

ESSAY

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
OF SA

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PREJUDICES & CHALLENGES
In Recovery

SA Purpose

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 AA Grapevine Inc.

RESPONSIBILITY DECLARATION

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.

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 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 by the General Delegate Assembly*)

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 the 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 in July 2016.*)

Essay is a publication of Sexaholics Anonymous

essay@sa.org

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

Adopted by the Trustees and General Delegate Assembly in May 2016



Dear Essay readers,

The theme of this issue is about the prejudices and challenges we all encounter sooner or later on the path of recovery.

Read how a Colombian member couldn't believe that there were people on this earth who could do things without self-interest. A religious Jewish fellow in New York left his fears behind and found brothers and sisters growing together with a common solution. An Indian member was afraid of being judged if members found out about his particular form of acting out. An 80-year-old old-timer shares about the challenges of growing old in SA. And a young Israeli woman tells us how she discovered prejudice to be a deep part of her disease keeping her from recovery.

If you haven't done it yet, could we please ask you to take five minutes to improve your magazine by filling in this short online survey:

<https://forms.gle/kHFENdRDEVapPm3UA>

In fellowship,

THE EDITORS (*Luc D., Kent A., Daniel T., Brian C., Doug H., Emily J.*)
& ARTISTS (*LaRon W., Jimmy M.*)

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“If our testimony helps sweep away prejudice, enables you to think honestly, encourages you to search diligently within yourself, then, if you wish, you can join us on the Broad Highway.”

AA 47-48



On the cover: Fellow-illustrator LaRon W.'s visualization of the challenges and prejudices on the Road of Happy Destiny.

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Dear Essay



This has been a much needed period of wandering that has allowed me to see both my continuing need for a daily personal program and just how truly slippery the slope of relapse is!

My Lake Of Recovery

READING THE AUGUST

Essay confronted me with several of my shortcomings. The article "Every Moment Is A 'Given Moment'" was especially powerful. The author related his recovery to a lake: "Recovery is like a lake that needs an inflow and an outflow." It showed me that my lake of recovery has grown shallow and stagnant.

During this pandemic I've suffered a sudden and complete severance from the core of my program and from most of my fellow members. Sporadic attacks of lustful thoughts

have been flaring up, especially during this last week. Sporadic attacks of lustful thoughts have been flaring up, especially during this last week. I've gradually allowed myself to drift away from the practices that have been the implements which allowed His grace and Spirit to flow through me and out into this world. I felt distant and separated, yet ignored these feelings, icing over them with work, food, games, and excuses. All the while becoming more critical and judgemental of others around me.


Fortunately I've received promptings to carry the message of recovery to a suffering addict who was recently placed on my

path again, as well as a fellow who asked me to be his sponsor. I pray for further opportunities to be of service, guidance in the words to speak, and the daily renewal of His Spirit. Recent events that require amends have also been illuminated.

All in all, this has been a much needed period of wandering that has allowed me to see both my continuing need for a personal daily program and just how truly slippery the slope of relapse is! If I'm not vigilant, diligent, and reliant on my HP, I run the risk of straying further and further away from my HP, this program, sobriety, and all the other graces I've been afforded.

I'm grateful for everything in this life, the good and the seemingly bad. Grateful for food, clothes, hot and running water, toiletries, a bed with blankets and sheets and a pillow, all the tools of recovery, ample time to reflect, pray, meditate, and praise God.

I'm very grateful for the opportunity to live a new life out of the shadows, to wake up each day and live life without being consumed by shame, anger, self loathing, the fires of a lust-fueled life, and to share my experiences so that others may know of a different way. Nothing I can do will ever repay what has been given me.

A GRATEFUL MEMBER IN PRISON,
IDAHO, USA 

World Wide Walls of SA

SA meetings can be held just about anywhere ...



Scandinavian meeting, Copenhagen, Denmark



Helya Film meeting, Tehran, Iran



Saturday group, Ghent, Belgium



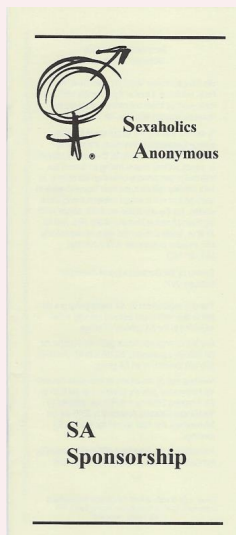
Zoom party for Kay S., former SAICO office manager, working 25 years in SAICO

Share your photos

Send your meeting place photos (minus identifiable people) to Essay@sa.org.

Remember: Include your name, address, group name, and location of the meeting.

SPONSORING - CORNERSTONE OF OUR RECOVERY



Our White Book writes, *As we get into the Steps, we find it indispensable to rely for help on those who have gone this way before. In Twelve step programs, the term commonly used is sponsor. What we call the person doesn't matter; and we don't have to call them anything. Asking for help and accepting suggestions are what bring results.* (SA 72)

This SA brochure explains in detail why getting sponsored by older members and in our turn sponsoring newer members is vital to SA sobriety and ongoing and joyful recovery. Find the Brochure on the SA Store: sa.org/store/

"BAD NEWS" IN SEXAHOLICS ANONYMOUS

(In serial form, #7)

Over three sober decades in SA there have been quite a few pieces of "bad news" for me as a recovering sexaholic. They all arise, like my entire program, from my experience, strength, and hope:

- ◇ Obsession (Defined as: thinking about something more than once without any new information) is a primary problem. Nothing causes obsession.
- ◇ Obsession is deadly to relationships. Obsession blocks me from my spouse, my family and friends, program people, institutions, and my Higher Power or God.
- ◇ The "Obsession Song" really works! The verses are: "I'm obsessing, I'm obsessing. Yes, I am, yes, I am. Take away the garbage, take away the garbage. Please God, please God." (Tune: Frère Jacques.) There are many other obsession tools such as surrendering my right to think and using a loose rubber band on my wrist.
- ◇ The Law of Obsession is "I only obsess about things I can do nothing about!" By definition in my experience, this Law is never broken. If I could do something, I would do something!"

DAVID M., Oregon, USA



Practical Tools



My name is Claire, I was created in the image of God and I am a grateful recovering sexaholic. My sobriety date is July 3, 2002. I need to remind myself that I am an addict because I can easily forget.

In early recovery I spoke with my sponsor very often. I knew that I couldn't think straight and I needed someone to think for me. In recovery I saw that I was able to think more clearly. I would think about things before talking to my sponsor and in time the answer that I thought was a good answer turned out to be the same answer my sponsor provided. Today my brain is usually clear and I can tell when it's not. Even so, if it's something big I talk it over, if not with my sponsor then with some other trusted friend. That came with a lot of recovery and I'm very grateful for it.

I have a sponsor I trust. Find someone who has what you want and learn how they got it. The more my sponsor knows about what my challenges are and what my difficulties are in dealing with those challenges, the better equipped my sponsor is going to be to help me and guide me in ways that work for me. Don't be afraid to share whatever is going on with you. There was a time when I remember being so glad my sponsor wasn't there to see or hear something. That was my flag to call my sponsor and repeat whatever had just happened because we're all as sick as our secrets.

When I came into program 18 years

ago I was in tears and my life was unmanageable. I started acting out by myself as a very young child. By the time I got to college I was only interested in planning on acting out or thinking about what I did acting out.

I'm 67 years old. I always thought that by the time I was 67 I wouldn't be dealing with issues of lust anymore, but that's not true. I still have issues and I'm grateful that I have the program to help me. Getting back to my history, along the way I became religious and religious girls don't randomly act out with men, so I got married. My addict unfortunately picked out my first husband. That marriage lasted 15 years. I'm very grateful that I got into the program about a year before I got divorced. After being alone for just a couple of years, I married a wonderful man. I am so grateful to my Higher Power for giving me a second chance to have a normal life.

People talked about how important it was to make phone calls. I was often the only woman at a meeting and, as a religious woman, wouldn't normally talk to men and certainly not one-on-one. In frustration and anger I asked who I was supposed to call. One of the guys quickly took out his notebook

and scribbled his name and phone number on a piece of paper, rolled it up, threw it at me and said, "You can call me." Then a few other guys gave me their number. It made me feel so welcome and wanted. I hear a lot of women have had trouble coming into meetings that are mostly men. Maybe it's good that I was older even eighteen years ago. Today I call many people and many people call me. We care about each other and we accept each other. We're not judging each other and it's wonderful. For many years I felt that I was a bad girl. I'm not bad, just sick.

"Acting as if," is doing what the person you would like to become would do.

In early recovery a person doesn't have a lot of tools. Whatever I could use, I did. I went to meetings, made phone calls, did some writing/journaling, and talked to my sponsor often. I have a reputation for being a positive recovery lady. "I can't do this," and "this isn't good," are ideas that I didn't find to be particularly helpful. I'd be so upset about things that I just wanted to act out. Instead, I focus on what I want. I want to be relaxed, to have a clear head, to be a good wife and a good mother. I want to have a good relationship with the people around me and be able to function. About eight years ago I went back to school and now I have a new occupation. I get very good feedback from clients and I'm very happy with my work.

