

Essay

December 2015



Finding My SA Family

A quarterly publication of Sexaholics Anonymous

The Twelve Steps of Sexaholics Anonymous

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

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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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Finding My SA Family

By the grace of God and the fellowship of SA, I have been sexually sober since August 1, 1985)—something for which I am frequently but never sufficiently grateful.

I was introduced to pornography when I was eight years old, by a neighbor boy who was 14. The pictures were tame by today's standards, but they were quite exciting to me. I knew instinctively that I could not tell my parents what I was doing. I have two kids now, and I look at them at the age of eight and ask myself this question: How could that have happened to me?

I acted out for 25 years: compulsive sex with self, use of pornography, promiscuous relationships with women, fantasy, sexualizing, objectifying and dependency relationships. The White Book says it best,

...we bought it, we sold it, we traded it, we gave it away. We were addicted to the intrigue, the forbidden, and the tease. The only way we knew to be free of it was to do it. "Please connect with me and make me whole!" We cried with outstretched arms (SA, 203).

That was my story.

I'm sober today because some faithful person told me about his spiritual journey and his conversion experience. This got me to thinking about my own life at the time. By then I had married the person whom I thought was the woman of my dreams. I had a great career in a Fortune 100 Company in Rochester, NY. We had a beautiful home and two nice cars. I'd done everything I knew to do to make myself happy. But when my best friend from

college told me his story—that he had a religious conversion—I began to examine my life.

I realized that deep down inside something was missing, so I went back to church. After a while at church, it occurred to me that my thought life—as

well as the behavior that I was keeping secret from my wife—was not consistent with my newly-found faith. I began feeling guilty. That's when I realized that I had difficulty stopping. But I had no name for my problem, and I did not know I was powerless.

I found the last piece of the puzzle one day in February 1984, when I turned on the television to watch a nationally syndicated program. I watched the program basically to get a hit, because the



host often had racy topics. But that day, instead of something racy, there was a guy sitting behind a screen so that his face could not be seen, and he was talking about his sexual behavior. He looked at pornography, had sex with himself frequently, and kept it all a secret from his wife.

I was mesmerized. This man was telling my story. I felt shame, but I knew this was the piece of the puzzle I was missing: I am an addict. The idea brought me up short. I knew I had to stop but I did not know how. The guest on the program had written a book on sexual addiction, but there was no mention of a solution. Over the next 18 months, I tried to stop, but I could not.

Later that year, my wife told me that she wasn't happy in our relationship and she wanted to go to counseling. I complied but I did not mention my addiction. After a few months, in May 1985, my wife decided to move out of our house and seek a legal separation. I was devastated.

I continued with counseling on my own, and after several weeks I mustered up the courage to tell the psychiatrist that I thought I was a sex addict. When I asked him if he could help me, he reached into his desk drawer and pulled out a blue and white pamphlet with the letters "SA" on it. He then wrote out an address on a piece of paper and slid it across

the desk to me. It said, "SA, P.O. Box 300, Simi Valley, California."

I did not know what SA stood for. Had I known, I'm not sure I would have written a letter. But the letter went out. A week or two later I received a copy of the pamphlet with "The Problem," "The Solution," and "20 Questions" in it. As I read "The Problem" I cried. I saw myself. I could also see that God would be part of the solution.

I had already taken a simple step of faith, and I recognized that God loved me just the way I was. I knew that I could not do anything to earn His love—He just loved me. And I could now see that He would be part of the solution.

I later learned that one of the guys at my first SA meeting had previously left that pamphlet with the psychiatrist, in case someone else might find the solution. What a gift! We may never know how the simple things we do in our recovery will impact the lives of those who are out there looking for help.

After my wife moved out, we had to sell our dream home. I was defeated. The last time I acted out was July 31, 1985, because I didn't know what else to do. I had planned to go to a meeting after I moved, but the SA contact in Rochester reached out to me first and invited me to a meeting. I told him I would be there, and I attended my first SA meeting on August 7, 1985, when I was six

days sober.

The meeting was held in a mental institution in Rochester. To get to the room, I had to walk the gauntlet of people smoking and wearing white gowns. Three other men were at the meeting. The man who had called me was there, and he told his story. He said he'd been sober five months, and I about fell off my chair. I was six days sober. There was another guy who had five days, and another who had maybe a couple of days. We never again saw the guy who had invited me. He went back out. We later learned that he had died of his disease.

Then the fellow with two days disappeared as well. So we were down to two. We were a couple of scared guys, newly sober, but we held hands and we kept marching forward. And this year, by some miracle, we both celebrated 30 years of sobriety.

My friend and I went to our first SA one-day conference in Cleveland in October 1985. On the way over, we listened to a tape of an old timer by the name of Jess L. He sounded scary, but we hoped that SA would be the solution for us, as it had been for him.

Five months later I lost my job, and I had to move to Detroit to take a job there. I thought that in Detroit—with a population of several million people—I would have no problem finding an SA meeting, but

there were none. I attended another S-fellowship there for awhile. But I kept reaching out to SA's Central Office, and Roy K. (who managed SA Central Office back then) suggested that I attend a conference in Chicago in September 1986. So I went.

It was there that I first heard about leading with my weaknesses. It was also the first time I heard about sharing my top plate. Today I think of Chicago as the Nashville of the North, because of the role it has played in my recovery. I left the conference determined to go back to Detroit and start an SA meeting there.

I had it all worked out in my head. The meeting would be on Tuesdays because that's what worked best for my schedule.

So I marched into the meeting place of the other S-fellowship, and I said that I wanted to start an SA meeting. They said they would support me, but the only time available was on Sunday afternoons, so I thought, "I guess I struck out."

I kept in contact with Central Office, and Roy suggested that I attend a national conference in St. Louis in November 1986. So I went, and there I met two people from Nashville who would become two of the most important people in my recovery (I knew that I'd be moving to Nashville within a couple of years). I look back in wonder at



all of the “coincidences” that have occurred since I got in to recovery. It was also there that it hit me: God wanted the meetings to be on Sunday.

So I went back to Detroit and asked whether the meeting place was still available, and it was. We had our first meeting on a Sunday in January 1987. I wasn’t even there. I was back in Kentucky, visiting my parents for the holidays. One of the other guys held the first meeting, and I came back for the second meeting. Within a couple of weeks we had a dozen people at the meeting. It was unbelievable. And it was not just men—it was probably 50-50, men and women. And people kept coming.

It turns out that the name of the facility where we held our meeting was “CAPS”: Children of Alcoholic Parents—and I realized that was what I was. The members were working on the same issues that I struggled with. At the time I was still married and trying to keep things together, even though I was 400 miles away from my wife.

I began seeing a counselor because I realized that I had codependence issues. I had one of those epiphanies when I was able to ask myself, “What is it about me that causes me to be in relationships with certain types of people?” In all of my relationships, my partners always left me. I was always dependent on others and they always left. Then

they would come back, and I always took them back.

At the time, my ex-wife was already engaged to someone else, and she would call me for advice. I knew that if I didn’t stop talking with her and get some help, I could lose my sobriety. So I started getting counseling, as suggested in our White Book.

The counseling involved looking at my childhood and the role I played in the family system. My parents both had their own issues that caused me difficulty, and working with my counselor, I was able to separate from them for a time. I felt unsafe around them; one of my parents had threatened my life multiple times.

I also separated myself from my ex for awhile because I couldn’t talk with her. I couldn’t give her advice about her love life. I was still married to her. I also had to separate from my childhood friend who shared his faith story with me, because I had become his wife’s confidant, and he was the dad that I could never please. I had to separate from all of those folks, so I moved to Nashville in 1988—and there I had my rock; my program. Two meetings a week! I had a place to go.

