

ESSAY

June 2015



Willing to **Wait**

A quarterly publication of Sexaholics Anonymous

The Twelve Steps of Sexaholics Anonymous

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

Essay is the quarterly publication of Sexaholics Anonymous

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Sexaholics Anonymous

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

—Adapted with permission from the AA Grapevine Inc.

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Young People in SA

Willing to Wait 2

Women in SA

The Fellowship of Sobriety 7

Giving Back 12

Members Share

Starting to Feel 13

Being of Service to Others 16

The Fungus of the Soul 18

Working the Steps

Step Four: My "I" Exam 19

In Memoriam

Fenner U.—A Remembrance 22

SACFC News

Introducing the New CFC Chair 24

Grapevine Reprint

Life on the Inside 25

SA News Around the World

EMER Report 26

Women in EMER Conventions 28

German-Speaking Convention 28

SA Business

SAICO Financial Update 30

Delegates and Trustees 31

Calendar of Events 32

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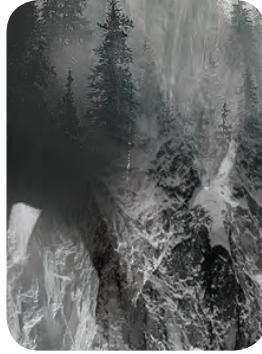
Willing to Wait

I came into SA a little over three years ago, when I was 19. By the grace of God and thanks to this program, I have been blessed with sobriety one day at a time since my first meeting, a few days after my sobriety birthday on March 8th, 2012. I'm grateful for this opportunity to share my experience, strength, and hope with the fellowship—as well as the events that led up to it.

Growing up, I never felt close to my parents. I experienced a lot of neglect and abuse from the very beginning of my childhood. Sometimes the abuse would get physical, because I was supposedly a “troublemaker.” My family would often watch violent horror films, and this violence became normal to me. I would respond in violence and anger toward my parents because I found that I got more attention that way.

At home I was an angry child, but at school I was literally the sweetest boy on the playground. I did this to get attention from my teachers, as well as from as many girls as possible. My elementary school teachers stated that I was a gentleman from the age of six. These tricks seemed to work for a while, but by this time I already enjoyed

living a double life. The adrenaline that was triggered through watching the violent horror films resonated with me and led me to seek this same high in my addiction.



I felt powerless being the youngest child in my immediate family, and I was often criticized and beaten for doing wrong things as a little boy. In elementary school I tried to see the female body

by looking up women's skirts or pulling down their blouses, but I would be caught by my father when I attempted these tactics in public, and I would be physically punished for it. This was confusing to me because I saw my father being intimate with women other than my mother, and he did not pay this much attention to me in any other aspect of my childhood. I found his pornography stash six years later when I was 12. The female body became forbidden territory for me.

I first looked at pornography online when I was 10 or 11, and I was shocked by what I saw. I immediately closed the webpage. However, after a few minutes I realized that I got the same high that I had been looking to repeat for so long. I sought adrenaline and physical touch, which skewed my

perception of relationships with people. Love was not love, it was lust—and lust was a violent way of disrespecting someone else’s body. I only see this now that I am distanced from my acting out.

I dove deep into my addiction. I never thought that what I was doing was that bad. I never realized at the time that my addiction was getting progressively worse.

From the ages of 11 to 18, I was involved in acting and performing arts in my school and in my community, and I toyed with the idea of acting as a profession. After thinking about this for a while, I developed an alter ego—which in reality is my addict.

I started chatting with strangers online, lying about my age when I was 13 through 17, but telling these strangers I was 18. It was easy to lie. I thought I was the best liar. I knew my parents believed everything I said, and my friends admitted I was the best at lying straight through my teeth, with a smile on my face. I would use this to my advantage because I came across as an innocent guy.

I found in porn, sex, and manipulation what I never felt growing up. I felt power and—in a way—intimacy. It was never true intimacy, but it was good enough, and I would tell myself that the next time would be better. I was really losing my life.



Before I was 15, I manipulated three of my closest friends (male and female) to act out with me on separate occasions. I also successfully hosted multiple boy and girl sleepovers in middle school, because my father was never home due to his business and sexual affairs, and my mother worked night shifts.

I first started drinking when I was 14, and the sleepovers were just excuses for us to get drunk and try to act out with each other. I was trying to make lust and sex normal for myself by projecting it onto my friends and their behavior. This was when I was in middle school, and it continued into high school.

I saw my parents’ relationship deteriorate right in front of me throughout my entire childhood. They began the divorce process when I was 14. That was one of the worst experiences of my life. My father, I believe, was addicted to sex (he had many affairs during his marriage), and in him I saw the full potential this addiction has to ruin people’s lives. My best friend would come rescue me from my house because of my parents fighting. I wasn’t even old enough to drive.

A year into my parents’ four-year divorce process, my addiction to pornography was peaking. I was only 15, not old enough to drive, but I needed to get out of the house to escape the chaos of my parents

fighting. My best friend would often drive over to rescue me. Then one day he was killed by a drunk driver.

I was in shock. I felt as if God was punishing me for acting out sexually, drinking alcohol, and doing drugs. My mind immediately turned to pornography. I felt I needed to escape, and lust was safe and would never let me down. Or so I thought.

At this point I had been conversing with a man for about two years on a pornography website. I was 15 but I told the man I was 18. I think I entertained this relationship because I was lacking a father figure and this man was giving me attention. He invited me to visit him, and he said he would help pay for my plane ticket. I thought, "Yes."

I wanted to escape. I hated my parents' divorce and their domestic violence, and I was still trying to deal with the death of one of my best friends. So, being the talented liar that I thought I was, I lied to my parents, confused everyone, and ended up in another country visiting a complete stranger. I intentionally let myself be sexually abused. I couldn't believe the series of events. I thought God hated me.

When I got back home, I began acting out with strangers who I found on-line. I acted out in public places with people I had never met before. I would get drunk at high school parties, and I would try to take

advantage of the girls that I thought I could manipulate most easily. I thought this would fill me up, but I had a bottomless pit within my soul that was asking for more. So I couldn't stop there.

When I finally turned 18, I thought, "This is perfect!" I thought that I would feel better because now I would be considered "legal" to go into adult places in the U.S. But that very week I reached new bottoms. My addiction drove me to strip clubs, sex shops, and eventually bathhouses. This all happened in the span of a week, and I went back for more throughout the year. But after every encounter, the adrenaline wasn't enough.

On a few occasions I consumed drugs while acting out to feel a higher high. For awhile I thought I could not act out without drugs. I was acting out with strangers—and I putting my life at risk every time I acted out, because of some of the things I would ask people to do.

When I was 18-and-a-half, I considered online prostitution. By this time, I knew that I should stop. I thought, "This could be bad, but maybe I'll feel better."

I see now the flaw in my thinking. I considered stopping multiple times, but my thinking was cloudy. I had no idea what was wrong with me, or what to do about it.

Just before I turned 19, I started going back to church after a two-



year hiatus. I began attending the church my roommate was attending, because deep in my soul I knew I was drowning in my addiction. I was desperate to find relief.

