

The image features a surreal landscape with a bright blue path leading to a horizon under a starry sky. Two small figures stand at the end of the path. The path is flanked by dark, triangular shapes that create a sense of depth and perspective. The sky is filled with numerous small white stars, and the overall color palette is dominated by deep blues and blacks, with a bright white light at the horizon.

Essay

March 2015

It Has To Be A Miracle

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

The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions are reprinted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. (AAWS). Permission to reprint and adapt the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions does not mean that AAWS has approved the contents of this publication, nor that AAWS agrees with the views expressed herein. AA is a program of recovery from alcoholism only. Use of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions in connection with programs that are patterned after AA, but which address other problems, or in any other non-AA context, does not imply otherwise.

March 2015



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

—Adapted with permission from the AA Grapevine Inc.

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

*Essay . . .
SA's Meeting in Print*

Member Story

It Has to Be a Miracle! 2

SA International Conventions

My First SA Convention 7

Getting Back on Track 9

Dating and Marriage

My Experience with Sober Dating 12

Recovery in Marriage 15

Members Share

SA Columbia Celebrates Ten Years 17

Thoughts on Sponsorship 18

Leaving the Nest 19

Lying to Myself 21

Getting There Slowly 23

Prayer and Meditation

Using the Serenity Prayer 25

A Simple Prayer 26

Utopia 27

SA News Around the World

New Meeting in the Netherlands 28

Request for Country Coordinators 28

SA Business

SAICO Financial Update 30

Delegates and Trustees 31

Calendar of Events 32

New to SA?

Call toll-free at 866-424-8777

Outside North America call 615-370-6062

Email us at saico@sa.org

Or visit the SA website at www.sa.org

It Has to Be a Miracle!

I'm Harvey A., a sexaholic from Nashville, TN. My sobriety date is March 8, 1984. I can hardly believe that I'm now 75 years old and have been sexually sober for more than 31 years. When I began the SA recovery program at age 44, I had a full head of hair that had not yet turned grey. At 75, what hair I have is completely grey. My outward appearance has changed over the past 31 years. But it's the change in my inner self that I want to share with the fellowship today.

My recovery story began when I was 44 years old. I had been married for 23 years, I was the father of four children, and I had a successful professional career. Yet there I was leaving a pornography store, disgusted with myself once again. I felt hopeless. Anonymous sex had become a daily occurrence for me. I knew that I would lose my wife, my children, and my profession—but I was ready to lose it all rather than fight the compulsion one more moment.

Within one hour of those feelings of utter defeat and despair, I met—by a fortunate coincidence—a man who had previously informed me about SA. I told him I was ready.



He handed me the SA Brochure. When I read the brochure, I saw myself in it—but I was certain that the stipulation of “no sex with self” could not be accurate. Masturbation is normal! Yet deep within, I finally understood. This was my drug of choice. I had previously tried not having sex outside of my marriage, but the true culprit turned out to be masturbation. Everything built on top of that realization. This was a moment of clarity, and it was a miracle for me.

My disease started early. By age five I was already masturbating and being sexual with a neighborhood girl. By age 10, I began fantasizing about my Sunday school teacher and his wife. I would picture them engaged in sex together. At that same age, I attended a day camp, and I remember being mesmerized by naked men I saw in the locker room.

When I was 11, my parents decided to move to another state. There, I went to school in a neighborhood that was quite hostile to people of my religion, and I was taunted by my peers. Some older boys befriended me and offered me protection, but in return I had to be sexual with them. This lasted for about three months, and it led me to believe that male friendship must

include sexual contact.

During my teenage years, I became obsessed with being as sexual as I could with the girls I dated. There was also some sexual experimentation with boys my age, especially those who befriended me. From age 14 to age 17, I had an incestuous relationship with a male relative. When I was 15, my bachelor uncle decided I should be initiated into manhood by visiting a prostitute. The experience was a dismal failure sexually for me, and a death blow to my emerging sense of self. I spent the rest of my high school years trying to prove I was sexually adequate with women. The result was sexual obsession and disrespect of all the women I dated.

In college I met my future wife. From the onset, I became sexually obsessive with her. We married when I was 21. My insistence on frequent sex alarmed her to the point that she eventually took me to her gynecologist for medical advice. He told me that I was acting like a “sex maniac.” I thought both of them were crazy to imply I was having too frequent sex with my wife.

Masturbation in secret continued. I was able to stop masturbating for the first few weeks after our wedding, but soon after that the secret behavior started again. For the first 12 years of our marriage, there were only rare sexual behavior episodes with men, but in fantasy I was unfaithful multiple times. Then one day at

a local health club, I discovered promiscuous sex with men. I took to it like a duck to water.

For the next 10 years, my sexual behavior was out of control. I had sex with hundreds of partners, buying sex from both men and women, and practicing group sex, exhibitionism, and voyeurism. I would spend money on my sex partners instead of spending it on my family. My spending led to financial problems, and I was unable to pay for college tuition for two of my four children. This created tension in my relationships with my children.

I would develop obsessions toward my acting out partners, and I would become possessive, jealous, and full of rage. I put my family and myself in dangerous situations. I brought diseases home to my wife. Time and again I would cry to my wife, “Never again!”—only to succumb once more within hours. I would make oaths to God to stop, but soon I would be acting out again.

My addiction took me to the gates of hell, but I could not turn back. Seven months prior to attending my first SA meeting, I discovered the wonders of Twelve Step recovery by attending Alcoholics Anonymous. But after my AA meeting I would jog down to a pornography shop for anonymous sex. I stopped drinking, but I could not stop acting out.

I knew that my acting out would lead to a probable relapse in AA. And I could not do my Steps Six and

Seven because I was not entirely ready to have God remove all my defects of character. I did not want to stop acting out sexually, but I knew that without progressing in my Step work, I could not stay sober from alcohol. I was between a rock and a hard place.

Then one day, after leaving a pornography shop in utter hopelessness, I met by chance the man who had previously informed me about SA, and he invited me to my first SA meeting. I was ready. It was just the two of us at that meeting, but I got the message. What has happened since that day is the miracle of sobriety, and I've been sexually sober since that day. Now I really wanted to stop—but stopping the use of my drug was a day-by-day drudgery. We had only one SA meeting a week in Nashville back then, and that one night was sacred to me. One day at a time, I learned about sobriety. The White Book had not been published yet, but we had that cherished SA Brochure with "The Solution" that said it all for us.

People started coming to the meetings, and then people stopped coming. Even my sponsor, the man who founded SA in our community, stopped attending. After six months of sobriety, he relapsed. As a result of his behavior, he was arrested and incarcerated for an indefinite period of time. I will never forget that day

when I cried to my wife saying, "What will happen to me now that he is gone from the program?" But somehow, I was able to stay sober.

How did I stay sober back then with no White Book and only one meeting a week? One day at a time, that's how! I would make a contract each day with God. I would promise just for that day that I would stay sexually sober. I told God that I could not guarantee tomorrow. I would then ask Him to keep me sober for the next 24 hours. I learned how to



avoid triggers, even those concerning my own body. I learned to pray for people who were triggers for me. I slowly got better.

The first year, I counted 120 people who came and went. We had only two sober people at the end of that year. Thank God I was one of them! Since then, I've watched our fellowship grow to 43 meetings a week, with as many as 70 people attending. And our fellowship now includes many members who have over 20 years of sobriety.

