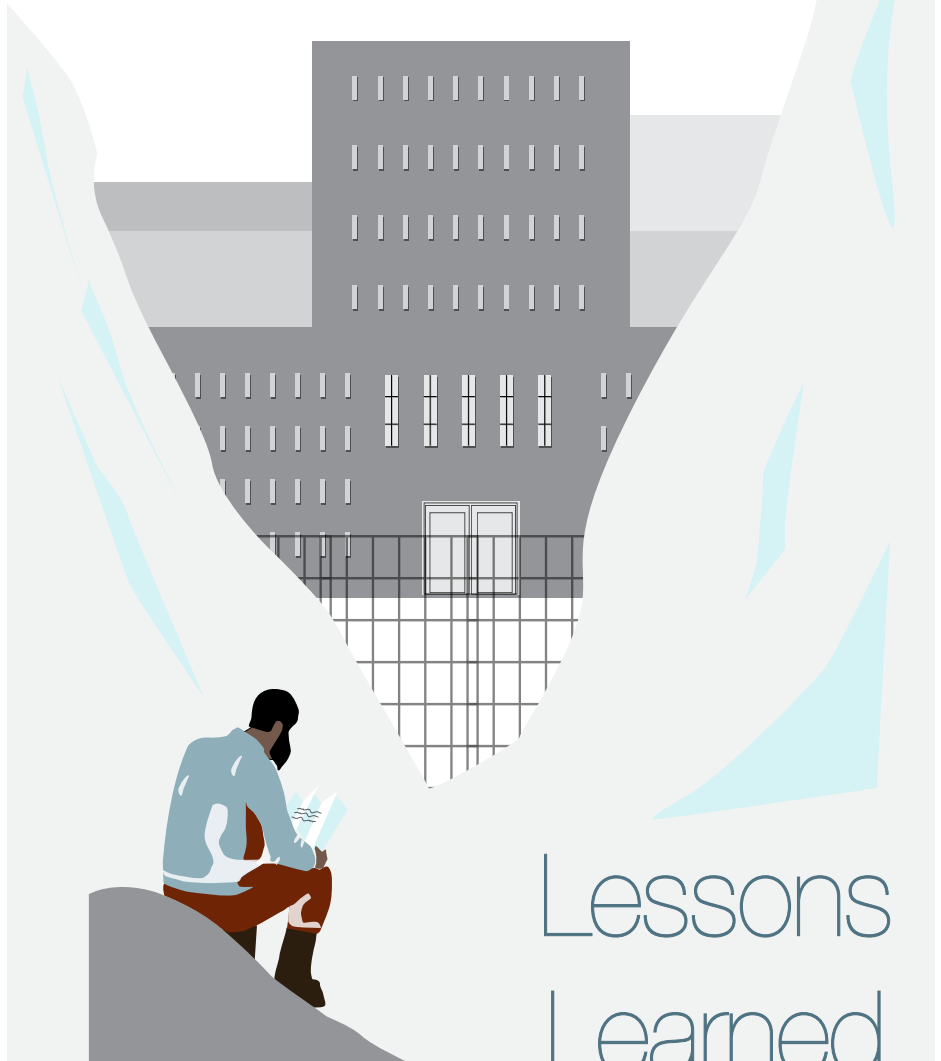


Essay

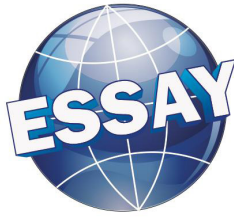
September 2016



Lessons
Learned

A quarterly publication of Sexaholics Anonymous

SA'S "MEETING IN PRINT"



Our Meeting in Print

Essay presents the experience, strength, and hope of SA members. *Essay* is aware that every SA member has an individual way of working the program. In submitting articles, please remember SA's sobriety definition is not debated, since it distinguishes SA from other sex addiction fellowships. 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*.

Themes for upcoming issues are: Going to Any Lengths for Sobriety, Dealing With Mixed Meetings; *Sobriety in Holidays*, Living The Traditions, and As We Understood God

Closing date for articles is approximately six weeks prior to publication dates in March, June, September, and December.

Resolution adopted by the Trustees and Delegate Assembly in May, 2016: ***"Since each issue of Essay cannot go through the SA Literature approval process, the Trustees and General Delegate Assembly recognize the Essay as the International Journal of Sexaholics Anonymous and support the use of Essay materials in SA meetings."***

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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 lust and become sexually sober. There are no dues or fees for SA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. SA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization, or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sexually sober and help others to achieve sexual sobriety.

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Essay is the quarterly publication of Sexaholics Anonymous

Essay@sa.org

EDITORS' CORNER

September, 2016

Dear Essay readers:

Welcome back to *Essay* -- or, if this is your first time to read the *Essay*, welcome to your SA meeting in print. In addition to our usual articles on meditations, practical tools, steps and basics, we are adding to this issue a new Literature Corner and a Humor page. We also are steadily increasing our use of graphics, including the remarkable "God -- Me Illustration" on page 23. This is also the introduction of our new logo.

We depend on your contributions of articles as well as your subscriptions to the electronic and print editions of *Essay*. We also depend on your use of *Essay* in meetings, while on the road, or in your living room. Please take us with you -- and let us know how we can serve you more effectively.

Our December issue theme will be Sobriety in the Holidays. Have any experience, strength and hope for us in that area? Let us hear from you!

The Editors (David, Kira, Kent)

Artists: (Michael J., Christian M., Jimmy M.)



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Or visit the SA website at www.sa.org

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“Lessons Learned”

Hope is present if we look for it



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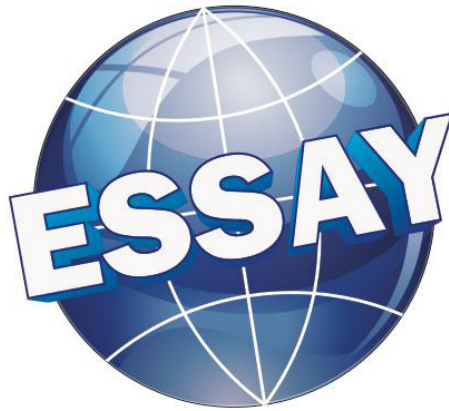
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Dear *Essay*

Dear *Essay*,

Thank you do much for the new edition of *Essay*. I really love the SA publication!

We have recently tried to change an old habit in SA, to make a distinction between the North American fellowship, and the "International."

I think SA is not a North American fellowship with international participation anymore. Soon there will be more groups outside the US than within.

The listing of the new groups around the world can be changed accordingly, for example by categorizing them by continent, or not categorizing them at all.

I have seen this has been changed already for the listing of the delegates and their Regions.

But there still I see first the North American Regions, followed by those outside North America. Maybe the Regions can be listed in alphabetical order? Thanks once again for your great service!

