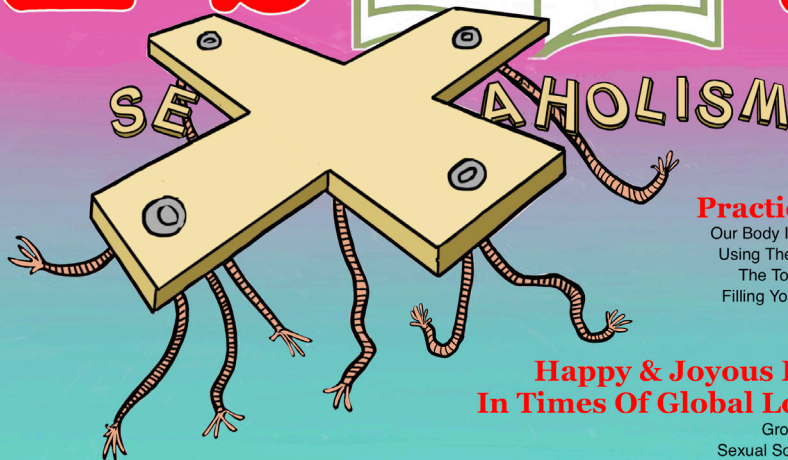


ESSAY



Practical Tools

Our Body Is A Practical Tool
Using The Tool Of Drawing
The Tool Of Bookending
Filling Your Emotional Cup

Happy & Joyous Freedom In Times Of Global Lockdown

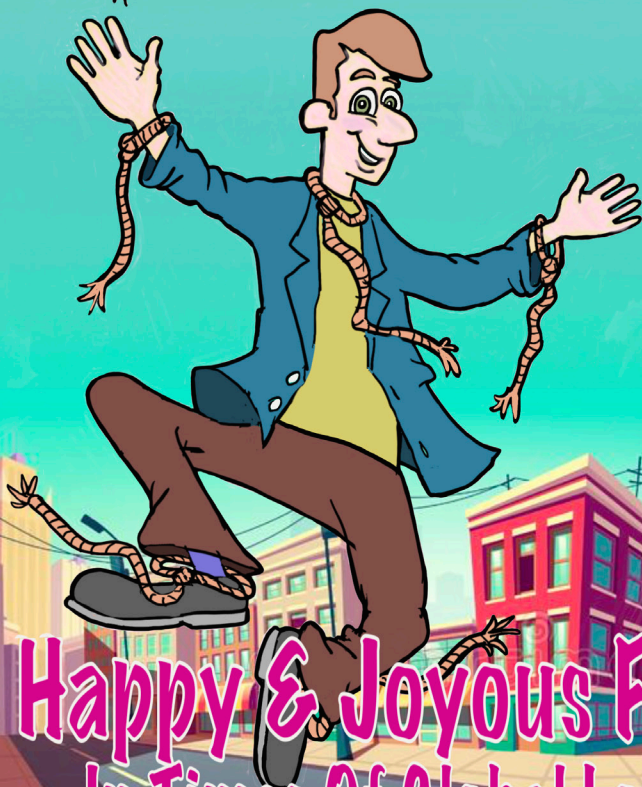
Growing In Recovery
Sexual Sobriety Is The Key
It's A Process, Not A Single Event
Carrying The Message

SA Stories

Towards A Proactive Sobriety
It Was And Still Is A Miracle
A One Day At A Time Journey
Positive Reasons To Be Sober

World Wide News

Life Is Good Down Under
Annual Fall Speaker Marathon
Report of SIM & What's Next
The Fellowship in Africa



Happy & Joyous Freedom In Times Of Global Lockdown

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

Editors' Corner

December 2020

Dear Essay readers,

The saying "Every dark cloud has a silver lining" conveys the notion that, no matter how bad a situation might seem, there is always some good aspect to it.

Our White Book phrases it like this: "Typically, when we come into the program, all kind of personal problems are uppermost in our mind: pending separation or divorce; problems of romance; and occupational, health, legal, or money crises. Most of us felt that if only the problems would go away, we would be okay. What we did not realize was that it is because of and within these very problems that the program works! The program doesn't work in a vacuum; it only works in the day-to-day ebb and flow of our lives. Trial, tribulation, and pain are the soil in which the Steps can germinate, take root, and find fruition in our lives. Thus every problem, no matter how small or great; every crisis, resentment, pain, illness, stress, conflict, depression—any and all of them, without exception—can be turned into good." (SA 75)

The theme of this issue is to focus our "magic magnifying mind" (BB 420) on the silver linings of the global lockdown. May the following stories inspire you to find and maintain happy and joyous freedom in your current life circumstances.

In fellowship,

THE EDITORIAL TEAM

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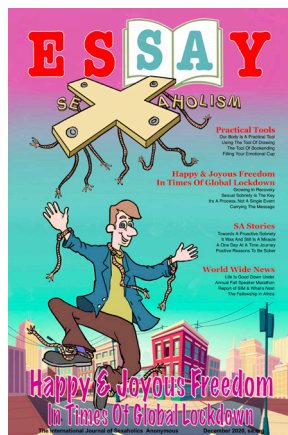
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December 2020

“But we have found that acceptance of these facts is the key to a happy and joyous freedom we could otherwise never know.”

SA 4



On the cover:
By working
the 12 Steps
we can be free
of the shackles
of our disease
in the midst of
the day-to-day
ebb-and-flow
of our lives.

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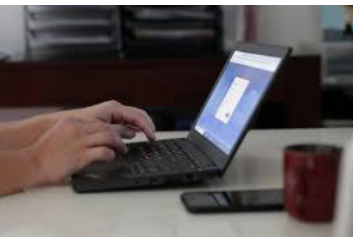
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Dear Essay



I Want To Share Life With You

WE ARE IN A NEW REALITY. Electronic meetings are going on around the world. They allow loners or travelers to join a meeting. I hear people say, “Yes, but they are not face-to-face meetings”. I beg to differ as they *are* face-to-face meetings. They are just not in person meetings.

We can see people’s faces, reactions, responses. We can see others’ responses and put names to faces. I have a concern. There are many people who are joining meetings with a picture instead of their live self. I believe that is dangerous for them. They are hiding. Often, they are doing something and not joining completely. That seems like secrets to me. ‘Our secrets keep us sick’. Come out of the closet.

I think it is also not fair to the group. We are sitting around one circle. If someone joins, we make the circle bigger.

We are inclusive. Joining with a picture does not fit that attitude. Sitting outside the circle does not fit that attitude. We are a fellowship, so let’s join together. I do not want to see your PR photo or a funny saying. I want to share life with you.

DAVE T., Oklahoma, USA 

The Power Of Fellowship

AFTER ALMOST TWO YEARS of sobriety, I had a relapse. Boom! It hit me after a few months of actively engaging in lust. Of course, I acted out! I thought that it had been OK to test the boundaries of lust and only taking the suggestions that I liked from my sponsor.