The Nashville fellowship was approximately 50% men and 50% women at the time. We learned how to be in meetings together and how to do activities together. We did raft trips. We did picnics. We worked

our Steps together. We learned how to be together as a family. That was a wonderful experience.

A couple of significant things happened to me during those early days. Early on, wherever I went, I had been the guy with the most sobriety. So guess who didn't have a sponsor? I had basically been winging it on Steps One, Two, and Three. But now the jig was up. I needed to do more work and I needed to get an SA sponsor.

By the time I moved to Nashville, I was a couple of years sober. It took me another year after I moved there to finally ask one of the men to be my sponsor, and it was my sponsor's idea to have our first SA International Convention in Nashville in January 1990. He also thought that I should be the Chair. It wasn't as complicated at it is today, and after several months of planning, about 300 people came to that conference.

God has a wonderful sense of humor. I was a very conservative Christian, and God brought an Orthodox Jew into my life to be my sponsor. I said to him, "I'm ready to do Step Four." He replied, "Why don't we start on Step One?" So that's what we did, and by the time we had our convention, I was doing my Step Nine.

At the time I had been divorced for three years. I hadn't had my first

date yet, so I called my ex and said, "We're having a conference, and I'd like you to come." I had told her about my addiction and recovery, and she denied it multiple times. I had this vision of us hitting the conference circuits. Instead I got to do my Ninth Step with her. That was a powerful experience. A couple of months later I had my first date in sobriety with a woman I had met at church.

My separation with my parents ended when I received a call that my dad was in the hospital with a heart attack, and he wanted to see me. So I went. We had tried to reconcile once before and it hadn't worked, but when I went to that hospital in Lexington, KY, we reunited. It was a wonderful experience. By then I was five years sober, and I was just beginning to have some compassion for my dad. He had done the best he could.

Eighteen months later he was diagnosed with terminal cancer. The SA fellowship shared their experience, strength, and hope with me as my dad went through that experience. I had been dating off and on, but from 1992 to 1993 I don't think I had a date. I was with my dad almost every weekend. We had a conference in Nashville right before he died, in 1993. I remember talking about his death with my SA friends there and crying. The SA fellowship loved me through that experience.



After the conference, we had our annual SA raft trip and I celebrated my eighth sobriety birthday shortly afterwards. One of the members painted the number eight on a river rock, and he gave it to me on my sobriety birthday! I still have that rock today.

Dad passed away in August 1993. The phone rang off the hook the day he died. I was surprised that all the phone calls were for me. Again my SA family loved me through my grief. They became my laboratory for life.

In January 1994, I attended another International Convention, in Rochester. There were three feet of snow on the ground. My ex was still unattached. I hadn't had a date in 1993 and she had broken off with that "boyfriend," so we had dinner together. I was still holding out hope. But it was clear to me that we had taken different paths.

I was sad for a month or two after I had that awareness, but I was going on nine years sober and I had wonderful friends and a job that I enjoyed doing. I was active in service to my fellowship and active in my church. I thought, "I can be single the rest of my life. Or I might get married and that will be okay."

Nine months later I met the woman who would become my wife. I met her through SA. A group of us had formed a book club outside of our SA meeting, where men and

women would read books to help us understand relationships.

In December 1994, one of the guys in our club decided to have a dinner party, and he invited several of us single guys. A female friend of his invited several single women, including the woman who would become my wife. We were gathered at a condominium in Nashville, and one of my buddies flirted with her all night long. But I called her afterwards—and the rest, as they say, is history.

We married on August 3, 1996, two days after my 11th sobriety birthday. My sponsor read an Old Testament lesson at our wedding.

The men and women who were in our book club and in SA were members of our wedding party and served as ushers.

My wife and I tried to have children pretty quickly. I was 44 by then and she was 34. We learned that we were infertile, and my friends in the fellowship supported me through the in-vitro process. We have a picture of our oldest son at eight cells before he was implanted in his mother. The picture is in his baby book. The men and women in my meetings walked me through my wife's pregnancy and helped prepare me to be a dad. It's a miracle.

Our second son is adopted, and the fellowship also walked with me through the adoption process. The SA fellowship has walked with me through so many things that I've had



to deal with in life. SA is my family, my learning laboratory, my rock.

The experience of celebrating my 30th SA anniversary was unbelievable. Through countless opportunities, I've learned that when I surrender my right to lust and turn to God through prayer, make a phone call, or go to a meeting, my life is continually improved. SA has given me this wonderful perspective. But I keep coming back because I'm as powerless today over lust as I was 30 years ago. I am not cured! I continue to work on the character defects that trigger my lust. As my sponsor says, if I want to stay sober for another 30 years, all I have to do is stay sober one day at a time.

I believe that our fellowship is on the cusp of exploding worldwide. I daily ask God to bless SA and make me a good steward of our fellowship. We have a wonderful message to share—but I only have a message if I work my program and am of service to others. I also try to be

generous in my giving, so that others will hear the message. I hope that other members will join me in these goals.

Last summer, right after the SA convention in Chicago, my sixteen-year-old and I took a train from Chicago headed for Flagstaff, and then on to the Grand Canyon, where we met up with my wife and youngest son. It was an amazing experience! I would never have had this experience had I not found SA. I never thought I'd have a wife and children, and I never thought I'd be so close to them.

I've been given a gift that I would not trade with anyone, and I owe it all to God, and to this wonderful fellowship of SA. May God bless all of you and this wonderful fellowship.

—Dave H., Franklin, TN



Sober Dating, Marriage, and Divorce

A Work in Progress

My name is C. and I'm a gratefully recovering sexaholic from Ireland. Some years ago I heard an old-timer say at a convention that, before he was married, he knew a lot about lust but did not know much about sex. I identified with this because it is also true for me. Through

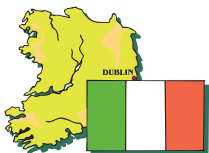
SA I've learned that lust and sex are two entirely different things.

When I started dating, I had no plan to get married; it was really a bit of an accident. I was prepared to spend the rest of my life happily being sober on my own. Mainly I just wanted to stay sober above all else.

I was an intense addict. I had a lot of pain from childhood on account of being sexually abused by a male relative when I was six years old. This went on for six years, causing me tremendous psychological pain, and it confused my gender orientation. I continued to act out from that young age, masturbating constantly and acting out with others. I was constantly generating fantasies in my head, and then trying to act on them afterwards. After 28 years of addictive acting out involving same-sex lust and multiple anonymous partners and promiscuous, dangerous activity, I was left quite insane. I was broken and suicidal at the end.

In 1988, some eight years prior to getting sober in SA, I had a four-year relationship with a woman. We had a son together and I wanted to get married, but my disease of sexaholism caused the relationship to break down. The experience was extremely painful. It took me five years to recover from the pain of that breakup. I lost faith in everything, including myself. I thought that I was incapable of being in a normal heterosexual relationship after that. I thought I was too insane to maintain a relationship, and that it would be unsafe for me to risk ever getting married.

I came into SA in 1995, and I had a number of slips until I got so-



ber in 1997. After two years of sexual sobriety in SA, I happened one day to say “Hello” to the woman who lived next door. She was out washing her car, and I just said “Hello”—and she completely ignored me. This was the first time a woman had actually ignored me! Another day she was out hanging up her clothes and I said “Hi,” and then she said “Hi” back—and that was it for a couple of days.