In Fellowship, Daan

Dear *Essay*,

Perhaps this letter can begin a series of discussions about SA and minors. This began when I received the following note from an SA List manager:

"I'd like to bring up the issue of minors on the internet SA Buddy List. A couple of weeks ago one SA member went through the verification process successfully. We learned last week by pure accident that he is only 17 years old. In Poland anyone under 18 years old is considered a minor. How to deal with it? Is it necessary to add question about age to our Buddy List verification form? If that would be the case minors have to be deleted from the list (?)"

This was my response: I feel so strongly about the need for help for young sexaholics. We have this situation (not "problem") on the buddy list, in phone meetings, and in face-to-face meetings. The Trustees placed a disclaimer on the SA web site that minors are not welcome in meetings. I understand the consequences of this, but how do we help them? There have to be ways to help them. Would the *Essay* allow a discussion of this situation?

Maybe the discussion should not be so much about what we

Dear *Essay*

can't do and how can we exclude these youth. We can ask rather how can we develop protocols that will provide for their needs?

I know two young men in Israel who got sober at 18. One has 3 years and one 5 years of sobriety and great recovery.

We have hurting parents and youth, as well as frustrated therapists, who desperately need our Experience, Strength and Hope. When are we going to step up to the plate? When are we going to explore avenues that work for other groups that have worked to get the message and recovery to youth. There have been quasi-meetings in therapists offices with members of SA and with the parents' permission. There have been small meetings in public places like parks where parents were in the distance able to watch. What else do we have in our toolbox? Responding to minors helpfully I believe is the "next right thing."

--

Dave T., Oklahoma

I AM RESPONSIBLE. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of SA always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.

Literature Corner



"The SA group whose meetings we attend regularly is usually referred to as our Home Group. ...For most of us in SA, our home meeting or group is where we discover sobriety and recovery.... Fundamentally the most important contribution an individual can make to a group is to get and stay sober, show up to meetings on time, and humbly serve where service is needed."

Get this pamphlet from [SAICO](#) for your Intergroup and sponsees!

MEDITATIONS

Honest Living

If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any lengths to get it, then you are ready to take certain steps. (SA 206)

Before recovery from my sexual addiction, I tried to appear squeaky clean. I tried to hide my mistakes and my shameful side. Nothing was ever my fault. I pointed out others' weaknesses as a smoke screen to deflect attention from my own. Yet, at the same time, I fluctuated between denial and despair about my own character defects and the hopelessness of my life.

When I entered SA at my emotional bottom, I found something unexpected and wonderful in the meetings—honesty. People actually led with their weaknesses when they shared their stories and their day-to-day experiences in recovery. I have learned from SA that we bond around our common weaknesses rather than our common strengths. As I worked the Steps, I admitted my defects and surrendered them to my Higher Power. I have become more useful in the world as

an honest “broken” human being than I ever was as a “perfect” one.

God, I see that today I can be more than my weaknesses if I honestly face them and surrender them to you
90 Days of Meditations Page 1

REDEEMING THE PAST

We will not regret the past, nor wish to shut the door on it. (AA 83)

I had heard about SA's Twelve Step recovery program for persons powerless over lust and sexual addiction. While I identified with lust as the motivating force behind my sexual behavior, I told myself I could stop what I was doing without a program. I was ashamed and did not want to reveal my dark secret to anyone. But, in truth, I could not stop acting out. I finally gave in and went to SA. In preparing to give my Step One to my sponsor and then to my committed SA meeting, I spent hours writing out my sexaholic story. I felt ashamed and guilty about my history and wished I did not have to tell it. Yet I did. What a relief to find that my sponsor and everyone in the room had a similar story, and that they

too were working for recovery.

Then I heard the Promise that I would “not regret the past.” I did not think it was possible, but God and the fellowship have shown me that my sordid past must be part of my restored wholeness. God uses my past to help others—good coming out of my evil. I learned to accept my past, which included forgiving those who had harmed me, and forgiving me for the harm I caused others. I live with the consequences of my addictive past, of course. But I rejoice in my connection to my Higher Power, which has redeemed me from the shame and guilt of that past and freed me to stand tall to face the present with sober and serene dignity.

Thank you Higher Power for making that promise come true in my life.

90 Days of Meditations Page 90

Change of Attitude

She found gratitude

When I am pushing my way and it's not going the way I want it to, I stop and pay attention. If there is time, I take a walk in the woods, sit with my back to a tree, feel the ground and the roots for the grounding effect, look at the treetop for the spiritual connection and the

trunk for my physical connection.

Sometimes the change in me is immediate, other times it takes longer. Most of the time I sit with a tree my Higher Power shows me that a change in attitude is in order. And if I sit there until I feel the change in my body, the attitude change will “stick” with me.

An example: I was leaving a huge fight with my husband about a trip I wanted to do and he did not approve. I was fighting for my entitlement. It was late. He went to bed, and I sat in the woods until two a.m. Feeling the energy come from both the treetop and the ground as I sat, my Higher Power's guide to attitude change was tremendous. I had to let go of my entitlement. I sat until I could feel it in every cell. I went home and went to bed.

First thing in the morning, I made amends and I still could feel I really believed the change of attitude was mine. When my husband tried to pick up the fight again, I could just say, “I'm sorry!” and I did not get in the fight again. With my change of attitude, the trip worked out anyway, and I was grateful and not at all resentful.

Chicago Convention 2003

DOWN TO BASICS

Without God I Can't, Without Me God Won't

He takes small actions every day

After my last act out, I have come to wonder if I am addicted to emotional pain. For an addict pain, along with most human instincts and feelings, can be skewed by a strange mental twist. Is pain that place of comfort or familiarity that I am inexplicably drawn to?

I am drawn to the news, like a moth to flame, for comfortable familiarity even though it ignites my emotional pain. News feeds my primary character defect of fear. Constant pain needs constant soothing and I sure do know how to soothe!

I NEED to follow every link, read a few comments, dig deeper, then revolted run to the next news site for something else, something that will make me feel better. I ignore work calls, my wife and children's calls, program members and my closest friends. I will not go to the bathroom or eat even though I sometimes feel the dire

need to do both. I NEVER feel better and join the walking dead.

I am bothered by my lack of progress in my Step work. I have worked the Steps in another fellowship and I am working 10,11, and 12 almost daily. Yet, lack of progress is not the cause of my hindered sobriety. I recently reworked the Twelve and Twelve, Step 3, and (perhaps not coincidentally) stumbled onto this "wonderful revelation":

... Our whole trouble had been the misuse of willpower. We had tried to bombard our problems with it instead of attempting to bring it into agreement with God's intention for us

"It is when we try to make our will conform with God's that we begin to use it rightly ... Our whole trouble had been the misuse of willpower. We had tried to bombard our problems with it instead of at-

tempting to bring it into agreement with God's intention for us... In all times of emotional disturbance or indecision, we can pause, ask for quiet, and in the stillness simply say: '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. Thy will, not mine, be done'" (12x12 40-41).