Coming back I had to get more involved in the fellowship and make it part of my life and my continuing story. When I have an issue I call, sometimes for feedback, sometimes to tell what is going on with me, and many times to see how the other person is doing.

I recently got honest about an embarrassing OCD issue I was having. I kept telling myself that it needed to be shared but that it was too embarrassing. Then, with the help of my Higher Power, I texted two friends and let them know I had something private to share with them. I did so and then shared it at the next meeting I was at. Since then I feel able to start tackling

this issue head-on. In my homegroup we read issues of the *Essay* almost twice weekly. It always amazes me how in this program members do not need to be perfect to stay sober. That is something I gain from our great Newsletter. The power of fellowship never ceases to amaze me!

YAAKOV, NY, USA 

I Want To Make A Complaint

I WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS my gratitude to all of you who share your strength and hope in our Newsletter’s pages. I enjoy reading it a lot. All your stories describe a variety of the consequences of the addiction as well as, and more importantly, the common solution—that God does for us what we can not do for ourselves.

Reading your testimonies fills me with joy and serenity. One of my favorite pages is the one with pictures of meeting rooms from all around the world. It is amazing to see all those distant places and know that the solution is available wherever I’d go to. I have sent a picture of our meeting room in Krakow to give something back to you.

Let me end by “complaining” that it is a pity that the *Essay* is only published 5 times a year as it makes the longing for the next issue almost unbearable ;).

LUKASZ G., Krakow, Poland 

World Wide Walls Of SA



“Monroe Fellowship” meeting, Monroe, NY, USA 




“AS 12 Schritte” meeting Aachen, Germany 

SA meetings can be held just about anywhere ...



Fregata Sunday meeting, Gdansk, Poland 



Krakow group, Krakow, Poland 

Share your photos

Send your meeting place to Essay@sa.org.

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

We absolutely insist on enjoying life!



Bowling after the meeting, Jerusalem, Israel



Eating out, Saint-Petersburg, Russia



Kayaking on the Donau, Moson Donau, Slovakia



Jumping castle fun, Sankt Vith, Belgium



After-meeting at a pavement café, Alicante, Spain

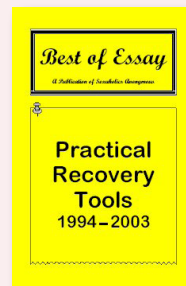


Share your photos

Send your socializing photos to Essay@sa.org. We will make the faces anonymous.

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

PRACTICAL RECOVERY TOOLS, 1994-2003



Read this wonderful compilation of Essay articles which contains many great topics like:

- Sobriety
- The Steps and The Traditions
- From The Toolbox
- Rule 62

To buy the paper version or get the e-book, just surf to the SA Store: sa.org/store/

ASK AN OLD-TIMER

“How do you practice your program during this pandemic?”

Haha! Thanks for asking. I was on a Zoom meeting the other day when a young man said with some alarm, “I feel like I’m living like a monk!” That just fits for me, I’m thinking. :))

Yes, we are still in social isolation here, and our meetings are mostly on Zoom. Of course I miss my Home Group terribly, but thank heavens for Zoom! From being angry and frustrated with the Zoom calls, I have moved into a place of gratitude for this technology, which was already available and free when we needed it. As I am single and retired, I have the freedom to participate in Zoom meetings most days. I have commitments to four meetings in my home city, and one or two international ones.

It is exciting to me to participate in our worldwide fellowship on Zoom, and to invite SA friends from Europe and Asia to our meetings here at home. I have been privileged to lend my support to the emerging Fellowship in India and Africa.

Since my service work on the Buddy List has been suspended (I hope temporarily), I have more time to devote to sponsorship, which I love. It’s wonderful to see how, as the new man works the steps, his eyes start to light up with little sparks of hope and joy and even humor. I see my role as a coach or guide to the Steps, and I try to encourage and support his good efforts.

Forty years after my student days in Paris,

I have the wonderful opportunity to go to SA meetings in France, without buying a plane ticket! I am getting reacquainted with the language, and learning for the first time the specialized vocabulary of lust recovery. I try to add something to the meetings, even when I speak slowly or get the genders wrong. I love the way in French we don’t just “attend” meetings, we “assist” at them.

I am trying to be more intentional in my prayer time, and to take the Higher Power with me on my walks and in my garden work.

Thank God for SA, and the SA Fellowship, to fill the emptiness!

MIKE F., NJ, USA
SD 22 Oct 1989



What would you like to ask on old-timer? Send your question to essay@sa.org

Practical Tools

Our Body Is A Practical Tool Too

Five old-timers shared their tools of using their body to overcome their lust temptations:

- ◆ Brushing off shame from my forehead and shoulders with flicks of my hand.
- ◆ Turning my eyes from left to right and up and down in order to interrupt my thinking.
- ◆ Getting down on my knees faking that I need to tie one of my shoelaces.
- ◆ Picking up litter.
- ◆ “Voting with my feet”: changing my chair just a little bit so that the person my lust wants to lust after is not in my field of vision anymore.
- ◆ Sitting on the same side of the table as the person my lust is driving at—instead of in front of the person.
- ◆ Sitting with my back to the crowd of people in a restaurant, bar, or any other public place.
- ◆ Closing my eyes or turning my head until a lust object has passed.
- ◆ Turning my head until a lust object has passed.
- ◆ Crossing the street in order to avoid a trigger.
- ◆ Choosing the cash desk with the unattractive cashier.
- ◆ Wearing a rubber band on my wrist and snapping it whenever I experience lust: in this way stinging my way back into reality.
- ◆ Turning my head away, turning my eyes away.
- ◆ Blocking my ears with my hands, putting a pillow over my ears, turning on

the radio, putting in headphones.

- ◆ Getting some fresh air, opening a window, walking outside, taking a cold shower.
- ◆ Using a sheet of paper at the computer to quickly block any bad image that comes in.
- ◆ Blurring my eyes slightly if I am in a crowded place.
- ◆ If I’m in an airport, crowded railway station, etc., going to where there is the least amount of people.
- ◆ Sometimes just being still and praying quietly helps too.
- ◆ “The SA salute”—raising a hand over my eyes, reducing my vision.
- ◆ Taking off my glasses when I’m walking or entering a restroom.
- ◆ Having some change in my pocket and throwing one of the coins away to get rid of a look.
- ◆ Stomping my foot and say “No.”
- ◆ Putting down my car window and saying “Get out!” to a recurring thought.
- ◆ Lighting a candle as a prayer for someone I’m lusting after, then blowing it out when the thought is gone.
- ◆ If I am alone and think of someone as a lust object, I sing aloud “Happy Birthday” for the person to remind myself that the person is a real person, not some possession of mine.
- ◆ Kneeling down in a public place and saying the third step prayer out loud.
- ◆ Doing a job I don’t want to do, like cleaning the toilet.
- ◆ Putting on a cap and pulling the peak low over my forehead so that the view is obstructed.
- ◆ Zoom is a fantastic medium to attend meetings nowadays, but I always have Post-it notes handy to stick on someone’s face my lust wants to lust after.
- ◆ Choosing the route that has the least likelihood of having a trigger.