Then a mutual friend invited us out to a concert together. I just happened to be sitting beside this woman and I felt a lovely kind of warm feeling, but it wasn’t lust. It was a peaceful feeling that came over me. It felt joyful. The room sort of lit up and I suddenly had a great feeling in my heart while being in the company of this woman.

I went home and rang my sponsor, thinking he would say “No way. You are not allowed date; not you! You’re too crazy.” But he didn’t say that. Instead he said, “This sounds okay. Keep going and see what happens. Ask her out.” I said, “I don’t know if I can,” because I was afraid. He told me to try it. So I asked her if she would like to go out the next evening to a concert. So we went out, and it felt beautiful, like the closest thing to my Higher Power coming for a visit.

Dating in sobriety was quite different from what I had experienced

before. I felt wholesome, clean, and right. But I knew what I had to do in my program, so I said to myself, “I must stay sober or this new relationship will not work out.” For me, that meant not getting physical at all.

For weeks there was nothing but holding hands and the occasional peck on the cheek. She became my girlfriend. She had a different view of sex than I did, but she accepted fully my position that I had to keep good physical boundaries. We just started dating and talking, and we got to know each other, and we fell in love. It was the best experience of my life. I was smiling all the time. People were asking me what had happened that I was smiling all the time. It was precious. I felt my Higher Power close to me in her presence.

Keeping good sexual boundaries was quite important to me, so I regularly checked in with my sponsor. I did not go into her apartment at night. I was okay sitting in the car chatting and looking at the stars with her or whatever. But if we started to get physically aroused, I would stop and say, “I’ve got to go now.” I knew that if I acted out with her my program would go, I would lose my sobriety, and then everything else would go. I would be back to acting out in the old way, and I would probably lose everything. I had to commit to sobriety 100%.

After about three months of

dating her, my sponsor said that I should tell her about SA, because it was (and continues to be) a big part of my life. This was difficult, but I knew it was the right thing to do. If she rejected me then at least I could accept it—but we actually got closer after that. She shared with me some of her own life issues, and we started sharing more deeply with each other.

In 1997, she came with me to an SA convention in the south of Ireland—and she got a real shock hearing one SA story after another! It was scary for her, but she became good friends with some of the SA members who are my fellows, and we are still all good friends today.

In the summer of 1998, I proposed to her and we got engaged. We got married 11 months after we started dating. It was quite quick. Sometimes she says to me, “Yes that was too quick,” but marriage has been a fabulous experience of continued growth for both of us.

Being married has helped my SA sobriety. There are always opportunities to be of service in the marriage and in the home. We have two children, and sometimes when they were young, I would get up at night to care for them if they woke up. Sometimes I would help my wife by washing the dishes. I had to stop thinking about myself all the time, and that helped me a lot.

I have changed so much since we got married, and the changes



have been for the better. I no longer dwell in isolation. I'm fine being on my own, whereas at the start of my recovery I felt safer when I was around other good people. The people I hung around with before we were married—like my brothers or sisters or being with my girlfriend before we were married—had a good sobering influence on me.

Being with others is better than going off and going into my own head. My sponsor would say, "Do what is in front of you; go home after the SA meeting to your family and sweep the floor, or offer to make tea. See where you can be of service." Even today my sobriety is enhanced when I am serving others.

My marriage today is a work in progress. Like every other couple we have our issues, but we are willing to work through them. We are committed to each other, and I have remained faithful to my wife, all thanks to SA. Our children are teenagers

now, and they are very active, well-balanced young adults. It is a big bonus for them to have a Twelve Step program in our house.

Over the years my wife and I have travelled to several conventions in Europe and have met and spoken with other members and SA couples. That is always a wonderful experience. When I met my wife, my Higher Power gave me a gift to help me grow up!

New members often ask me for advice about dating. From my experience, I believe that SA members who wish to begin sober dating should set good boundaries from the start. I recommend telling the person about SA within a few months so that you each know where you stand. Get your friend to an SA convention or speakers meeting—and if he or she doesn't run away, then you're probably on to something good.

—C.M., Ireland

Recovery and Divorce: But I'm Sober!

I desperately wanted to have the SAs-Anon marriage recovery story that one hears of from time to time in our rooms. I've probably read the "ending" (or better said, the "true beginning") of the story in the White Book (SA, 149-154) a dozen times or more. I would have done anything for that be my story—but it has not been my

story and it is not the experience, strength, and hope that I have to share.



After eight months of sobriety, my wife revealed to me that she had cheated on me multiples times with multiple partners over the previous year. She said she wasn't attracted to me and didn't love me anymore. She

said she wanted out.

In a flash, my world exploded. I had not been a good husband to her surely, but this was not how our story was supposed to end. "But I'm sober!" I wanted to yell.

Fast forward eight more months, and I'm now 16 months sober. I find myself sitting in our couples therapist's office hearing the words that I thought I would never hear, those words that just can't be true: "I want a divorce." All this work...All these risks taken...All this surrender... All this hope. This is not the story I wanted. This is not how our story was supposed to end. I wanted to yell, "But I'm sober!"

Today as I write this, it has been eight more months since my soon-to-not-be wife asked me for a divorce. I'm coming up on 24 months of sobriety. Yesterday, we signed the paper work to finalize our divorce. I'm overwhelmed with the feeling that this just cannot be my story. It's not the story I wanted for my life. I do not want this divorce. "But I'm sober!" I want to yell.

The truth of the matter though is that sobriety and recovery do not equal a magical path to getting what I want in life. Progressive victory over lust and conscious contact with God do not mean that I am insulated from the pain of living life on life's terms. Members of SA still get cancer, lose jobs, have family members pass away, and in my case, some-

times go through heart-wrenching divorces.

Based on some of the shares I sometimes hear in meetings, one would think that every person who gets sober and walks the path of recovery ends up with a million dollars in the bank, a beautiful, happy family, and a full head of hair. That just hasn't been my experience; in fact, my experience has been rather the opposite. I've had to come to accept that recovery is not a ticket to the land of impossible dreams. That's what lust always offered but never provided. Recovery does not make my fantasies real. Recovery makes reality real. In recovery, I'm able to accept reality for what it is, even if I wish it were not.



For me, recovery means letting go of my resentments and praying for my wife every morning, praying for her partners, praying that God will do for me what I can't do for myself, and that He will enable me to forgive them and truly wish them well. Recovery means choosing truth over the false comfort of fantasy. It means I don't have to run from reality but am able to accept reality despite how much I'd like to change it. Recovery means being able to live life on life's terms even when those terms feel unbearable.

No, I did not get the marriage recovery story I wanted, but I did get a Solution that works on good days and bad. I got a Solution that

has allowed me to continue to grow in recovery despite the hell that this year has been. I got a Solution that made it possible for me in the midst of the painful ending of my marriage to be able to gratefully yell, "But I'm sober!!"

If anyone had told me all that would come to pass in my life at my first meeting two years ago, I would not have believed for one second that I could walk through such pain, depression, and fear and remain sober. But through SA, not only have I remained sober, but my sobriety has thrived.

When I first came into these rooms, I could not string two sober days together—and that was when everything seemed idyllic. I did not and still do not have the capacity within me to keep myself sober. That's true even on sunny days when all the lights are green and they're handing out free samples at the gro-

cery store.

But walking through a divorce in recovery? Remaining sober despite being rejected and left by my wife? Forget it. Not a chance in the world. There's just no way I could have made it through all of this sober... and yet I have.

As I look back on this deeply painful year and a half, all I can say is that I know God has done and continues to do for me what I cannot do for myself. At the end of the day, while the details may differ, this is the story of all recovering addicts, a story I am so very grateful for today. The dawn to this night I've been living has not yet come, but I have faith that it will if I continue to take right actions. And until it does, I am content to patiently wait and simply be grateful to God and this fellowship for giving me a Solution that works.