Here's the thing - what can I

DOWN TO BASICS

do about world events? How do I get balance? Get right sized? Have wisdom to know the difference? Well, I can't but God can. I am a success in recovery as long as I really take it one day at a time and work my program without expectations. I have seen miracles of recovery in the rooms of SA. I have seen families, finances, and faith restored. But miracles, like feelings and willpower, have shelf life. It's hard to remember a miracle when I am caught up in the fear that the news brings.

So what is the answer? How can I come back to the feeling that the world is a beautiful place where hope is real and the imperfections add to the beauty? For me it has to be action -- small, positive action that I can take to make my world a better place. Once I take a small action I can start turning the results, along with the world at large, over to God who can do those huge things I cannot do. For today, I focus on the Serenity Prayer as a way of trying to align my will with God's.

Sober Today Max`



Emotional Sobriety

Asking for help works!

A few years into my recovery I found myself periodically delving into some very negative emotions. These incidences were sometimes triggered by things like dealing with difficult people, having to make difficult decisions when there seemed to

the emotional hang-over, the direct result of yesterday's and sometimes today's excesses of negative emotion—anger, fear, jealousy and the like.

be no good options, and trying to cope with marital difficulties.

My life would become very dark and my head would spin with emotional strife, counter arguments, self-pity, and other unpleas-



ant emotions. It was debilitating because when I got into this mode I was unable to deal with people effectively, focus on my work, and enjoy things I normally like to do.

I talked to my sister (who was in AA and experiencing recovery) about the situation. After listening to me for a while she said, "Why don't you see what the 12 Steps have to say about this? Maybe they will have something that will help you." I was not too hopeful, but I agreed to study the Steps with this in mind. It didn't take long before I found a useful passage in the AA 12 Steps & 12 Traditions.

...humbly saying to ourselves many times each day 'Thy will be done'"

"But there is another kind of hangover which we all experience whether we are drinking or not. That is the emotional hangover, the direct result of yesterday's and sometimes today's excesses of negative emotion—anger, fear, jealousy and the like. If we would live serenely today and tomorrow, we certainly need to eliminate these hangovers" (12x12 88).

After reading this, it was obvious to me that I was allowing myself to obsess over certain things that I had very little control over. I was getting drunk on negative emotions.

Another passage I that helped me a great deal was in the Big Book



where it says: “As we go through the day we pause when agitated or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action. We constantly remind ourselves we are no longer running the show, humbly saying to ourselves many times each day “Thy will be done”” (AA pages 87-88). I decided to try and surrender my agitation, annoyance, fear, and other negative emotions when they came over me. I immediately began to feel relief. This approach

has helped me maintain emotional sobriety and to better experience the promises of peace and serenity.

I am glad that I opened up to my sister and accepted her assistance. I am also very grateful to the SA program of recovery which allows me to experience more and more of the promises as I “trudge the Road of Happy Destiny” (AA 164).

Tom M., Florida

Are you addicted to sex or porn?

- Have you felt driven to despair by destructive sexual thoughts and behaviors?
- Have you ever vowed to stop yet found you’ve lost control and can’t stay stopped?
- Has your illicit behavior or Internet use put your job at risk?

- Have you lost needed sleep due to obsessive or compulsive sexual behavior or Internet use?
- Have you lied to others to cover your illicit behavior or Internet activity?
- Have you missed important events or meetings because you were on the Internet?

From Sexaholics Anonymous
Taichung, Taiwan website

OLD TIMER STORY

Lessons Learned

Hope is present if we look for it

From my earliest recollections at age four, I obsessed over nude women. I visualized any woman I encountered as nude. This was true for strangers, relatives, and even the nuns who taught me in elementary school. In puberty, I discovered masturbation, and my nude visualizations were transformed into sex fantasies. Masturbation and sex fantasy were compulsive from the start, and my two-part illness—obsession and compulsion—was complete.

I continued to masturbate and fantasize throughout adolescence. At age 21 I got married. With sex built into my life, I thought, I would be cured. Of course, that didn't work. My obsession and compulsion continued for the fifteen years of that marriage. The marriage ended when I decided that I had the wrong wife. If only I had the right wife, I would be cured. So I left my wife and seven children and married a second wife, who I thought would fix me. The problem was

me, not my wives, but it would be many more years I understood this. So, after thirteen years in my second marriage, I decided that I made the same mistake twice. If I really had the right wife, I would be okay. Again, I left my second wife and two more children, got another divorce, and married a third wife.

Not only was I not cured, but I was getting progressively worse. What had been mostly kept secret from my first two wives became more and more apparent. My third

Masturbation and sex fantasy were compulsive from the start, and my two-part illness — obsession and compulsion — was complete.

wife took me to counselors, therapists, and psychiatrists, but to no avail. These professionals could not cut through my wall of denial. After two years of this third marriage, my wife conducted a one-person intervention on my alcoholism,

which had started at age thirty as I fought to avoid the guilt of my sexaholism. I spent a month at a treatment center, got very active in AA, and have not had a drink since then. But I didn't get well!

In fact, I got a lot worse. Without alcohol to mask my guilt, I had to face my sexual addiction alone. A number of suicidal episodes en-

sued, and I was hospitalized twice for extreme depression. Eventually my wife confronted me over my sexaholism, and I started to attend SA meetings on a regular basis. At the time I felt that the program wasn't right for me. It didn't work, and I didn't stay sober. I wasn't ready for the program.

Throughout my extreme depression, I had been unable to work. It was almost impossible for me to get out of bed most of the time, and I was certified for long-term disability benefits. No one knew whether I would ever be able to work again.

After two years of deep depression, the loss of my professional career, and the end of insurance, I was forced to change psychiatrists. This new professional decided very quickly that I was manic-depressive and needed medication for that condition. His diagnosis, based on the ups and downs of my addictive cycle, was wrong, but the medication did level out my life to the point where I felt I could get some kind of job. As I searched for work, it seemed that everyone felt that I was over-qualified for any job I thought I could handle. After several months, I decided to go to California for a fresh start.

Arriving in California, I soon found routine nonprofessional work by not disclosing my education or work history. Although I attended AA meetings with some regularity, I didn't make any SA contacts there. I drifted steadily into pornography, porno shops, and porno flicks.

Eventually my third wife gave up all hope of helping me. I found myself living alone in a flop-house hotel, frequenting the porno places, losing my job, and going crazy. Desperation drove me once again to the brink of suicide.

Hopeless, in this darkest night of my soul, I looked up the SA number and phoned for help.

Hopeless, in this darkest night of my soul, I looked up the SA number and phoned for help. I got to an SA meeting, got a sponsor right away, worked the Steps diligently, stayed sober, and got to Step Nine within a few months.