HARVEY A. DAVE T., LEE T., NICHOLAS S., CATHAL M.

Using The Tool Of Drawing

I met Dave at a downtown Denver SA meeting. He introduced me to Maxey. He volunteered at a shelter, and brought out three rescue dogs and it wasn’t even close. Maxey was the dog for me.

It was the fall of 2007 and my life was full of fear, grief, and shame. After a lifetime of hiding my excessive porn addiction, I was arrested for printing explicit internet photos of minors. Never underestimate the power of lust.

My wife kicked me out of the house. I went on paid leave from work. I attended meetings every day. Full of fear of the unknown future and shame for my behavior, I managed one day at a time. Soon, my wife filed for a separation. Court was set for December. And somewhere in my mind I realized I needed a companion, and if I waited, it may not be an option. Hence, I adopted Maxey.

After full disclosure to my employer, they decided to keep me on the job. So by July, I was working full time again. I attended meetings every day and began to write and draw in my journal. It was about to get a lot worse.

By December I lost my job and could no longer see my two teenage sons. I began four years of probation with intense treatment



and restrictions. Within a few months, I could see my kids with approved supervisors, for which I am forever grateful.

I was going through the motions. A dry drunk, I behaved and said all the “right things”. However, the treatment saw through my smarts and knocked me down again and again. Recovery was not something in my head. It required a full reboot, going places emotionally I never wanted to go. I was a mess.

Maxey was there for all of it. He got me out of the house for walks and runs, snuggled with me when I cried, and was a source of joy amidst the pain. I will always believe he was a gift from God.

Maxey crept into my journaling. He began to speak to me there, as if he was my better self. Although I am a trained musician, I found myself drawn to my journal to write and create rather than the music studio. Maxey appeared in our local SA newsletter. I

made calendars. Since 2016, Maxey has shared his wisdom on the pages of the *Essay Newsletter*. With each Maxey frame, I released a part of myself that needed the light. He loved and was loved by everyone.

After 15 years, it was time to say goodbye. Maxey, my inspiration, friend, companion and better part of myself passed this month due to old age. He was there when I was at my best and worst. Through my darkest times, he helped me through. I will miss him always.

However, he will live on in my drawings!

JIMMY M., Georgia, USA



The Wonderful Tool Of Bookending

My name is Matan C. and I am a recovering sexaholic from Jerusalem, Israel; I am sober joyous and free from September 30th 2016 by the grace of a loving Higher Power, the 12 Steps and Traditions, my Sponsor and Sponsees, my Family, this Fellowship and a wide variety of recovery tools, one of which I would like to share with you now.

When I started my way in SA, my sponsor and other long time members (both living and via recording, non living) gave me a gift - they handed me a large toolbox filled to the brim with all sorts of gadgets, ideas, actions and behaviours I could use to stay sober and happy.

This toolbox is really magical, it's kinda like Mary Poppins's (or Hermione Granger, depending on how old you are) bag: there is no problem or situation that doesn't have a solution in this toolbox. Resentment? Inventory; depression, sadness or loneliness? Service work and connection with others; lust? 18 wheeler at the end of the White Book; RID (restless, irritable, discontent)? Prayer and meditation. A tough or potentially hazardous task at hand? Bookending.

Merriam-Webster's online dictionary defines Bookending as: "to begin and end (something) with two similar things or with the same thing". The phrase stems from the function of a physical "Bookend"; that piece of metal you place at the beginning and ending of your bookshelf to stop your books from falling off and making a mess.

I, too, as a staggering and powerless (but not helpless!) lust drunk, can create quite a mess if left to my own devices, even worse than a shelf of books falling to the floor. Let's try to give a few examples to demonstrate what I mean:

- Let's say I am not spiritually fit and

my wife (or boss) asks me to look up something online, and I do so without taking anybody with me on this potentially hazardous journey, isn't there a chance that I will wander off to places I don't want or intend to?

- If my physician recommends I exercise regularly but all the people at the gym or the area I work out in are lust objects to me - wouldn't going into that kind of a situation "unarmed" be a bit foolish?
- Say I have a deadline coming up at work, or even in SA, like maybe I was asked to write a little piece on bookending for the next issue of ESSAY but I can get myself to sit down and do it, wouldn't it prove helpful if I bring some backup with me?

In my country and language we call Bookending a "circle"; circles are meant to be closed, if they are not, they are hardly a circle. At the end of the day we can also call this tool an "accountability circle", a pledge or a commitment to someone other than myself that I will get something done a certain way in a defined amount of time. Let's use those same examples from above to tie this in:

- Let's say my wife (or boss) asks me to look up something online, and I don't feel comfortable enough doing so alone, or I think it would be wiser to bring someone in on this with me - I send a WhatsApp message to a recovering friend or group of people and "open the circle" for the period of time I think it will take me to get the job done. There, I now have other people with me on this task and I am not surfing the web by my own power. Once finished with the task I'll send another message and "close the circle" or bookend.
- I want to exercise regularly and all the people at the gym or the area I work out in are lust objects to me - I can call a recovering friend and pray together about the coming exercise session, "opening a circle" for the

hour I intend on being there at the end of which I promise to check in with the same friend to "close the circle" and bookend together.

- There is a deadline I am fighting my best to beat but nothing is happening, it's not even lust but I just can't get myself to sit down for enough time to get anything done - I will "open a circle" with a recovering friend (in my case I have a designated WhatsApp group just for this - we update each other about our progress on tasks at work) for the next task I want to get done at work and "close the circle" only to open it up again for the next task (I usually use the "pomodoro" 25 mins time cycle at work). Most days this is the only way I can get anything done.

Bookending, circles, accountability partners - there are many names for this simple truth: I am a staggering, powerless (but not helpless!) sexaholic that needs all the help he can get to succeed in getting some very simple things done (like staying sober or sending an email to my boss or writing a short piece on bookending for *Essay*). I don't know why this is, and I've stopped trying to figure it out. In fact, I've stopped trying to get simple things done by myself and today I take any and every help I can get from that amazing, magical toolbox called SA. Bookending is just one of them and I can highly recommend using it together with all the rest.

Love and Light,

MATAN C., Jerusalem, Israel



Acronyms As A Tool Of Recovery

I recently came across an acronym which reminded me of what I need to do each day to remain sexually sober. The acronym is **SAHOPE**. Here's what each letter stands for.