—Nick Z., Cambridge, MA

An Action of Love

Five months before we retired, my wife and I made the last payment on what had been a sizeable debt for our family's education loans. We thanked God as we sat next to each other on our love seat in our living room. We sat silently for a moment, each lost in our own thoughts. She was the first to speak and her words disturbed me. She asked, "Do you think we will ever buy my rings?"

A freak accident had destroyed

her engagement ring soon after our second child was born. We saved to replace her ring (as well as a matching wedding ring) but then our third child was born. Rearing three children and getting them through college made it necessary for us to put off purchasing rings until sometime in the future. I was still thinking "future," but she thought "future" was now. It was time to buy her rings.



Sadly, my first thoughts were, “What? Are you crazy? We are retiring in five months!” Thankfully SA has taught me to feel my feelings but consider the facts before speaking. A quick prayer enabled me to receive direction from our loving God. It was time to replace her rings—but my heart wasn’t in it. I nodded and replied with what seemed to me to be a monotone voice, “Yes, let’s buy your rings.”

Even though I committed to this action of love, it felt artificial. I prayed and then called my sponsor. I admitted that I’m selfish and driven by fear. He recognized this and encouraged me to join with my wife and help her find the replacements for her rings. In the past I wasn’t always willing to take the actions of love, but my sponsor has taught me to “suit up, show up, and allow the attitude to catch up.”

When I entered the rooms of SA on February 06, 2001, I did not know that I was selfish and prone to fear of economic insecurity. I knew I was a mess and I desired sobriety, but I did not understand what my problem was until I read “The Problem” (SA, v): cant find toolbar

We could never know real union with another because we were addicted to the unreal... Fantasy corrupted the real; lust killed love.”

The phrase “lust killed

love” explained why I could not experience intimacy with those I professed to love, including my wife. My compulsive use of lust had led me to live in my fantasies, and self-indulgence was destroying my relationships. Lust was not only killing love; it was killing me.

The years have passed, but thanks to God’s grace, the support of the SA fellowship, and the SA Twelve Steps, I’m recuperating from the love-killing effect of my former, compulsive use of lust. Taking the actions of love is healing me. Today I can turn to God when tempted by the symptoms of my disease.

So today, thanks to God’s grace, I can choose to take actions of love instead of actions of selfishness and faithlessness. My wife and I started looking for her rings soon after our discussion in the living room. She took me to a jewelry store she admired.

Miraculously, I let go of worry about our financial security in retirement. I began to enjoy my wife’s excitement and joy. She found the stones and bands that she had been hoping for in time for our 40th wedding anniversary celebration. Today I look at the rings on her finger and feel gratitude for my sobriety and for her. Thanks to God’s grace, the SA fellowship, and the Twelve Steps this love cripple is sober and in recovery.

—Ken W., Rochester, NY



May I Never Forget

May I never forget the sexaholic who still suffers. With just over one year of sobriety, the freedom I'm experiencing is indescribable. The freedom I have been blessed with is a gift that brings peace, joy, serenity, and an absence of the ravages of my disease.

And yet just yesterday, after attending another wonderful SA meeting and enjoying the closeness of fellowship, I was going about my day when out of nowhere I was struck by a tidal wave of lust. It struck with speed and power, and I never saw it coming. I was surprised to be in the middle of a storm.

I immediately turned to my Higher Power, as I have done so many times when hit with this type of attack. There was no relief. I started going through my checklist. I could not identify any resentments, fears, or disturbances in my life that would bring on such an overwhelming occurrence. I affirmed that I had not taken any drinks or sips of lust. I had not viewed anything that was harmful. All of those things that brought storms in the past were absent. I was dumbfounded and—more than that—my Higher Power was not bringing me relief.

I was suffering like I used to suffer before coming into SA. My

head was on a swivel, I could not stop the drinking, and I was feeling an incapacitating urge to act out. It had been many months since I experienced this level of absolute agony. The discomfort I felt was a wrenching deep inside that I could not escape. I was irritable, restless, and discontent. I could find no peace.

My wife and I had planned to spend time together that night, but by 8:30 I was so physically and mentally exhausted that I could only climb into bed and succumb to a deep sleep. The next morning when I awoke I slid out of bed, thanked God for another day of sobriety (as I do every morning), admitted my powerlessness, surrendered my lust and my will, and asked Him to lend me His power just for today.

Then I prayed the Third Step prayer. Freedom and serenity returned. I was at peace. As I meditated, my Higher Power brought to my mind a single thought, one that I had thought but not spoken the day before.

The previous day I had received a message from a member saying that another member had slipped the night before, and also that morning. This individual might be classified as a "chronic slipper." As



I read the email, I felt absolutely no compassion. I even felt a bit judgmental as I haughtily thought, “He just doesn’t want to quit”—even though this individual has cried out many times for help.

The smug thought came and went, and then I headed off to my wonderful meeting where I could enjoy another glorious day of recovery. Life was so sweet. But then out of nowhere the storm came with debilitating force, and (after reviewing the sequence of events) I now realized a few important truths.

First, God and God alone has given me every sober moment. Only through His power have I enjoyed recovery and serenity thus far. In that storm I could plainly see the disease that is still very much alive in me. The freedom I’ve been experiencing has been a gift from God. In those times when my disease seems nonexistent or removed for periods of time, I can become lulled into a false belief that lust is gone, and it seems I cannot even remember the horrific agony of the disease. As the Big Book says,

We are unable, at certain times, to bring into our consciousness with sufficient force the memory of the suffering and humiliation of even a week or a month ago. (AA, 24)

I felt quite humbled by this experience, because I do very much

believe that,

What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition. (AA, 85)

Another truth I realized is that God very much loves the sexaholic—all sexaholics. I am ashamed of the attitude that I had toward that young man as he expressed the pain of slipping yet another time. My thought that “He just doesn’t want to stop” would imply that he has some type of choice, and he is choosing to stay in his disease.

How soon I had forgotten the absolute powerlessness and hopelessness I experienced before coming to SA. I only had to suffer half a day experiencing what other sexaholics are suffering on a daily

basis to remember. God please forgive me for my uncompassionate heart toward another sexaholic, and thank You for showing me that I am still a very sick man.

I see clearly now that my sobriety, serenity, peace, and every part of this program only come from a loving Higher Power. He will give me all the gifts of the program if I will only turn to Him on a daily basis, and if I have love and compassion for the sexaholic who is still suffering.

—Dennis T., Alaska



Thirty-Day Chip

I've learned a lot in the past seven-plus years that I've been in recovery. I've learned that knowledge (like half measures) avails me nothing. Primarily, it does not get me the one thing I cannot get on my own: sobriety.

In the past—even before recovery—there were times when life seemed manageable. I even had stretches of days and weeks when I wasn't acting out in my disease. But I could not stay sober. I never surrendered lust because I was using knowledge as my Higher Power, and with that came my delusions of power—and thus came my half measures of recovery. This included working *some* Steps, making *some* meetings, and taking *some* direction from a sponsor in another fellowship.

My half-measures were where the insanity lay. I made up my own definitions for pornography and masturbation. I defined pornography as material that I either read, heard, or viewed which contained “raw” sex. I defined masturbation as stimulating myself to climax. Anything outside of those definitions did not count as porn or masturbation—according to *my* definition. I knew I was lying, but no one ever called me out for being a liar or said that I wasn't sober—until July 14, 2015.