A great tool for me has been "acting

as if." There is a difference between "acting as if" and being a hypocrite. Being a hypocrite is doing something that you think the other person wants you to do but you don't really want to. "Acting as if," is doing what the person you would like to become would do. I have found that certain things that I have learned to do have come to replace my knee-jerk unhealthy reactions.

I often think, "What would my Higher Power want me to do in this situation?" Sometimes that's too hard. Instead I have certain people in my life who I admire and I'll think to myself, "What would this person do in this situation?" Then I'll go and do that. I was talking to my daughter-in-law and said that I didn't really want to do something, but it seemed like the right thing to do, so I did it. She told me that she hears me say that often, that I don't want to do something but I do it because I think it's the right thing to do. I hadn't even realized that I mentioned it to her more than once or twice but it made an impression on her. I stopped and thought about it and realized that I really do try to do the right thing to the best of my ability.

Step 10 is a part of my life. I don't usually sit down and write a long Step 10 anymore. I stop and think about any interaction that I've had, not just the ones that I think were negative, any serious or lengthy interaction and obviously anything that bothers me. I run it through my head at a quiet time. Sometimes I'll wonder if what I said was appropriate. Then I'll go back to the person and I'll tell them that I was thinking about our conversation and I realized I said such and such and I'm hoping that it wasn't misunderstood. If I need to apologize I do, without going overboard. Sometimes I realize that I'm upset about something. Then

I'll go back and mention that the last time we talked they mentioned such and such and I was wondering what they meant. I'm not accusing them of anything, I'm just asking for clarification and usually it's fine because I'm not going in there attacking them.

My sobriety keeps getting stronger. I'm very grateful that I have not acted out in over 18 years but my sobriety is very different than it was 17 years ago, even five years ago. I see the depth of things. I see how it's affecting me. I see how my life keeps getting better. In early recovery I had a discussion

with my sponsor about sobriety. I was sober, but I still had many character defects and I didn't feel good. My sponsor said I was talking about serenity, not sobriety; just stay sober and serenity will come. My sponsor was right. I thought that I wouldn't have any more problems once I was working the program, but nowhere in our literature does it say that. I have people to talk to and tools to use. I have much less fear and a relationship with my Higher Power. I am not alone anymore.

CLAIRE Z., *Israel*



One of the most effective Practical Tools is HUMOR.

"I have been sober for a long time. I tried to give my recovery knowledge away like a fire hose. I realized I was overwhelming newcomers with way too much information at

one time. I slowed it down to a garden hose. That was still too much. Today I do my Twelfth Stepping like a water fountain. I know more is missed than is swallowed but at least part of my message is received."

BOB F., *Nebraska, USA*



Jim is told by his sponsor that he needs to participate more in service work. So he applies for the position of treasurer. They hold a group conscience and ask him "What is nine multiplied

by four?" He thinks quickly and says "Thirty-three." After the interview, he realizes his mistake. He's surprised when they inform him he got the job, despite there being four other candidates. "But I got the wrong answer," he protests. "Yeah, we know. But you were closest."

ANONYMOUS

Have a good joke, wry observation, funny SA story? Send your Humor gifts to essay@sa.org

Sobriety My No. 1 PRIORITY

After seven years of sobriety I relapsed. I called my sponsor, dreading his reaction. He was kind but very clear. One of the things he told me was to take stock of *all* program actions I normally practiced. Had I been practicing them? Were there some I had stopped doing or only doing occasionally?

Being no stranger to OCD, I made a color-coded spreadsheet. Red meaning 'red alert', orange 'watch out' and green 'that's a daily reprieve for you'. On the next page are my actions, or lack thereof, in the week before my relapse.

Morning	Week before relapse
Pray on my knees for freedom from self-will and a lust-free day.	No
Review my gratitude list.	No
Read the "Just for Today" card.	No
Consider my plans for the day, using the Step 11 template (AA p.86-7).	No
Read from the AA Big Book or SA White Book.	No
Meditation	No
Day	
Phone my sponsor.	infrequent
If fearful, ask G-d to remove my fear. Say the Serenity Prayer and then think of someone to help. Talk about my fear with an SA member.	sometimes
If people offend me, pray for them. "G-d, how can I be helpful? Save me from being angry. Thy will be done". (AA p.67).	sometimes
If facing indecision, follow Step 11 template (AA p.86-7)	sometimes
Contact with sober oldtimers - phone two every day.	sometimes
Work with my sponsees	Yes
Contact with newcomers - phone two every day.	no
Go to a meeting at least three times a week. At my home group arrive early to help set up and stay late for coffee and fellowship.	no
Serve at local, intergroup, regional level	Yes
Evening	
Read from the AA Big Book or SA White Book	no
Constructively review the day using the Step 11 template (AA p.86)	no
Add to my gratitude list.	no
Thank G-d for a sober day.	no
Pray for others	no
Review my progress in the Steps	no

Lust inventory - (letting it in)	
Taking second looks	yes
Allowing sexual or romantic fantasy for more than 1 second	yes
Mis-connections	yes
Flirting	yes
Watching triggering images	yes
Lust inventory - (surrendering it)	
Bringing it to the light with my sponsor	not fully

Last month, now two years sober, my sponsor pointed out that I had slacked off again. I completed another of my color-coded reports, this time adding two new sections on lust. It looked eerily similar to the report I did after my relapse.

I picture in my mind a sexaholic looking at this article and reflecting - "Great stuff, very useful, but not for me, I am colorblind." That's me, only I am not colorblind, but willfully blind, I can't always see how I am doing.

The acronym S.L.I.P. stands for - "Sobriety Losing Its Priority." This helps me remember sobriety must be my No. 1 priority. As I discovered, lust is very patient. I have only a "daily reprieve, contingent on the maintenance of my spiritual condition" (AA p.85).

TAMMO D., *The Netherlands*



WANT TO HELP ANOTHER SEXAHOLIC?

"We were learning how to give and the measure we gave was the measure we got back."

Sexaholics Anonymous 205

This iconic painting depicts AA founders Bill W. and Dr. Bob carrying the message to AA number three in the hospital.

The Essay is a Great Twelfth Step Tool!

Give a gift subscription of the print version to a sexaholic who needs it. Great for: ♦ Sponsees ♦ Newcomers ♦ Prisons ♦ Rehab Centers ♦ Doctor's Offices ♦ Giveaways ♦ Group Celebrations ♦ Intergroup and Regional Events

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My Higher Power Is Here In This Program

I am a recovering sexaholic, since May 25, 2019, working the Steps with a sponsor. I thank my Higher Power, as I conceive it, for being a sexaholic and seeing my multitude of character defects that help me stay in Sexaholics Anonymous.

When I arrived in SA, my challenge was that I did not believe in anything or anyone. I had been serving for 25 years in my religion, which had been the most beautiful time of my life. I will never regret living this experience full of love, service, and self-surrender.

When I left that religion my soul was shattered and my life had no direction. I fell into the depths of the abyss of lust, in all its manifestations, making my existence more miserable. After suffering with suicidal wishes and without believing in anything or anyone, surfing the net between tears and contempt for myself, I found SA.

While reading everything on the SA website, more fears welled up inside me. What people are these who insist that I talk with them, that I share in groups? Horrified because someone was giving me their hand with no self-interest, I did not believe that such people existed on this earth. For me it was impossible.

Entering the deep waters of Sexaholics Anonymous, I was stunned by the unconditional love of the

beloved fraternity that received me regardless of my past, my condition, my age, my way of thinking. I was totally in love with them. I started my process of redemption. Each minute and every second that I heard them share of themselves, that I read the literature, that I was in the face-to-face and virtual conventions, I felt my beloved Higher Power as he showed himself to me. With so many ways of seeing a Higher Power in this temporal space, I knew there had to be a place where all were equal and loved each other without limits.

Horrified because someone was giving me their hand with no self-interest, I did not believe that such people existed on this earth.

My Higher Power is here in this program. I love being a sexaholic. I thank my Higher Power for his mercy towards me and for bringing me to SA. Here, day by day, minute by minute, I rebuild a new life of change from destructive addictive behaviors. I've learned to love a girl inside of me who I did not know. Dear beloved and respected fellows, we will meet in happy destiny.

A sexaholic in recovery, totally in love with my Higher Power in SA,

LUCIA A., Colombia



Race, Status, Religion - We're All Addicts

Being a religious Jew wearing a yarmulke (skull cap) I was taught to live with fear that there is prejudice towards me and "my kind".

As a child I remember being told, "Behave yourself, Yaakov. You're in public. We are Orthodox Jews and we have to make a 'kiddush Hashem' (bring honor to our God's name)." However, being a sex addict in recovery, this proved to be a major challenge for me. I did not want to go to meetings at first for fear that someone of my stature, a role model for the community and attending rabbinical school, would be judged if I went to a meeting. What if someone saw me? What would they think?

I tried to push off my therapist telling me to try a meeting, letting him know that I was part of an online support group (which didn't get me past 29 days, ever). Finally, after enough pushing, I gave it a try. I walked into my first meeting (it was an AA meeting as the SA fellowship in that area was small). Boom! There were two Orthodox Jews there, one even leading the meeting.

What a shock, I thought, these people were at the meeting!?! Kinda strange ... then over the next few meetings I met two other members I knew. What an embarrassment and a relief I felt all at the same time. I was supposed to be "better than these alcoholics" and yet I was there, one of them, talking and eating cookies with them.