- **S** reminds me of **sponsorship** and **Steps**. I read years ago that the people who do well in this program are the ones who work the Steps with a sponsor. Each day I need to continue working on whatever Step I am on. This helps me address what is going on in my inner man.
- **A** stands for **acceptance**. Alcoholics Anonymous, page 417 states it well - "Until I could accept my (sexaholism) I could not stay sober; unless I accept life completely on life's terms I cannot be happy."
- **H** reminds me I need to acknowledge and accept a **Higher Power** in order to remain sober and grow in recovery. For me this Power is called God.
- **O** stands for **outreach**. I give and receive support and inspiration by talking to others in the program. This happens in meetings, text messages, or on the phone. In Step Into Action, p.173 it says - "As others had done for us, we reached out to newcomers with a message of hope. We participated in SA meetings, where we shared the solution with others."
- **P** reminds me of the immeasurable usefulness and power of **prayer**. When I finally became sober in September 2016, it happened after I sent up the most desperate prayer I ever prayed... "God, you've got to help me!"
- **E** reminds me that physical **exercise** is a great outlet for negative thoughts and emotions. Even though not an official part of our program, I find exercise helps me calm down and feel much better going through my day.

RICH R, Michigan, USA



Filling Your Emotional Cup With safe People

Below is what I shared with a lady in the fellowship who felt attracted to a man in a mixed meeting:

“Well, it’s a healthy thing that you recognize the things you like about him: his voice, personality, and maybe other things. List out all those things that you like and that you feel you get from that interaction, even though you think it’s not reciprocal.

Then make another list of people—both

men and women, that you know have these qualities too. But *only list safe people*, that way you’re not just transferring the emotions. Then list the days that you can connect with those people to fill up your emotional cup.

Simply staying away from the meeting will not help. You might be in denial about having unmet needs that are driving you to want that person. By acknowledging that you need other people, and giving yourself permission to connect to those other (safe) people, the obsession will loosen its grip.”

RINA R., *New Jersey, USA*



WE ARE NOT A GLUM LOT



One of the most effective Practical Tools is HUMOR.

The difference between your sponsor and a therapist

1. Your sponsor isn’t all that interested in the reasons you acted out.
2. Your therapist thinks your root problem is your lack of self-esteem, negative self-image and

your poor self-concept. Your sponsor thinks your problem is a three-letter word: You.

3. Your therapist wants you to pamper your inner child. Your sponsor thinks it ought to be tutored.

4. Your sponsor thinks your inventory should be about you, not your parents.

5. Speaking of your parents, your sponsor tells you to not confront hem, but make amends to them.

6. The only time your sponsor uses the word “closure” is before the word “mouth”.

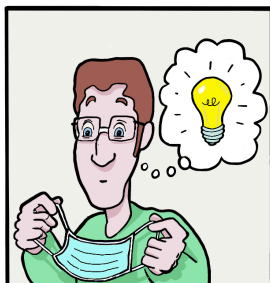
7. Your therapist wants you to love yourself first; your sponsor wants you to love others first.

8. Now that you haven’t acted out in 6 months, your therapist thinks you should make a list of your goals and objectives for the next five years, starting with finishing up that college degree. Your sponsor thinks you should start today by cleaning the coffeepots and helping him carry a box of literature to the jail. Oh yeah ... and making your bed.

JOHN B., *Manchester, UK*



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



Happy & Joyous Freedom

In times of global lockdown

Growing In Recovery One Day At A Time

Football (or Soccer as they call it in the US) - what would we do without it? It is so exciting, so passionate, such a good topic of conversation, and so much more. As a teenager I was obsessed travelling around the UK following (worshipping?) my beloved Tottenham Hotspur F.C. As life moved on and I got busy with studies, marriage, kids I realised that (maybe?) there are more important things in life and I gradually lost interest. You know, an addict thing, it is either all or nothing.

After finding SA in January 2014, I found myself (sometime in 2016) finding an interest again in football in general and Tottenham in particular. And they were doing really well for a change. Surely it was good to have interests which were not lust related and a healthy escape from life. But I became soon obsessed. It was taking up so many hours of my day and night and I felt enslaved to it (sound familiar?). It is still better than lust, I convinced myself.

The fact that I did not share the obsession with the ones closest to me, the time at work that was spent on it, and the lying I had to do to get out in the evenings to go “shopping”, etc. but always with the intent of going past the office to stay “updated” - and the time at work that was spent on it, was not healthy. I was enslaved again. I prayed to stop but did not imagine how it could happen. I mentioned it

often to my sponsor - who is also a big Tottenham fan and could relate to the challenge but had no ‘magic button’ for me to press.

And then the global lockdown due to Covid hit. No football, no transfer news, no highlights, no interviews - nothing! Just rumours about if/when the season will restart.

From one day to the next the obsession went. It is like it was just taken from me (sound familiar?). For approx. six months, one day at a time, I have not been onto the BBC or Tottenham websites and I am not ‘desperate’ to either. It has freed up so much time and headspace and I am so grateful for it. It has also helped me in general escaping on the web to the news, etc.

I share this since there are so many areas in my life which I wonder and worry how can it ever change. May it be finances, fears, relationships which need changing. You know what, G-d removed my obsession with lust and he just did it again with football. I have learnt that I can’t change things. I can pray and hope to do G-ds will. When the time comes G-d will remove it. I got to remember to keep out of G-ds way. Instead of worrying about situations and trying to control I got to do the best, for today, *with a foundation of zero tolerance to lust*. And I pray for guidance in all areas of my life to do his will.

And if you enjoy soccer or American football or indeed any sport I am not out to make you feel bad. On the contrary, if you can enjoy it in a healthy way that is good. I have learnt that there are things I can’t do in recovery that other recovering addicts can do. And vice versa. And I hope your team does really well.

ZALMI S., *London, UK*



Sexual Sobriety Is Truly The Key To A Happy And Joyous Freedom

Let's start with some statistics. The word happy appears in the book Sexaholics Anonymous seven times, and in the book Alcoholics Anonymous 16 times. The word joyous is in the SA book eight times, and in the AA book 12 times. Freedom is used only four times in the AA book and 37 times in the SA book. That leads me to believe that freedom is more important to sexaholics than to alcoholics. That does not mean freedom is not important to alcoholics, it simply means it is more important to us. So, what is freedom to a sexaholic, and not just freedom, but happy, joyous freedom? I can't tell you what it is for others. I can only tell you what it is for me. When I came to Sexaholics Anonymous I was a member of another 'S' Fellowship. I had defined my bottom-line behavior, and it coincided with the SA shared sobriety statement. So, I already had some sober time when I came to SA.

My road to recovery did not begin because I was powerless over lust, sex, alcohol, nicotine or anything else. It was because my life was unmanageable. My wife left me, took the kids, I lost my house, my car, my job and, most importantly, my dignity. It took me six months of 'S' meetings before I also joined AA and got a real start on recovery. I am a real sexaholic as well as a real alcoholic, and I could not stop on my own. It is my belief that anyone who is in recovery from any addiction is crazy to drink alcohol. Alcohol lowered my inhibitions and made it easier to do things I would not do had I been sober.