With one year of sobriety, and a lot of work on Steps Nine, Ten, and Eleven, I returned to the Southwest, and to my second wife and family. After a second year of sobriety and total abstinence, we remarried. I have continued to go to SA meetings and to work the Steps. I do extensive Twelfth Step work with prisoners. Life has never been better.

Sober since 1988, I have been relieved from obsession and compulsion. My spiritual development has been enhanced through prayer and meditation, through a steady diet of spiritual reading, and through the inspiration of several very caring and inspiring ministers.

Every aspect of my life has changed. Love has replaced lust to a very great extent. The mere avoidance of acting out has been replaced largely by a more positive sobriety and the actions of love. While my first wife is deceased, I enjoy a good friendship with my third wife. I am pursuing healing relationships with my nine children, twenty-four grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren. If I live long enough, I am determined to have them know and love the new father, grandfather, and great-grandfather they have never known.

There are a number of lessons that I have learned at various stages of my recovery:

When I lived alone in my first year of sobriety, I learned that life without sex is infinitely better than life with compulsive sex.

When I lived with my second wife for a year before we remarried, I learned that love without sex is infinitely better than sex without love.

Since our remarriage, I have learned that making love is infinitely better than having sex.

In recovery, I continue to be surprised that there are no limits to the development of positive sobriety, spiritual life, and love in action.

My life is manageable today, but I have to remember who the manager is: God is truly doing for me what I could not do for myself.

Through telling parts of my story and sharing my experience, strength, and hope with prisoners in some five hundred letters over the last ten years, I have observed that the more

I give to others, the more comes back to me. My life is manageable today, but I have to remember who the manager is: God is truly doing for me what I could not do for myself. I have experienced all of the promises of the program to a very significant degree.

I continue to work the SA program on a daily basis. I attend meetings regularly. I continue to make amends as opportunities occur. I take inventory continuously and try to correct my thoughts, words, and actions in midstream. I pray and meditate

daily, and continue to discover and pursue God's will for me. I continue to serve as a local SA contact, to sponsor those who ask, and to sponsor prisoners by mail

I thank God every day for my new life, my growing ability to love, and SA.

Member Stories 152

Group Discussion Topics

The author of "Lessons Learned" uncovered new concepts to himself about sex, sobriety, and love.

He discovered the differences and relations among life without sex versus compulsive sex, love without sex versus sex without love, and making love versus having sex.

What differences are you uncovering about sex and love?

What do you experience as the compulsive pull toward sex and what program tools help you?

What can you suggest to a newcomer who fears not having sex?



STEPS

Taken by Step One

Step One is not telling all...

After Step One in our book Sexaholic Anonymous on page 87 it says: *This is why "telling all" is not taking the First Step. Such confession can be anything from boastful replay to anguished dumping or intellectual analysis. And even then, it's not really "all" and often is only surface material. In truth, we don't*

"take" the First Step; it takes us. It overtakes us. And if it hasn't yet, hopefully it will. The sickness and punishment sexaholism produces inside us keep pounding us until we're ready to give up, let go, and know we are powerless over lust.

The first time I made an effort to work Step One was back in 1989. I had a look at some material about how to do it, asked a few questions, and then proceeded to try to do it my way by writing out a "Step One Inventory." I polished it up, and with

quite a few months of sobriety already, I shared what I had written in our local meeting. Looking back I remember the pride with which I shared that inventory, basking in the attention of the group, receiving the “good job” congratulations after the meeting ended.

But regardless of how well I had followed the formula to prepare and share, I see I simply “told all” instead of being taken by the First Step. And it should come as no surprise that I had many more years of relapses and acting out ahead of me before I would finally have a true Step One experience. As with everything else in this program, it’s an inside job. Step One happens in the heart.

When I returned to SA over six years ago, I was a very different man. I had been beaten. I had been humiliated, but was not yet humble. I had already been to the point of despair. I had several months of tenuous sobriety when I finally became just humble enough to ask for someone to sponsor me. I knew that my ongoing sobriety and true recovery depended on working the Steps the way they had worked for other SA members who were sober and in recovery. I knew I needed help, and I needed

to stop relying on myself, because I was powerless over lust and my life had become unmanageable. I knew I had to take direction and do what I was told to do, whether I understood it or not.

So six years ago when I started with my sponsor, in all honesty it didn’t really matter what he suggested I do to work Step One. My Step One experience was already done. Rather than me doing anything, it had happened to me. The admission was already complete. I had been taken.

from SA, Taichung, Taiwan

I knew I had to take direction and do what I was told to do,

Any Lengths

Higher Power put her in his life

I learned about the sobriety definition (ludicrous!) and the Steps (no problem!) more than 20 years ago. In my head I completed them all in short order — until I became more desperate and got a sponsor. We agreed to work the Steps together.

My brother discovered me masturbating as a teen and the shame led me to more pornography, masturbation and then phone sex.

When questioned about the phone bill, I blamed someone else. Lessons learned: Lock the bathroom door and lie when caught.

I abused authority and trust to victimize family, friends, even the family pet. Shackled to lust, I took greater risks. I dared not share my feelings with anyone.

My girlfriend became my wife, and desire for other women should have vanished. But fantasy sex continued and I turned to strip clubs and prostitution. I missed my child's birth. I lost thousands of dollars on a messy divorce, and lost my career.

I stopped acting out, but shame drove me toward suicide. I got into treatment, took anti-depressants and participated in therapy. I still hadn't heard of SA.

I met a wonderful woman. I confided in her the nature of my problems. She accepted me, and I thought I was finally free. I thought I could live with self-discipline learned from my father. I clung to self-control with some initial success, but my attachment to shame was too strong for self-will. Now married a second time, I re-visited strip clubs and planned to pick up a prostitute. My wife confronted me and I partially confessed. We moved to another state to find better jobs. I carried my dishonor with me. At her wit's end, she

said we were through. The next morning I learned how much she cared for me -- she wanted to see me get sober. "You have to do it for yourself," she said.

I found a long-distance meeting and sponsor. He helped me work the Steps. I stopped acting out and got honest with myself and others. Another member and I initiated a meeting closer to where we lived.

I have cultivated a better way of living, one that balances self-care with serving others. I find my Higher Power, and sometimes It finds me, in daily events, pauses at work, walks in the woods, songs of affirmation.

Writing the Twelve Steps draws me closer to the joys of the Twelve Promises. I am amazed at my development and I do know a new freedom: I'm no longer tempted to harm others.

Shame and lust surface, but these would-be soul-wreckers are only temptations to surrender to the wind. My outlook on life has changed; others notice it, even on days when I feel like I'm going backwards.

I'm grateful for the SA pioneers, for my sponsor, and for my wonderful wife. She gifted me with that epiphany about twenty years ago – the enlightenment that I must do this for myself.