But something was still missing. After 11 months of sobriety I began suspecting what it was. Lust was still there, camouflaged as sex in my marriage. I realized that I needed a period of sexual abstinence from my spouse. I fought the idea, but finally I asked my wife. She agreed. After six weeks of abstinence, I told her I was ready to resume our sexual relationship. With the anger in her

eyes and voice she said, "I'm not!"

Why was this a shock to me? This was a woman I had disrespected for 24 years. When I told my sponsor that I was angry at her for not being willing to end our abstinence, he replied, "You are an addict. You cannot be the one to know when to stop your abstinence. Let God talk through your wife." God did, almost two years later. For me, it took 21 months of total sexual abstinence for that part of my illness to subside.

My sexaholic mentality still flares up periodically. I will notice people in the street, walking together and automatically wonder if they are lovers. I will observe people looking at me, and for a moment, think they are trying to seduce me. These thoughts happen less frequently now. When they do occur, I pray, "God, whatever it is I am looking for in that person, may I find it in You" (see SA, 165). I thank God when these thoughts appear, because they remind me that I'm still sick. How dangerous it would be to think I am cured!

Over time, I've also had victories over some of my character defects. These include greed, envy, and control, to mention only a few. The miracle today is that they are lessening and that I am aware of them when they appear. My sponsor tells me that I'm better than I used to be, but not as well as I'm going to get. Through SA, I've learned new tools that help me deal with my

defects. Step Ten always works when I use it. To admit my faults to myself and to another human brings me immediate relief. A burden shared is half as heavy.

Miracles have happened. I no longer have a preoccupation about my gender orientation. I came to realize that it was not an issue of being gay, straight, or bisexual. It was an issue of addiction. Once I put my drug away, those issues seemed to vanish, one day at a time. Today I like to say that my primary orientation is toward my Higher Power.

Miracles are also happening in my family. My wife and I are more comfortable with each other than we have ever been. We try not to work each other's programs. We've travelled a lot together, sharing the message of our recovery with SA groups all over the world. We look forward to these times together and enjoy each other's company. Our travels have taken us to people and their families hurting from sex addiction in countries such as Poland, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Israel, England, Ireland, Canada, and all over the United States. We recently returned from presenting SA and S-Anon workshops in Australia and New Zealand.

Who would have ever thought that God's will for me—a low-bottom sex drunk—would be to carry the SA message throughout the world? It has

taken many years for my wife and me to work through a healthier sexual relationship. In our geriatric years, we have finally found a compatible frequency and style for sexual intimacy.

My children and I get along so much better now. When they were younger, they would joke with us, saying, "Are you going again to one of those 'Lust Buster' conferences?" Now my children are older and they are all married. My daughters-in-law know that I'm in SA. My children have an open invitation to ask me about my program, and I have the freedom, if asked, to tell them the simple truth. I feel the genuine love among us all.

Last but not least is the miracle of finding the God of my understanding. This God, who watched me in the pornography stores—as I practiced all those low-life sex acts—still loved me so much that He brought me to the wonderful fellowship of SA. My God is my good friend today. I can talk to Him any time or any place. I occasionally lapse back into the belief in a God of retribution Who is out to get me. When that happens, I ask God to remove the thought from me. I now know that He loves me, and nothing I can do will keep Him from loving me.

This is how I stay sober today. It's simple. I do the same things today that I did when I first came into the

program. I get on my knees each morning and evening to give my Higher Power my day. I pray for His will for me. I speak on the phone with people from the fellowship throughout the day and evening.

I do a great deal of sponsorship, and—whatever the results are for the sponsee—sponsoring others helps me. I make a two-way contract with God each day. I ask God to keep me sexually sober that day, and I tell God I will stay sexually sober that day. I make a gratitude list each day to keep me currently connected to God. I try to attend a recovery meeting at least five days a week. I read each day from SA or AA literature. Over

the past few years, I've tried to meditate at least 20 minutes a day.

My recovery is like a three-legged stool: the Twelve Steps of our program, the God of my understanding, and the fellowship of SA (including meetings and sponsorship). The stool is sturdy and safe on its three legs. If any one leg breaks, the stool will topple. If I use all three legs simultaneously, I'm on solid ground. When I omit any one of the three, my program is unsteady.

I've been sober, one day at a time, for more than 31 years. One day at a time, I want to continue to stay sober. How else can I get to keep all I have found in this fellowship? I've found recovery in SA. I've found friendship. I've found a loving God.



I have truly found my home. Each morning I make a decision to accept the gift of sobriety, and each day I receive it again. And as my sponsor

would say, "It only gets better." It has to be a miracle!

—Harvey A, Nashville, TN

SA International Conventions

My First SA Convention

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

In May 2014, while out of the country on a business trip with my husband, I met a man who disclosed to me that he was a sexaholic. I told him that I thought I might also be a sexaholic, but I was shocked by the sobriety definition. I asked him, "You will never masturbate again?!" I was astounded. I didn't think that was possible. He told me about his Higher Power, and that there is hope.



When I returned home, I continued to talk to him briefly. I was in despair. I wanted to die—so I wanted to figure out how to have his Higher Power. Even though I love my husband and my two daughters, I could not find happiness even in them.

So this man (who I was talking with via the Internet, with my husband's permission!) eventually suggested that I look at the SA website. At the time I didn't understand my motives, but honestly, I think I wanted him (a professed sexaholic!) to lust after me. My Higher Power was working with what He had—He was working with

my lust to bring me to SA.

So I visited the SA website, answered yes to 19 out of the 20 questions, and made the phone call—and I attended my first meeting a few weeks later, on June 7th, 2014. Both men and women attended that meeting, and I could

not believe that people shared things that were going on in my head. They shared these things out loud and they shared without shame.

My husband knew from the beginning that I was attending SA. Two weeks before coming to SA, I had discussed a possible separation with him—but after my first meeting I felt better. I realized that I really do love my husband, and that it was my sickness that caused me to believe I was unhappy. I didn't understand why, but I suddenly felt that there was hope for our marriage and our family. After that first meeting, I felt like I belonged. I was home.

When I first heard about the Portland International Convention, I was surprised to find that my sponsor would be going, as well as my grand-sponsor and my sister-sponsee—and

I wanted to be a part of this. They suggested that I bring my husband (he joined S-Anon the same week I joined SA). They said that this would not only be an excellent opportunity for powerful recovery for me, but also for my husband, because he would be able to meet other S-Anon men there. They said it would be a great recovery experience for our relationship. I was excited and terrified to go, but I wanted to take positive action in my life, so I registered, and I was excited that husband and I could go together.

After registering, however, I was mainly terrified. I was full of shame and worried that people would know that I am the addict in our marriage. At some level, I believed that the woman is not supposed to be the addict. Intellectually, I knew I would be surrounded by others just like me, but somehow I felt different. I was terrified when I was packing, terrified when I was getting on the airplane, terrified when I got to the hotel, and terrified when it was time to register.

So I ended up missing some meetings the first night of the convention. I wanted to leave my husband there and fly home, and I was planning (in my head) what I could say to him to get him to stay. Of course I wanted him to stay, because it was an excellent opportunity for him to connect with S-Anon men.

I missed the first meeting as I lay paralyzed in fear in bed. The only reason I made it to the second meeting was that my sponsor and sister-sponsee came to my room to see how I was doing. This is not typical of their behavior—but I had been speaking to my Higher Power, asking for Him to send someone to come help me, and there they were.

Still, when they knocked on the door, I didn't answer right away. When I finally opened the door, they were already halfway down the hall, but they came back. They could tell I'd been crying. They helped me get my shoes on.