A few months later, I very hesitantly signed up for a men's sexual purity group in that church. I was blessed with accountability from the moment I joined the group—and, when I was 19, this group introduced me to SA. I must admit that much of my recovery began because of people pleasing and approval-seeking. I would not act out for fear of having to tell anyone in my group what I might have done. I constantly sought approval from my SA sponsor and others in the program. I thought that if I waited awhile to act out, I'd be fine.

When I first came into SA, I felt as if I had been hit by a train. I was in shock. But I tried to completely change my life around. I thought, "If this is what I need to do, and if I can trust my Higher Power, then I will dare Him to let me trust Him through this process. It worked. I begged God to let me trust Him, and that worked for me.

I heard a voice from within telling me to just wait. I didn't know what this meant, but I told myself to wait to act out. So, I did. I kept waiting and slowly the days added up. I "waited" the first six months. Then I did my Step Three with my SA sponsor, and I gave my will over to God's will. I didn't know yet

the power of surrender, so I would literally cry to not act out. I would talk to my Higher Power and ask for help. I just kept waiting, not just to act out, but in general. I needed to wait.

I was the youngest person in my SA home group (and maybe in my state), and I felt isolated because of this. I thought nobody else my age was as bad as I was. But I knew I just had to wait. So I kept going to meetings.

At first I kept quiet and just tried to listen to everyone in the meetings, for fear of looking dumb—but also, honestly, to learn. I knew that what I had been doing was wrong. I got a sponsor (or really, my sponsor got me), and he had me start the Steps and call him every day for the first 90 days. I didn't know how to check in with him, but I would still do it! I made meetings and Step work a priority—just like a class and homework—as part of my schedule. Gradually, I learned that if I were to do well, I would have to show up.

Some of the most amazing things happened during my first 90 days of sobriety in SA. At times I would feel that urge to act out, and I would turn to God. Then I would immediately get a phone call from my accountability partner from the purity group (who was also in SA). After this happened for the third time, I knew it wasn't a coincidence. My Higher Power was doing for me what I could not do for myself.

So I kept waiting, not just to act out, but in general. I needed to wait. Through this waiting period I've grown older and wiser. I continue to grow as I attend meetings, meetings, meetings; work the Steps; and make phone calls. I never thought it would be possible to not act out. I didn't think sobriety was possible. I thought that SA members were crazy. But in those first few SA meetings, I constantly heard my story coming from other members' shares, and I knew that I was exactly where I needed to be. That is the reason I felt that I had been hit by a train, emotionally and mentally. The SA program saved my life. It gave me back my life. I had been putting my life in other people's hands, because I literally could not function or live without lust.

This program works. I love SA—I have to. God has worked through the members of SA in my life on a global and local scale. I have been blessed with so many opportunities in SA. For example, I don't have much money but I love to travel, and I've met many SA members this way. I was able to stay with a member in Warsaw, and I made it to meetings there. Another time I had nowhere to stay while traveling on the East Coast, so I trusted God, and I let Him know that I was okay with sleeping on the streets of a foreign city as



long as I stayed sober. But then I surrendered to His will, and another member opened up his home to me. My recovery probably helped me under these circumstances as well. I've realize I can't do anything if I don't stay sober.

I've been blessed through the SA program of recovery. After attending meetings for only three years, I've already seen the miracles that regularly happen in these rooms. My recovery has been a gradual process, and I'm still a naive 22-year-old at times. But because of SA, I get to experience the youth that I never felt I could experience because my father stepped out when I was 15.

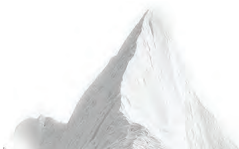
Another miracle that occurred because of SA is that I began to apply myself more in school. Then my projects got better, my portfolio got better, and my Higher Power led professors, employers, peers, and others to notice me in ways that never happened before. God was and is doing for me what I could not do for myself.

I never thought I would get sober. Sobriety is a gift I have only today. In my immaturity I sometimes feel limitless and I think, "If I'm sober then what's stopping me from trying to achieve my dreams?" I want to see how far my Higher Power will take me if I surrender to His will. I would never have felt this hope without recovery.

I'm getting ready to graduate now from a private design school. At times the stress can feel like too much, but through the process, as I stay up late working on projects, I'll pray the prayer that always helps me pull through:

God, I offer myself to Thee—to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help, of Thy power, Thy love, and Thy way of life. May I do Thy will always! (SA, 95).

I'll be graduating in June, and I'll turn 23 right after that. Sobriety is a gift I have for only one day. Lust is still a daily battle, and I still struggle with immense amounts of shame, but one



Women in SA

day at a time, I am surrendering the shame to my Higher Power. I am grateful for SA, and for the Twelve Promises, and for the gift of sobriety that was bestowed on me through God in SA.

The best years in life are not the ones when we are young but the ones when we are sober. I've been told (and I have to remind myself) that everyone's recovery is different. I've learned that I cannot expect another person's miracle through the program to be the same as my miracle.

I'm running a marathon and it's about endurance. I trust that my Higher Power will show me when I need to change my "pace," if He needs me to do so. Until then I want to endure, and I'm willing to wait. I'm ready for whatever God brings my way. I pray for not my will, but His will to be done.

—Christian M., San Diego

The Fellowship of Sobriety

The first thing I remember from my childhood is that I spent every waking minute reading stories of beautiful, fragile princesses, who would be rescued by handsome princes on white horses. I would spend many hours going through every detail so that I could be just like a



princess, so that when my prince arrived I would be ready to go with him and live happily ever after.

I was brought up in a family riddled with addiction (alcohol and sex), dysfunctional behaviors, and physical violence. I also suffered from guilt, frustration, boredom, and

loneliness. When I was around five, I was sexually abused by the male caretaker of the apartments we lived in. Today I know that was my first “sex drink.” I felt how it numbed the pain of the life around me.

In primary school, I was attracted to boys, and I was especially obsessed with one boy. This was the beginning of a 40-year journey of obsessing over one man at a time, or one man after another. I would live and relive stories in my head, making up fantasies about how the man rescued me. This obsession was a source of pleasure; it helped me avoid the pain and disconnection I felt in early childhood. I also sought out brief sexualized encounters with other children. For example, I wanted to know what kissing on the mouth was like, or I wanted to play doctors and nurses.

I imagined I would grow up to be the princess in my storybooks, but to my dismay, in my early adolescence I was a small, chubby girl. I observed the other girls who were thin and beautiful, and I noticed how the boys pursued them. I was envious and wanted to be like those girls. That was the beginning of my future obsession with my body and my looks, as I dedicated a great deal of time trying to be an appealing sex object to be lusted after. I got my sense of worth from being the center of attention.

I would obsess about all types of

boys in my school, but especially the strange ones—the hard-to-get ones. I would pursue an impossible love that would never come true, so that I could keep reliving in my mind how I could get the boy to fall in love with me. I was never interested in easy love. I only wanted the struggle, the long wait to finally be rewarded.

That never happened though, especially in my teenage years. Boys ignored me. They seemed to find me strange. If by chance I happened to spend a few minutes with one of the objects of my obsessions, I would feel awkward and want to run away. I didn’t know how to behave when I was confronted with reality. I only wanted the fantasy of what could be.