Jim D, New England

I learned how much she cared for me - she wanted to see me get sober. "You have to do it for yourself,"

PRACTICAL TOOLS

I Don't Need to Know

Only God needs to know

I suffer from a sort of hypervigilance. Something in me wants to identify and define every object, every person, every angle and surface in my physical environment. My ears are open; my eyes are taking in the very texture of things around me. At some point, a long time ago, this hypervigilance became a tool of my lust. In “insobriety,” I was always looking and listening for triggers: people and images that I could get a hit from. I call that one of the habits of insobriety.

With the gift of sobriety I wanted to leave all that behind. I wanted to control my eyes and ears. I knew that the lust hits not only hurt me immediately, but that they have come back to haunt me later that day, the next week, or a month later. Yet the more I used my will power, the stronger was the desire to look around -- or look a second time.

At some point in recovery, it

came to me that this exaggerated vigilance was more than a mere inclination; it felt like a need, a compulsion. I asked myself “Do I *really* need to know everything going on around me?” The answer was--No! I don't need to know every detail about everything around me.

I don't need to know! Telling myself this reminds me that my desire to poke and prod my environment with my senses is not an imperative. There are a lot of things I *want* to know but don't *need* to know.

When I practice habits of sobriety, I open myself to God's grace.

My sponsor once told me that I can't just make a decision not to be compulsive. He's right, of course. But habit is a powerful force, and I can use it to my advantage. I can have bad habits or good habits, habits of insobriety or habits of sobriety. When I practice habits of insobriety, I open myself to lust. When I practice habits of sobriety, I open myself to God's grace. So now I'm in the habit of saying to myself, *I don't need to know*. It's become a mantra for me.

When I leave the house, I utter my mantra. Driving down the street, I notice someone on the sidewalk a block ahead. What gender? What age? I don't need to

know. As I tell myself that, I find I'm no longer compelled to follow that person with my eyes. At the stoplight, who's in that car idling beside mine? I don't have to glance over to find out. I don't need to know.

In the supermarket, if I'm carrying lust in my head, I feel like I'm peering out at a little world populated by strangers, any of whom can be a lust object. When I make eye contact, I often see hunger. If I'm working my mantra, it reminds me that I don't have to know the spiritual state of these people. That's God's job. My job is to find the unwaxed dental floss.

That person in the canned vegetables aisle, how do her clothes fit? I don't need to know. The sound of talking and laughter in the next aisle -- are they men, women, adolescents? I don't need to know. Sometimes I'll see someone and look away while telling myself, *I don't need to know*, and I'll experience surrender from the lust impulse. But it has to be a habit. Even when I'm not in a triggering environment, I sometimes recite my mantra. It's a gentle discipline for me. It calms me.

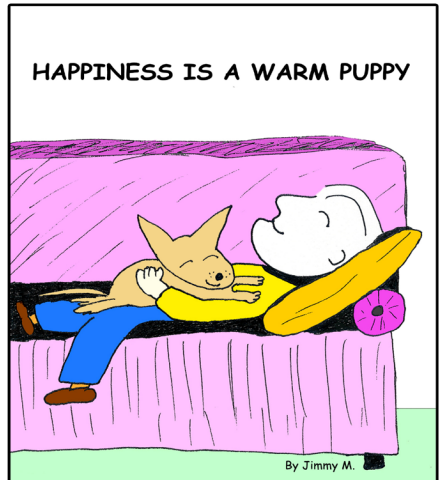
Am I cutting myself off from the beauty and rich variety of God's creation? It doesn't feel that way to me. I feel more at peace with God's

world and God's people. I'm more aware of me, where I am, what my feelings are. I'm more able to respond to things in the present. I believe I'm able to relate to other people more comfortably and more directly.

...I don't need to know, and I'll experience surrender from the lust

The phrasing of my mantra is not elegant, but that's how it came to me: *I don't need to know*. It's grammatically negative, but it feels positive and spiritual. I think of it as I think of the principle of anonymity, which is (among other things) about letting go of identity and ego. My mantra is about letting go of pretensions of controlling the world around me. It's a Third Step prayer for me, a way of surrendering. It's a reminder that God can handle what's going on in the universe . . . or across the street from me.

Art B., Macon, Georgia



The Nature of my Addiction

How to answer questions

This summer I attended the SA International convention in Denver. While there I went to a baseball game. While there I talked with a man sitting beside me. After some baseball talk we got to what convention brought us to Denver. I said my convention was a non-profit organization, and he said he was there for a medical convention. We were interrupted by a food and beverage vendor. I thought I had successfully diverted his question, but eventually he brought it up again, "What was the nature of your convention?"

I've faced this question numerous times. First with family, which was very awkward because I was still uncomfortable with my own disease back then. Another time I sent an SA email to a large group, and received a "You must have included me by mistake" reply from a co-worker. I replied, "Sorry. Now you know more about me than I intended to divulge." One time a group of us attended a church service while at a Regional Retreat. The friendly hostess at the post-church reception asked, "What is your retreat about?" I

replied that it was a Twelve Step retreat, like Alcoholics Anonymous. She was still curious. "What is your addiction?" she asked. So I told her. "Oh" was all she said, as she walked back to the kitchen.

Encounters like this have taught me that although people ask, they usually don't really want to know. Explaining the distinction between an addiction to lust versus sex is awkward. Trying to assure people that we're really not a convention of active predators only seems to stoke their fears. So, I have learned to say, "It's a convention for people who have become addicted to pornography." It is not a lie. It has always been positively received. The baseball game man replied, "Oh, that's such a wonderful ministry, and so badly needed." We then resumed our conversation about baseball, politics, our families, etc.

Telling people that I'm in a fellowship for people addicted to pornography relieves them of a burden of not knowing how to respond. Some people want additional information, and I freely give it. Most do not. I have found this to be the most compassionate way to disclose the nature of my addiction, and I recommend this to my sponsees as well. You might find it works for you too.

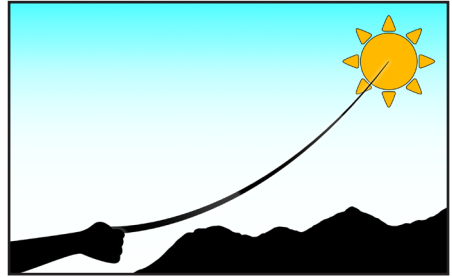
Brian W., Portland OR

**...although
people ask,
they usually
don't really
want to know**

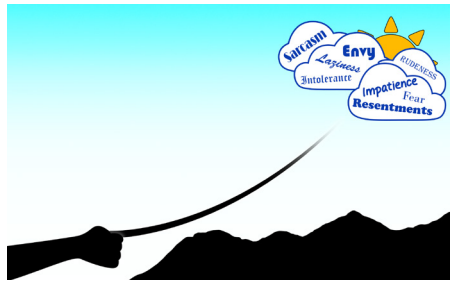
The God-Me Illustration

One night, at our home group meeting we discussed the SA group’s Primary Purpose—to carry its message to the sexaholic who still suffers (Trad. 5). Someone commented how helpful it would be to have a visual explanation of the Steps to share with newcomers. Below is what we created, and it has helped many newcomers ever since.