And off we went to a meeting. In the meeting, I didn't look at anyone, and I couldn't hear a word that anyone said. I believe I was in shock. I felt like I was under water.

After the meeting my sponsor took me to register, but I couldn't look at her or anyone else. I remember her asking me "Jessica, what do you need to do to feel better?" I was pouting like a baby, and was resentful to her for asking that. I didn't want to be resentful but I couldn't stop. So I responded, "Ask God to give me a changed attitude." Then I stormed off to my room, got on my knees, and prayed out loud to God. I didn't feel better immediately, but slowly I was able to start doing the next right thing, and I was able to get my body to dinner. After that things got better.



After dinner on Friday night I had the amazing opportunity to give away my Step One. I had over three months of sobriety, but I've been in the program for eight months and have worked very hard at doing a thorough Step One. And that night I became a part of something outside of myself—a part of something that wasn't about me. I was able to trust my Higher Power, I was able to clean house, and I was able to help others. I felt serenity right after giving that Step away; the power was lessened as my secrets were no longer secrets.

The next two days were quite different. I was able to embrace and enjoy the rest of the convention. I was better able to embrace my identity as a sexaholic. Listening to others share in the meetings was amazing because I found that every sexaholic thinks just like me! I was no longer unique. When my character defects



popped up and I became judgmental or resentful, I could always find someone to talk to immediately, and I was able to release the negativity quickly.

What a blessing it was to meet people I had listened to on CDs, who have been helping keep me sober, and what a blessing to meet people who have decades of sobriety. These people give me hope that I can also have recovery and that my husband and I can have a beautiful marriage in recovery. Now when I pick up the phone to call someone, it doesn't weigh 500 pounds anymore. I have many new women in my life who will be there at the other end. And I feel a part of the fellowship as I never have before. I will eagerly be looking forward to the convention in Chicago.

Thank you SA!
—Jessica, Edmonton, Alberta,
Canada



Getting Back on Track

I was on a slippery slope. For the past few months I had begun indulging in lust, as well as resentment, anger, and self-pity. I was yelling at my kids, demanding things from my husband and family, and wallowing in self-pity. I was spending more time in my head, in fantasy about past sexual encounters.

It was the holiday season and

I was busy, so I told myself I didn't have time for meetings, and my attendance at my local meetings became sporadic. I also stopped attending regular phone meetings, and I was disconnected from my sponsor, not calling her for months. I started to believe that I could control my addiction. Then one day I decided to "just see" what porn

would look like on my fancy new smart phone. But when the page appeared, I instantly felt shame. I could feel it through my whole body. Thank God, I was able to close the page immediately and pray for the people I saw on the site. This helped me get out of my head and back into reality. That was my wake-up call. I returned the phone the next day.

I knew that I had to get back to my program, and I started back to meetings. Then I remembered that the Portland convention would be coming up soon. Portland, OR is my hometown, and I suddenly really wanted to be there. I fondly remembered my first SA convention, in Newark, NJ in 2010. I always wanted to attend another one but never had the funds to go. But this time I learned that my local Intergroup has a scholarship fund for just this purpose, so I was on my way. I was also excited to stay a few extra days with family and friends.

The convention was exactly what I needed. I had prayed to be saved from isolation from God and others, and now here I was with more than 400 members of my SA family. I met women I had talked with over the phone but had never met in person, and I met many new women. I met people from all over the world, including Germany, Switzerland, Canada, and the UK. I found fellowship with much laughter

and happiness.

The convention schedule was packed with meetings and speakers. I attended as many meetings as I could, absorbing as much of the recovery in each as I could. I was inspired to hear so many different ways that people experience victory over lust.



I loved the topic meetings, such as “A Grateful Addict Will Not Use.” I was inspired by a panel of members with long-term sobriety, who shared their experience, strength, and hope. I learned a lot about recovery from them.

During the meals, I was blessed to hear both SA and S-Anon speakers. The S-Anon speakers helped me understand how my acting out has affected not only my husband, but everyone in my life. I know that I never want to go back there again. I also attended the celebration of sobriety after the Friday night dinner. One by one, about 300 of us went up on the stage to receive a chip for our varying lengths of sobriety—for a combined total of about 956 years! That had a tremendous impact on me.

Since I got home, I’ve gone back to all of my regular meetings. I’m getting better at sharing my weaknesses, reaching out to others, and doing service work. The convention helped me understand my powerlessness and helped me get back on track. I feel a renewed

connection with my Higher Power and my fellow SA members.

I would encourage anyone who is struggling to attend an SA convention. I cannot fight my disease alone, but at the convention I found that help is available when I ask for it. This is an experience way beyond

a local meeting.

As “The Solution” says, “We were making the real connection, we were home”(SA, 62). For me, this convention brought me home. Not just to my hometown, but home to my SA family.

—Wendi F., Colorado Springs



July 2015 International Convention

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

How is your program going? Are you enjoying all of the sobriety, serenity, and sanity that your Higher Power has for you? 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. As Chicago has served as the crossroads of America, we encourage you to join us at the “Crossroads of Recovery” for a weekend of sharing, listening, learning, and connecting with others for lifelong relationships.

Our convention will be held at the Westin O’Hare Hotel. Special rates of \$119 per night are available for single or double occupancy, \$144 for triple occupancy, and \$169 for four. These rates are available until June 26, 2015, but make reservations as early as possible to assure room availability. For more info visit www.crossroadsofrecovery.com.

We look forward to seeing you in July!

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



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. We also invite you to share your personal stories of recovery for possible inclusion in future issues. Submit to essay@sa.org.

—Gary L., GDA Chair

My Experience with Sober Dating

When I came into SA in 2009, I balked at the part of the sobriety definition that says “no form of sex with self or with persons other than the spouse” (SA, 191-192). I had come from a secular upbringing, and I lived through three divorces of my parents. First they divorced each other, then each of them married someone else, and then each divorced again. Marriage was not for me. I cohabited for six years with my first girlfriend, then another year with my second girlfriend, and it never once crossed my mind to ask either of them to marry me.

In 2009, when I was 35 years old, I thought I deserved more than ever to have a girlfriend and become a father. I was in another S-fellowship here in the Netherlands at the time, and I tried my very best to be sober. I knew of SA. I thought that SA might be good for others, but not for me. As the White Book says,

Our rationalizations are ingenious. We tried masturbation only, or having “meaningful relationships” only, or having affairs where we “truly cared” for the other person. Or, we resorted only to one-nighters, prostitutes, or anonymous sex “so nobody got hurt.” (191)

I had tried all of these rationalizations, and I knew in my heart that the result would always be the same: more acting out. Then a short relationship ended in a big frustration, and I was alone again. I was drunk on porn and masturbation, and nothing seemed to work for me. But I noticed that those “crazy” people whom I knew in SA were staying sober. So even though SA’s sobriety definition was tough for me to swallow, I had become really sick and tired of being sick and tired. Reluctantly I gave up my “last hope” and decided to surrender to SA’s sobriety definition.



I was quite surprised to find that after some days I was still sober, and I had not been fighting for it. In the next year I found many more “weapons” that I had been holding against the world, such as my continuous resentments against my father, my friends, and my ex-girlfriends. I was able to put them down also, one by one. I had to let go of so many things, but for the first time I felt really happy with myself and with other people. Living a single, unmarried life wasn’t so bad after all.