As a teenager, I started reading romantic novels. There I discovered intrigue and infidelities. I learned about how to plot to conquer the object of my desire, and I loved reading the sexual scenes. I started repeating these scenes over and over in



my head, and I discovered masturbation, which took up most of my adolescence. Masturbation got me away from the pain of abuse in my home, as well as from frustration, guilt, boredom, and loneliness.

One night, when I was around 13, I had my first physical encounter with a man much older than I was. We did not have sex but the experience set me off on a search for constant physical contact

with men. That episode was a turning point in my addiction. It blew my mind. It was stronger than any fantasy, romantic book, obsession, or masturbation. From then on my life turned into a constant search for my drug, while I ignored most of my responsibilities.

After that I was eager to have my first sexual encounter. That happened when I was 14, with a man much older than I was, and whom I had only met twice. I felt terrible afterwards, but the only way I could escape the pain was to fall even deeper into my compulsive acting out. I turned into a “man hunter.” I would go out in provocative clothes and makeup, and I would carefully lay out webs to trap them.

From the age of 14 to 17, I had constant sexual encounters with men. I was always searching for these encounters, but this made me feel more and more lost. I put my health and my life at risk, without protection. I would go away with men to their homes without even knowing where I was, and I returned home feeling lost, abandoned, and ashamed.

I had no values, principles, or morals. I would go out with a man without caring whether he was married, in a relationship, or the boyfriend of a friend of mine. The more attached he was to someone else, the better I liked him. I really didn't want a relationship; I just wanted

one-night stands with no ties, so I could keep acting out. Serious relationships scared me. When I tried to go out with good men I always ended up being unfaithful or hurting them with my behavior.

When I was 17, I began to feel scared of my behavior. I felt like a prostitute. People were talking about me, so I decided to disguise my addiction. I would act like a prude and look for steady relationships. I started a long list of steady relationships, but I was always unfaithful in the end, because I thought that each of them was not the man I was looking for.

I spent many years on a see-saw; sometimes feeling suffocated in a steady relationship, and then dying of loneliness and heartbreak from being single. There came a point where I couldn't be with a man or without a man. When I was in a relationship, I would obsess about other men. I would think about the negative sides of the current relationship, and I would fantasize about finding a perfect man when I was on my own again.

When I was 23, I finally met a good man, and amazingly, he married me. But the marriage lasted only a year, as I left that man for a married coworker, after obsessing about him to the verge of madness. The married man left me after seven months, and for the next five years, my life



became a living hell.

I partied, drank, and used drugs. I started taking sleeping pills, antidepressants, and anxiety pills to be able to get up in the mornings and get through my days. I was still in college, and I went from work to school in a daze. I barely passed my classes because my mind was always drifting to the hundreds of lust and romantic sex scenes that were playing in my head. Every day I reminded myself that I had destroyed my marriage and lost the only good man who ever loved me. In this madness I continued acting out. I got pregnant twice and had two abortions, leaving behind me two unborn children whom still I remember every single day in my prayers.

I constantly looked for physical and sexual contact with men. I was desperately seeking to find some comfort, sanity, and emotional support in my life—but love does not happen in this context. My sexual relationships were all a show. I pretended I was present, but I could never connect with any of them.

I kept thinking there was something wrong with my looks, so I put all of my attention on improving my appearance. I turned into a “plastic” woman; I had all the attention I was craving, but it was all superficial and empty. I needed to be lusted after every single day; if I did not achieve this, I felt sad and depressed.

When I was 30, my low and desperate self-esteem took me to an abusive relationship in which I thought I had gone completely insane. After two years of this psychological torture, I fell on my knees and asked God for help. At that point



I knew I was powerless. A few days later, I read about a Twelve Step program in an article in the newspaper. It was an interview with an alcoholic, and the interviewer recommended that his family members go to Al-Anon. After reading this, I began relating my problems to addiction.

So when I was 32, after two years in that abusive relationship, I started attending Al-Anon meetings. At the time I saw myself only as a victim of my family addiction. But in Al-Anon, I began to understand addiction and the addictive process.

However, I continued lusting in those meetings, and a relationship in those rooms took me to another “S” fellowship. That is where I started my recovery from my own addiction. At the time, I identified my problems as promiscuous behavior, flirting, and infidelity. I stayed single and I started to respect married men.

But the obsession and fantasy never left my mind. I was still acting out in my head. I thought I was sober, but I continued to masturbate. Finally, I could not stay single anymore, and I met another man. I thought that with my time spent in

recovery, things would be different. But this relationship turned out to be my biggest nightmare, and it took me to a new bottom. At this stage, my life felt unbearable. I slowly became numb and frozen. I was completely paralyzed. I thought that I might jump out of a window.

It was in this state that I arrived at SA, on October 11, 2011. When I first heard the SA sobriety definition, I felt blessed. It was all I had ever wanted. I embraced SA sobriety from Day One, and I have been sexually sober since that first day.

As soon as I walked in the doors, I was told to get a sponsor, work the Steps, and go to meetings. I did not question this because I was desperate, so I obeyed. I worked my Steps one after another with my sponsor. This was a difficult two-year process, but it was worth every minute of pain. I'm grateful for the way my sponsor worked with me through this process; she was very strict and very loving at the same time.

When the huge waves of craving began to subside (which took quite awhile), I then discovered a whole list of character defects. I have worked on these quite hard. The major ones are an ongoing process, so I work on them as hard as I did with lust. I am now three years and seven months sober, and my life has taken a big turn. I feel joy and peace for most of my days, and I feel part of the human race. I know where I

belong.

Through this process, I was brought to my knees and became very close to my Higher Power. I have established a true connection with Him, and I have never felt lonely again. He sends me all the strength I need daily. Through all of this, I have been supported by the men in my home group, as I am the only woman. The men have become my spiritual brothers. I have also found fellowship and the support



of SA women in a weekly English-speaking Skype meeting, which I attend every Saturday evening (see box on page 13).

Progressive victory over lust is an ongoing process, but now when I discover a new disguise my lust has taken, I immediately ask for help. I start talking with God in my prayers, with my sponsor, and with other SA women. In meetings, I keep bringing my lust out into the light as many times as I need to, and I keep asking for help to surrender one trigger at a time. Each day I feel more and more peaceful.

After so many years of wondering what was wrong with me, I have found the solution in SA. Through SA, I have found progressive liberation from obsession and fantasy. I've become gradually more focused and able to concentrate on my daily activities. I have become better able to connect with others, and I have developed meaningful relationships

with other SA members. I have also found a Higher Power Who means the world to me, and Who is my true life companion.

Today I can honestly say that I don't wish to be in a sexual relationship, as I have found in God what I was looking for in a man. So now I can



focus on building my life around the culture of sobriety and trying to carry the message to other women who are suffering from sexual holism. Today I am grateful to be a sober woman, and part of the Fellowship of Sobriety.

—*Maria Y., Spain*

Giving Back

I came into SA in October 2014, on the advice of a friend in another Twelve Step program. I started working the Steps with a female sponsor (the only SA woman in my area), but the situation did not work out, so I asked one of the men in my home group to be my sponsor. But this did not work out so well either.