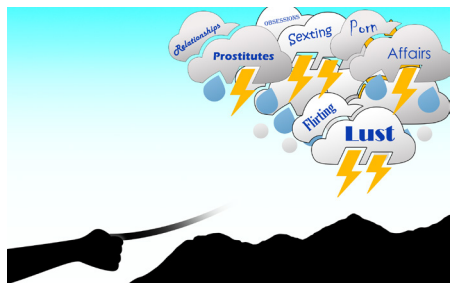
“But there is one who has all power. That one is God. May you find him now”(AA 59). The ideal relationship between us and God: a crystal clear, “fiber optic” line of communication. When we need God’s power, wouldn’t it be wonderful if we simply called upon him and he answered? The result is that we’d be useful to Him and others and be “rocketed into a fourth dimension of existence of which we had not even dreamed”. (AA p. 25)



But, that’s not how we’re wired, is it? As humans many things stand in the way of feeling God’s presence. These are our defects of character: Resentments, Need for Approval, Judging, Impatience, Intolerance, etc. Everyone’s list is different, but the cost to our relationship with God is the same: we miss out on peace, joy and serenity.

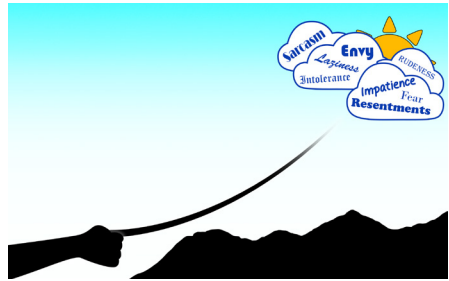


Although a relationship with God is the solution, we don’t work on that relationship, do we? We find that pornography, affairs, flirting, and obsessive relationships with other people help us feel happier... temporarily. When the temporary false joy wears off, we again reach for these distractions to give us that “good” feeling we want so desperately.

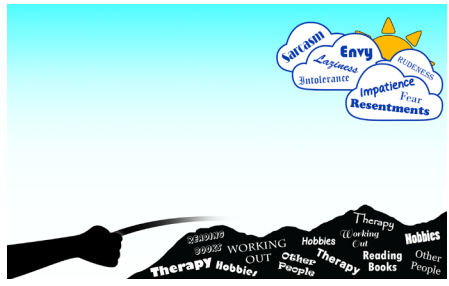


We sense God’s presence either not at all or very little. The clouds that separate us from Him are thick, gloomy and opaque, and we stay at this stage – with things getting worse and worse – until we hit our “bottom”.

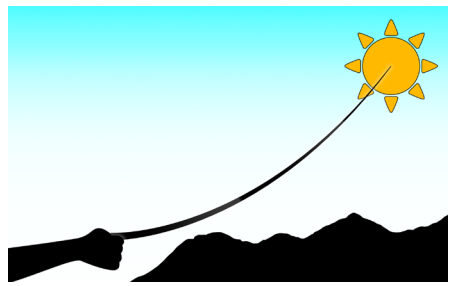
When we come into Sexaholics Anonymous, we stop our acting out. Our heads begin to clear. We sense that we're on the right track. If we stop our forward motion, telling ourselves that this is all we need to do, we backslide. Frequently a sober newcomer shares that they feel they are doing something wrong because they aren't happier. They may not be doing anything wrong at all. They are now simply experiencing their defects of character WITHOUT lust to cover them up.



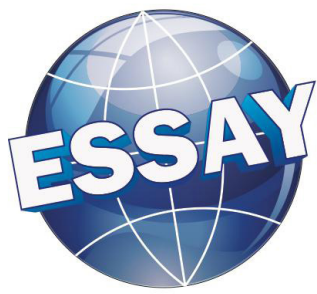
However, instead of pursuing The Solution in their relationship with God, some people think that the answer lies in therapy, exercise, eating healthier, dating someone, or finding a hobby. That's not what SA's 12 Step spiritual program of recovery is about. These answers can help a person feel better, but they are not The Solution.



Our SA program is so simple that many people miss it! "We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves." (AA p. 83) We seek to develop and nurture a relationship with the One who has all power (as we understand Him) so that when we need His help, God is there for us—anytime, anywhere. We remove things that block us from the sunlight of the Spirit and become Happy, Joyous and Free (AA 133).



—Michael J.



HUMOR FOR SA

Told by a Denver 2016 Conference SA speaker: What is the difference between a jet engine and a commercial airline pilot? When you get to the gate, the jet engine stops whining.....

[Ed.: this works if the pilot is a sponsee, too.]

What is the difference between your therapist and your sponsor? The only time your sponsor says the word "closure," it is immediately followed by "your mouth."

The speaker was going on and on. A man in the fifth row stood up and walked out. As the speaker was winding up, the man returned. After the meeting, the speaker asked the man where he went. "I went for a haircut," he said. "A haircut? Why didn't you get a haircut before the meeting started?" The man replied, "I didn't need a haircut before the meeting started."



EVENTS CALENDAR

October 2016

8, Macon, Georgia, USA, South Georgia Intergroup Marathon, The Joy of Recovery. Info at midgasa.org.

14 - 15, San Antonio, TX, USA, San Antonio 8th Annual Days of Recovery 2016, Step Into the Light. Info at www.freedomfromlust.com or call 210-541-1299. Flyer available at saico@sa.org.

14-16, Turner, OR, USA, SA/S-Anon Regional Conference, Willing to Go and Grow. Info at www.saportlandmetro.org or call 888-647-2494.

21 - 23, Pomona, CA, USA, SA/S-Anon Unity Conference, Progress Not Perfection One Day at a Time. Info at www.sasanonunity.com.

28 - 29, Toronto, ON, Canada, SA Ontario Marathon, Sometimes Quickly, Sometimes Slowly. Info at 2016marathon.eventbee.com or email events@saontario.org.

28 - 30, Harrisburg, PA, USA, SA/S-Anon Mid-Atlantic Regional Convention, A Change of Heart 2016. Info at www.achangeofheart2016.com or contact achangeofheart.sa@gmail.com. Come enjoy a full weekend of recovery.

29, Greensboro, NC, USA, Recovery in the Fall/Triad Autumn Renewal, Hope and Healing Through Our Common Welfare. Info triadsa.org/RITF or email triadsa@triadsa.org.

November 2016

6 Alicante Spain, Espana Workshop with Shirley K. From the False to the True Connection. sa.eventos@saespana.es

11 - 13, Ben Lomond, CA, USA, SA Men's Retreat. Info at www.sabayarea.org

11 - 13, St Gilgen am Wolfgangsee, Austria, Autumn Convention, We Will Know Peace. info@anonyme-sexsuechtige.at. Meetings in German and English. English flyer at saico@sa.org.

