and Sanity....* Workshop will be held in English & translated into German. Phone: +49 157 361 322 39, email: asduesseldorf-schritte@web.de

### September 2014

**5-7, Ammerdown, UK:** Summer Convention. Contact sauksecretary@gmail.com

### October 2014

**11, Greensboro NC USA:** *Recovery in the Fall* Contact 336-833-1591 or servingtheliving@gmail.com

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

## The Twelve Traditions of Sexaholics Anonymous

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

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

### Upcoming International Conventions



**July 11-13, 2014, Miracle in Motown, Detroit, MI.** For info call 313-528-3006, contact miracleinmotown.com, or email sa-registration@miracleinmotown.com

**January 23-25, 2015, Awakening the Spirit, Portland, OR.** For info or to register, contact awakeningthespirit2015.com  
**July 2015, Chicago, IL.** Info available soon at saico.org



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*God,  
Grant me the Serenity to accept  
the things I can not change the  
courage to change the things  
I can and the wisdom to  
know the difference*