After just two weeks, I felt lust for this man, so I had to drop him as a sponsor. After that, I still received daily contact from him via phone or texts, and this brought me spiraling out of balance each time, so I knew that I had to be more honest with him (and mostly with myself). I knew I had to let him go—not just as a sponsor but also as a friend in the program. I had to ask him not to call me. I had to admit that I needed a woman sponsor.

What did it mean for me to give up this man, as a sponsor and also as a contact person in the fellowship? Giving him up made me face my Steps One through Three again. I had

to admit my powerlessness over lust again. I had to turn my drug over to my Higher Power again.

I had enjoyed his calls because, my whole life, I always wanted to feel like “one of the guys.” I did not want to be treated differently because of my gender. I still sometimes wish I could just be one of the

guys and call everyone in my meeting, but this is not possible. So I realized that I needed to re-focus my ties with women in the fellowship.

But a good thing came out of this experience. I remembered that when I first contacted SAICO for information, I received a list of women I could contact by phone or email, and I had begun emailing some of them. So recently I asked one of those women to be my sponsor, and I'll be starting Step Four with her soon. Also, as I began strengthening my ties with my SA sisters, a new women's meeting opened here in Israel, because of my reaching out.



Awhile ago, when I was working my Step Two, I asked myself what I could do for my Higher Power in return for all of the blessings He has given me in recovery. Immediately I knew the answer: the answer was service. Service is the way that I can give back for all of the blessings that I have received from my Higher Power through SA.

Today I'm helping to connect more women with one another in

the fellowship here in Israel. I want to help women who join the fellowship today to have an easier journey finding other SA women to connect with than what I experienced at first. Being able to do this service has been a blessing for me. Maybe this is what my Higher Power wanted from me all along. In any case, I am grateful to God for my sobriety today.

—Leah, Tel Aviv

Resources for SA Women Around the World

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 at any hour of the day or night. As of April 2015, there were 105 women from 26 countries on the list. To join the Sisters List, contact SAICO at 1-866-424-8777.

Weekly Saturday Essay Women's Skype Meeting takes place every Saturday at 18.00pm (GMT+1). For more information, contact jirlmay@hotmail.com or mpc777@pt.lu.



Members Share

Starting to Feel

As I type this, it's 2:34 am, and I have reached a little over eight months of sobriety. I just experienced what I believe may be the first depths of recovery but I'm not sure. When I first entered through the SA doors and was shown how to surrender my lust by my sponsor, my life changed in that moment. For the first time in over 47 years of my ever-progressing disease, I felt immediate relief from



what had controlled me and my life.

I started to record my lust levels early on. I've used a scale from one to 10, where a 10 would be where I masturbated and lost my sobriety. I remember on day four awaking to a level nine attack. It was my first severe withdrawal from lust. It was calling out in such a severe fashion that I lay writhing in discomfort. My mind was racing and the urge to

stop the discomfort was insatiable. I immediately went through the Steps my sponsor taught me: admit powerlessness and do not fight it, completely surrender it to God (visualize handing it to Him), then say, “God I need your power, please lend me your power just for today so that Thy will may be done.” I felt immediate relief, but I had to get up and focus my mind on readings from the Big Book and White Book.

Over the next eight months I recorded various levels of lust, but never another level nine. Within three short months I was experiencing levels two through four, and an occasional five. As I walked through my initial sobriety, I soon realized that when I first felt the temptation to look, if I would immediately go to God and surrender and ask for his power, He would remove it 100% of the time. But if I did not immediately go to Him and took a sip or a drink here or there, I would ingest the poison of those drinks and have to suffer the consequences that came with drinking. It would hit me in the form of an intense desire to act out. Asking God to remove it after drinking never worked. In that case I would have to let the poison dissipate and run its course. I always had two choices after drinking: act out or suffer.

After eight months of sobriety



and diligently working my Steps, and in accordance with the White Books section on “The Caution” (SA, 3), my sponsor agreed with my marriage counselor that it was time to make a full disclosure to my wife. She already knew a lot of my story, but she could have never imagined the sheer magnitude of the progression and the depths to which I had gone. She had read a lot of books over the last eight months about sexual addiction, and she knew I had been unfaithful— but she did not understand to what extent.

This hurt her more than I could have imagined. She learned the absolute depths

I had sunk to over the last 20 years of our 30-year marriage. She had known that on a couple of occasions I was not faithful and that I had picked up a couple of women off the street—but that was it. She now sat in complete shock as I revealed the progression, which started out with drunk women, then prostitutes, then massage parlors, and finally crossing the gender line. She was horrified, and unable to comprehend the information she had just received. As we walked out of the therapist’s office I felt a strange urge that I was going to get sick, and I did. As I came out of the restroom she asked “Are you okay?” I thought to myself, “Am I okay?” I couldn’t even imagine how she was even surviving this. I

was so disgusted with myself that I thought, “Who cares how I am?”

The next day she talked while I just listened. She said that she now understood the depths of the progression from the books she had read. She said she had no delusions that I was somewhere in the middle of my disease. She was angry, hurt, and sad at how far it had progressed. There was so much she could not understand. She laid down boundaries that I was not to cross—which I was very happy to follow, since I did not have to leave the home. I was not to touch her in any way. She was completely repulsed by me and she did not know if she would make it through this.

The next day we spent several hours together talking. I did 95% listening and I would only say, “Thank you for sharing.” That evening, after a long conversation lying in bed, I instinctively touched her arm without thinking about it and instantly apologized and recoiled from it like from a hot flame. In that moment she said, “I would like to hold your hand” and she touched my hand. I instantly felt a river of emotions and I began to sob uncontrollably for about five seconds. Then it suddenly shut off as I closed my eyes and began shaking my head no. I don’t know what exactly happened, but I very much wanted to experience that feeling. I had not



cried to this point. In fact I have felt very little throughout this process. My sponsor and counselor have said that is because of the deep wounding I experienced as a very young child.

I have excelled in many areas of my life and provided well for my family, but my dark secret life kept me in bondage from an early age. Tonight I awoke after this incident and started to feel my feelings. It was a strange encounter with “me.” I felt as though I were sinking into my body.

I barely started feeling my emotions and then lust suddenly struck, covering them up (a level five attack). I consciously settled back into my feelings, and the lust slowly dissipated until it was completely gone. I was feeling my feelings for about 10 seconds—and then I was suddenly and violently hit with a level 9.5 lust attack. It felt like it was a “burning lust” that started in my heart and moved throughout my body. It completely incapacitated me. I was overwhelmed with the urge to masturbate to get rid of it. Since coming into SA, I had not been hit with this level of lust to date. I immediately admitted powerlessness, surrendered, and begged God for his power.

The relief came instantly, as I continually cried out for God.

For some reason my body does not want me to experience these feelings. It is baffling. I do

not understand why my body automatically shuts down feelings and covers them with lust. I can only believe that this is the beginning of recovery for me. I know that more and more each day I will return to explore those feelings. The touch of my wife's hand opened a chasm that

I do not yet understand nor have I ever felt in my life. I do know I want very much to explore these feelings and someday live without lust automatically covering them up. But for tonight I will just write this letter and try again tomorrow.