I also came to realize that I was not the only one in my community who suffered from an incurable disease. Many of the "distinguished families"

in my community had a son or daughter showing up at the same meeting. They were also powerless and had nowhere else to turn.. People from all walks of life are accepted here as Bill W. and the others learnt early on. There is no one we will turn down. The line we say is "We will take you whether you're from Yale or jail". I have experienced this not only with my Jewish brothers and sisters, but with people of different skin colors, sexual orientations, and basically every other religion out there.

After coming into the 12-Step program I was exposed to a new culture, starting with signing for the meeting room key at the rectory office, which would have been unheard of just months prior. Walking down the steps into a local church a few times a week looked quite unnatural for a 22-year-old Jewish man. The feeling did not match the actions. I was able to come into a room with people who left their job, religion, and color outside. I can call a Christian, a Muslim, or a millionaire and still feel like we are brothers and sisters growing together with a common solution. I can report that I have not felt any prejudice at all. Thanks for making me feel at home, just as me.

YAAKOV K., New York, USA



By Jimmy M.

Nobody Has My Acting-Out Pattern

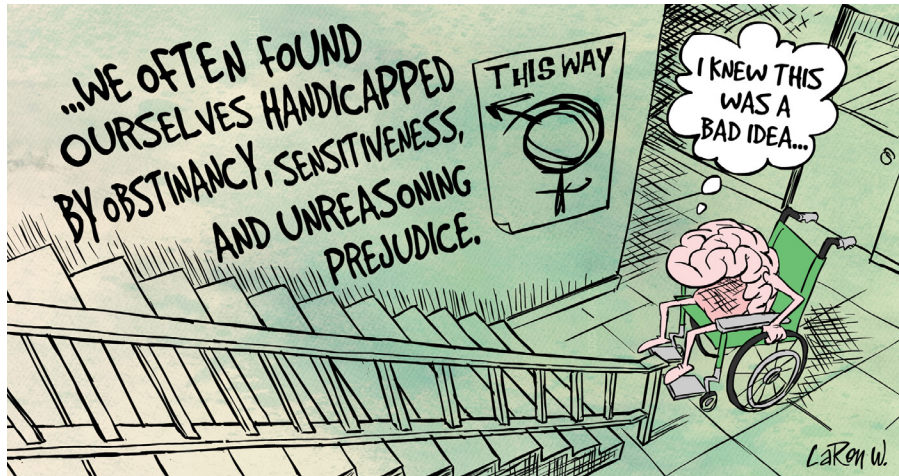
My form of fantasy is something that I hadn't heard from anyone before, therefore I believed it could be something someone could be prejudiced towards me about. I remember in my early days of acting out I would fantasize about what women were enjoying. Being a male I felt my form of acting out wasn't even "manly" enough to be shared with others. My last relapse happened when I refrained from sharing this with anyone else. I learnt my lesson. I needed to "begin exposing the roots of my spiritual emptiness and hunger instead of covering those feelings with compulsive sex."

I was asked by one of my sponsors

early on what sort of pornography I engaged in. The correct answer was "lesbian," but I said "anything would do." I was honest in saying that really anything would do, but I was not rigorously honest when I said it. I hid something from my sponsor.

I feared if I told others that I used to chat with males and females anonymously while saying that I was a female, then even members would not talk to me. They might tease me, and if not to my face then at least in their heads. I feared what I would say to a newcomer. How would I share my story? What if it leaked out of the group? I have been coming out of that fear by sharing it with the fellows I came to know over the course of one year in recovery. Thank God for SA.

SHIVAM T., India



The Challenge Of Growing Old In SA

Why would a man, 80 years old with 36 years of sexual sobriety, still be utilizing the same tools he used when he first

came to the program?

The answer is simple. I have a chronic, progressive, and fatal disease that is also very patient.

It would be much easier if we could rest on our laurels. My experience in our program has shown me that others resting on their laurels did not work

for them. We not only learn from our own experiences but also from the experiences of others. I have learned that each day I wake up with this incurable disease and each day I need to take my medication as if I am a newcomer. As I've been told, "Once a cucumber becomes a pickle, it can never go back to being a cucumber again."

I am so grateful that when I came into the program 36 and a half years ago I accepted the disease model. I accepted that I was not bad getting good but sick getting well. I have watched people time and again cling to their old ideas of shame based "badness" rather than accepting that they have an illness. The results, I watched from them, were not very encouraging.

So here I am 36 years later taking my daily medication, and finding that the medication continues to keep me free of lust and free from acting out.

What do I do today that I have done since I entered the program?

1. I hit my knees when I wake up in the morning and do the third step prayer.
2. Each morning I get up and do a 2-way contract with my Higher Power. I say: "God, today I will stay sexually sober, help me stay sexually sober today."
3. I do 20 items I am grateful for today. (A few years ago I raised it to 30 items.)
4. I read a page a day of recovery-related material.
5. I talk to many people each day from the program.
6. I have a sponsor to whom I surrender to his answer when I ask him a question.
7. I try to go to a meeting a day of 12

step programs.

8. I hit my knees at night and do the 3rd step Prayer prior to going to sleep.

9. If I am not asleep in a few minutes, I get out of bed and read from 12 step material or meditate. (The bed is good for sleep, but is my enemy if I'm not sleeping.)

10. I sponsor many men.

11. I continually utilize the steps.

"Once a cucumber becomes a pickle, it can never go back to being a cucumber again."

Now in my senior years I have not graduated from these daily activities. I take them even more seriously, knowing my disease is waiting patiently for me. How do I know the disease is active and well even in my senior years? It shows up in my dreams. It also shows up in my still noticing triggers but thankfully not having to take second looks.

I have noticed many married people in recovery try to convince their wives and themselves that they are cured. I do just the opposite. My danger is not thinking I am still ill, but thinking I might be cured. People, in my opinion, who think they are safe are those who are in danger. They forget they merely have a daily reprieve. I also need to remind my wife I am still sick. What else justifies placing my program before her?

In summary I need my medication as much today as I did 36 years ago. Is this a negative life sentence? It is not. By taking my daily medication, I have found a joyous life. I am no

longer always restless, irritable and discontented. The paradox continues. By putting my program first, I have been able to keep all the things I would have lost from my disease. My marital life is wonderful. My family life with my children has improved immensely and last but not least my spiritual life has not only gotten deeper but has widened.

The program is not part of my life. The program is my breath. It is my life.

As my sponsor would say, "It only gets better!"

HARVEY A., formerly from
Tennessee, now Florida, USA



Freedom From Prejudice

The Cambridge English Dictionary defines "Prejudice" as follows: *an unfair and unreasonable opinion or feeling, especially when formed without enough thought or knowledge.*

Perhaps one of the most lethal parts of my disease is the compulsion to find where I am different from everybody else: "Everybody's married and I'm not", "Everybody's male and I'm not", "Everybody acted out in that way and I didn't." I think that one of the reasons this part of my disease is so dangerous is because I actually believe these voices in my head, I give them strength and act upon them, even if they're not based in reality and are simply prejudiced.

In my first meeting of Sexaholics Anonymous that same voice spoke in my head and immediately began talking frantically. The whole meeting I focused on how different I was, how I won't be able to recover like all these others. Everybody seemed

to be better than I was, different than me. They could but I couldn't. This prejudiced voice followed me through my first months in SA and prevented me from being a part of, making real connections and from starting to work the steps. I was stuck! On the other hand I knew that I had a fatal disease and I saw the end was in sight. I really saw it. I asked my Higher Power nightly to take me after another night of acting out with the ensuing pain and suffering that wouldn't end. I was broken from the inside. I wanted help, but I wasn't able to lose the prejudice and see how we were the same. I wasn't able to see that if it worked for them it could work for me.

Spiritual principles are not picky, they are not prejudiced, they don't care what background I have, what gender I am, or what my job is.

In my first conference of SA I felt that familiar feeling of alienation. My head told me that all these fellows who were sober were older men or married and that I had no place here. When people share about their sexual histories I thought: "I am not a real sexaholic. I didn't do everything they did." I thought that maybe I had to go and suffer more before I could be a part of. I felt there was no hope for my recovery. But inside there was a small voice that cried out and begged, a voice that I could barely hear. The voice insisted: "Maybe I do." I talked to an old-timer who flew into Israel for

a convention and I asked her: "Do you think there is hope for my recovery? Do you think I belong in SA?" She looked at me and asked: "Did you suffer enough?" I thought about it for a few seconds and with tears in my eyes I replied: "Yes! I don't want one more day of this suffering" She said: "That's all you need. Welcome home! Who knows maybe your recovery will lead the way for many young women that will come after you."

This conference and the conversation with this fellow sexaholic shook the foundations of my loneliness and broke apart some of my prejudice. I began to see how I was like all these other people. How much I related to the pain they described, the way their disease spiralled out of control and sucked the life out of everything. I started listening to shares from friends and I heard me in the shares, as if someone was describing what was

going on in my own head. I wanted to cry out: "My name is _____ and I am a sexaholic."

One of the most important things that my sponsor has taught me was to pass on the spiritual principles that have saved many lives. I was told that spiritual principles are not picky, they're not prejudiced. They don't care what background I have, what gender I am, or what my job is. A spiritual principle works if you work it, so work it, you're worth it.