I was trapped in a nightmare and

couldn't wake up. One day of not acting out sexually was barely possible for me, multiple days impossible. I went to both 'S' meetings and AA meetings, multiple times a day. I could go without drinking, but I couldn't stop acting out sexually. After four and a half months of start and stop (mostly start) sobriety, I became suicidal and ended up in a treatment facility.

After about 30 days I was sent home with some tools to help me stay alive long enough for the fellowship to continue helping me stay alive. I started into recovery with a renewed enthusiasm. Life got a little better, I found a job, went to meetings, gained several months of sobriety, felt some serenity in my life, and eventually remarried. But I still didn't feel any real happiness, joyousness or freedom. I did a great job of faking it. My stage character looked good to everyone except me. I have heard people say that their insides didn't match other's outsides. My inside didn't match my own outside.

I lived that way for about four years. Then I had a major relapse. It was not a slip. It was a relapse, and I didn't, couldn't, wouldn't tell anyone what was really going on in my life.

I believe that if you thoroughly follow the path I followed; you, too, can live in happy and joyous freedom—even during a pandemic.

Instead of buying pornography, I was breaking into people's apartments and masturbating with their pornography.

My life got progressively more unmanageable over the next nine to twelve months. I finally had a scare when someone came home and caught me in their apartment. I escaped and told an AA friend what had happened. He gave me the courage to tell my wife and 'S' group the truth about what was going on in my life.

The problem was that I had talked about the Steps, read about the Steps, went to meetings about the Steps, but I had not actually taken them. Another friend gave me some tapes with instructions for the Steps as written in the AA Big Book. In earnest, and using the tapes and the AA Big Book, I went from Step One to Step Twelve. I had the spiritual awakening promised in Step Twelve and my life has not been the same since. Today I can do things I could not do before. I can feel things I could not feel before. And I believe things I could not believe before.

Years later, through the unseen hand of God, I found my way into SA. I feel at home with people who truly understand that lust has been my real problem all along. Contact with others is now more important than ever. Even in troubling times, like this Covid-19 pandemic, I still

have the gifts of sobriety, serenity, sanity, and spirituality. I regularly attend meetings online (via Zoom) or by phone. I talk to other members of the fellowship daily. And, most importantly, I use the Steps to stay in conscious contact with God.

By the grace of God, the Twelve Steps, and the Fellowship, I have been sober since October 16, 1991. I have been granted progressive victory over lust, and today I have happy and joyous freedom from the need to act out sexually, from the bondage of self, and from the bondage of lust. And for all that I will never be sufficiently grateful. Today, I know that my recovery is the most important possession I have. Conscious contact with God answers all my problems today.

"Nonetheless, in spite of the questions, struggles, and confusion that we have gone through, we find that sexual sobriety is truly 'the key to a happy and joyous freedom we could otherwise never know.'" (SA2). I believe that if you thoroughly follow the path I followed; you, too, can live in happy and joyous freedom—even during a pandemic.

BOB F., Nebraska, USA



DISCUSSION TOPIC

Am I practicing ALL the program offers me to live in happy and joyous freedom during this pandemic?

Bob F. tells us how he continues to live in happy and joyous freedom during the pandemic.

He uses working the Steps as outlined in the Big Book, doing virtual meetings, and calling members daily to stay in conscious contact with God.

How am I doing in the pandemic, really? Do I have the courage to set aside my pride and tell my group the truth about what is really going on in my life?

Do I take advantage of all modern technology is offering me today

to attend meetings and call members? Do I live in happy and joyous freedom in this pandemic—and if not, why not?

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

It's A Process, Not A Single Event

It works if you work it!. It's a simple quote. We repeat it at every meeting. Just as simple is the requirement for membership: a desire to stop lusting and become sexually sober. But while these are simple truisms, living them is not easy. To stay sober in the face of day to day challenges and to deepen my recovery means I have to work the steps, practice the tools of recovery, do service for others and take regular guidance from my sponsor.

Here's how I do it. First, I stop feeding lust, whether through the eyes, the ears, hands, or fantasies. I used to practice partial abstinence for a period before I got serious about recovery; it worked, but only partially. Quite simply, I did not stop feeding lust. As you would expect, I relapsed. This was in August 2019, after a prolonged period of white knuckling which was really uncomfortable (I had been in SA from November 2015 to June 2016; I left then, thinking I could do better on my own.)

Since rejoining SA more than a year ago, I have completed the 12 steps and try my best to live by them each day. My spiritual life has improved; so too, my relationship with my wife. Today, my life in recovery is comfortable. The work I put into the steps makes them simply work. For the first time in my life, I can deal with the many things that used to baffle me. For the first time in my life, I accept myself; I am no longer drowning in shame. Just as the Twelve Promises say, I don't wish to shut the door upon my past, knowing that my experiences back then help me identify and empathise

with sponsees, present and in the future. The Promises are real. I see them coming true for me.

I did face considerable "external" challenges en route to this point. I live in a country where, as far as I know, there are no other SA members. I am simply a loner. But I reached

While I am a loner, I am not alone. I have access to meetings, sponsors, sponsees, support, acceptance, so much help, and all at the touch of a finger.

out on the global SA website and got access to members and meetings. The Buddy List also put me in touch with SA fellows. And the journey began. One thing led to another, and now I am using the latest communication apps to connect with SA fellows from all over the world. While I am a loner, I am not alone. I have access to meetings, sponsors, sponsees, support, acceptance, so much help, and all at the touch of a finger. I just have to pick up my phone. It's a miracle, really and truly. As the only recovering sexaholic in Iraq - that I know of - technology is facilitating my recovery, keeping me in touch with the supports that I need.

So, back to the program and how I am working it today. I simply face each and every lust hit, each and every character defect that is triggered by a challenge, with the necessary steps; the same with a baffling issue, I just work the steps. When hit by

lust, I immediately concede that I am powerless over it (or whatever defect has been triggered), and that it is making my life unmanageable. Next, I remind myself that there is a power greater than me who can and will restore me to sanity. That higher power is God as I understand Him. I make a decision then, in the context of my current challenge, to hand my life and my will over to His care. That done, I sift through the mental, emotional and spiritual carnage and pick out the pieces that I am responsible for, admitting my part in it all. If I am honest, it doesn't take long to identify where I have been resentful, fearful, false, proud, selfish, lazy, lustful or dishonest. Then I pick up the phone and start calling, sharing, and surrendering.