11 - 13, Holywell, Wales UK, SA/S-ANON Weekend, Celebrate 25 years of SA in the UK. http://www.pantasaph.org.uk/how_to_find_us.html

11 -- 13 Moscow SA, 6th Annual Russian Speaking Convention. Write for location. "Give, Asking Nothing In Return" intsamos@gmail.com

13, Bayshore, Long Island, NY, USA, SA Long Island Intergroup Fall Conference, CPR: Commitment, Progress, Recovery. Info at www.salongisland.org or call 516-218-1336.

Upcoming International Conventions

January 9 - 11, 2017, Jerusalem, Israel, Growth and Renewal in Israel 2017. Info at www.growthandrenewalinisrael2017.com

July 14-16, 2017, Newark, NJ, USA, Jersey Strong--Experience, Strength, & Hope. Info at www.jerseystrong2017.com

SA in the World

Summary report about the Iranian fellowship April 2016

SA was started in Iran by two sexaholics from Shiraz in March 2003. The readings had already been translated into Persian by an expatriate Iranian.

In April Luc and Yvonne from EMER were able to serve the Iranian fellowship by doing workshops and speaker meetings. We used the Twelve Step Workshop found on www.sexaholicsanonymous.eu complemented with some string exercises we had learned last November in France. In each city the workshops took from Wednesday evening till Friday lunch time.

The fellowship in the area around Isfahan is the biggest in Iran: around 700 men and 15 women. Currently there are 19 groups/23 meetings. Isfahan gets about 10 newcomers per day, of whom 2 stay. Over the last 3-4 years, the fellowship has boomed especially because of the website. The male workshop in Isfahan numbered 88 participants. The female workshop had 11 participants and was held in the local meeting room of Narcotics Anonymous. The workshop being separate male and female gave the opportunity for the members to bond with their own sex: we both found this experience very important as we noticed by the end of the workshop there was a great feeling of true connection.

The day after the workshops in Isfahan a meeting was held with about 100-

150 male & female members attending.

The workshops which were held in Isfahan had a great impact on our fellowship:

A more true and deeper definition of sobriety in SA by clarifying that watching pornography or entertaining willfully deep lustful fantasies and enjoying them is not true sobriety. How to work and conduct the Steps in a practical way. More contact with the international fellowship of SA to have a deeper recovery and help others.

In Ahwaz the male workshop had 45 participants in a place where religious discourses are held. The female workshop had 8 attendees and was held in the shrine of a war hero. The women came from different towns around Ahwaz and for some it was the first time they were meeting face

to face. One woman started a meeting in her hometown after the workshop. The next day we held a joint-sharing meeting with the men and women together.

Ilkin from Azerbaijan: It was a great experience for me! I am since 9 months a loner and the only SA member in Azerbaijan. I traveled by

bus 16 hours to reach Iran and then take a plane to Ahwaz and I don't regret it! I got tremendous experience in Iran from Luc and the Iranian fellows. It was my first encounter with sober sexaholics in my life. It changed my outlook on the program. I Learned 2 important things there: to help and to listen. I am trying now to reach sexaholics here in Azerbaijan and give my experience to them.

On Saturday we flew to Tehran. On Sunday evening, we gave respective shares on "how we were, what

See and read this complete 5,000 word report and two included supplemental reports at www.sa.org/essay

happened and how we are now”, in an auditorium in the center of Tehran with over 100 male & female members. On Monday we went to the same place to Q&As for a similar audience. There were many Q&As, a lot of them quite basic, specifically around the Sobriety Definition and the true meaning of being clean from lust. On Wednesday till Friday the workshop for 21 women was held in the house of one of the female members,

The workshop for men was held in a marriage hall for more than 100 members. The fellowship in Tehran has 100-150 members, including about 15-20 women. Tehran has about 10 meetings of about 10-20 members. We are following up to get the Persian-speaking Region well connect-

ed to the international fellowship. Mohsen from Ahwaz was elected 6 months ago by the Iranian Regional Assembly to be the Iranian GAD. On the GDA of 15 May he was joyfully welcomed by the other delegates at his first GDA. Hamed from Isfahan has been elected as liaison person of the Iranian Information Committee with the international Public Information Committee. Mohammad Reza from Tehran has been elected as the chairman of the Iranian Workshop Committee. We are discussing the possibility of organizing a convention in Istanbul, as Iranians do not need a visa to travel there and Europeans can get a cheap and easy-to-get visa.



Calendar

8 - 10 July	SA/S-Anon International Conv. "Happy, Joyous and Free"	Denver, USA	website
15 - 17 July	SA Convention "Love and Service"	Dublin, Ireland	flyer
22 - 24 July	SA/S-Anon Yearly Summer Retreat	Salamanca, Spain	side a side b
29 - 31 July	SA Convention "The Spiritual Toolkit"	Hereford, UK	flyer
28 - 30 October	SA Speaker Workshop with Shirley S.	Poland	
4 - 6 November	SA Speaker Workshop with Shirley S.	Spain	
11 - 13 November	SA Speaker Workshop with Shirley S.	North Wales, UK	
11 - 13 November	SA/S-Anon Convention "We will know peace"	St. Gilgen, Austria	flyer
2 - 4 December	French-speaking Recovery Weekend	Luxembourg	
9 - 11 January	SA/S-Anon International Convention	Jerusalem, Israel	website

Member shares about last Regional Convention in Spain

"Talent show was really nice. Also relieve to see many members with long term sobriety."
 "Great spiritual cooperation. Many nationalities. Break up time to be able to talk with each other and get to know people is very valuable."
 "Sense of unity was very strong. Great spirit of wanting SA sobriety and recovery."
 "Ever younger ages. Absence of fear. Sense of working together. The weather is the only thing that does not need to be repeated."
 "Enjoying brotherhood, during and after the Convention."
 "Seeing people grow in sobriety and service."
 "Great sense of hospitality."

"Lot of good emotions. Meeting S-Anons brought healing inside."
 "Well organised, to the point that one didn't notice the organisation."
 "Sense of big family."
 "Very impressed, very well organised. Streaming has been great experience for members staying at home."
 "Made new friends, especially from Germany."
 "It opens the heart to see new members coming in. Great to see the message spread in Europe."
 "Grateful for live streaming. Very good quality. It is part of the convention now."