Two weeks before that, I was

headed into the abyss when I fasted a religious fast. I was feeling sick, and I didn't check in with a sober member or with a Rabbi. I lusted with fantasy that day and stormed out of my bungalow in Upstate New

York, driving three hours back to the city where I could be alone. Since for the past two years I had already been watching porn (which I didn't call porn) and touching myself while aroused

(which I didn't call masturbation), this new bout of lust was driving me as only lust does to an addict of the hopeless kind, like me.

Within a few days I was acting out with a deeper level of exhibitionism than I had ever done before. I reached out—for the first time—to an SA member who had the kind of sobriety I wanted, but which I did not believe I could get. I shared two things with him. First, that I was acting out big time but calling myself sober, and second, I was still attending another S-fellowship.

This man called me out for real. He asked why I was still attending the other fellowship, and I actually said, “To carry the message of lust versus sex,” to which he laughed in my face. He said that made no sense, as I was I was seriously lusting and could not carry any message. I will be forever grateful to him for speaking to me so freely. I acted out



that afternoon with pornography and masturbation (by my old definition), and I felt so low that I did I not want to go to a meeting. But that night I went to an AA meeting (I've been sober in AA since March 16, 2014), and I took a seat next to an SA friend who also attends AA. While waiting for the meeting to start, I asked this man to be my sponsor, and he agreed. For the first time in over seven years I had an SA sponsor!

Today I accept SA's sobriety definition; I no longer define anything myself. My sponsor told me to attend 90 meetings in 90 days, make three calls a day, start writing my Step One, call him every day and share a lust and a feeling, meet him once a week, and stay honest with my wife. And so far it has worked: last Thursday I celebrated 30 days of SA sobriety.

I hadn't planned to go to the meeting that night. I really didn't want to get a chip because I did not want to lose the feeling of pain of hitting bottom on July 14—which was the basis of my new total surrender. But one of the people I've called every day was about to celebrate one year of sobriety, and



he insisted that I show up to get my chip. So I took my chip and shared how I did it: by asking for and finally getting the help I needed from SA.

After the meeting, a sober member approached me. I always loved and respected this gentle, loving, and rock-solid sober member. He gave me the 30-day chip he had received when he celebrated his first 30 days some years before—and this was by far the most emotional experience of my life. This amazing man told me that his sponsor told him he couldn't keep it unless he gave it away, and he was now giving it to me, and he hoped I would do the same down the road. I cried and hugged him, and I still feel emotional when I think about his gift.

As a chronic slipper I would always say, "This time I mean business" (AA, 5) and then eventually that strange mental twist would hit me and I would drink in lust until I acted out. This last time it took two years of lust-drinking until I hit that bottom but man, am I glad I did—because it's great to be sober today.

—Max P., Brooklyn, NY

(Today, November 12, 2015, I received my four-month chip)

The First Drink

In SA's Step One, I admitted that I'm powerlessness over lust (not over a particular behavior), and the Third Tradition states that the only

requirement for membership is "a desire to stop lusting and become sexually sober" (SA, 209). Both the Step and the Tradition remind me

that lust lies beneath my acting out behaviors.

I'm like the alcoholic in many ways, but one difference is that I carry my distillery with me wherever I go. I can think I'm sober but really be a long way from sobriety because I've been indulging in lust: stealing glances, lusting over past sexual experiences, entertaining illusions of desirability, fantasizing while having sex with my wife, or looking at porn.

For the alcoholic, the first drink is literally a drink of alcohol, and that first drink starts the craving the Big Book speaks of. But for me, the first drink is a lust hit.

When I take in image or thought and indulge it, then lust starts the craving.

So the difference between the sexaholic and alcoholic is the source of the first drink. For the alcoholic the first drink is external: the bottle. For me, the first drink is internal: it's lust. Resentment nursed by an alcoholic or a sexaholic can cause a mental obsession, resulting in each of us becoming "restless, irritable, and discontented" (AA xxviii), and we each seek that first drink that brings "ease and comfort" (AA xxix). I must remember that "Resentment is the "number one" offender (AA, 64) for me, just as it is for the alcoholic.

But the difference between the alcoholic and me is that the alcoholic has to find a bottle. If he's in a business meeting, he might

have to wait all day to get that first drink, find comfort, and thus break his sobriety. For me, however, sitting in the same meeting, I only need a sideways glance to find a bottle—or if no fitting object is present, I can recall my favorite fantasy and be off. I've taken the first drink, found comfort, and the craving is initiated (and I'm on my way to a roaring drunk) while my alcoholic colleague is still stewing in his resentment because his drug is far off.

For me, I may have to wait to physically act out, but that's just the conclusion of what's already going on in my head.

And if I live in this acting-in-state, I'm really just trying to "control and enjoy" my drinking (AA, 30), and living like this in a drunken, sorry state will lead to disaster.

We addicts have an allergy, a drug that is absolutely toxic to our systems. For the sexaholic, the White Book pegs my toxic substance:

For the sexaholic, lust is toxic. This is why in recovery, the real problem is spiritual and not merely physical. This is why change of attitude is so crucial. (SA, 41)

Therefore, if I am to recover from lust, and if I am to have the abundant life promised in our literature, I must be just as intent on being purged of my lust as I am on being purged of my problematic sexual behavior.

—Richard H.



Gratitude

I've had a month of feeling low. I've got lots of excuses, such as changing jobs, loss of significant other relationship, family issues, and poor diet and exercise. It all adds up to excessive sleep and self-pity. Going back to my Fourth Step work, I can see my defects coming to life. No wonder sobriety has been a challenge. Anger, fear, ego, and self-centeredness all contribute to my current zombie-like existence. But then I received a gift: an e-mail invitation to support *Essay* with artwork and maybe some words.

My Higher Power is telling me to share words of gratitude. So what am I grateful for? In the midst of depression, gratitude is a powerful antidote. So let's give it a go.

I'm grateful for my friends. I'm grateful for having a roof over my head and money in the bank. I'm grateful for my two sons, one of whom just got married. I'm grateful for his intelligent, beautiful, and loving bride. I'm grateful for.... *Oh no! I'm starting to listen to the negative inside my head. Go away!*

I'll try again. I'm grateful for music, and how music draws me toward my Higher Power. I'm grateful for how music moves me to tears, as it did this morning. I'm grateful for this cup of coffee, even if it's warmed up

from this morning.

This is lame. I'm not feeling grateful. I'm feeling self-absorbed and depressed. "*Go on,*" I hear inside. Okay, I'm grateful for..... grateful for..... Love.

Yeah that's original. What do you mean by that, smart guy? Well, if I allow myself to feel (which in my case can require an act of God), love is with me. My Higher Power's love is with me. Why did I book a trip for Thanksgiving to see my closest cousin? My Higher Power told me to go be with love. Why did that relationship end? My Higher Power tells me to let it go with love. Why did I get an opportunity to journal

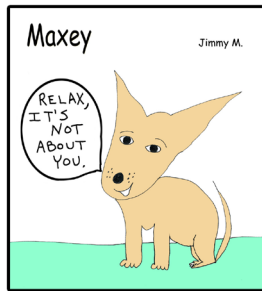
my feelings from *Essay*? Published or not, the love I feel from the asking got me to start typing; and you know what? I am grateful.

I pray for the attitude of gratitude. I pray I can reach out to others and not obsess about

myself. I pray I can keep a journal of gratitude by my bed and list 10 things I am grateful for each night. I pray for the courage and willingness to get to meetings and do the work (again). Yes, I pray for gratitude.

And you know what? I'm grateful that I'm feeling better right now.