I think that prejudice is a deep part of my disease that wants to prevent me from recovering by causing me to be lonely and different: "terminally unique". Just for today I can hear these voices in my head, tell them "Thank you for sharing" and not believe them. I don't have to fight, just to accept their presence there and to ask for help from my HP.

ODEYA R., Israel



Religion Versus Program

When I joined the SA fellowship, I was afraid that it may have been a sect and incompatible with my faith. I wanted it to be a fellowship endorsed by the Church to which I belonged. But I saw members around me who were sober and that was what kept me coming back to meetings. I said to myself that if I was to leave SA, it would be because of something that was in opposition to my faith and / or the Church to which I belonged.

While I was working on Step 2, I had a relapse. It wasn't triggered by lust (that I can recall), but mainly because of self-pity, judgmentalism and anger towards my sponsor. The disagreement was mainly concerning my definition of God but thankfully we were able to resolve this.

Subsequently, I participated in a workshop and a ski break with SA members. There, an oldtimer from Ireland talked about how faith and the Program fitted into his life. Subsequently, I got to know this member better and since he belonged to the same church as me, I felt safe with him and asked if he would sponsor me. He declined and said that it would be better to work with someone from Slovakia who could help me with the Steps in person.

The turning point was when one member read the following quote to me: "There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all argument and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance — that principle is contempt prior to investigation." (SA 59).

It made me quite angry, even though I didn't want to show it on the outside. That quote was, and often still is, about me. All my life, I thought I was right about everything and I never made the connection between "my truth" and the conflict I had with others.

Another thing that helped was my sponsor saying that I am free to put either the Program or my personal faith as my first priority. Before that, I had the impression that the fellowship was telling me that I had to have the Program as my utmost priority. This made me defiant, because I had believed my whole life that God should be my top priority. Now, I see that the Program actually suggests the same thing - "So, we used sex or lust or relationships to satisfy this drive, letting them take the place of God as source of our lives. Idolatry." (SA 55). I also saw that I didn't really have God as my highest priority, I just thought I did.

I am grateful that in Step 3 I have surrendered my life and my will to the care of God as I understand Him. And thanks to that, I have been experiencing not only my longest period of sobriety but also the happiest period of my life. I thank God for keeping me sober. I am grateful for my parents, fiancée, family, all members of the Slovakian fellowship, members from abroad who visit us, all oldtimers who have been with us, and for the whole SA fellowship with whom we connect via teleconferences. I am glad to be a member of this fellowship.

Today, sober in SA, I find no contradiction between the Program and my faith tradition. In fact, I am learning to practice it better now than I did back when I was active in my lust addiction!

PETER T., Slovakia



October 2020

They Will Point You Out, They Will Judge You

In 2014 I first heard about the program of SA. I identified myself with it, I knew I needed it, but I did not dare take the step and join the program. There were many prejudices in me that prevented me from doing so. I was afraid: I thought they were going to judge me and condemn me since I was leading a double life, a double moral standard, since within my religion, in 2002, I had made the decision to consecrate my life to God and I had fallen, I had failed God.

As the addiction was still progressing, I had begun acting out at the end of 2013. I thought I could control it and I decided to live in abstinence. For days, weeks, even months I almost always achieved my goal; but once those times ended, I would relapse again.

At the beginning of 2017 I had my first face-to-face meeting in Bogotá with two fellows, a man and a woman, and once more I admitted that I was an addict; but my prejudices would not let me come into the program, my sickness would say to me: "They will point out to you, they will judge you. You will be a cause of scandal. You will no longer be able to publish your profile photo, and what if your community becomes aware that you are an addict? You will have to leave it." And I continued living in slavery.

I kept on receiving my whatsapp daily literature from SA, thanks to another fellow; but I kept on being stubborn, trying to control it; until, tired of sporadic periods of abstinence, I wanted to stop definitively, but I could not. It was there where I realized that I had lost control, I was desperate, tired, with much sadness, and I did not understand why in my addiction

I was always relapsing, doing what I never did in my adolescence and youth; that which at that time was a life of sin for me.

Thanks to the Fellowship which embraced me and listened to me without condemnation, I began to have a real relationship with my HP.

I had to give up, recognizing that I was not capable to do it alone, I had to admit I could not do it, and it was at that moment that I had an encounter with my Higher Power that gave me the strength and courage to get into the program. But upon entering the program, the prejudices came back, I had to get a sponsor, and I said to myself "She cannot be just anybody"; "She must belong to my same religion."

Thanks to the Fellowship which embraced me and listened to me without condemnation, I began to have a real relationship with my Higher Power, and I began to regain my peace.

HP granted me a wonderful sponsor. She was not of the same religion as mine, but there developed a relationship of closeness and trust that came to us at the time we communicated with each other by video call. The fear that the fellowship would become aware of the lifestyle I had been leading, was disappearing. Within my recovery process I have had two relapses, due to my lack of using recovery tools at the critical time, but I have learned from this.

There was an interruption in my

process with my first sponsor in April of 2020 and the prejudices to choose a new sponsor came back, and I thought I would have a temporary sponsor until I could muster confidence, but thanks to another fellow, I understood that the sponsor is not there to be chosen, that it is a gift from my HP, and in May of this year the HP granted me another wonderful sponsor. I am

working the steps with her, knowing that I cannot do it on my own, that I am powerless over lust, over my character defects and over many situations that come up in my life. I am not in control so I turn it over to my HP.

MARIA, Colombia



Out Of Small Things, Big Things Grow

I started my SA story in a rural town in Australia. There were no SA meetings near me at the time. Being a sexaholic in a rural area is very challenging because there is a bad stigma attached to sex addiction. There was a Royal commission into sex abuse in the church. There are a lot of old world views where sex addiction is seen as something bad; something that doesn't belong in our community. Sex addiction is connected to pedophilia as well. I lived in fear of people finding out I was a sex addict. They might connect me to those old world views.

The challenge was living with these old world views and not getting found out. I had nowhere to turn. I went to the video store and rented a movie called "Diaries of a Sex Addict." There are no sex scenes in this movie, it just depicts the story of a man living a double life. I could relate to living a double life. I thought "That's what I am. I'm a sex addict." It was such a relief to figure out what I was. I had been seeing a counselor for many years. I told him I was a sexaholic, and he really didn't know what to say because being a sexaholic isn't something that is talked about in Australia. The counsellor said "just see women in a normal way." He just didn't understand this lust-driven addiction.

I was lost with nowhere to turn, again. Thankfully, an ex-girlfriend told me about SA. I drove four hours to my first SA meeting in Sydney. I knew this was the place for me, but I didn't like being a sexaholic. In fact, I hated being a sexaholic. I hated going to SA meetings and I didn't

particularly like the members. I was sexually abused as a teenager, so I had old world views too, and thought something bad would happen to me in SA.

Nothing bad ever happened. I found lots of love and friendship in SA. How did I survive recovery living so far from the nearest SA meeting? I made lots of phone calls, joined lots of phone meetings, made connections all over the world, and went to SA conferences. These conferences would be the only times I met sexaholics in person.

At one of these events I met a long-term SA member from the UK who spoke about building an SA region with the fellowships in his part of the world. That was over 7 years ago. I went to work at building a region near me. With God's help, we now have the Asia Pacific Online Unity Conference because of that chance meeting with that UK member. I'm also the first Indigenous Australian Trustee, so out of small things, big things grow! Against all odds, great things can happen with a BIG GOD on your side.

JASON C., Australia



My Biggest Challenge is My “Stinking Thinking”

My mind, my thinking, is sick. It creates continuously judgments and prejudices. These are distorted ideas and beliefs about what is right and what is wrong. I judge the events in my life and believe they should have been different. I judge other people, I judge myself, I judge God. I cannot trust my thinking or judgement.

What I need in my life is more awareness and less thinking. Consciousness is behind the mind, unmasking the thinking, is without judgment, and is directly related to the God of my understanding. Meditation is a form of bringing more awareness into my life.

Consciousness is always in the NOW. And the NOW is what I have to fully embrace, with no judgment. When my thinking, and my ego, flee from the NOW, they can go in three directions: thinking about the past, thinking about the future, or fantasizing. All three directions are a form of intoxication that clouds my life.

Consciousness is behind the mind, unmasking the thinking, is without judgment, and is directly related to the God of my understanding.

The program often speaks about “one day at a time,” which, in my opinion, points to the importance of the present moment, the NOW.

Surrender only works in the NOW. An intention or plan for surrender in the future is nothing until I do it right NOW.

In my experience, lust is always a form of resistance. The questions that help me when I feel lust coming up are: What am I resisting? What judgments do I have? When the resistance is exposed in my mind (and sometimes I need others for that) and I give up the resistance, the lust disappears and gratitude takes its place.

Thank you this opportunity to share.

ALLARD G., *The Netherlands*



Prejudiced By Other Fellowships

I attended my first SA meeting in 2015. Back then I was a member of another 12-Step fellowship in which I was dealing with my drug addiction. After a couple months of struggling with lust, while being clean

in the other fellowship, I found SA. I continued going to SA meetings and was around 4 months sober when I left SA, convinced that I could now handle my lust problem without SA.

This was one of the first challenges that I faced in my SA sobriety. It was suggested to me by members in other fellowships that I don't have to be “that strict” about my sexual conduct. They told me that after I worked my steps in the other program I would be able to have “moderate” sexual activities. Well, I bought into that idea.