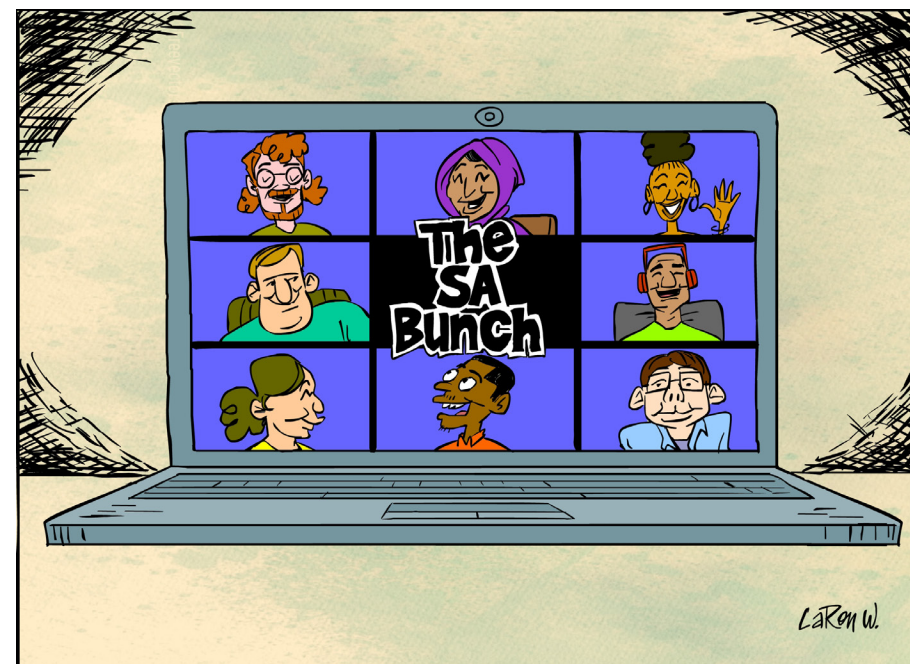
When I am entirely ready to have God remove these defects of character, I humbly ask Him to take them away, praying that He accept all of me, good

and bad, and that He help me do His bidding. I check with my sponsor to see if amends are due anywhere and, if they are, I go and make them. Before going to bed that night, I make an inventory of my behaviours and attitudes during the day and share it on a call so that I am truly free of anything that could disturb me with lust, shame or guilt; this helps and encourages the member taking the call too. In the morning, I pray and ask for God's help and I do my daily DSR with another member. Finally, I am prepared to carry the message as best I can to another sexaholic so that we can maximise our support for each other as we trudge the road of happy destiny.

Working the program is an ongoing process, not a single event.

Thank you!

AMEER M., Iraq





Carrying The Message What An Adventure!

“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.” WB 208

To seek spiritual progress, I must continue to work the Steps with my sponsor. I must continue reading questions, reflecting and writing answers no matter how many times I’ve done this before. This time around, I found a few Twelfth-step questions online—about reaching out to other sexaholics and how the 12-step program has worked for me.

When I first joined SA in the early

1990s, there was no Internet or local phone number to call for help. I learned about the program from my therapist, who was in SA, and brought me to my first meeting. Someone must have mentioned the Steps and the part about carrying the message, but I homed in on the sobriety definition.

No masturbation? Outrageous! I went home and told my second wife, a progressive thinker like myself, and she agreed.

I joined the program to eliminate problems, improve the marriage and then live happily ever after. I hadn’t yet realized how much of a perfectionist I was or that life ain’t no fairy tale.

I began to accept the sobriety definition, however, as I was smart enough to realize I was running out of options. I needed a sponsor but couldn’t (wouldn’t?) find one. No Buddy List back then. Email wasn’t even a thing. I didn’t yet have the

Making myself available to someone in distress and who has summoned the courage to ask for help, makes me feel grateful for the people who were there for me when I was in trouble.

clarity to consider calling SAICO to inquire about a long-distance sponsor. I’m not sure I even realized there was a central office or worldwide fellowship.

At the local meeting I attended, I found another struggling member and relative newcomer who was also looking for a sponsor. We commenced to working the Steps together, using a general recovery workbook. We’d meet in his or my car to discuss what we had written. An excerpt from my initial First Step reflection: “I am powerless over this illness. It seems like the last couple of weeks, my alter ego addict wants to control

the addiction. I suppose I still don’t believe that I deserve better. I used to think or rationalize that I wasn’t as bad off as others, but now I’m thinking my acts were even worse ... I must be missing something because I’m not completely ready to surrender things over. Part of me still wants to sabotage the progress the other part of me has made ... I know in Steps Two and Three I have to confront my belief in God and my willingness to surrender to Him.”

A good start, I reckon. Better than nothing, even though I wasn’t ready to work the Steps the right way or for the right reason.

With an ugly trail of financial, emotional, professional and spiritual consequences behind me, I put myself back on the path towards self-destruction. Dabbling: calling phone sex numbers and then not following-through with the transaction; going to strip clubs and a massage parlor but not “acting out;” arranging for a prostitute to visit our home and then sending her away before it was “too late.”

Three years into the second marriage, I revealed these transgressions to my wife. She said she’d never love anybody again. The next day, we talked. We realized I had to get help, that I had to commit to the whole program, for myself - not for the tenuous marriage, but for myself. That was September 1, 1996. My sobriety date, the day I got real.

Today, I realize that “perfect”—a perfect recovery or perfect fellowship—isn’t attainable. Yet, through working the program with the guidance of a sponsor who has a sponsor, I’ve gained what I thought I didn’t deserve way back when: a lot more enlightened self-interest,

progressive victory over lust and enthusiasm to carry the message to those who still suffer in North America, Central America, South America or wherever. “Tengo ganas”, as they say in Spanish; it means to really want something. And I really wanted sobriety and recovery.

Today, as I continue to work the program, I enjoy more intimacy with my wonderful wife of 26 years. We’ve been abstinent for more than 20 of those. We’ve grown individually and together. We’ve traveled to SA International conventions, and she has met some of my fellow trudgers. She has even learned some Spanish.

I’ve relied upon the amigos and amigas I’ve made. My program friends are my spiritual lifeline as I strive for SA unity and to carry the message.

I respect, admire and applaud the AAs and SAs who had the courage to change and to create counter-culture fellowships to save lives like mine. Though I bristled at the sobriety definition when I first heard it, I’m forever grateful for the SA members who right away set me straight on an approach that works.

Working my program today includes service work, something I was reluctant to do in the early years. I hadn’t taken to heart the part about carrying the message to others—that doing so meant more than sharing my story at my home group.

In the past year, my home group and our fellowship here in New England has fractured. There was little service rotation, and several wonderful, intelligent and kind people have decided they don’t want to be part of SA anymore.

I’ve been praying for patience with myself and for others. My higher

power has a plan that I don’t always see. The difficulties of uniting those who have a desire to stop lust and want to become sober, as well as those who believe and support our sobriety definition and principles, have led me to a deeper connection with my higher power. A more profound spiritual awakening had been waiting for me. My eyes, heart and soul are more open as I contact prospective newcomers.

Serving as the hotline coordinator has helped me get back to the roots

Meeting people whom I only know by an email address or phone number has been fun! I’ve performed music with SAs in other countries. A few of us recently collaborated online to produce a recovery song.

of SA and our primary purpose: It’s not just about me and my recovery. Making myself available to someone who’s in distress and who has summoned the courage to ask for help makes me feel grateful for the people who were there for me when I was in trouble. I’m also grateful for the AAs and SAs who established our service structure and who wrote and edited our literature, such as *Beginnings... Notes on the Origin and Early Growth of SA*.