—*Blessings to all, Jimmy M.*



My Miraculous Journey

When I attended my first SA meeting on June 7th, 2014, I finally learned what my problem was. Hearing “The Solution” brought me hope. During my last year of acting out, I had become a chronic marijuana user and daily drinker. I was high on something 24 hours a day, and I withdrew from lust, alcohol, and drugs all at the same time. This was rough at first. I stayed sober in SA almost four months, but then I relapsed and learned that I had to be more honest with myself. Today my sobriety date is September 30th, 2014.

My husband joined S-Anon shortly after I walked into SA. These programs have helped us to develop a healthy relationship, parent our two daughters, and live our everyday lives. This past year-and-a-half has been a miraculous journey.

Retreats and conventions have been an important part of my recovery. I attended my first SA International Convention in January 2015. I shared my First Step there to a room full of strangers. That was truly a spiritual experience.

In April 2015, I attended the Northwest Regional Retreat, where I learned how to let go of shame. In July 2015 I attended the International Convention in Chicago, and the

entire weekend was a spiritual experience for me. I learned more about how to rely on my Higher Power. I plan to attend the SA

International Convention in San Diego in January. I’ve also participated in one-day retreats where I live. Each time I attend any of these recovery weekends, I learn something that has changed my recovery for the better.

I still attend AA meetings, and I celebrated my one-year birthday there on June 9th, 2015. I do service work both in SA and AA. Service has allowed me to get out of myself and focus on others. My AA home group is a women’s-only meeting, and sometimes, when I feel it serves a purpose (or when somebody asks “What is this other Twelve Step program you’re in?” I break my SA anonymity so that others might be helped.

Sponsoring women—both in SA and AA—has been a huge part of my recovery. At times I feel inadequate, but when I don’t have experience with something, I know I can ask my sponsor or others for help. There is always someone willing to help.

Not all of my sponsees have stayed sober, and not all of them have kept me as a sponsor. But as Bill W. has said, sponsorship helps keep *me* sober. It’s difficult



to be in despair or self-pity when a newcomer walks through the door and is desperate and scared. Newcomers need someone to listen, and being that ear takes me away from my self-centered ways. I've found that when I forget about me, I feel taken care of. That is a miracle of the program for me.

Another miracle I've experienced in SA is the ability to see men as children of God, rather than as objects to lust after or to hate. At first I lusted after the men in SA meetings, but by following my sponsor's suggestions, today I am able to see those men as my brothers in sobriety. By attending our mixed meetings and doing the work suggested, I have overcome the obsession with men, one day at a time. This never happened by running away or avoiding them.

Then out of nowhere I started lusting after a woman in my AA home group (I thought I was safe because it's a women-only meeting). I was embarrassed to share this with anyone, including my sponsor—but I knew my life was in jeopardy. So I shared with my sponsor, followed

her directions, and today the obsession is gone; I'm able to talk with that woman without lusting. Oddly, before SA, I had never lusted after a woman, but through SA I've learned that lust can come in from anywhere. And as soon as any lust comes in, I need to bring it to the light.

When I came into SA, I was suicidal; I had a big empty hole inside. Today I can say that most days I'm happy with life and life's circumstances. I remember that when I first joined SA, if I felt truly okay, it lasted for maybe an hour. Then I would have weeks feeling crazy. But because I've continued to work my program, I now have weeks of peace at a time. That's what SA has brought me. I never knew peace existed. Now that I know it exists, I want more serenity, and to get more serenity, I need to work on my spiritual condition and maintain my connection with my Higher Power. With a strong connection to my Higher Power, anything is possible.

—*Jesica L. Edmonton, Alberta, Canada*

Women-Only SA Convention Being Planned

We are planing a women-only International Convention for April 7-9th, 2017 at Westfields Marriot, in Chantilly, VA (a 10-minute drive from Washington Dulles Airport). If you would like to attend, or to be added to our mailing list, or if you would like to join our weekly conference call, please contact sawomensconventions@gmail.com.

Please spread the word to any SA women who may be interested.



Remembering Randy H.

January 17, 1957-February 8, 2014

On February 10th, 2014, I learned that Randy had passed away from a heart attack a few days earlier, while on a holiday cruise with his wife. Randy would have had five years of sobriety on February 22, 2014. Randy's life had quite an impact on me, and I have felt moved to share it.

I first met Randy on a snowy evening in early 2009 in Barrie, Ontario, about an hour north of Toronto. As we shared each other's stories, I could see how similar our acting out patterns had been. After the meeting, our group gathered outside to talk. Randy had his bicycle with him that night, and I offered to give him a ride home. That was my first time getting to know him. Little did I realize that he would become one of my closest friends.

Randy was a long-distance truck driver and was often away from home for three to four days at a time. This had led to a lot of his acting out for decades. But after he was in SA, he would listen to recovery CDs while driving.

Randy dove head-first into our program. He got a sponsor early on and started working the Steps. He regularly attended our Saturday morning meetings, as well as any week-day meetings when he was home. He attended our Spring three-

day conference and Fall marathon every year. He was always available to Twelve Step newcomers, and he sponsored others. He gave a lot of time to his sponsees, but he expected them to rigorously work the program.

Randy, like myself, had completely forgotten about God while active in his addiction. Early on in his recovery, Randy found God again, and he became active in his church. His favorite prayer was the prayer of St. Francis.

Randy, like me, was sexually abused as a young boy, and he held on to a lot of shame and anger over this. But he knew that God had forgiven him for his past actions and was at peace with himself. Eventually he found a way to forgive the person who had abused him. That was a huge piece of his recovery.

In January 2012, Randy and his wife attended their first International Convention in Atlanta. That summer, at the convention in Baltimore, he co-led a breakout session. He served as Alternate Rep for our Ontario Intergroup and had offered to serve as the Vice Chair for our Ontario IGO. And just before leaving for the holiday with his wife, he volunteered to Co-chair our 10th annual Spring Conference. Randy's commitment to



our program was an inspiration to us all.

During the past several years, Randy and I were morning check-in partners. This time spent on the phone with him was one of the most important tools of my sobriety. It set up our day with awareness of our addiction, as well as any current

challenges we were facing.

Well, my buddy, I miss and love you. You will never be forgotten. Rest peacefully, knowing that you were an outstanding example of how a sexaholic can come to enjoy and live our Twelve Promises.

—Your friend forever, Gary

SA Around the World

The Fourth Dimension of Being

Fifth Annual Russian Convention, October 2015

We have found much of heaven and we have been rocketed into a fourth dimension of existence of which we had not even dreamed. AA, 25



While attending the International Convention in Portland in January, I found myself saying to God that I was ready to be of service again. Shortly thereafter, I ran into an SA member living in Russia. Though he and I knew of each other, we'd never spoken before. I introduced myself and asked him for his contact information, "in case I ever come to Russia." He responded, "Why don't you come to our Russian Convention in Moscow in November?"

My British wife and I love to travel, but Russia has never crossed our minds as a destination, let alone as a place to carry the SA message. Yet I knew this encounter was not happenstance. God was inviting me to Russia.

Both my wife and my sponsor supported the idea, and I was in-

spired to invite other members to go with us. In the end, five agreed. We were a diverse group: one member was originally from Australia and one from Iran. One was 25 years old and one was 73.

My friend suggested that when we travelled to Russia, we attend two meetings prior to the convention; one in St. Petersburg and one in Moscow. He said that St. Petersburg is one of the most beautiful cities in Europe. We found this to be true.

Our group rented an apartment together in each city. This meant doing everything together: touring, food shopping, cooking breakfasts, and washing dishes and clothes, as well as sharing bedrooms and bathrooms. It was a test for each of us to sign up for a two-week journey with



five other sexaholics to a foreign country where none of us spoke the language! Our morning meetings, where we read from SA literature and checked in with one another, were an indispensable highlight of our life together.