I have learned the hard way not to discuss my lust sobriety and the reasons behind it with people who are not in SA, unless someone is searching for a problem to their lust problem.

I started working a rigorous program in AA, hoping that by the time I passed Steps 6 and 7, I would be able to “lust like a gentleman.” Although, after I worked my 6th and 7th in AA, I found some relief from a few forms of my lust addiction (I stopped masturbating and watching porn), I was still acting out in other forms. And most importantly, I was not feeling joyous and free.

Thus, I came back to SA in June 2016 and I've stayed sober ever since. During this period, I have learned the hard way not to discuss my lust sobriety and the reasons behind it with people who are not in SA, unless someone is searching for a solution to their lust problem. Our literature nails

it when it says “we can only speak for ourselves.” I simply let people know that I do not feel comfortable when they openly discuss lust-related topics in my presence, and they often respect that.

Another challenge has been my age. I sobered up when I was 26, and by the norms of society, which I do not approve of, I should be sexually active at this age. Being a single member in SA, and in my late twenties, it is sometimes difficult to convince myself that I do not have to do “what everyone else does.” After all, I came to SA because when I was sexually active I felt miserable.

Today, I enjoy my sobriety in SA and everything that comes with it. It has helped me beyond imagination. I am free from shame, guilt, and remorse. I have a conscious contact with the God of my understanding, and I am living a life which I could not even dream of.

FARZAD, *Greece*



The Challenge Of Getting Sober, Again

In March 2018, I had been sober for about three years ... I relapsed. It took me completely by surprise. Later, when making my inventory about it, I could see that the disease, very cunningly, had slowly conquered its way back in. From time to time I had purposely let short lust thoughts in, which I did not completely surrender. I hadn't worked on my defects firmly enough and had taken less time for “the inside job.”

I'm glad I never quit our program or the fellowship after that relapse, but I can see now that my life had become unmanageable, again. I stuck

to my structure of meetings, daily phone calls with fellows, and contact with my sponsor. I also found the motivation to start on another 12 Step program besides SA. From the outside it looked as if I was back on track after that one relapse. I also thought that I was doing well on a good program to the best of my ability ... and maybe I was ...

Then I reached a point where my sponsor told me he had to let me go because I once again had crossed a boundary that he had set for me. I understood his decision, but it had a far greater impact on my recovery than I expected. On the very day that I was to start with a new sponsor I had a strong relapse, again. I visited a prostitute after five months of sobriety! With those relapses I allowed a lot of lust to come into my system, again. I tried to stick to the program and stay sober, but at times the craving overwhelmed me and I was too late in surrendering it. I experienced then how progressive this disease really is, especially after a period of sobriety. I also found out what it can do to my self-esteem. All I had built up seemed to vanish and I sank even deeper than that!

I got a new temporary job where I worked hard. Willpower may have slipped in again along the way ... I kept relapsing ... and "suddenly" a year had passed. After yet another binge, one day I became more desperate.

My sponsor advised me to do a "90 in 90" (90 meetings in 90 days). I had to do this in addition to my other activities and my work, but I became more and more motivated again and it looked as if it had the desired effect. I stayed sober for five months, again. Then one night, lust attacked and I succumbed to it for a minute. I told my sponsor and one week later I decided

to reset my sobriety date. That turned out to be the start of another period of relapses ...

Although my feelings and emotions are sometimes overwhelming, I am grateful for what and where I am today ... God, help me to never forget who I am, what I am, and where I came from.

One morning when I was working with clients, life felt very unmanageable. I could not focus at all and was in a very dark mood. I had to sit next to a client's bed, but I realized I could not go on anymore ... I left work and went home sick. On my couch at home I collapsed. In desperation I called my sister and asked her to come over as I didn't know how to go on. I hit a new bottom again. My self-esteem was at an all time low ... I lost my job and I lost my sponsor, again.

But it was a turning point, because from that moment on I started slowly building up again and I received the willingness to surrender more deeply. Today I have almost 9 months of sobriety. And although my feelings and emotions are sometimes overwhelming, I am grateful for what and where I am today ... GOD, HELP ME TO NEVER FORGET WHO I AM, WHAT I AM, AND WHERE I CAME FROM.

WALTER L., *The Netherlands*

"Denial ain't just a river in Egypt."



HOPE & FULFILLMENT AFTER DIVORCE

My relationship with my wife was almost ruined when I read an article in *Recovery Continues* about abstinence in marriage. That was exactly for me, a real insight! After discussing this with my wife, she accepted my suggestion. We began various non-sexual activities, including walks. Things we hadn't done together for a long time and which gave me a new kind of joy and satisfaction. The sexual abstinence was for about ten months and the warmth between us was reappearing. I began to feel hopeful our marriage would be OK.

But then I found out that my wife was visiting a psychologist and discussing the possibility of a divorce. I became resentful and confused. I called my sponsor who helped me calm down and I began to have hope my wife wouldn't divorce me even if only for the sake of our son who was about to start school. Soon after, my wife found my SA Step notebooks and the next day she told me about the planned divorce. Panic, pain, despair and frustration took hold of me. It felt unreal. Why does she do this, I thought. How will I pay alimony? How will I see my son? We can still fix everything! I admit I did a lot of bad things to my wife, but how could I live without her and without married sex (to which I was addicted). Self-pity set in. Looking back, I know now that my wife took the place in my life that

I should have given to God.

After more discussions with my sponsor, the decision was made to let her go and, due to financial pressures, I moved in with my parents. Solitude and sorrow became unwanted guests of my soul. Around this time, I learned my sponsor had been divorced by his wife and realized I was not the only one in the program with this problem. I began to feel God's support. More support came when I met a sexaholic at an SA convention and he offered to do sobriety renewals with me. Then my home SA meeting moved close to where I lived. I saw God in all of this - He was starting to take my pain away. It was as if He was giving me a hug!

I saw God in all of this - He was starting to take my pain away. It was as if He was giving me a hug!

Hard months passed and I made lots of calls to my sponsor, other trusted people and to God. I still had turbulent emotions towards my wife and worried she would find another husband. My wife was now succeeding in much of her life, whereas I saw myself as a failure. I found I simply couldn't accept this and was tempted to turn to lustful fantasies to deal with the pain. I even became resentful towards God. But I continued to pray and call others and made a decision to live "one day at a time".

I came to see God allows me to go through painful circumstances as part of His plan to change me. I realized He

was working patiently with me and would bring good out of the bad - in His timing. The divorce happened and there was fear about how I could enjoy life without sex. But I realized I would have to turn my whole life and will over to God's care and that victory over lust would be a progressive thing. Sometimes I felt like I was a "dry drunk" but I continued to aim for complete honesty with others about my condition and tried hard to avoid isolating myself.

After about ten months of pain, I came to accept I can be without my wife and accept life without sex now or into the future. Desperation was leaving and hope was coming into my soul. I wrote this article on my wedding anniversary and was afraid of being hurt by the nostalgic feelings of the day. But this didn't happen and today life is good and I feel fulfilled. I can now actually thank God for all

that has happened to me. It has been a time of "growing up" emotionally and spiritually.

Today, I share my experience with my seven sponsees (one of whom is overcoming a difficult divorce himself). Also, I have started to work on my physical health, something I neglected in my marriage. I started to eat proper food, do exercises and lost 30kg in weight. My teeth needed attention and I had them fixed too. I improved my relationship with my son and try to be a good father.

The darkness in my life has dissipated and hope has returned. I don't know God's plans for me and whether or not they include re-marriage. But I am so grateful that in SA, we have this Fellowship of the Spirit where we can continue to recover and heal.

ALEKSEY A., *Russia*



WHICH WAY DO YOU TAKE? IT'S UP TO YOU ...

Hi everyone, I'm Flo, a recovering sexaholic, sober since Oct 7, 2015. Sobriety is my priority in life. I want to live a sober life, no matter the kind of garbage I have to face on a given day. No matter what the emotional or physical pain, I keep moving ahead in my sobriety and recovery. Why? Because sobriety is the only thing I really have in life, and everything in my life depends on this.

That's what I wanted to illustrate with my drawing. My health, family, friends, money, job, freedom, ... are all based on my recovery, *on which way I take.*

As of five minutes ago, I was laying on my couch, thinking about my life,

the way things are going at the moment. They are running really well. I have sobriety. I have peace. I do not obsess about sex. I have a good job and have some money in the bank. I feel joy through my family and my friends; people appreciate me; they appreciate the contribution I make to life today. Sounds good, doesn't it?

I can honestly say that I am a completely different person from the one I was five years ago.

But, good and all as this is, I still need to work at my recovery. Like it says in the Big Book, "I cannot rest on my laurels."

In case it sounds like I have it all wrapped up and am giving a lecture - no! I can honestly say that I have been struggling these past few days; feeling a sense that my life makes no sense, a sense of heading into depression.

But - no matter what - depression or no depression, having sex or living like a monk, having fun or living in emotional misery - I want sobriety!!!!

This program works 24 hours a day: it works for my sponsor, it works for thousands of sexaholics around the world, it worked for Roy K. So, why wouldn't it work for me - an ordinary Joe, another clown on the bus.