After two-and-a-half years of sobriety, my sponsor suggested I start dating. Me? I felt comfortable being “unavailable.” But now I had

to get out of my comfort zone. In the next two years I dated 10 different women, and my sponsor’s support and directions were indispensable. Then I met the tenth woman, and my Higher Power confirmed over and over again that I should continue with her. I proposed after four months.

In the beginning, I kept extremely strict boundaries with my fiancée in order to assure sober dating, but after awhile I began to relax a bit. As we drew closer to each other, I started feeling the temptations. One night my girlfriend tried to kiss me when we said goodbye. I was shocked. I turned my head away and quickly said goodbye. On my way home I felt lust barking and screaming at me.

I immediately called an old-timer who I knew had dated and married in sobriety. He calmly related that sometimes he had needed to cool down when things became too warm, by going outside for a walk alone or taking a cold shower. But he said that in the end, it was possible for him to stay sober through all of that. His simple testimony helped me so much. It was what I needed to hear. I learned that, for me, in order to stay sober I could not kiss my fiancée. It would simply arouse too many sexual feelings and make it more difficult for me to stay

abstinent.

The next time we met, I explained that we could not kiss. I had already told her my story so she understood this decision. Then I could see that she had a spiritual awakening. All her life, she said, she had thought that if a man likes a woman, he would want to kiss her. And now she saw that I liked her very much but didn’t want to kiss her. Kissing was suddenly not indispensable for being loved. I could see a big delight on her face!

I also learned many things from married fellows about the subtleties of lust for the spouse, and I could already identify with these things. These included suggesting that she wear a certain dress, because it fits her so well. Or indulging in sudden urges to have sex at unusual times during the day (which I would not need to share and surrender because it is in the marriage). I began to see that I could easily switch the form of my acting out from watching porn and having sex with myself to using my spouse as an object for my lust. This would just be another progression of my disease, but this time I could call myself sober in SA!

In two months from now we will be married. At this stage it doesn’t feel difficult anymore to stay abstinent. Having a sober engagement has been a wonderful experience for both of us; we would



not want it any other way now. I know that breaking my sobriety with her would only be a bummer. This path we are walking is the most beautiful experience in both of our lives.

Sober dating has also been an opportunity for healing in my family. My sponsor suggested that I ask for the blessings of my parents and my fiancée's parents before I proposed to my girlfriend. At first this seemed unnecessary and complicated. I rationalized that it was dishonest and not respectful to my girlfriend to speak to the parents before she agreed. But these and many other protestations turned out to be based on fear, and finally I went and got all blessings.

It turned out that my parents felt enormously respected because I valued their blessing before proposing to my intended wife. The look in their eyes and the way they reacted told me that this was the most wonderful gift that I could have given them. That is a treasure I will always carry in my heart. And my fiancée told me afterwards that she had dreamt as a little girl that the man who would propose to her would first ask for the blessings of her parents. Because of SA, a dream she had nearly discarded and forgotten had come true.

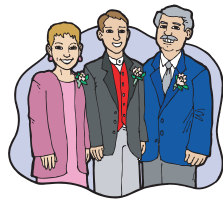
Recovery for me is full of

paradoxes, and I have learned a new way to look at these paradoxes. The best ideas that I can think of sometimes just aren't good enough. They might be good, but they can keep me from something better—and then I might be depriving myself of the best that my Higher Power has for me. This is the paradox of our "impossible" program with its "crazy" sobriety definition. Other sobriety definitions might be good, but for me, "nothing but the very best will do!" (12&12, 138).

I also learned that I had to give up my expectations about a relationship with a woman. In the past, I could relatively easily meet a woman and start a relationship. But my way of doing that didn't work out in the end. I first had to learn how to stay away from dating and be comfortable with myself, and then I learned how to date soberly. SA doesn't have a negative message of "not doing this and that," but the positive message that SA is for sobriety, for victory over lust and for the marriage. Maybe the Big Book says it best:

While you were drinking, you were withdrawing from life little by little. Now you are getting back into the social life of this world (102)

—Daan L., *Amsterdam, the Netherlands*



Recovery in Marriage

My wife and I recently celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary, and I can honestly say that the last 13 ½ years have been better than the first 36 ½ years, for two reasons. The first reason is that I've been sober for 13 ½ years, and the second is that in the last 13 ½ years we have experienced honesty, respect, unity, and love—love that is expressed in so many different ways in our relationship. I'm grateful for what the program has given our marriage.

Because of my addiction, in the past we could not experience true respect, unity, or love because I was living a lie. Everything seemed good on the outside to anyone looking on, but we did not have the oneness that is the product of a pure relationship. I often found fault with my wife and children. As the White Book says, "Instead of acknowledging my own problem, I transferred it onto another" (SA, 120). I will never understand why my wife put up with me for so long. She bore the brunt of my anger, resentment, and moody silences.

When I came to SA, I needed to deal with my character defects before I could become a whole person. I saw that the person on the inside, the real "me," was different from the person on the outside—

the person people thought I was. But by bringing the inside out and being honest with myself—probably for the first time in my life—I was able through SA to deal with my character defects. So today what you see is the real me—warts and all.

The process has been painful, but I could not expect to have recovery in my marriage until I had dealt with my own issues and character defects. I could not expect to have true union in my marriage if I was still acting out, nor could I expect true union "with the Source of my life." The White Book puts it this way:

I can't have true union with my wife while lust is active because she as a person really doesn't matter; she's even in the way; she's merely the sexual instrument. And I can't have true union within myself while I'm splitting myself having sex with myself. That fantasy partner I've conjured up in my mind is really part of *me!* With lust, the sex act is not the *result* of personal union; sex doesn't flow from that union. Sex energized by lust makes true union impossible (42).

I needed to deal with my own issues before I could concentrate on repairing my marriage. As I read in



the White Book in the chapter “The Sobriety Definition,”

The fact that marrieds can have sex with their spouse and call themselves sober is no advantage at all. (192)

My problem is lust, and if I’m motivated by lust in my marriage, things will not go well. After three years of recovery, my wife and I decided to have an open-ended period of abstinence, so that I could recover from lust. I needed time to cease playing those fantasies in my head when I was being intimate with my wife. I had to learn what true intimacy is—the difference between lust and love.

I also needed to learn how to “take the actions of love” to improve my relationship with my wife. I had to learn that there are many ways of showing love apart from sex, especially during the time of abstinence. I needed to better understand her needs so that I could better show love to her. We also learned that it is important for each of us to endeavor to improve our conscious contact with God as we understand Him—because as we each come closer to God, we become closer to each other.

Mainly though, I’ve learned that I must deal with my lust and my character defects before I can expect any recovery in marriage. I’ve found

that by focusing on the positive aspects of the SA program—doing service work, attending meetings (especially when I don’t feel like going), talking with my sponsor—this program of recovery works for me and improves my marriage. As the White Book says:

What we strive toward is not only the negative sobriety of not acting out our sexaholism, but progressive victory over the obsession in the looking and thinking. We also strive toward the positive sobriety of acting out true union of persons. (193)

I also need to keep reading the White Book. Each time I read it, I glean something I’ve missed. I must work the program. If I don’t, I cannot expect to receive the results of sobriety, sanity, and serenity—and I will not receive the benefits of healing in my marriage.

So what is our marriage like today? Instead of anger, resentment, and moody silences, we accept each other as we are. We feel a real enjoyment of our commitment to each other. The relationship is no longer a selfish one. We care and nurture each other, each accepting that neither of us is perfect. What I treasure most of all is the feeling of oneness, the respect, the unity and love. God is good. I am a work in progress, and I am grateful for SA.