—Dennis T., Alaska

Being of Service to Others

When I was eight years old, my mother would ask me (her only child), "Will you help me by drying the dishes and stacking them on the counter?" I enjoyed the activity and felt I was part of the team. She would also ask, "Will you help sweep the stairway?" I remember this task as being fun because, as I swept from the top step to the bottom, the amount of debris that accumulated to the bottom kept growing. Both of these jobs were effortless, and, in my naturally isolating mind, they were "mine to do." Helping was a service that provided rewards of self-satisfaction and contribution to the general welfare. I could see that I was part of a happy home, and that my help would help. There were many other tasks, but those are the first requests I remember.

I also learned at a very young age that my help in doing unassigned chores was important to my family. My growth as a responsible person

required that I help out. As I got older, more and more chores were assigned to me, and I never felt angry about them because I was reaping the freedom that comes from responsibility.

Things started to get complicated, however, when I was 13 and I found that lust, sex, and alcohol were the "in" things with other friends my age. I did not need to help any more. While I enjoyed helping as a child, I was slowly growing "into myself" (or so I thought) with the discovery of sex and alcohol. What tremendous excitement there was thinking about the next escapade!

My new friends actually were sex and alcohol—and the classmates I hung out with either enhanced these adventures or I dropped them as associates. If I needed sleep, I had a choice of options, and the options seemed perfectly normal. I rationalized that, if I just drank myself to sleep every night, I would be an alcoholic, and if I were to seek

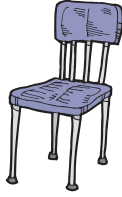


satisfaction sexually every night I would be a sexaholic—but with both options, I would be neither. That made perfectly good sense to me at the time.

For decades afterward, except for the responsibilities of my job and marriage and parenting, I found many new and different ways to isolate. Watching sports on TV was a wonderful experience that did not require other people, and that gave me chance for me to get into my “zone” and forget about the pressing issues that were building up in my life.

Eventually, my wife and children were all in some sort of trouble and I had to closely analyze my practices to see why everything was falling apart. I went to AA and found that it was a spiritual program, and I thought that I could use some spiritual uplifting. (I had been a regular church goer every Sunday my whole life.) But after I did the Steps in AA (and subsequently in SA), I realized that the problem was not only that I had become powerless over alcohol and lust, but that I had really become powerless over myself.

Both of my sponsors (in AA as well as SA) were urging me to get involved in service, and I did not really see the fruits of the fellowship until I started doing service for others. I was told:



- If you do what you always did, you will get what you always got.
- If you want what you haven't gotten, you will have to do what you haven't done.

As examples to me, both of my sponsors were active not only as sponsors but also as meeting leaders: organizing new meetings, always bringing the program of fellowship and sobriety tools into every meeting, getting to meetings early to set up, rearranging chairs, and putting literature away at the end of the meetings. Other members contributed by organizing new meetings, serving as Intergroup Representatives or Regional Representatives, or presenting at speaker meetings.

I started small, but soon I found my place in the recovery world like they did. And somewhere in the process, I found the same joys of peace and serenity that I knew as a young boy helping with my family. In fact, today I know that every member at every SA meeting is a family member in the Twelve Step fellowship, and we find that the Twelfth Step is a living reality:

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. (SA, 208)

—J.F., *Northern New Jersey*

The Fungus of the Soul

There I was in an Israeli prison, walking through a security checkpoint to visit an incarcerated SA member. What an ordeal! First, I had to empty my pockets. Then I had to take off my shoes. After that, I had to take off my socks and walk barefooted on a tile floor where other barefoot people—from all backgrounds—had been walking. All my mind could think was “If I take my socks off, I will surely get athlete’s foot from walking barefooted on this tile floor.”

It is always about me and my fears. Here I was almost 31 years sober in SA, and I was still obsessing about me and my fears. At that moment, a passage in our SA literature spoke clearly to me:

Lust hates the light and flees from it; it loves the dark secret recesses of my being. And once I let it lodge there, it’s like a fungus and starts flourishing—the athlete’s foot of the soul. (*SA*,160)

At that moment, I knew that if I walked barefooted, I could get a fungus between my toes—but if I did not walk barefooted, the fungus of my soul could return. The answer was easy: I needed to take off my socks, get through security, and help another suffering sexaholic.

This is my secret of staying sober. I accept that I am a selfish, self-

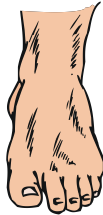
centered, self-delusional sex drunk, driven by a hundred forms of fear, just as the Big Book states in terms of alcoholism:

Selfishness—self-centeredness! That, we think is the root of our troubles. Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity....” (62)

After I accept the truth about myself, I can then ask God to help me transcend my illness of self-centered fear—“to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt” (*AA*, 63).

What a miraculous time this past eight months has been. My wife and I spent our travel time doing SA service work in Poland, Australia, New Zealand, Denmark, and Israel. My wife worked with the S-Anons and I worked with the SAs, and together we led meetings for couples. I’ve been able to help people of diverse religious and varied political beliefs. How can a selfish, fearful person like me do this? Only by my staying sexually sober both inside and out. Only by not acting out or lusting one day at a time could this be possible.

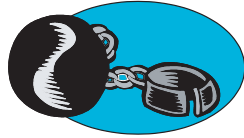
I recently heard a story that a man in AA who had 40 years of sobriety was asked why he kept coming back to meetings. His response was, “To see how awake I can get.” The awakenings we get in



recovery never end.

The awakenings I receive are awe-inspiring. My recent awakening is that this was why I was created: to pass the message throughout the world to people of many diverse faiths and political beliefs. The message is this: if this program could work for a low-bottom drunk like me, it can work for anyone. No matter what your background or religion, it can work.

The Twelve Step program works. It can restore us to sanity. It can bring us into a personal relationship with a loving God of our understanding. It



can show us that God loves us. It can also show us that we can only keep it if we give it away. This is why SA service work is so important to me.

I hope that I don't pick up athlete's foot from my barefooted walk in the prison. But if I do, that would not be as bad as the fungus of the soul that plagued me for so many years when I was active in my addiction.

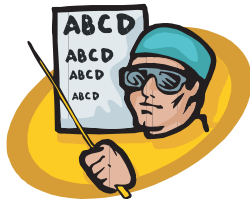
We sexaholics are now God's agents to prevent and exterminate the fungus of the soul. What a great job to have!

—Harvey A. Nashville, TN

Working the Steps

Step Four: My "I" Exam

My name is Jim B., and I'm a sexaholic in recovery. For the past three months, I've been working on my Fourth Step with the guidance of my sponsor. The journey has led me through the gamut of emotions, and it has given me a significant amount of insight into how my past characteristics have manifested themselves and impacted others. My fearless moral inventory has been a deep soul-searching, eye-opening experience that has moved me forward in recovery with a new awareness of who I was, who I am now, and who I desire to become.



For me, the Fourth Step experience was a journey. It was not about "just getting it done," as that would mean just speeding toward completion without allowing time for personal change. To speed along would be to miss the point of Step Four as I understood it: to facilitate a lasting change in my understanding. Through this process, I have learned that recovery and the Fourth Step are about change and healing.

In my fearless moral inventory, I identified 39 character flaws. These ranged from ego, pride, and lust to impatience, anger, envy, arrogance,

and dishonesty. I researched the definitions of each of these to make sure I understood each trait. This provided me with a new understanding of my past behavior.