That's the way I'll take things today - even if I feel like garbage, I know it will pass. And why? Because it has passed before, lots of times; and I have seen it pass for others as well, people who went through hell in sobriety and who, in time, became more and more comfortable with themselves and with the world.

You get the message. You know what I mean. There is no other way to say it other than, *it's up to you*. Just consider, - the only reason for a relapse is if you allow yourself to have one.

FLORIAN K., Germany



A SECOND CHANCE IS WHAT I ASKED GOD FOR

My name is Brian. I am a recovering sexaholic. On a Thursday afternoon seven years ago, I was arrested in a police internet sting. Step One reads - "We admitted that we were powerless over lust - that our lives had become unmanageable." Being arrested and publicly shamed illustrates in the most obvious way that my life had become unmanageable. That afternoon, I had a gun pointed at my head. I was put in handcuffs and sat inside a police wagon. I was interrogated by detectives who had no interest in hearing my explanation. All this before I even got to the County Jail.

When I finally arrived, the jailers stripped me, examined me, and performed all of the other perfunctory tasks they do. They just didn't put me in a cell. No, I was shown a chair in the hallway and told to sit. And there I sat and stared into the abyss. I was in shock, and numb. I wish that I knew how long I sat in that chair. Probably not as long as I thought. I did have the feeling of being utterly alone. I thought of my wife and kids. I was pretty sure that she would be gone. When I was finally put into a cell, I broke down and cried.

Once I finished crying, I prayed to God for the first time in years. My prayer was probably a plea for a second chance rather than a prayer. But a second chance is what I asked God for. I was bailed out of jail sometime Thursday night and released in the early hours of Friday morning. My wife was waiting for me. I asked God for a second chance at life, and He had my wife waiting

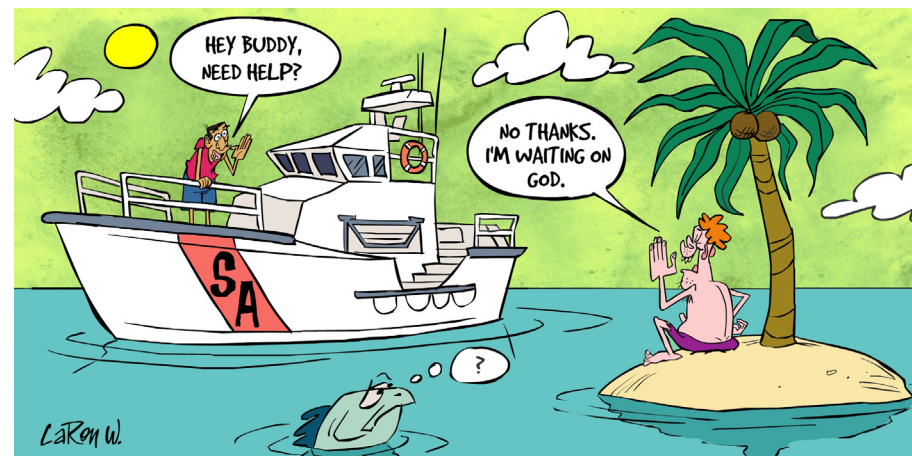
for me. As Step Two says, "We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity." I have believed that was the message being given to me at that moment. My actions, the actions that led up to this moment, weren't healthy. Those actions would never bring happiness.

I went to my first SA meeting that Saturday. I was scared and terrified. I did not know what to expect. I was sure that I would be shown the door if I shared my story. I could not have been more wrong in my assumption. The man who would become my first sponsor, pulled me aside to read from the White Book. We read, among other

things, the Twenty Questions, where I would answer "yes" to all twenty. He had me read the Twelve Steps and I knew I had already seen Steps One and Two in action. I hadn't realized it until then.

I have been sober for the last seven years and have seen the highs and lows in life. I would spend eighteen months in prison. I've made new friends and changed my outlook on life. And every day, I try not to squander the second chance that I was given.

BRIAN J., Florida, USA



DISCUSSION TOPIC

What are you doing today with the second chance that you were given?

The writer of "A Second Chance Is What I Asked God For" describes very vividly how he got arrested 7 years ago and was on the verge of losing everything that was dear to him.

He goes on by telling how joining SA and working the program

gave him new friends and changed his outlook on life.

Are you taking care of never forgetting your bottom - whatever it was that led you to come to SA and surrender to the program?

Are you conscious that SA is God's second

chance for a sexaholic like you? Do you try, every day, to not squander this second chance you were given?

You may use this topic in a discussion meeting, or send us a story of your own recovery journey to Essay@sa.org.

Life After Joining THE PROGRAM

Before joining the Program, my life was spiritual vagueness, white knuckling, and shame, a darkness inside me where I was lost. I was afraid all the time - of myself, the future, and other people.

My relationship with God was like a one-way road: I asked, he fulfilled. I tried the spiritual path alone, I was unsure. I had doubts about God, I developed my own theology, a dream-maker god! By not putting God as a Higher Power I became an all-knowing and powerful person. I suffered delusional thinking and false expectations, believing I was in control along with God! How crazy I was. That has changed.

The Program helped me to obtain serenity, courage, and wisdom. All that happened during Steps Zero through Three. I have grown from a shaky man to one who is more able to do the next right thing and leave the outcome to God - serenity.

Serenity is a strange word which means quietness and calmness. How can someone reach serenity while the world around him is raging? Serenity does not mean lack of fear. It means accepting our own limitations as humans. Steps Zero and One showed me how sick I was and how lust ruined my good days. I also realized that I couldn't change what happened in the past. It did not matter how much I fought, I could not change

that I was sick with same-sex lust, that I had no control on my own health, that I had no firm grip on my financial future. I finally accepted that my life was unmanageable, that I was powerless over lust. I had to admit my defeat to myself.

When I reached that level of weakness and defeat, my heart opened to the solution. I was walking the path that would work for me. Step Two taught me that only a Power greater than myself can restore my sanity! This Power was revealed in the group, the people, my sponsor. Deep inside I knew that God was helping me, however my vision was blurry! Without the people sharing their experiences, I would be lost! I was certain that the Higher Power was working through these people.

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In Step Two, I learned that God is my Higher Power. He is able to speak to me through group sharing, through daily reflection, and through my own prayers. He is changing me day after day. He is close to me now in many different ways. Although I have not reached the level of complete spiritual awakening, I am sure that my soul is more awake today than yesterday!

Step Three was not an easy Step as it required faith as a priority and

trust absolutely. I had faith, but I did not have God. As I did not trust Him fully, I was not able to establish any willingness to completely surrender to him. I don't claim that I know how to surrender completely, but know I am growing in that direction!

In short, my journey shows that I am powerless over my life, lust, and personal defects; I need a Power higher than me to take me back to sanity and help me to overcome my weakness; and I must trust Higher Power, which I call God, to enable His power in my life!

Before the Program, I had 21 months of not acting out physically. However, I was actively consuming Lust. All that has changed now. Today, I have progressive victory over lust and I enjoy sobriety. I have the tools now to overcome lust: Surrender, Share, Pray! The entire SA people are with me. I am never alone, and for sure I

am not lonely.

At the moment, I am sponsoring other SA members. Instead of abusing them mentally, I put myself out under the light and show them my defects without shame! I speak and share freely. The Program brought light into my heart and helped me to clean it. I am less pained by my history, and more accepting of my condition of being a lust addict.

The Steps helped me learn how to properly love my wife and how to deal with her. I treat her with love and I give her actions of love. I also more appreciate the presence of my family in my life. I really see how valuable they are to me. I feel that I am sober and well, now. I've been sober for nine months and my sobriety has no pressure on me. Finally, I feel I can enjoy my life.

ANONYMOUS, *Iraq*



The Importance of STEPS FOUR & FIVE

Recovery has been a process that moves me ever closer to God. Through selfishness, self-centeredness, resentment, fear, and harms done to others, I built obstacles I could not get over, under or around. I moved farther and farther away from Him. When I went to my first meeting, I found a host of others suffering from the same malady, though I did not know it at the time. I do not remember what they said, but I do remember how I felt when I left. That feeling, and the friendliness of the people there, got me to my second, third and subsequent meetings.

Step One was easy. Steps Two and Three took longer than I would

have liked, but I persisted. After several starts and stops, sponsors and numerous friends, I finally took the Step Three decision. Then, I asked my sponsor what I should do next. He looked at me dumbfounded and said simply, "Step Four."

Here is what I found:

The path between me and God was strewn with obstacles; like broken down cars, boulders, buses, rusted machinery, washing machines, mountains of debris, and barriers of every kind. The problem was that the path was completely black. There was no light at all. I could not see the obstacles.

Through Steps Four and Five I began to shine a light on these obstacles and for the first time in my life I could see what was blocking me from the Sunlight of the Spirit. Some of the

obstacles disappeared on their own as part of the Fourth and Fifth Step processes, and I began to feel the nearness of my Creator.

I tried over and over to remove the remaining obstacles but failed every time. I came to see that I could not remove these obstacles (defects/shortcomings) any more than I could my lust. I finally asked God to remove the defects that were keeping me separated from Him, and unable to be of real use to Him and my fellows.

Once I completed my Eighth Step list, I talked about it with my sponsor and we worked out the amends I needed to make. Then he told me to do Steps Nine, Ten, Eleven, and Twelve all at the same time. I gave him a puzzled look and he told me, "None of those Steps is ever completed so they can all be done at the same time."