—David W., *Ulverstone, Tasmania*



SA Columbia Celebrates Ten Years

When I first came into recovery in January 2004, my counselor recommended that I attend a Twelve Step group. The only group in Columbia at the time was another “S” fellowship, so that’s where I went. Then the wife of one of our members founded an S-Anon group when they moved here from North Carolina. My wife began attending S-Anon, and one day she came home with a flyer for the Mountain SA Spring Marathon in Asheville. We attended, and I came back raving about it. So a member of our group who had been an SA member in Washington DC asked if I would like to help him start an SA meeting in Columbia, and I agreed.

There were four of us at first. My friend found a meeting place, and he invited two other attendees from the other “S” group. Then one member moved away and another fell away, so we were down to two.

We met in an art gallery next to a bar/strip club on the local “prostitution highway.” The meetings were preceded by turning the nude paintings backwards. What a great venue for launching a new SA meeting! But it worked. The group grew slowly but steadily. Then after a couple of years, the owner sold his gallery.

We relocated to an Episcopal church that had a Twelve Step house on its property. The only open night was Monday, which was when the Boy Scouts met next door. After the church leaders consulted with the scout leaders—and we promised that we would not “hang around” after the meeting—the church reluctantly granted us tentative permission to meet there.

After a few more years, the church tore down our meeting place to make room for an addition. No problem—the scouts were moved inside the church, and their house became the Twelve Step house. Then the bombshell dropped. The church announced plans for a multi-use building that would have a separate meeting place for Twelve Step groups, and it would be inaccessible to other areas. Unlike all of the other groups, we were told that our SA group should look for an alternate meeting place before the new building opened.

Fortunately, there were other SA groups in Columbia by then, and we received permission to meet at one of their facilities. At the time, we had groups meeting three nights a week, a meeting every workday at noon, and an early morning meeting once a week. And just recently we started



a Saturday morning meeting, making a total of 10 meetings in 10 years. It is now possible to attend SA here every day of the week.

How did we do it? To paraphrase the White Book, “We didn’t—God did” (SA 158), with the support of several counselors and pastors in the

area. At this time, by the grace of God, we have a thriving SA population of 40 members here in Columbia. So on February 7th, exactly 10 years after our first meeting, we had a party!! Followed by a meeting, of course....

—Art H., Columbia, SC

Thoughts on Sponsorship

I’ve been sober in SA for four and one-half years, and I believe that my sobriety can be attributed in no small part to sponsorship. The SA program continues to bless me with valuable lessons from the process of both having a sponsor and being a sponsor, and I’m grateful to my Higher Power for putting my sponsees in my life.

Through experiences I’ve had lately, as both a sponsor and sponsee, I’ve thought of some new ways to frame my role as a sponsor. I’ll call this “The Three C’s of sponsorship”: being compassionate, consistent, and concise.

1. *Being compassionate.* The compassion I experienced at my first meeting was probably what kept me coming back to share with this group of “weird guys” when I joined SA in Nashville almost five years ago. My sponsor’s compassion has comforted me on countless occasions. When he says to me, “That sounds like me,” or “I know what that’s like,” it reminds me that just because I

experience powerlessness over my defects several times a day, I’m not alone. And since he’s ahead of me in sobriety, I must not have to act out over those defects either! All this has taught me that, despite my natural desire to lecture or moralize at times, I can strive to lead with compassion when I’m working with sponsees.

2. *Being consistent.*

Since coming into SA, I’ve often said to myself that the program doesn’t really change, so I guess I’ll have to change. As a sponsor, I think it’s my role to represent that consistency with my recovery and my sobriety. I cannot adjust the message of the program when my sponsees are encountering stormy emotions and experiences.

I’m aware that I sometimes sound like a broken record, but paradoxically I think this is what is often called for. For example, when a sponsee is complaining about his spouse and asking my advice, I can empathize, but also comment on what a challenge it is to keep the focus on one’s self in one’s



own recovery. Or as my sponsor has taught me to say, very gently, “Remind me where we left off in the Steps?”

The balance I still find challenging is getting the right mix of compassion and consistency. Early in recovery, I remember self-censoring what I told my sponsor in order to “get away with” the self-will in my heart. It’s taken me a while to learn that Step Three means I am able to take direction even when I was hoping for different directions.

So if I didn’t do early recovery perfectly, I don’t think it makes sense for me to give out “tough love” to my sponsees. I can be consistent and still be kind. This doesn’t always come naturally to me, since I sometimes like to glorify the image of the no-nonsense sponsor, dishing out tough love left and right to sponsees. But that hasn’t been my experience with my current sponsor, so it doesn’t really feel right for me.

3. *Being concise.* It’s not that I’ve learned to have only brief conversations with my sponsees, but it’s important for me to stick to my own experience, while also honoring my boundaries. When I find my end of a conversation with a

sponsee running long, I ask myself if I’m getting into sermonizing or giving advice beyond what’s been asked for. I think most of my sharing and suggestions should be based on my own experience, and this can help me keep my end more concise.

I also sometimes find a conversation running long with a sponsee because, for some reason, we are going in circles. I’ve spent enough time in my active addiction going in circles (doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results), so with an appropriate dose of compassion, I want to avoid these pitfalls.

A circular conversation might occur because we’re getting into a disagreement over a suggestion I’ve made. I think it’s good for me to practice patience and explain my reasoning if challenged, but I also have to know how to say, “I’m not sure we’re understanding each other. Why don’t we both reflect on this and talk again tomorrow?”

Those wonderful words, “One day at a time,” remind me that, as a sponsor or sponsee, I don’t have to figure it all out today.

—Anonymous, Cambridge, MA

Leaving the Nest

When a young bird is hatched, all it knows is the insatiable urge to be fed, crying out for its next meal. As the chick grows, the time comes when he is finally able to look outside the nest and see all the

mature birds soaring through the air. He is awestruck viewing all the wonders of flight. He begins to flap his wings each day, mimicking the older birds. As time passes the little bird begins to strengthen his wings

and starts to feel himself being lifted ever so slightly from the nest.

Weeks pass, and with knowing only a little, he decides to join the other birds in the joy of flight. He works his way to the edge of the nest, flaps his wings for all he's worth, leaps from the nest, and discovers the mystery of flight—and then he plummets to the earth. As he descends toward earth, he learns valuable lessons that he could only have learned by leaving the nest.

I remember that as I started in the SA program seven months ago, I felt defeated by lust. I continually battled against it, but lust always won out. I realized that lust was stronger than I was, and I knew I could not beat it. I hated my lust. I wanted it to go away and never return. I begged God a thousand times to take it, but it seemed that He never would. So I did not believe that God could or would remove my lust.

Today however, when I list the things I'm grateful for, one of them is my lust! I never would have believed that a day would come when I would be grateful for my lust—but today I am. How is that possible? As I began attending meetings, listening to my sponsor, calling other guys in the fellowship, and working the Steps, I discovered a whole new world.

I learned that when I try to

resist or fight lust (even with only one ounce of my own energy), I've already lost the battle. That is the beauty of powerlessness. Today when I feel lust, I can take a deep breath and know that there is absolutely nothing I can do about it. There is a freedom that comes with knowing that I'm powerless over lust.