The rewards of listening to someone who’s lost and looking for help and then guiding that person to recovery leave me feeling more willing to take care of myself and to continue to work the Steps with my sponsees and sponsor.

I find myself more reliant and aware of God’s omnipotence throughout my day. My conscious contact with my higher power has become more frequent as I pray using a book my mom gave me almost twenty years ago; speak Spanish with an SA member in South America; listen to a guided meditation in Portuguese; attend a SA meetings in Portuguese; type program-related passwords on my computer; enjoy a conflict-free dinner with my wife; practice and play the guitar without expecting perfection; call prospective newcomers, other members and my sponsor; participate in the Zoom meetings; ponder becoming a delegate; and pray as I go to sleep.

As a result of having worked the previous Steps, I’m more grateful for the challenges and benefits. I feel blessed with support and look forward to helping others to liberate themselves from lust and to enjoy this life our higher powers have granted us.

The compulsion to harm others and to go to the old haunts have been removed. I rarely wallow in the shame. Broken relationships have been repaired or are, little by little, being restored. My estranged daughter, for example, has now re-entered my orbit.

I’ve shared my story with SAs from all over the world—most recently on a Zoom call with the European fellowship. And before travel and COVID-19 became an issue, I shared

my experience, strength and hope with members in Ireland, Manitoba, Seattle, Spain, Tennessee and Texas. Sharing how I’ve worked the Steps at a meeting in a different country or speaking on a topic at an international convention has proven beneficial in all aspects of my life.

Meeting people whom I only knew by an email address or phone number has been fun! I’ve performed music with SAs in other countries. A few of us recently collaborated online to produce a recovery song!

A few weeks ago, I learned how to say roller coaster in Spanish, “montaña rusa.” Participating in this international fellowship, during the twists and turns and highs and lows has given me such peace, joy and hope.

As we read in *Recovery Continues*, “What an adventure.” Worth the price of admission.

JIM D., Massachusetts, USA 



Finding Growth in Joy & Freedom During the Covid Pandemic

Initially when I read the theme to submit an article for the *Essay*, I wondered about the paradox and challenge of finding such growth. I was intrigued by the focus. However, the more I reflected on my experience, the more I could honestly say that I had grown in joy and freedom during these Covid times.

Early on in the lockdown in March of this year, my spiritual guide invited me to go deeper, to be still and reflect and recognize what is most important in life, and to listen to the truths that I usually wouldn't with all the kinds of activity that I am involved in at this time in my life. The basic questions of who am I, where am I going, what matters the most in life...

In an SA phone meeting, one of the shares included a fellow member who heard his first sponsor ask him if he had a hobby. He thought it odd and the question didn't make sense to him but he continued to share that later on like 20 years later, he came to realize the value and meaning of having a hobby that would serve his recovery well.

I thought about the hobbies I have tried over the years: fishing, running, drumming. When noticing my garden I decided to take up gardening as my hobby. It has been a great joy getting into the process of uprooting, transplanting, pruning, clearing the weeds, etc. The slower pace of working the earth, the discoveries of weeds, roots of weeds and their impact on the plants reminded me of my character defects and shortcomings and the ongoing work with my HP to lessen their impact in my life.

Within two to three weeks, one of my local SA groups decided to go with the Zoom meetings. Even though I missed the face to face encounters, I began to appreciate the zoom meetings. I was able to freely gather with other SA fellowships that normally I wouldn't due to the distance and time spent going and coming back from a meeting on a work night. I appreciated the shares of other groups that have their own ways of carrying the message and this experience helped strengthen the unity I felt with and for other members. It has been a joy to encounter other SA fellowship meetings via Zoom since there were several I have known that are mature and solid in carrying the message.

Having participated in the Sexaholics International Marathon (SIM) of last year, I was open to the Asia Pacific Unity (APU) event in April of this year. This was very powerful for me as I heard from members of different SA fellowship groups of the Asia Pacific Region. Personally I came into the rooms of SA in the Pacific and was fortunate to get on Skype meetings with SA members from Australia, Europe and Asia. I was a loner on the small island and began an SA meeting. I was able to connect with SA members via phone and Skype was so important in helping me persevere and continue the process even if I was the only member in the face to face meetings. I stayed up till 2am my time as part of the APU event and decided to be a part of the planning committee for the following year.

Thanks to SIM I completed the survey of the experience of that event and my name was forwarded to the APU planning committee. Even though I am not tech savvy, I persevered and was able to make announcements to local fellowship groups of So Cal

(South-California), three of the SA phone meeting fellowships, the SA-Net fellowship and to all the SAs I have in my phone book. One of the local So Cal fellowships started to have old-timer speaker meetings once a month via zoom. Wow! One hundred participants from all over the world. To hear a fellow member with 36 years of sobriety share his experience, strength and hope in a way that I had not heard before, gave me hope.

The three keys to recovery remain: Open Mindedness, Honesty and Willingness. They are indispensable for recovery and work no matter the situation, circumstance, Covid or no Covid, international or local.

I heard Mike C. share on the process of "developing a culture of sobriety" and an intentional growing of the application of the principles of the Traditions in the local fellowship group. What growth in freedom and joy I heard when he shared how his group grew through sharing the message, as sobriety became the foundation for their recovery that is positive, progressive and powerful!

As our local Intergroup continued to meet via zoom, I noticed the listing of members of the different service positions and GSR's for the represented fellowship that had a blank for Spanish translation contact.

I thought I knew enough Spanish to carry the message as I was able to develop this skill in my career. I submitted my and my sponsor's name to be two members who would communicate in Spanish with any Spanish speaking newcomer.

Within a short time, I got a phone call from one of the Intergroup service members who asked me to contact a lawyer who had a client that she believed needed to go to SA meetings. The Arizona fellowship decided to start anew the Zoom meeting in Spanish for the newcomer in So Cal and it continues today. I formed a contact list from a few members who speak Spanish in the local fellowship.

As I joined a few Zoom meetings in Spanish, I was asked if I wanted to connect with a Spanish SA WhatsApp group that included a few South American countries. How glad I was to read reflections from the Real Connection in Spanish and also from the Big Book. Then with the WhatsApp Spanish fellowship, there were announcements of conventions, workshops, Speakers, First Step shares in Spanish.

Throughout this experience, I realize the three keys to recovery remain: Open Mindedness, Honesty and Willingness. They are indispensable for recovery and they work no matter the situation, circumstance, Covid or no Covid, international or local. These three keys are vital to continue growth in Joy and Freedom given these ongoing Covid times. Our Higher Power is present and active. So are we as we seek to do His will, one day at a time, as a fellowship sharing our ESH through faithful service that bears fruit in good times with trust and unity of purpose.