In the process, I came to describe my journey as an “I” exam. Most of us have had an eye examination at some point because we couldn’t see clearly. I was not able to see my life, because my character defects skewed everything I experienced—so I could not see clearly how I behaved and reacted toward others, including my family.

My Step Four was my personal “I” examination. As I researched my characteristics, I began to connect their evolution from my earliest memories, and I could see more clearly how the behaviors had affected my current life. I felt as though I were looking at an eye chart and realizing just how out of focus my life had been.

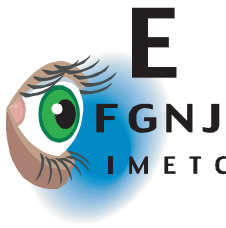
As I tried to read the chart, covering first one eye and then the other, it became apparent that much of my life was a blur. Between my addiction, character traits, and behaviors, not a single letter on my eye chart was clearly visible. I suddenly realized that my being unable to see has disconnected me from my wife, my children, my friends and family, and my faith. I have missed opportunities to build relationships,

be compassionate and empathetic, and forgive myself and others. My distorted vision also caused me to make poor life choices that were most often selfish.

As a result of my “I” exam, I diagnosed myself with what I call “characteristic blindness.” This is an ailment that gets progressively worse without proper correction, and it was at such a destructive point in my life that I clearly needed to take corrective action in order to recover any ability to live life wholeheartedly.

While I was in the exam chair, the optometrist (who I believe is God as He may express Himself through my sponsor and Step Four) placed drops in my eyes. But instead of easing my discomfort, the blurriness continued, and then I felt pain, anxiety, and fear. I recalled that healing sometimes involves pain and discomfort.

The “optometrist” then placed the equipment with various lens adjustments in front of me to look through. At first I still could not see anything and was left with a sense of continued despair. I was told to look at the chart again, and first one lens was adjusted and then the another. With each turn of the lenses, some of my blurry life cleared. Fuzzy images became shapes, and shapes became letters. The dots in my life began to appear to me and connect. First the



large row of letters became visible, then the smaller rows, and then the smallest rows. As each row cleared, I gained a further understanding of just how poor my “I” sight had been and how things could be improved, if I wanted to improve. I realized I had a choice: I could continue to see things poorly, or I could see things through a new corrective behavior. This new choice also comes with the ability to live life through “get to’s” and as opposed to “have to’s.”

In the end, Step Four gave me a prescription for the remainder of my life, with an understanding that lasting improvement would come over time and with commitment. The only way I can live the life I desire is through making new choices. Today I must accept the responsibility for amending my past and for taking corrective action to move forward. Here’s how my personal “I” prescription reads:

1. Do a regular daily check-up by evaluating my thoughts and behaviors and seeing how they relate to my life.
2. Remain forever aware of how my defects of character have influenced me, and in this new awareness, take time to pause and see things as they really are and not as I believe they are.
3. Stay present and vigilant through prayer to God, as I understand Him. Surrender those items I



need to work on continually.

4. Add perspective by seeking out good counsel from my sponsor and others when things start to get blurry, before they get out of focus.

5. Focus every day on being selfless rather than selfish.

6. Be grateful that through my Fourth Step, my life was still correctable and blindness had not permanently set in.

7. Recognize that I am a good man and that I matter and make a difference.

So after three months, 71 pages of Fourth Step writing, and a lot of soul searching, I have come to acknowledge that at the core of my fearless moral inventory, I discovered my pure selfishness and disconnection from God. These two items were the common thread woven through my every defect. They were the basis for most of my behaviors, much of the hurt in my own life, and most of the emotional harm I caused others.

With my newfound understanding and perspective from my personal “I” exam, I am now working daily to recognize my defects of character, and asking God to remove them. And I am grateful to have the choice to do so.

—I’m Jim B., and I am still working on recovery

Fenner U.— A Remembrance

He would tell anyone who would listen that SA saved his life.

On March 10, 2015, Fenner U., one of SA's longest-standing and staunchest members, went home to be with God. Fenner joined his beloved

SA in 1984 in Washington, DC, and he remained in the program consistently throughout those 31 years. His welcoming smile and open heart were always there for the newcomer.

Members were drawn to Fenner's deep faith in God's readiness to transform our lives through our program of recovery. Fenner would passionately testify to how God had changed his life so completely, and that He would do so for others as well if they would simply give SA a try. Though ill for many years, he never let his

physical challenges get in the way of his Twelfth Step evangelism.

Fenner served many years on the SA Literature Committee and chaired the Program Committee of International Conventions in the Washington, DC area. His

favorite service was the Phone Committee, and many members in the DC area recall how it was the hope they heard in Fenner's honesty and optimism during that first call that convinced them to attend their first meeting.

Fenner had a brilliant mind, a genteel spirit, and a loving heart, and he poured out his life generously in service to all of us in the program. We will remember him with deep affection and gratitude. Following is his story as printed in December 2009 *Essay*,

—L.A.



My Path to Recovery¹

I had been in the program for several years before I finally met Roy K., although I believe we talked over the phone during those first years. I remember Roy's passion for spreading the message, his courage, and his principles. Those qualities came through

clearly in his conversations as well as his writing.

I joined SA in 1984, a few months after breaking up with a fellow who had been my "lover." This man had died suddenly of a mysterious new disease, which we now call AIDS. I was shocked that

¹ Reprinted from December 2009 *Essay*, page 11.

a man who seemed so healthy had died so suddenly. I was consumed by fears: I would I start having sex with people without telling them I was infected? In desperation I prayed, "Please help me, Lord!"

Not long after those desperate prayers, I "happened" to overhear another same-sex-attracted man talking very loudly in public. He shared that he was a member of a new Twelve Step sexual abstinence program that advised complete mental and sexual abstinence for lust and sex addicts. It was called Sexaholics Anonymous.

I had never heard lust discussed as an addiction, like alcohol or illegal drugs, but I recognized the similarities. I joined this new program and was told that I would have to stop lust. Paradoxically, the wording of SA's Step One reflected how impossible that would be: "We admitted that we were powerless over lust—that our lives had become unmanageable."

During my first few years in SA, I wanted the sobriety definition to be redefined. I thought Roy was puritanical. I considered that the sobriety definition—no sex with self or anyone other than a heterosexual marriage partner—would be impossible for me. I

was right. By then, I had become consumed with lust. I could have never stopped on my own. Fortunately, I kept coming back. I found that with the help of God and others, it is not impossible. But it was difficult, and to stay sober, I needed the help of the recovering men and women whom God placed in recovery with me.



At the meetings I attended, most of the other men talked about their acting out with women. However, I readily identified with them, and they with me, no matter what our ways of sexual acting out had been. They did not scorn me; they were helpful. I learned

that meetings are safe places. It is okay to be honest. God gave me the grace to keep coming back. After only a few years of working the Steps and sharing with others, I began to realize something very surprising: I was getting far more real love and acceptance in the meetings than I had ever gotten in my sexual relationships.

It took me a few years before I recognized the wisdom of my program's definition of sexual sobriety. During these struggles, Roy loved me and others enough to tell the truth, even when it was unpopular. He did what God called him to do. He kept reiterating SA's

bottom line and insisted that the sobriety definition applied to men and women of all backgrounds. Today, I have found this to be true for myself.