There are many promises in our literature, but I believe the greatest promise is in Step Twelve. It promises that I will have a spiritual awakening as THE result of these Steps. The blessings that came to me because of this awakening are too numerous to list, but the paragraph at the bottom of page 106, the "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions" describes things that, I can attest, came true for me.

BOB F., Nebraska, USA



The Fortress Of Higher Power

As a sexaholic, I am a refugee from the land of "Trying-and-failing-miserably-at-running-my-own-life."

I have a new address called the "Fortress-of Higher-Power." Inside that Fortress, I have the resources that I need to stay sober ... IF I choose to ASK for help and RECEIVE the help I need to stay sober and recovered.

All the entanglements that had me trapped get released here. Sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly. All my nicks, scrapes, cuts, and bruises from the past get healed here.

As a refugee, I relocated, there's no need to go back to my old address for anything. And because this is a fortress, I'm not expected to be the guard. I'm just expected to stay inside the walls of the Fortress to be safe.

I have no personal defense against the disease, but the Fortress is my defense. The longer I stay inside the Fortress, the more I might be tempted to think that I've somehow become strong. I might be tempted to think I can go outside the perimeters for a stroll. Negative. Nothing good is out there.

All I need as proof is the number of fresh refugees coming inside the door of the Fortress. I can see their scrapes and bruises. The festering, open wounds. There's no difference at all about my ability to resist. The only thing that works for me is staying inside the Fortress.

RINA R., New Jersey USA



By Jimmy M.

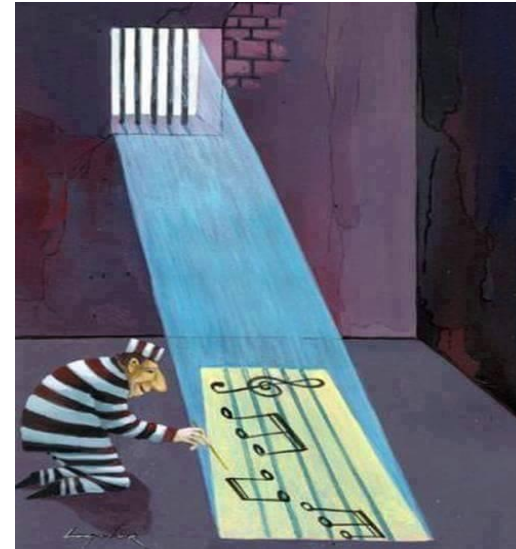
SA CFC

Some of my earliest childhood memories are of obsession and preoccupation with touching the private parts of other children. Raised in a religious home, weekly attendance of church services was expected. Instead of healthy discussion there were punishments and threats of hellfire and eternal damnation. I developed the belief that anything to do with sex was evil, and since I was compulsively obsessed with it, I too, must be evil in my core.

I continuously delved deeper into lust, especially after being introduced to pornography at the age of 14. By age 18 I renounced any concept of belief in God for the satisfaction of carnal pleasures and material gain.

Instead of seeking help after my divorce I shut down emotionally. I turned to lust, drugs, and alcohol, wrapped in lies and manipulation, to try to bury the shame and self-hatred. After dating a single mother for about a year, I moved in with her and her children. I molested her oldest daughter, 6 at the time, within months of living together. When I was arrested, I plead guilty to lewd conduct with a minor under the age of 16. I was sentenced to 32 1/2 years, 7 1/2 years fixed. Believe it or not, being arrested and actually sentenced was one of the best things that has ever happened to me!

In county jail, awaiting sentencing, someone left a copy of "Step Into Action" for me to stumble across. Through working the 12 steps, prayer and meditation, and rigorous honesty, especially with myself, I have found the promises in the Big Book to be absolutely true. God has done and continues to do for me what I never could - maintaining sexual sobriety and living a life I'm no longer ashamed of.



Though I still struggle at times, have doubts, fears, and anxieties, I choose to use the dark experiences from my past as lessons and opportunities for personal growth, to demonstrate that there is a different way.

JARED S., State Correctional Center Idaho, USA



Ask CFC

Dear Ask CFC, How do you ensure your own family's safety and anonymity when writing to SA prisoners?

Dear ... , Anonymity is something we take very seriously. We always suggest using the Intergroup PO Box address as your return address. Another common suggestion is - using one's middle name or initial or creating a name other than your own, simply for anonymity.

When it comes to sharing, this is entirely between the sponsor or first responder and their Higher Power. We suggest talking to your sponsor or your CFC group if you are not sure. Remember, ours is a 'we' program of support. Some prisons require a full name for delivery, rather than first name, last initial.

Using one's middle name or another name serves the purpose of allowing the SA message to reach those asking for help.

Have Questions for 'Ask CFC?' Send to sacfc1@gmail.com

2020 Third Quarter SAICO Budget Results

◆ Revenue	\$69,318
◆ Expenses	\$66,337.19
◆ Revenues - Expenses	\$2,981
◆ Prudent Reserve	\$132,676

New SA Groups October 2020

North, Central, & South America

- ◆ Hyattsville, Maryland, USA
- ◆ Manhattan, Kansas, USA

Europe

- ◆ Aachen (2nd group), Germany

Translate Our PSA Videos Into Your Language



The SA Public Information Committee has exciting news! The three first Public Service Announcement (PSA) videos it has made can now be translated into more languages around the world!

You can find them on our website: sa.org/sa



The videos have proven to be very beneficial when communicating our message of recovery to the sexaholic who still suffers and to teams of health professionals.

The Committee is looking for members who are able to transcribe the spoken audio into written form in their languages, for use in subtitles.



All translations will need to be approved via the Translations Committee before the videos can have new subtitles added and be posted for the public.

Please contact Michael J. for more information or to get started: mikeldad@gmail.com

SIM 2020 - "God Is Surely For The Sexaholic" (SA 119)

It only happens ONE TIME a year: the SA Internet Marathon (SIM). It's an inspiring, recovery-focused event. And it will be even more so this year of global cancellation of in person events. The White Book states that "God is surely for the sexaholic," which is the theme of this year's event.

You can drop in any time of day or night to experience the proof of that theme. Just by showing up, you will be of service to other people who are hurting and who will be comforted by your presence. Sober speakers will share their experience in more than a dozen languages.

Recover. Together. For 24 hours. Worldwide.

Join us for the world's largest online SA convention, with 24 hours of shares from SA speakers and members on a wide variety of topics.

Learn from fellow members, laugh together, make new friends and celebrate what our Higher Power is doing in our lives!

- FULLY ONLINE
- FROM AROUND THE WORLD
- ENTIRELY ANONYMOUS
- VARIETY OF TOPICS
- 12 LANGUAGES SPOKEN

1,200 ATTENDEES LAST YEAR!

SIM 2020
SA INTERNET MARATHON

REGISTER FOR FREE AT **simhp.com**
(PREVIOUS ATTENDEES MUST REGISTER AS WELL)

November 19-20, 2020
Starting 12:00 PM UTC

The SIM organizers need you to do three things to make the event a success:

1. Go over to <https://simhp.com> and register for the event.
2. Add the date and time to your calendar.
3. Talk to ALL your SA friends and invite them to do the same.

Remember you've got to register for this year's event, even if you're already on the SIM email list.

Events Calendar

PLEASE NOTE - These events are subject to cancellation or change due to the Coronavirus conditions in the local areas. Please check with the hosting group for specifics.

International Conventions and Events

NOV 19-20 2020 **ONLINE** SA International 24 hour Marathon SIM
God Is Surely For The Sexaholic simhp.com

JAN 22-24 2021 **100% ONLINE** International Convention SA/S-Anon IC
Keys To Freedom keystofreedom.org

Regional and Local Events

OCT 24 2020 **ONLINE** SA/S-Anon Southern Californian Regional Unity Conference
Living In Virtual Gratitude sasocal.org/info-meeting/

NOV 1 2020 **ONLINE** German-speaking SA Convention
Being Connected - It Starts With Me as.d@posteo.de

NOV 6-8 2020 **ONLINE** SA UK 25th Annual Convention
Recovery As A Way Of Life <https://tinyurl.com/saukconvention2020>

NOV 7 2020 **ONLINE** Capital Area Gratitude Day VII
casaig.wixsite.com/home/event-info/gratitude-day

NOV 13-15 2020 **HYBRID** from Wichita, KS, USA SA/S-Anon SMW Fall Family Reunion
Today's Footprint Is Tomorrow's Legacy davethestringman@gmail.com

NOV 15 2020 **Newcastle, Australia** Newcastle 1 Day SA Conference
Doing The Steps The Old Way saoz.net/events/

NOV 27-29 2020 **ONLINE** Spanish SA/S-Anon National Convention
The Joy Response sexolicosanonimos.org

MAR 26-28 2021 **Sumas, WA, USA** SA/S-Anon Spring Regional Retreat
Free At Last savancouver.org/events/

APRIL 25 2021 **ONLINE** Asia Pacific Area Online Unity Event 2020
Growing Within And Growing Globally sa.org/events