Once I understood that I'm totally powerless over lust, I could completely surrender it to God. Before, I would beg God to take it, while I held on to lust with a death grip. As I slowly began to open my hands and surrender my lust to Him, He still would not take it. It wasn't until I completely surrendered my lust—with my hands fully opened—that God took it from me. I've learned to cry out for His power just for today, saying, "Thy will be done"—and like the wind lust is gone.

The freedom I felt the first time I experienced this was life-changing. However, over the next few months, lust still showed up in varying degrees. I could not figure out why sometimes it seemed stronger than other times. As I learned more about the program I began to see how much my will plays a part in my daily struggle with lust. When I fully surrender my lust and my will, I'm able to face God and be the recipient of His great power, love, and way of life. The lust is still there,



but it seems momentarily rendered impotent.

I still have trouble noticing when my will slowly starts to turn me away from God. I cannot tell when this starts to happen, but the minute I detect even the slightest bit of lust, I know that my will is turning me away from the direction of God. So I can now see that my lust is like a compass—when I detect lust's presence, it is alerting me that my direction must be altered. Then I can immediately surrender my lust—and more importantly my will—to God, asking for His power once again. This prayer immediately re-aligns me back to facing God and receiving His power in my life.

A compass always points toward true North. True North is an invisible



force that never changes from its direction and is always present. My lust is truly a blessing, in that I no longer need to let lust grow stronger by allowing my will to move me further away from the direction of God.

I still have so much to learn in this program, but each day that goes by—and the more I stay surrendered, facing God—the more my wings strengthen. I can now see how those who are ahead of me—who have been in the program for a while and understand what I am still trying to learn—are soaring through the air flying in the wondrous air streams of sobriety and recovery. That is my desire; that is what I want today.

—Dennis T., Anchorage, Alaska

Lying to Myself

I've been sober in SA for seven years now, and today I'm grateful to be a sexaholic. Because of SA, I have a life worth living, tools to help me live that life, and the ability to help others live a life worth living by working the Twelve Steps. But it wasn't always this way; I had a lot of resistance at first. So I decided to write a few things about my early resistance to working this program of recovery, in case my experience might benefit others.

Following are examples of lying to myself that I still must watch out

for. If I notice that I'm straying into any of these lies, I try to connect with others and God—because I'm headed for disaster if I continue.

1. *Recovery is boring.* Addiction is about instant gratification. Recovery is about taking it easy, slowing down, and serenity. For the longest time I thought recovery was boring. Now I see that recovery is anything but boring because now I can live a life worth living. Since working the Steps with a sponsor, and helping others work them, I can live a life of serenity no matter what's

going on externally.

2. *Recovery is too difficult.* But the addiction was also difficult. It took lots of time and energy to act out. My mind was constantly focused on a certain place to act out, or where to click on images, trying to find that “perfect” image, which always seemed to elude me. It’s difficult to go through all that chaos and uncertainty.

3. *I just need to remember how bad it was.* At first I thought that if I could only remember how bad I felt the last time I acted out, that would make me stop. But when temptation struck, I would forget the bad feelings and go right back to acting out. The Big Book talks about our strange mental blank spots, and how one cannot remember the suffering or humiliation of a week or a month ago (AA, 24).

4. *I can handle this; it’s not that bad.* I thought I could figure out some way to quit my addiction. I didn’t need the help of others. But that thinking almost caused me to commit suicide—until I heard in my head the words we sat at the closing of each meeting: “It works if you work it.” It was then that I realized I had not really been working it. That was my first step toward being honest with myself.

5. *I can beat this addiction.* I was able to quit smoking, drinking, and using drugs. I was able to lose weight and start exercising. But no matter how hard I tried, I could not

apply the same willpower to my sex addiction. I had to finally admit that I’m powerless over lust.

6. *One meeting a week is plenty.* I thought that I could attend just one meeting a week and then go about my life as usual. But eventually I realized that I had a full-time addiction and that I must counter with full-time recovery—like going to many meetings, staying in contact with others, and working the Steps.

7. *I can rely on my willpower.* I would think, “If I only had enough willpower,” or “I’ll try harder next time.” The problem was that I always said these things *after* acting out. The Big Book talks about losing the power of choice (AA, 24). I have no power of choice in lust. I could not control or enjoy lust; lust controlled me.



8. *Church will fix me.* I got involved in church, thinking that would stop me, and for a time it did—but I always returned when the urge hit me. Then I would try harder to practice my religious activities, but the result was always the same—mainly because I was asking God to take my addiction away, but I was not ready to give it up (see SA, 20).

9. *I don’t need to work the Steps.* For the longest time, I didn’t work the Steps with a sponsor. I told myself that I didn’t need the Steps—but really I was afraid to work them.

10. *I just need to stay busy.* I

would think, “If I only stay busy, then I won’t act out.” I tried this numerous times, but inevitably there were times when I felt bored or I felt entitled to act out, and so I would.

11. *I love my wife.* I thought I loved my wife enough to quit on my own. I thought that the fact I married her meant I loved her. But the truth is that I got married under the influence of lust. I made decisions based on lust and not on love. I wanted to be seen as being in love with my wife while I was still practicing my addiction. But I need to be sober in order to truly love her.

12. *At least I’m not doing “that” anymore.* I would think that at least I wasn’t as bad as I use do be—but

the fact was that I still hated myself. Today I don’t hate myself because I’m free of the obsession and the acting out, thanks to SA.

These are just a few of the lies that I once told myself. In order to be truly sober, I had to get honest with myself and admit that I’m a sexaholic. I needed to make a 100% commitment to the program, get a sponsor, and work the Twelve Steps with that sponsor.

Today I’m grateful to be a sexaholic. When I first heard someone say that in a meeting, I thought he was crazy. But today I know that I remain a crazy sexaholic, restored to sanity one day at a time.



Getting There Slowly

I came to SA in September 2005, when I realized I was hooked on Internet pornography, and I’ve been sober since that day. Before then, I thought I could stop on my own. I actually *could* stop for several days on my own will power, but then I would binge on lust for days afterward and my obsession would increase. Tolerance to the content of the indulgence kept me searching for more new material. I was not getting better. I was getting worse. My life was out of control.

I was not happy. The value I put on my life decreased as I put a higher value on acting out. I put my addiction where my Higher

Power should have been. I was insisting on my “Right to Myself.” I was becoming suicidal. Finally, I made a decision to get help. I found an SA meeting, went to my first meeting, heard people share about their addiction to lust, and made a decision to come back. Why did I wait so long?

Now, many years and many meetings later, I have become better able to surrender lust when it appears. I don’t believe I will ever become completely well, but I’m getting better. And as I get further away from indulging lust, I feel more happy and free.

Will I ever be completely free

from temptations? Probably not. But if I pay attention to my inner attitudes and thinking and don't feed the triggers within me, I will be better able to let temptations pass me by. All of this is by the grace of my Higher Power, to whom I surrender my temptations and character defects on an ongoing basis.

Being sober is a simple condition, but it is not easy to maintain. Following are some things that I do that help me support my decision to be sober.

1. *Have an attitude of gratitude.* Every evening before retiring I make a list of the things that happened that day for which I'm grateful—and I find so many things that I often forget the problems I experienced that day. The list helps me to remember what is most important in my life.

2. *Accept life on life's terms.* I'm constantly learning to develop an attitude of acceptance. This is more challenging than gratitude because acceptance requires me to trust in my Higher Power that things will get better. This is often hard for me to believe, but listening to the sharing at meetings and surrendering temptations helps me grow in trust and acceptance of my condition.

3. *Go to meetings.* I attend two to four meetings a week. I need to participate in the fellowship of the program to keep me on track.