Even as my physical health has declined, my spirituality and self-awareness have grown as a result of my continued pursuit of this

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Introducing New CFC Chair

Carrying the Message

My name is Chuck, and I'm a recovering sexaholic. I've been sexually sober since June 3, 2013. When I was 12, I began looking at various magazines, seeking out pictures of women in them, and I would sneak them home to act out. At 13, while babysitting, I found pornographic magazines and began looking at women as sex objects. Then I found Internet pornography, followed by chatting with promiscuous adults. I was pushing boundaries because I wanted what I wanted when I wanted it.

My addict could not get enough lust! We say in this fellowship that one of three things is going to happen to us: We will find God, we will die, or we will go to jail. My addiction took me to jail, so for me it was either die or find God!

I was finally ready to admit that I had an addiction and I could not do it alone. While incarcerated, I was

God-given program. Roy did more for me than I can possibly express. Many wonderful blessings came my way when I finally learned to surrender to this program, surrender my lust, and work the Steps in SA.

—Fenner U., Washington, DC

in a "cognitive behavior treatment program." We were not allowed to talk about lust as an addiction (the therapist said) because there is no physical withdrawal. Nor could we talk about spirituality, because it was a federal facility.



When I came to SA, I was ready to try something else. I went to my first meeting September 2009, and I heard that this is an addiction and that there is a spiritual solution. These things made me feel like I belonged. At my second meeting I got a sponsor and began working the Steps, because I could not do it alone! I also started to do service work and I began sponsoring others, which definitely helped keep me sober and led to my recovery.

I began sponsoring others face-to-face, then long distance by phone, and then by mail with those in prison. I joined SA's Correctional Facilities Committee (CFC), later becoming

Intergroup CFC Chair, and then the SA Southeast Region (SASERA) CFC Chair. Now I'm gratefully serving as the International CFC Chair. I have felt honored to follow the previous CFC Chairs, including Unchatwa, who has been an inspiration to me and others.

We currently look forward to achieving the following goals:

- Get two pamphlets into print: "So, You're Going to Prison" and "So, You're Leaving Prison."
- Fill vacancies among regional CFC chairs, who then can work to fill Intergroup roles.

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AA Grapevine Reprint

Life on the Inside ¹

When I was 3, I had my first taste of liquor. By the age of 11, my alcoholic stepfather and I were getting drunk together. Although I was an alcoholic, I still found a productive life. I have three children, a wife, and my own tattoo business. My studio was always filled with alcoholics. I was getting drunk on the job and spiraling out of control, but I never knew why. The thought of getting help never occurred to me.

But on June 5, 2009, I had a spiritual awakening. I was shot twice by police officers and charged with aggravated assault of a public servant



- Host three sessions at the Chicago Convention, including a joint S-Anon session on "Corrections: A Family Issue."

- Expand the Sponsor-by-Mail program beyond the 36 prisons and 210 prisoners (so far this year) we have reached.

Our Sponsor-by-Mail program provides the only way for inmates with our disease to have a chance for recovery. We need your help. Volunteer today!

I hope to see you all in Chicago.
In grateful loving service,
—Chuck S., Atlanta

with a deadly weapon. I was drunk and high the day I was shot, and I came within seconds of dying. Looking back, I've come to believe that a Power greater than myself gave me a second chance.

A few weeks later, on July 29, I went to my very first AA meeting, by myself, in the county jail. It was there that I met other alcoholics who were also seeking help. I learned to reach out, and I got a sponsor through AA World Services. With my new sponsor I made a searching and fearless moral inventory of myself, so he and I could see my path of destruction, and I began

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to see my path to staying sober.

I've been corresponding with my AA sponsor Pat for four years now. He recently celebrated 27 years of sobriety. He took me through the Steps and has taught me many tools to stay sober. Through Step work, I learned things about myself that I never knew, as well as my defects of character. I also learned to renew myself and gain a deeper understanding of myself. I've been granted the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Pat also introduced me to the best little magazine, called *Grapevine*. It's so encouraging to read it because it's filled with

stories about people just like me.

I've been in here since June 5, 2009, and even though I have a life sentence, I am finally free on the inside. I now reach out to other alcoholics and share my experience to help others overcome this terrible disease of alcoholism, which is what I was blind to. That is my message.

I've been sober for more than five years. That's the longest I ever had since I was nine. My wife has also started going to AA meetings. Together we walk one day at a time through prayer and meditation. For both of us, our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics achieve sobriety.

—C.A., Rosharon, TX

SA Around the World

Multi-National EMER Convention

May 2015, Birmingham, UK



On May 15-17, SA's Europe and Middle East Region (EMER) held its third annual Regional SA Convention, with S-Anon participation, in Birmingham, UK. After our first convention in Warsaw in 2013 and our second in Jerusalem last year, our UK fellows took the initiative to host this annual event. The venue was the beautiful Royal Angus Thistle Hotel in the center of the city. The convention was preceded by a face-to-face Regional Assembly on Friday, where Intergroup Representatives



from the nine different Intergroups participated in all-day sessions.

The Assembly meeting started with a spiritual exercise to identify beliefs that block us in service and to identify the spiritual viewpoints on service in our AA and SA literature.

Our Delegates learned this exercise at the General Delegate Assembly meeting last summer in Detroit. After that, the morning session continued as the IGRs shared the developments, challenges, and successes in their countries, and they answered

questions. In the afternoon regional business was discussed, and the meeting proceeded as usual.

The convention opened officially at 5:00 pm, with talks from three speakers: UK Intergroup Chair Ed M., S-Anon Representative Karen W., and EMER Chairperson Luc D. Members from 18 countries attended the convention—showing that SA is getting a foothold in more and more European countries! Several brothers and sisters from our neighboring German-Speaking Region joined us, and their support and cooperation gave us much joy and strength.

Besides fellows from the nine EMER Intergroups—Ireland, UK, Flanders, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Spain, Israel and the French-speaking IG (which includes groups in France, Luxembourg and the French-speaking part of Belgium), friends from Finland, Slovakia, Croatia, Austria, Switzerland, Cuba, and a US member living in Russia came to celebrate with us.

A large group of Jewish members also attended. Some of them were from the UK, and some were the party makers from last year's convention, who came over to sing and dance with us again during the Saturday evening entertainment. They helped make the convention a joyful experience.

Meetings were held in Hebrew,

German, Spanish, and Dutch. Additionally, 17 members offered their services as simultaneous translators, and many sessions were translated into Spanish, French, and German. Throughout the convention, there were three simultaneous meetings of 50 minutes each, and in each meeting a panel shared their experience, strength and hope on more than 50 topics. Open meetings (which included both SA and S-Anon members), were held in the main room.



Those meetings were recorded, and for the first time in SA history, they were live-streamed. So members from Germany, Egypt, the US, and Belgium who could not attend were able to listen in live! Many members sent enthusiastic responses stating how grateful they were for this service. The recordings can be found on the EMER website (sexaholicsanonymous.eu/content/resources).

Next year's EMER convention will be hosted by the Spanish Intergroup and will take place in Madrid, May 13-15. We hope to see more members there, from even more countries—including a sprinkling of members from the US. EMER is growing in members and sobriety, and our third convention was a spiritual expression of our regional unity.