Unity Conference 2020 Living in "Virtual" Gratitude SA & S-Anon Program					
Saturday October 24th					
TIME	SA and S-Anon Room 1 Link: Meeting ID: Password: Phone #:	SA Room 2 Meeting ID: Password: Phone #:	SA Room 3 Meeting ID: Password: Phone #:	S-Anon Room 4 Link: Meeting ID: Password: Phone #:	S-Anon Room 5 Link: ID: Password: Phone #:
7:30 - 7:50	Welcome & Introduction	room closed	room closed	room closed	room closed
8:00 - 8:50	Attitude Adjustment < Joint Meeting >	room closed	room closed	room closed	room closed
9:00 - 9:50	Speakers	room closed	room closed	room closed	room closed
10:00 - 10:50	Families Working Together in Recovery < Joint Meeting >	Steps 1, 2, & 3: The Anchors of Sobriety	The Covid Condition: Handling Isolation and Relapse	A New Freedom and Joy	Prayer and Meditation
11:00 - 11:50	Secrets and Boundaries < Couples Meeting >	True Freedom: Ending the Shame Cycle	Facing the Truth About Me: Rigorous Honesty	Newcomer Welcome / Signups	Step 4
12:00 - 12:50	Speakers	room closed	room closed	room closed	room closed
1:00 - 1:50	My Side of the Street < Couples Meeting >	Authenticity: Making a Radical Amends	Soul Surgery Without Pain Killers: Reality of Recovery	Steps 1, 2, & 3	Belonging
2:00 - 2:50	Childhood Sexual Abuse < Joint Meeting >	R-A-G-E: Resentment, Anger, Guilt & Ego	Keeping the Spark Alive: Living in Positive Sobriety	Forgiving Ourselves	F.E.A.R Face Everything And Recover
3:00 - 3:50	Speakers	room closed	room closed	room closed	room closed
4:00 - 4:30	Closing Remarks & 7th Tradition	room closed	room closed	room closed	room closed

LEGACY OF SA

Today's footprint is tomorrow's
LEGACY

LEGACY OF S-ANON

SA/S-ANON
Fall Family Reunion

November 13-15, 2020

Spiritual Life Center
Wichita, Kansas

This will be a hybrid event happening in person and via the online Zoom platform.

Send in your event to be listed in *Essay* and on the sa.org website. Please submit the following information: dates, theme, location, and contact(s). An event flyer is very helpful. Send to saico@sa.org


sa.org

ASIA PACIFIC AREA
online unity event 2021

Growing Within
and
Growing Globally

25 APRIL 2021

For further details, contact:
sa.asia.pacific@gmail.com

**Experience, Strength and Hope
Unity, Recovery and Service**

Recovery as a Way of Life

6-8th November 2020



25 Year Anniversary of SAUK Conventions
UK and International Speakers

Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/saukconvention2020>

Zoom link sent to registered members on 5th November

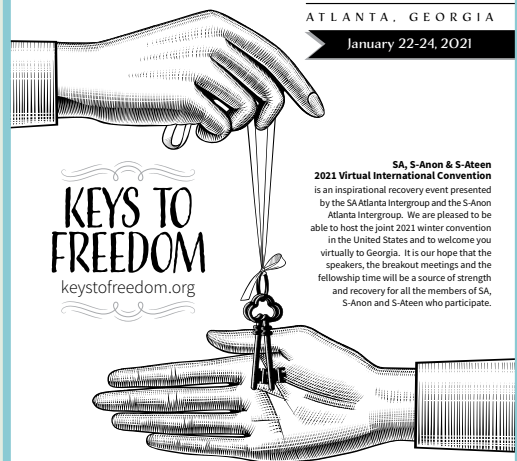
Topics include: 25 Year History of SAUK Conventions, Group Sobriety, Recovery as a Way of Life, Step 10, Our Recovery Journey, Step 1, 2 and 3, Emotional Sobriety and Service and more.

SA • S-Anon • S-Ateen

2021 VIRTUAL INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

January 22-24, 2021




KEYS TO FREEDOM
keystofreedom.org

SA, S-Anon & S-Ateen
2021 Virtual International Convention is an inspirational recovery event presented by the SA Atlanta Intergroup and the S-Anon Atlanta Intergroup. We are pleased to be able to host the joint 2021 winter convention in the United States and to welcome you virtually to Georgia. It is our hope that the speakers, the breakout meetings and the fellowship time will be a source of strength and recovery for all the members of SA, S-Anon and S-Ateen who participate.

CONVENTION REGISTRATION:
SA/S-Anon/S-Ateen complete registration details on the website.

REGISTRATION BY COST

Through December 15, 2020 **\$15**
December 16, 2020 - January 20, 2021 **\$20**



Saying "Hi" to SAICO

The *Essay* recently had a chance to interview Laura, the new Office Manager of SAICO. The article provides a brief insight into what SAICO does on behalf of the world-wide fellowship.

Laura, how many years have you been working in our SA Central Office?

On September 4th this year I will have worked for SAICO for 13 years.



Laura working in her and Linda's office.

How did you end up working with people who have sex addiction?

I consider working here my God job. When my youngest left for college I asked God to guide me towards where He wanted me to be. Then Linda, who works at SAICO, told me that the office needed help. When I called in, Kay, who was the office manager at the time, handed me the brochure and told me to look it over and see if I was still interested. I almost fell off my chair. Well, I always wanted a job that would make a real difference to people and so, here it is, but I had no idea before this that it would be in this area.

What did you study?

I completed a Master's Degree in Public Affairs at Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

What was your previous work experience?

My previous jobs included Health Systems planner, insurance claims adjuster, paralegal, and tax preparer.

What have been your most outstanding highlights in your work for SA so far?

My 2 biggest highlights were attending the

first conventions outside North America. Another joyful part of working at SAICO is knowing our work helps save lives and families. I also love meeting old-timers and hearing their stories of recovery and hope.

What have been the most difficult things to handle?

COVID-19 is the biggest challenge we have faced so far. This has been a year of firsts for everyone.

What does your job entail?

It's very broad. It covers aspects of administrative management, staff supervision, financial management, internet maintenance, the SA service structure, SA International Conventions, and the administration of archives. It also includes training others on various managerial duties.

And, final question, who else works in SAICO and what's their job?

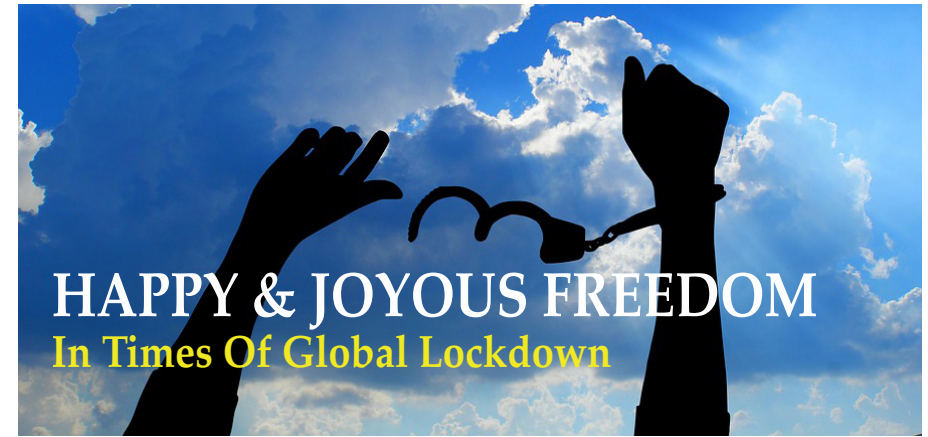
We work as a team. Linda does bookkeeping, banking, reports, payroll benefits, tax records and research. Wendy goes graphic design for our brochures, Zoom meetings, committee Minutes, bookkeeping, conventions management, and *Essay* distribution. And Jenny is our most recent fabulous addition, primarily in charge of processing and shipping orders. We work together to get the *Essay* sent. Kay thankfully continues to serve, nowadays as a paid consultant.



SAICO's shipping office.

Editor's note: If you want to read in greater detail the work SAICO does, you can go to the [COMC report](#) which sums it up pretty well.

COMING IN DECEMBER



NEXT EDITION

In the December issue, read how members continue to experience *Happy & Joyous Freedom* in the absence of face to face meetings and conventions.

Reporting on SIM 2020

International shares on *Happy & Joyous Freedom* during the SIM event.

Happy & Joyous Freedom

This old-timer is convinced that you, too, can live in the happy & joyous freedom he found!

Continuing To Carry The Message

He has been sharing his story with SAs all over the world, in person, on Zoom calls, by email and phone.

Love Essay ?

Thank you for keeping our worldwide magazine available.

Click here to donate:

www.sa.org/donate?src=essay

SUBMIT YOUR STORY

Your writings and art are invited. All articles are edited to meet *Essay* word length and content limits, and become the property of *Essay* for copyright purposes.

The *Essay* also welcomes meeting room photos, artwork, and humor. For graphics, 300 dpi is preferred.

We invite articles of different lengths, from 200-400 word anecdotes or memories, to 400-600 word Practical Tools or Meditations, to 1000-1500 word Member stories.

Send your articles to essay@sa.org. Please include an author name, sobriety date, address, telephone number, and/or e-mail address so that authenticity can be verified. This information will remain confidential.

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*.

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THE TWELVE STEPS OF SA

- 1** We admitted that we 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. 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 OF SA

- 1** Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon 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 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 nonprofessional, 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 upon 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.