4. *Make phone calls.* I call my sponsor as I work the Steps and surrender temptations and character defects. When he's not available, I call someone else. A weekly phone call to a friend in the program has been valuable for me. I don't hide anything. I cannot hide my desires and expect to be well.

5. *Have a sponsor.* I've always had a sponsor since I entered the program. I like the practice of being accountable to someone for my behavior. I also offer to sponsor newcomers. Talking to sponsees doubles the conversations that I have with people in the program. As I listen I hear new ideas. I receive back from others what I freely give away.

6. *Trust in God.* The most important component in my program is the one I tend to forget about: trust in my Higher Power. Too often, I turn to Him only after I've tried unsuccessfully to deal with life on my own terms. Now I'm learning to trust Him with the whole lot: my sobriety, my dreams, my hopes, and my final end.

I've come to realize that there is no one magic action that keeps me sober. But I have tools to use when lust knocks at the door, and working the SA program has given me hope, some serenity, and a reasonably happy life.

—Anonymous, St. Louis, MO



Using the Serenity Prayer

I would like to share my recent experience in using the Serenity Prayer (SA, 95). I've been sober in SA since October 2008, and have done lots of service work. But recently I was faced with one of the most challenging business decisions of my 30+ year career. An employee whom I have known for 20 years did something which, in our company, is grounds for dismissal. The problem was that he is a personal friend—a wonderful human being with whom I had worked closely for more than two years.

I was troubled at a deep level. I was concerned for my friend and his family. Plus, who was I not to forgive? God and my wife each gave me a second chance. Who was I not to give this man a second chance? I struggled with this internal battle in my deepest inner self. I sought wisdom from my pastor and a mentor, both of whom know of my addiction.

But in the end, it was the Serenity Prayer that helped me find my peace around this event. The nature of the transgression required that the employee be removed from his position immediately. This all happened rather quickly. Once I had my facts, I knew I that I would have to fire him the next day.

That night before going to sleep

I asked God in my prayers to help me accept the responsibility for what I needed to do. The next morning after awakening, I dozed on and off for a while. Often when this happens, I am in various stages of prayer. During my first few years of recovery, I quite often recited the Serenity Prayer during this time. So once I got up that morning, I started to journal about the situation—hoping to find some level of peace. Following is what I came up with.

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change...

I had been trying for more than six months to try to correct this man's work shortcomings, because they affected his job performance. I had done what I could, but the situation only got worse. The fact was that trust was broken in my workplace. I could not change that.

Courage to change the things I can...

In looking for alternatives, I sought the wise counsel of others. I did not act rashly, did not act with cruelty or malice, searched my heart and soul, and sought God's will on this difficult decision. I faced the issues and weighed the alternatives. Doing nothing would have benefited no one, not even the employee. I'm sure I could not have faced this in the same way prior to recovery.



And wisdom to know the difference...

Immediately after writing things down in this format and applying the Serenity prayer, I felt more at peace with what had to happen.

Yes, delivering this news was absolutely the worst human interaction I have had since my wife found out about my addiction. I pray no one ever has to do this. I was effectively an executioner.

My heart ached and my emotions were close to the surface. Previously, I would have simply locked my emotions away as part of my dual secret life. This time, while my heart was heavy for days afterwards, I never questioned my feelings. I was much more at peace than I expected. For a person who had fear of con-

frontation as a huge character defect in my Step Four, the program has brought me a long way. I'm grateful for our fellowship.

Thy will, not mine, be done.



God already knew how this would play out. He always does. He has continued to use me for His will and I will forever be grateful for this undeserved gift. I did my absolute best to deliver the bad news clearly and honestly, with a humble, caring heart. I prayed for God's presence—as well as for the employee—before and during the actual time.

Perhaps this exercise will be helpful to others who might be facing some of life's challenges. I know I will be using it again in the future.

—Anonymous

A Simple Prayer

These thoughts from the AA Big Book run through my mind nearly constantly: "Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God's will into all of our activities. How can I best serve Thee—Thy will (not mine) be done" (85). And, as emphasized on the same page, this is the proper use of my willpower.

The words of Step Eleven insist that we pray "only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry it out." I added the emphasis because I need to

remember that I am only praying for what comes from my Higher Power. While I need to think of "those I would help" (AA, 63) and "my usefulness to you and my fellows" (AA, 76), I cannot better serve my wife, my friends, my job, my children, or certainly myself out of my own motives, but only as God leads me to do so. In the spirit of the Third Step prayer, I want others to witness God's power, love, and way of life working in me.

I can always use more help to



practice serving God in whatever way He needs me at that moment. So I developed a simple prayer to use whenever I'm to speak in public, or when I'm not sure what to do next. I have found that this prayer not only calms me down, it also opens my mind and heart up to the people and situation in front of me. The prayer lays out the sequence of my choices: thoughts, words, desires, then actions. If at all possible, I say it on my knees. Here it is:

God, may my thoughts be Your thoughts;

*May my words be Your words;
May my desires be Your desires;
May my actions be Your actions;
May Thy will, not my will, be done.*

Among the program prayers I use often are the Third Step, Fourth Step, Seventh Step, and Eleventh Step prayers. I also, like many others, continue to explore the meaning in the Serenity Prayer. My simple prayer, however, keeps me focused on the task at hand and my need for God to power me through it.

—David M., Portland

Utopia

Most of us feel we need look no further for Utopia. We have it with us right here and now. Each day my friend's simple talk in our kitchen multiplies itself in a widening circle of peace on earth and good will to men (AA, 16)

I just re-read Bill's Story (AA, Chapter 1) with a sponsee of mine as part of his Step One work. It's amazing that two Jewish sexaholics from Israel in their mid-twenties can identify with a 40-year-old alcoholic stockbroker from New York. Bill's story is rough and sad—until his crazy hopeless bottom. It's remarkable that he survived that bottom, and even more remarkable that he grew to be the spiritual person he was, even while writing the Big Book!

The God I trust today is that big. If he can sober up Bill W. from alcoholism, then He can

sober me up from active lusting. And He has done exactly that, in giving me more than two years of SA sobriety. If He can do that for a guy like me—who was so hooked on lust that when my friend told me about SA, I had to prove to him that I was not a sexaholic, and that I could stop on my own (even though I couldn't stay sober more than five days)—then He can do anything.

So Utopia is here all right. We still live in the era of miracles. Just look around you at your next SA meeting!

—Aviad, Israel



New Meeting in the Netherlands



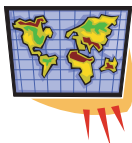
On January 1, 2014, a new SA group was started in Zwolle, the Netherlands. We meet on Wednesday in a room that was kindly rented to us by an organization that deals with all kinds of addictions. The members of this meeting, however, felt that we needed another meeting in Zwolle, on another night. So even though we were few in number, on October 1, 2014 we started a second meeting on Friday nights in a church building. We expected the same small group of people to attend both meetings, but to our delight the new meeting attracted newcomers that could not make it on Wednesdays.

It's great to see how fellows that suffer from sexaholism find their way to SA here in Zwolle. They not only find their way to personal recovery, but also become instrumental in reaching out to others who still suffer.

—In Service, Ewoud, Zwolle, the Netherlands

Request for Country Coordinators

In countries where there are no SA groups, SAICO depends on member volunteers to carry the SA message to those who seek help. SA's International Committee (IC) is attempting to organize those volunteers to focus on specific areas where help is needed. We are currently looking for volunteers to answer inquiries from several countries.