The royal palaces were magnificent; the churches and cathedrals were inspiring; and the museums filled with original paintings of world-famous artists and sculptors were breathtaking. The two ballets and the symphony concert we attended left us with admiration for the rich cultural heritage of the Russian people.

We were warmly welcomed at SA meetings in both St. Petersburg and Moscow. We quickly found that, even though we spoke different languages and came from different cultural backgrounds, we are all one family in the fellowship.

The Russian-Speaking convention was held the last weekend of our visit. Members came from all across Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, two from Germany, and one each from Finland, the UK, and Iran. Excellent interpreters helped those of us who spoke only English. The Russian fellowship has younger members in their twenties and thirties, and about one-third are women.

"The Fourth Dimension of Being" was a fitting title for both the convention and for our experience of traveling to Russia. We were

definitely having a spiritual experience of "which we had not even dreamed."

Perhaps the words of one of our Russian brothers capture it best: "I thank God that He has given me the pleasure to know you. My heart is shining love to you and to all our fellowship. This is the great gift of our community."

Or perhaps the words of one of our Russian sisters: "Thanks to everyone who was at the convention. I felt kinship. You have inspired me that there is nothing that God cannot forgive, and that I might even share scary corners of my soul to my group. I wish you inspiration and ever-growing joy!"

When I returned home, my sponsor asked, "Why did you go to Russia?" followed by the perplexing words: "There is only one right answer." I paused and said slowly, "To stay sexually sober." "Try again," he said. "To stay sexually sober and carry the message to the sexaholic who still suffers," I then offered. "You're getting a little rusty," he chided me. "Okay," I said, "You tell me why I went to Russia." "You went to Russia because God wanted you to be in Russia," he replied.

That is the entryway to living in the Fourth Dimension: being where God wants me to be emotionally, mentally, and physically, one day at a time.

—William R., Bellevue, WA



Sharing the Message

EMER and Russia, October - November 2015

Early this year, I was invited by the EMER Regional Assembly to travel and give some talks to the fellowship, at the Poland Congress of SA/S-Anon (October 23-25), in Poznan, Poland; The First Annual SA/S-Anon Retreat in Lille, France (October 30-November 1); and the Fifth annual Russian-speaking SA Convention (November 6-8) in Moscow. I also spoke at the SA/S-Anon Singles Weekend Retreat in Israel (couples were also invited), overlooking the Dead Sea, and the 12th SA/S-Anon Convention in Jerusalem (November 18). And since I would already be in Europe, the German-Speaking Region invited me to speak in Munich (October 16-18).

In addition to the EMER itinerary, I also conducted one-day workshops in Poland and Israel, as well as several speaker meetings, and I also attended a number of local meetings. At least 20 countries were represented at these events, including Spain, Austria, Finland, Sweden, Iran, Slovakia and Ukraine. (The member from Iran was on a scholarship from other members in the U.S.)

At each of these events I shared my experience, strength, and hope with our members. This was a busy time but quite rewarding. Everyone

was receptive to hearing how another member works the program.

Since I myself am a tactile and visual learner, I use coins, strings, and movement as metaphor for describing my disease and recovery. The beauty of this program is that we can each share the message in our own way because we all learn in our own way.

Some of the best sharing times started with; "I have one little question." Or, "If you don't mind my asking..." Or "Do you have a minute?" Or, "He doesn't speak English so I will translate."

I was at an SA meeting in Russia with 20 people there: 10 men and 10 women. I was impressed with the women in Russia; they could teach us a lot about recovery. I attended a meeting in Israel where one member was 23 years old, and he had five years sobriety. The young people can teach us so much. At the Russia convention two men had come from seven time zones away. These members can teach us so much about "going to any length."

I'm so grateful to be sober today, and for the opportunity to share that joy with others all over the world. May we meet again soon on the road of Happy Destiny.

— Dave T., Lawton, OK



SA French-Speaking Fellowship

The year 2015 has been an eventful one for me, for my home group, and for the the French-speaking Intergroup. I came to SA in March 2012, at a group located in Lille, France. My home group in Lille opened in 2009 and has grown steadily. This is the only SA group in France. The other SA members in France are loners, but we stay well-connected through the Internet.

On a couple of occasions, some of us have travelled to Brussels for First Step sharing, and the fellows of the French-speaking SA group there have travelled to Lille a few times. The French-speaking Intergroup also includes French-speaking Luxemburg, some 300 kilometers (190 miles) away.

The French-speaking Intergroup also runs telephone meetings and has set up a website (sexoliquesanonymes.eu). This makes it easier for our members to get in touch through our Intergroup in a safe way, without being forced to look up names of triggering websites. Our membership here has decreased a bit, but our Higher Power keeps sending in new members.

Over the past couple of years, the Lille group has been able to lay down some basic guidelines, such as choosing officers (Treasurer, Secre-

tary, and Intergroup Representative), deciding on the sobriety requirements for becoming an officer, and deciding the length of sobriety required to vote in our business meetings and groups.

When it comes to bigger events, the three groups (Lille, Brussels, and Luxemburg) work hand in hand, despite the long distances between some of our members. Thank you HP!

Everyone has problems. As SA fellows, we know our common problem is sexaholism. Therefore, we only talk about sexaholism in our meetings. We do have more light-hearted exchanges when our meetings are over.

This past October 30th through November 1st, our Lille group organized the first workshop ever held in France. The venue was the "Centre Spirituel du Hautmont, in Mouvaux," about eight miles from Lille. The topic was "Happy, Joyous and Free," and Dave T. from the USA was our speaker. This was the big event of the year for us. Fewer than 20 fellows were expected, including S-Anons. But 41 attended!

God always takes care of each one of us; in this case by providing a wonderful welcoming team, in heaven-like surroundings.

—Bernard, Lille Group IG



Thank You to Outgoing Essay Editor

Barbara F., Essay Editor 2006 - 2015

(Printed by Request of the Board of Trustees)

November 2015

Dear Barbara,

The service structure of SA would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your service to the Fellowship of SA as the editor of *Essay*. We would love to give you a standing ovation for your efforts. Since we know how much that would embarrass you, we will remind you that you can pull out this letter if you ever need to feel appreciated.

During your tenure, you changed the looks of the magazine, enhancing its beauty with many illustrations and works of original art. You tweaked the format to make information flow more smoothly. Although we know that you did not produce the text, we recognize that you were responsible for its clearness, readability, and correctness of grammar and punctuation so that no printed defect would stand between the content and the reader.

Referring back to the content, we know that you labored long and hard to encourage members to submit stories and vignettes from their personal experience with the program of SA, the Twelve Steps and Traditions, and service work for the Fellowship using the Twelve Concepts. Many articles featured effective tips for working the SA Twelve Step program. There were even humor items occasionally.

Above all, you worked to a deadline with as much poise and grace as we've ever seen any member muster. *Essay* will miss your sharp eye, deft touch, and self-deprecating humility.

With gratitude,

General Delegate Assembly, Board of Trustees, SAICO



Permission to Copy Essay

In order to serve the members of the SA fellowship, a subscriber to an *Essay* issue is granted permission to make ten copies—print or digital—of that issue, to be shared with members of SA. Such copies may not be further copied, shared, or altered. We continue to encourage all who are capable of subscribing to do so, as your financial support is critical to the work of our fellowship in making our Solution known to all who seek freedom from the bondage of lust.