—Nicholas S., Convention Chair

Women Meet at EMER Conventions

At EMER's first Regional Convention in Warsaw in 2013, five women met from five countries (Luxemborg, Ireland, Holland, Spain, Poland). We had never met before, and most of us were the only women in our home meetings. This was a wonderful experience, and we started two projects: a Women's Skype meeting and an EMER Support for Women Committee. Both of these are still up and running and doing great. Some of us met again at the second EMER Convention in Jerusalem in May 2014, and that helped to



cement our friendship.

This time around, in May 2015 in Birmingham, we all met once again—the original five of plus a few more. It is amazing how we have grown to know and support each other. This time we spent a lot of time together eating, sharing at meetings, and enjoying the lovely terrace and views from the hotel. We all feel our sobriety has gained a lot from this network of women that we are creating around Europe and the Middle East.

—*Maria Y., Spain*

Report from German-Speaking Convention

Honesty, Munich, April 10-12, 2015

I'm Bernd, a sexaholic from Munich, and I'm grateful to have been a part of the Munich team that organized (with God's help) the German-Speaking convention this year. The convention was held in Zavelstein near Stuttgart. The theme for the weekend was "Honesty."

This convention was organized a bit differently from others in the past. Our Munich fellowship was inspired to bring in some new innovations, which worked well for our fellowship. To see a bigger picture of recovery, we (1) organized speaker



meetings with two to three speakers each, who each had at least one year of sobriety, (2) invited an International speaker, and (3) recorded meetings for friends who could not come. We also organized three parallel tracks of one-hour meetings: one for German speakers and one for English speakers (for the first time at a German convention), and one mixed sharing meeting (as described in SA, 197).

We had International speakers and meeting leaders from Belgium, the Netherlands, and Ireland, as well as representatives from EMER

to speak about their work and how we might better work together in Europe. As a big surprise, Harvey A. flew in to be our Saturday evening speaker. We enjoyed listening to him share his experience, strength and hope.

Altogether, 112 members participated. One highlight for me was that we were able to pass a basket and provide some travel expenses for Dave T. Now Dave will be able to travel to the Russian convention on his upcoming trip

through Europe. He will be speaking at gatherings in Munich, Germany, October 16-18; Lille, France, October 23–25; in Warsaw, Poland, October 30–November 1; Moscow, Russia, November 6–8; and in Jerusalem, Israel, November 13-15. We want to show that we support each other in fellowship, even with friends we do not know yet.

This convention has meant a lot to me; I found new connections in my fellowship and with God.

—*In fellowship, Bernd*

July 2015 International Convention

Chicago, IL, Crossroads of Recovery, July 24-26, 2015

Are you looking for opportunities to be of service to God and others? Do you want to foster new friendships with those who are seeking a shared solution to a shared problem? Do you just want to have some “good clean fun”? The SA fellowship of Greater Chicagoland invites you to contemplate those questions at the July 2015 convention. We encourage you to join us at the “Crossroads of Recovery” for a weekend of sharing, learning, and connecting with others. Our convention will be held at the Westin O’Hare Hotel. For more info visit crossroadsofrecovery.com.

We look forward to seeing you in July!

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



Members Please Share Your Experience, Strength, and Hope!

Sharing your recovery experiences encourages the addict who still suffers as well as other members who are in recovery. Articles are invited from all SA members and SA groups. When submitting articles, please remember *Essay's* editing philosophy:

All articles submitted become the property of *Essay* and are subject to editing.

(see sa.org/submitessay.php)

Submit stories or ask questions at sa.org/submitessay.php



SAICO Financial Update

Following is a summary of SA fellowship revenues and expenses for First Quarter 2014. A detailed donations report is enclosed with mailed issues of *Essay*. The report is also available from SAICO. To request your copy, please call SAICO at 866-424-8777 or write to saico@sa.org.



SAICO Financial Update First Quarter 2015	
Donations	\$ 59,296
Other Revenues	12,713
Expenses	61,035
Revenues (less expenses)	3,974
Total Prudent Reserve	131,384

Permission to Copy Essay

At our meeting in February 2015, the General Delegate Assembly (GDA) voted unanimously to permit *Essay* subscribers to make up to 10 copies, either in print or electronically, to share with others. This decision is in furtherance of our primary purpose to carry the message (Tradition Five) while still protecting the integrity of our copyright. 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.

—Gary L., GDA Chair



"Pray for
freedom from
self-will"



New SA Groups

USA

Augusta, GA (additional)
Boerne, TX (additional)
Cypress, TX (2 meetings)
Englewood, CO (additional)
Pocatello, ID

Terre Haute, IN
Westmont, IL

United Kingdom

Aberystwyth, UK (additional)
Chelmsford, Essex, U.K.



Delegates and Trustees June 2015

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

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

Calendar of Events



July 2015

5, Buxton, Derbyshire UK, SAUK Recovery Day, *Into the Light*. One-Day speaker meeting. Flyer available from SAICO or SAUK.

10-12, Dublin, SA / S-Anon Convention, *It Works If You Work It*. Info at convention@saireland.com

17-19, Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico: Convención Nacional de S.A. México. Phone: +52 1 3310623768, webiste.sexolicosanonimosmexico.blogspot.mx/2015/02/convencion-nacional-en-guadalajara.html, or email nuevogruporenacer@hotmail.com. This is a Spanish-speaking convention. Members

from outside Mexico are welcome.

August 2015

15 - 17, Cali, Colombia: Congreso Nacional SA. Third annual SA convention. Visitors from SA welcome. Call 57 3108392022 or email: carlrobg@yahoo.com.co.

September 2015

4-6, Ammerdown, UK SA/S-Anon Convention

24-27, Bear Lake Ranch House 7630 ID-36, Montpelier, ID. *The Crucial Change of Attitude*. WISA (women only) retreat. Info available at bearlakeranchhouse.com, or contact Amy at 425.577.4855 or recoveringamy@gmail.com

October 2015

2 - 4, Wichita Kansas USA, South Midwest Region Retreat, *Attitude of Gratitude*. Online registration will be available at SAICO Online store.

11, Bay Shore, NY USA (Long Island NY Inter-group) A One Day Conference. Info at salongisland.org. Flyer in late August

16 - 18, 2015, Post Falls Idaho USA, SA Fall Retreat, *Take the Actions of Love*. Info at sanorthwest.org. Online registration offered at www.sanorthwest.org

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

Upcoming International Conventions



July 24-26, 2015, Chicago, IL, Crossroads of Recovery. Contact crossroadsofrecovery.com or info@crossroadsofrecovery.com

January 15-17, 2016, San Diego, CA, USA, Reflections in San Diego. Join us in our beautiful oceanside city for a weekend of recovery. Continue your journey by sharing,

listening, and learning. Connect with SA members from around the world. Make new friends and reconnect with old friends. info at reflectionsinsandiego.com



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The Twelve Traditions of Sexaholics Anonymous

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

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



GOD

GRANT ME THE

SERENITY

TO ACCEPT THE THINGS I CANNOT CHANGE

COURAGE

TO CHANGE THE

THINGS I CAN AND

WISDOM

TO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE.

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