Specifically, we are looking for volunteers who might have an affinity for any of the following countries:

- Brazil: Portuguese speaker preferred.
- Japan: some knowledge of Japanese preferred.
- Egypt and Arabian Peninsula: Arabic speaker preferred.
- French-speaking Africa: familiarity with French (especially African French) is desirable.
- Pakistan: Pakistanis speak English and Urdu. The sixth most populous country in the world.
- India: Hindi and English spoken. Home to over a billion people.
- Nigeria: English is the official language. Most populous country in Africa.

In all of our outreach activities, the IC recognizes the responsibility of maintaining SA unity. Because each Country Coordinator will serve as the

point of contact for a whole country, volunteers are needed and who strongly support SA's sobriety definition. In addition, the ideal candidates will have at least three years SA sobriety, have worked the Twelve Steps of SA with a sponsor, and understand the structure and function of SA meetings.

If you are interested in volunteering to serve as a Country Coordinator, or for more information, please contact the International Committee at saico@sa.org.

Russian-Speaking and Finnish-Speaking Sponsors Needed



Russia: The Russian-speaking SA fellowship is looking for Russian-speaking male and female SA members throughout the fellowship who can provide sponsorship to our members. If you or someone you know is interested, please contact me at oleg4837@yandex.ru. Many thanks.

—Oleg, Russian IGR



Finland: A few members from Finland are looking for Finnish-speaking members who are available to serve as sponsors. Those who are interested please contact me through SAICO at saico@sa.org or contact me directly at strength-to-go@hotmail.com.

As a Finnish saying goes, "Auta miestä mäessä, äläkä mäen alla."
—Harri, Finland

New SA Groups

USA and Canada

Ave Maria, FL
Abbotsford, BC, Canada
Dayton, OH (add'l mtg)
Escanaba, MI
Fresno, CA (additional, men)
Fresno, CA (additional co-ed)
Knoxville, TN (women's mtg)
Marquette, MI
Montgomery, AL
Monsey, NY (add'l)
Monterey, CA (additional mtg)
Peoria, IL (women's mtg)

Wilkes-Barre, PA
Wenatchee, WA

International

Bangkok, Thailand
Hamilton, Bermuda
Jerusalem, Israel (add'l mtg)
Mexico City, Lomas de Chapultepec
Bet Shemesh, Israel (additional mtg)
Zwolle, Netherlands (add'l mtg)



SA Financial Snapshot 2014



We are grateful to our members for our excellent 2014 financial results. We finished the year on target compared to budget! I'm excited to see members spread the word in so many directions: globally, through literature, and into the digital world. But this outreach requires service and contributions, so we need to set our sights even higher. To celebrate your sobriety, consider serving on a local, Intergroup, or International committee. Thank you all for your continued support in spreading the word.

—Carlton B., Chair, Finance Committee

Budget Item	2015 Budget	2014 Budget	2014 Actual
Revenues			
Contributions	155,000	150,000	201,760
SACFC	13,000	10,000	15,746
Convention Donations	22,500	20,000	30,728
Literature Sales	74,000	75,000	94,691
Literature Volume Discounts	(7,400)	(6,500)	(10,346)
Essay	13,000	8,800	11,232
Credit Card Recovery	900	2,500	4,630
Cost of Goods Sold (COGS)	(23,000)	(19,000)	(31,794)
Interest	1,800	1,200	242
Total Revenues	249,800	285,500	316,891
Expenses			
Bank Charges	200	200	49
Credit Card Fees	10,500	8,800	8,413
Accounting	6,000	5,800	8,793
Liability Insurance	2,400	2,300	2,475
Taxes and Licenses	600	600	1,169
Legal	500	500	0
Compensation			
Payroll and Benefits	152,500	138,420	142,915
Professional Fees	5,900	5,900	5,900
Overhead			
Office Supplies	3,100	2,600	7,905
Printing	5,000	9,000	2,507
Postage & Freight	13,000	12,650	12,027
Telephone	6,500	4,500	5,920
Internet Services	3,600	2,500	4,291
Facility			
Rent	19,500	19,000	18,928
Repairs & Maintenance	500	500	1,455
Travel	46,000	38,000	28,840
Total Expenses	275,800	231,370	251,592
Revenues-Expenses	-26,000	-10,370	65,299

For Additional Budget Info Contact SAICO@sa.org

Delegates and Trustees March 2015

Region	Delegate	Committees
Gary L., <i>GDA Chair</i> Tom K., <i>GDA Vice-Chair</i>		Literature, Legal (Chair), COMC Conventions (Chair), Nominations
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. Yvon L. Kathy R., <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.	Finance, Conventions COMC
Southeast	Art S. Manse B. LB B., <i>Alternate</i> Rich P., <i>Alternate</i>	CFC, Literature Finance, Conventions Literature, RAC
German spkg	Hans L.	Literature, CFC
EMER	Francis C., Ireland Cathal M., Ireland AJ A., Israel Daan L., <i>Alt.</i> , Netherlands Luc D., <i>Alt.</i> , Belgium Artemes, <i>Alt.</i> , Spain	H&I, International, Literature PI H&I

Trustee	Committees
George F., <i>Chair</i> Mike 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



April 2015

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

11, Franklin WI USA: North Midwest region Spring Marathon. *Acceptance is the Answer*. Info at 414-238-2903, milwaukeeesa@yahoo.com

Includes old-timer speakers and break out sessions

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

24 - 26, 2015, Wyevale, Ontario Canada: SA Spring Retreat, *A Joyous Freedom*. Info at springretreat2015.eventbrite.ca or email events@saontario.org. Online registration through SA Ontario.

25, Asheville, NC USA: SA Spring Retreat, *A Joyous Freedom*. Save the date.

May 2015

2, Richmond, VA, USA: *Experience, Strength and Hope*. Info at 540-809-6960 or sagrouprichmond@gmail.com

2, Rochester, NY, USA: Marathon Meeting, *Facing the Problem through the solution*. Info at 585-747-2725 (Bill R.) or 801-870-3792 (Matthew B.)

15 - 17, Birmingham UK: EMER Assembly and Convention, *Putting Sobriety First*. The Royal Angus, St. Chad's, Queensway Birmingham B4 6HY. Largest SA convention outside North America. Speakers from 10 countries. Members from USA welcome. Info at +44 1202 763 570, sexaholicsanonymous.eu, or email emeregion@gmail.com

15 - 17, Big Bear, CA, USA: Find God XXI Men's Retreat for SA Men. *Standing at the Turning Point*. Flyer available at sasandiego.org or sasocal.org or questions contact Leo Z. at 619-985-9889 or leozech@cox.net.

23, Chattanooga, TN, USA: *Bridges to Recovery*. Info at 423-521-5636, chattanooga.org, or chattanooga.sa@gmail.com

August 2015

15 - 17, Cali, Colombia: Congreso Nacional SA: Info at: 57 3108392022 or carlrobg@yahoo.com.co

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

The Twelve Traditions of Sexaholics Anonymous

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

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



Upcoming International Conventions

July 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 a weekend of recovery as your journey continues with sharing, listening, learning and connecting with others for a lifelong relationship. For info contact www.reflectionsinsandiego.com



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



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.

Copyright 2015. All Rights Reserved

*In order to serve the members of
Sexaholics Anonymous, the subscriber
to this issue of Essay is granted permission to make
ten copies – print or digital - to be shared only with
members of SA. Such copies may not be further
copied, shared, or altered.*