Essay Editor Needed



The following qualifications are excerpted from the *SA Service Manual, 2015 edition, page 48*:

The Essay Editor has managerial oversight and responsibility for *Essay* and reports directly to SA's Board of Trustees. Preferred background and experience includes:

1. The *Essay Editor* will be a member of SA with a minimum three years of sobriety, and will fully support and agree with SA's sobriety definition. This is extremely important in evaluating the appropriateness of articles.
2. Experience using both MS Word and Adobe InDesign (preferably on an iMac, for compatability with the printing company's equipment).
3. One to three years of corporate publications management experience, including the ability to communicate with multiple authors, editors, artists, committee chairs, printing company personnel, etc., and to balance the various schedules and priorities of all parties.
4. Three to five years' experience as a Senior Editor, with proven track record of completing projects on time.

If interested, please submit detailed information related to your experience in each of the four numbered items above.

Applicants will be required to provide samples of their work.

Please send your responses to SAICO at saico@sa.org.

January 2016 International Convention

"Reflections in San Diego"

January 15 - 17, 2016, San Diego CA

We invite you to join members from all over the world as we gather in San Diego for a spiritual weekend of Twelve Step reflection, celebration, and hope. The convention will be held at the newly renovated Town and Country Hotel. If you can extend your stay, San Diego is a world-renowned destination spot with numerous attractions including the San Diego Zoo, Old Town, historic Balboa Park, the U.S.S. Midway Naval Museum with life-at-sea exhibits, restored planes, and flight simulators.

To register or make hotel reservations, visit reflectionsinsandiego.com. If you have questions or would like to help with service work, click on the "Contact Us" link on the main page. We look forward to seeing you soon!

—God Bless, *Steve C., San Diego*,
SA Convention Chair



Note from the Finance Committee Chair

Dear SA Fellowship:

Following is a summary of SA fellowship revenues and expenses for Third Quarter 2015. 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 2015	
Donations	\$48,729
Other Revenues	\$19,584
Expenses	\$74,706
Revenues (less Expenses)	\$ -12,927
Total Prudent Reserve	\$ 184,510



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

The Buddy List is a directory of 430 SA men (from 56 countries 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

International

Altrincham, UK
Amsterdam, Netherlands (add'l mtg)
Brussels, Belgium (add'l meeting)
Dundee, UK
Golders Green, UK
Ladywell, London, UK
Maribor, Slovenia
Okinawa, Japan
Zurich, Switzerland

USA and Canada

Alamogordo NM
Dayton, OH (Women's mtg)

Florence, AL
Indianapolis, IN (add'l mtg)
Lafayette, IN
Lapeer, MI
Minnetonka, MN (women's mtg)
Peachtree City, GA
Phoenix, AZ (add'l meeting)
Rice Lake, WI
St Petersburg, FL
Sioux Falls, SD (women's mtg)
Wildomar, CA



Delegates and Trustees December 2015

Officers: Tom K., <i>GDA Chair</i> Brian W., <i>Vice-Chair</i>		Conventions (Chair) Literature, CFC
Region	Delegate	Committees
North Midwest	Dimitri P. Jon H. Marv R., <i>Alternate</i> Robert Z., <i>Alternate</i>	International (Chair) RAC, Literature Public Information (Chair), SACFC RAC, H&I
South Midwest	Joe M. Dave T. John I., <i>Alternate</i>	RAC (Chair), Legal Nominations, International
Northwest	Brian W. Zoila G. Kathy R., <i>Alternate</i> Maureen J., <i>Alternate</i>	Literature, CFC, GDA Vice-Chair International, RAC Literature
Southwest	Eric S. Steve C. Jim C. Sean R., <i>Alternate</i>	RAC, CFC, Literature PI, Service Structure, Essay Finance, COMC H&I
Mid- Atlantic	Carl N. Ben L. Hugh S. Brad S. Mike S., <i>Alternate</i>	H&I (Chair), Conventions Conventions, IT Finance, COMC Nominations (Chair)
Northeast	Gary M. Suzanne S. Terry O., <i>Alternate</i>	Finance, Conventions Public Information IT
Southeast	Manse B. Rich P., Jay H., <i>Alternate</i>	Finance, Conventions Conventions, RAC
German spkg	Hans L.	Literature, Service Structure
EMER	Cathal M., Ireland Luc D., Belgium Daan L., Netherlands Artemes, Spain Padraic L., Alt., Ireland	International, IT International Spanish-Speaking areas
Trustee	Committees	
Mike Sh., <i>Chair</i> Mitch A., <i>Vice-Chair</i> Bill S. Dave H. Gene T. Jim B. Michael J. Gary L.	COMC, Conventions, Service Structure IT, Serv. Structure, Literature COMC, International, Nominations, Service Structure Finance, Legal, RAC CFC, H&I COMC, H&I Service Structure, Literature, H&I, PI Legal, Literature, Nominations	



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

Calendar of Events



January 2016

4-5, Barcelona, Spain, SA Winter Convention, *Journey to Sobriety*. Info at convencion@saespana.es.

February 2016

4-11, Gratitude Week

5 - 7, Surfside Beach SC, USA, SA Winter Weekend IV, *Winter retreat at the beach*. Info at 803-900-5326 or SAColumbiaSC@gmail.com.

13, Fort Myers, FL, USA, SA One Day Workshop, *A Spiritual Solution*. Info at swflsa.org/blog/events. Flyer available from saico@sa.org

March 2016

5, Norcross (Atlanta area), GA USA, Atlanta 2016 SA Marathon, *The Journey Continues*. info

atlantathejourneycscontinues.org or atlantathejourneycscontinues@gmail.com

April 2016

1 - 3, Wilkeson, WA (Seattle area) USA, Northwest Regional Spring Retreat, *Humility, Grace, and Hope*. Info at pugetsoundsa.org. Flyer available from saico@sa.org

8-10, Mühlhausen, German. Kontakt Telefon: +49 (0)177-3568786 Olaf or email: as-jena@t-online.de

15-17, Edinburgh, Scotland, Scottish Spring Convention, *New Beginnings*. Info at sauk.org/events or contact essay.edinburgh@hotmail.co.uk. Remarks: Flyer available from saico@sa.org

22 - 24, Harrisburg PA USA, SA/S-Anon Mid-Atlantic Regional Conven

tion, *A Change of Heart 2016*. Info at achangeofheart2016.com, or achangeofheart.sa@gmail.com. Come enjoy a full week of recovery!

May 2016

6-8, Madrid Spain, EMER Regional Assembly and Convention 2016, *A Design for Living that Works*. Info at sexaholic-sanonymous.eu/events or sa.eventos@SAespana.es Meet with the international fellowship in beautiful Spain

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



Upcoming International Convention

January 15 - 17, 2016, San Diego CA, USA, Reflection in San Diego. To register or make hotel reservations, visit our webpage at reflectionsinsandiego.com. If you have questions or special needs, or would like to help with service work, click on the "Contact Us" link on the main page.

July 8-10, 2016, Denver, CO, USA, Happy, Joyous and Free. Come join us in the Mile High City for friends, fun, recovery, as well as experience, strength and hope. We have a wonderful assortment of speakers for your entertainment and thoughtfulness. For more info, contact happyjoyousfree2016.org or info@happyjoyousfree2016.org

Subscribe to Essay. Mailed individual subscriptions are \$16 per year. Group rate for mailed copies is \$14 per year for 10 or more subscriptions sent to one address. Subscriptions for electronic copies are \$12 per year. For more information, email us at saico@sa.org, call toll-free at 866-424-8777, outside North America call 615-370-6062, or visit our website at www.sa.org

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 adjudicated 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

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