SA CONVENTIONS

SA/S-Anon International Growth and Renewal in Israel 2017 Jerusalem ISRAEL — January 9-11, 2017

The SAICC & The S-Anon WSO accept the Israeli SA & S-Anon bids to host the first International Convention outside of North America. We are all very excited. For any questions, please contact us on:

Web: <http://www.growthandrenewalinisrael2017.com>

SA help: sa@growthandrenewalinisrael2017.com

S-Anon help: sanon@growthandrenewalinisrael2017.com



July 14-16, 2017,
Newark, NJ, USA, SA
International Conven-
tion “Jersey Strong--Ex-
perience, Strength, &
Hope”

Info at www.jersey-strong2017.com



**SA Women's International Convention
May 5, 6, & 7, 2017 • Washington, DC, USA**



Join women from around the globe as we break the hold that silence and shame have over us in this disease. Trudge with us as we seek healing through the bonds of love, peace, service and unity through the 12 steps of Sexaholics Anonymous.

www.neveraloneagain2017.com

Together and never alone again!
Dates: May 5 - 7, 2017
**Hilton Garden Inn Dulles North
22400 Flagstaff Plaza Ashburn,
Virginia**
Join women from around the globe as we break the hold that silence and shame have over us in this disease.
<http://neveraloneagain2017.com/>

**NEW SA GROUPS
3RD QUARTER 2016**

Europe and Asia:

- Amsterdam, Netherlands, (Additional meeting)**
- Brussels, Belgium (Women's meeting)**
- Leiden, Netherlands**
- Worcester, United Kingdom**

North and Central America:

- Auburn, Washington**
- Branson, Missouri**
- Cranbrook, British Columbia, Canada**
- Florence, Kentucky**
- Seward, Nebraska**
- Sioux Falls, South Dakota, Women's Meeting**
- West Allis, Wisconsin**
- Nezahualcoyotl, Mexico**

SERVICE STRUCTURE

Delegates and Trustees		September 2016
General Delegate Assembly officers		
Tom K., Chair		Conventions, chair; COMC
Brian W., vice-chair		SA CFC, Literature
Delegate	Region	Committees
Dimitri P.,	North Midwest	International, chair
Jon H.,		Literature, Service Structure
Marv R., Alt		Public Information, chair; SACFC
Ken G., ALT		Conventions
Dave T.,	South Midwest	Nominations, International
John I., Alt		Public Information, Hospitals & institutions
Brian W.		Literature, SACFC; vice-chair GDA
Peter F.		Information technology,
Kathy R.,		Literature, Nominations
Eric S.	Southwest	RAC, SACFC, Literature, PI
Steve C.,		Public Information, Service Structure
Jim C.,		Finance, Conventions, H & I
Carl N.	Mid-Atlantic	H & I, chair; Nominations
Ben L.,		IT, PI
Hugh S.,		Finance, COMC
Brad S.		International Conventions, Service Structure
Mike ST		Nominations
Gary M.	Northeast	Finance, Conventions
Suzanne S.		Public Information, H & I
Terry O., Alt.		Information Technology
Manse	Southeast	Finance, Conventions, Legal
Jay H., Alt		Legal, Literature
Rich P., ALT		PI, Conventions, RAC
Cathal M.	Europe, Middle East	International, IT
Luc D.,		International, PI
Marco V.		International (Spanish speaking areas), Finance
Jackie H.		International (women in SA Fellowship)
Shachar H.		International, PI
Padraic, Alt		Literature
Denise, Alt		International
Pawel, Alt		International (Buddy List)
Bernd S.	German speaking	International, Service Structure
Trustees		
Mike S., chair		COMC, Conventions, Service Structure
Mitch A., vice-chair		IT, Service Structure, Literature
Bill S.		International, Service Structure, Nominations, COMC
Dave H.		Finance, Legal, RAC,
Gene T.		CFC, H & I
Jim B.		COMC, H & I
Michael J.		H & I, PI, Service Structure
Gary L		Legal, chair; Literature, Nominations, Essay

SEXAHOLICS ANONYMOUS – STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLE

We have a solution. We don't claim it's for everybody, but for us, it works. If you identify with us and think you may share our problem, we'd like to share our solution with you (Sexaholics Anonymous, last sentence, page 2). In defining sobriety, we do not speak for those outside Sexaholics Anonymous. We can only speak for ourselves. Thus, for the married sexaholic, sexual sobriety means having no form of sex with self or with persons other than the spouse. In SA's sobriety definition, the term "spouse" refers to one's partner in a marriage between a man and a woman. For the unmarried sexaholic, sexual sobriety means freedom from sex of any kind. And for all of us, single and married alike, sexual sobriety also includes progressive victory over lust (*Sexaholics Anonymous* 191-192). (*Adopted* 2010)

The only requirement for SA membership is a desire to stop lusting and become sexually sober according to the SA sobriety definition.

Any two or more sexaholics gathered together for SA sobriety according to SA sobriety definition may call themselves an SA group.

Meetings that do not adhere to and follow Sexaholics Anonymous' sobriety statement as set forth in the foregoing Statement of Principle adopted by the General Delegate Assembly in 2010 are not SA meetings and shall not call themselves SA meetings.

Addendum to the Statement of Principle passed by the General Delegate Assembly on July 8, 2016. Moved to publish the addendum to the Statement of Principle in all SAICO literature, Essay, SA.org home page, SA Service Manual, and through the SA service structure.

August 2016: The Finance committee appreciates the way the Fellowship of SA has stepped up to support the projects the Fellowship wants to fund, including development of the international Fellowship.

SAICO Financial Update First Quarter 2016		
Donations		\$36,153
Other	Revenues	\$19,632
Expenses		\$55,453
Revenues (less Expenses)		\$332
Total	Prudent Reserve	\$253,790*

*SAICO Operating Reserve for 6 months is \$147,000

WE INVITE YOUR SUBMISSIONS
TO ESSAY

Your writings are invited, although no payment can be made. All articles submitted are assumed intended for publication and will be edited. Articles are edited to maintain their essence and meet Essay word length and content limits. Materials submitted become the property of Essay for copyright purposes. Please do not reference unadjudicated illegal activities.

We invite articles of different lengths, from 200+ word anecdotes or memories, to 400+ word meditations, to 1000 – 1500+ word member stories. We prefer electronically submitted manuscripts sent to Essay@sa.org. Articles may be sent by postal mail to SAICO, PO Box 3565, Brentwood, TN 37024 USA and should be printed, double-spaced. Handwritten manuscripts should be written clearly on only one side of each sheet.

All articles must either be in English or have an English translation along with the original language. Whenever possible we will publish in the original language as well as the translation. Please include an author name, address, telephone number, and/or e-mail address so that authenticity can be verified. This information will remain confidential.

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The Twelve Steps


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.

The Twelve Steps and Traditions are adapted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. ("AAWS"). Permission to adapt and reprint 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 which are patterned after AA, but which address other problems, or in any other non-AA context, does not imply otherwise.

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

The Twelve Traditions

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 membership is a desire to stop lusting and become sexually sober.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or Sexaholics Anonymous 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. Sexaholics Anonymous 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. Sexaholics Anonymous 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.



**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.**