KIKO S., California, USA



Counting My Blessings During Covid

Happy and joyous freedom for me began nearly 13 years ago when the lust obsession was removed from my life. I had become a slave to uncontrollable urges, beginning about 25 years earlier and slowly worsening. Somewhere along the way, I crossed an invisible line into insane thinking and behavior.

All the “remedies” I tried had failed. Joining SA, I had numerous false starts and in less than a year, I had left the program in despair. After a few months, I returned to SA with no great hopes that anything would change—but it did. A merciful God set me free. The lesson I learned? Keep coming back! But, as it says in Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions, page 88—*Then comes the acid test: can we stay sober, keep in emotional balance and live to good purpose under all conditions?* Here are some things which worked for me in 2020.

First Things First. I have continued to focus on using the tools of the program. Key things for me are twice daily prayer (on my knees), trying to practice the Steps, sponsoring others, and attending meetings and conferences (until recently, all via Zoom or Teleconference). The AA Big Book offers me this encouragement—*It (the program principles) is a design for living which works in rough going* (AA 15). But only if I work it.

Putting things in Perspective. Covid-19 has brought “new normals” to get used to. Many people have suffered terribly with the loss of a loved one or the loss of a job or

business. I have not had to endure that. I need to remember that the impact for me of the Covid restrictions have been relatively small compared to the hardships experienced by many. They have also been virtually a non-issue, compared to the suffering and loss I experienced during the long years of my active addiction. I don’t know what trials and low spots await me in the years ahead. It is hard to imagine, however, that they will be worse than the living hell of the active addiction I endured for so long.

Gratitude. I thank God every day for the miracle of sobriety. I express gratitude for many other things besides, including a house to live in, relatively good health for my age and “little” things like a good meal or the flowers in my garden

Here are some things which worked for me in 2020: First Things First. Putting Things In Perspective. Gratitude. Self-care. Asking For Help.

and the birds that visit it. One of my character defects is the tendency to complain, so it’s very important for me to continue to remember my many blessings. Gratitude can be an effective “antidote” for when I slip into negativity.

Self-Care. Maintaining habits of healthy diet, adequate sleep and regular exercise have also been important. I am a regular walker and it was good to see the government authorities identifying exercise as an

important activity during the Covid-19 restrictions. My hobbies of gardening, bird watching, reading, listening to classical music and enjoying football on the radio have contributed to my well-being and a more balanced lifestyle. *We learned the difference between indulging ourselves and taking care of ourselves.* White Book, 34.

Asking for Help. This year, I have also learnt something about the importance of asking for help. Because my age (now 71) put me in the higher risk category for Covid-19, and as I live alone, I was worried that if I got sick, I might be trapped in the house with few options for obtaining basics like food. One day I saw an advertisement by a local grocery store offering help for people my age. After talking on the phone to the manager, I was offered food delivery to my house if needed. A similar thing happened with the local library where, before Covid, I used to spend a lot of time,

for both work and recreation. Even though the library was closed to the public, I was able to talk to staff who explained they could arrange delivery of books, magazines and music CD’s. A shopping bag full of these items was delivered to my front door about a week later! The newspapers here often carried stories of outstanding examples of kindness extended by different people in the community which were quite uplifting.

It’s hard to predict what the Coronavirus situation might be like next year. One thing seems certain, though. Another “virus”, the lust-virus, will still be active. It too is now pandemic and it too has the capacity to kill (SA, 44 & 56). But God has provided a solution. Today, I feel privileged to be part of a worldwide fellowship providing hope to many who have reached out for help.

DOUG H., Logan City, Australia 



Recovery By Walking

Like most people in SA, I have had to make adjustments in the way I practice my program routine. I had been a regular at the noon meeting near where I worked. With four meetings a week, it offered me a safe haven where I could finally face myself and what better way to break up the work day. I have to admit, I really depended on going there. I had heard old-timers reflect on their first time meeting in the same room decades prior. It seemed we would meet there forever. Little did I know what was coming.

With the first wave of COVID-19 we saw our lives and meetings change right before our eyes. The last meeting we held in person was on a Friday. Somebody in the group had recently set up a conference call a few days prior, so we were able to pick up without skipping a beat on the following Monday but this time in a call-in format. And it has kept going to this day, for which I'm thankful.

The continuity of this meeting has helped me stay sober. In a way, having meetings over the phone has saved time as well. Suddenly, attending more meetings became easier. Although they are virtual now, my average number of meetings in a week has gone up. That is certainly a plus. But after a while, I could feel the affect of only seeing and hearing people through my phone. Something was missing: the hugs, the going out for food afterward, the facial expressions that helped me understand what someone was sharing. *I decided this new meeting format would work but I needed to find a way to supplement the*

fellowship I was lacking.

So a few months into the pandemic, it started with a walk. I reached out to a fellow member about going for a walk in a local park. He was already an avid walker so he jumped on the opportunity. We walked and talked, smiled and laughed, checked in, and encouraged each other. It was great to see a friend from the program in a safe setting that also included exercise with an opportunity to share and have fellowship. Who else can I get honest with about my addiction than other addicts? I need this fellowship. Sure we could have talked on the phone, but this was better than a phone call. It was self-care with recovery built in and a healthy way to stay connected.

We started walking a few days a week and it caught on with others as well. Now I've gone on walks with several members. It's led to finding other ways to meet outdoors at coffee shop patios, parking lots, and park benches. I am even planning a day soon to hit baseballs in the same park with a few program buddies. This recreational type of fellowship with 1 on 1 or in small groups helps me feel "part of" instead of "apart from." This is what I was missing.

I hope once we start having face to face meetings again, that I still meet with others in this way. It has improved my program and brought me closer to my fellows. I also pray if anyone is struggling and feels like something is missing, that God show them a way to stay connected. This is what worked for me. Instead of dying slowly in isolation, my program is expanding into new territory. One day at a time and by the grace of God, I can get through this pandemic and stay sober.

ROBINSON N., Georgia, USA



The Most Important Service is to Have a Positive Sobriety

We take it so easily for granted that everyone has a computer and smartphone these days

and knows how to work these tools well—but not always: this old-timer from Virginia sent us a hand-written letter with a very positive message in these times of global lockdown, focusing on the silver lining instead of the seemingly dark cloud.

In this time of disorder, struggle and transition God is at work. Sexaholics Anonymous is emerging as part of the solution. Technology has brought fellowship members into contact with large numbers of fellow sexaholics we would normally not have the opportunity to meet, nationally and internationally. More than ever, the Fellowship of Sexaholics Anonymous is contributing to the work of our Higher Power: the healing of family, community and society. The most important service any of us in the Fellowship can do, is to have a positive sobriety. Birth pangs are painful. What we are experiencing nationally as a health crisis and civil unrest is nothing new. This too shall pass. But ^{what} will emerge in our Fellowship is an increased Higher Power vision and dedication to Our Primary Purpose. After years of struggle in Sexaholics Anonymous I was blessed with the Gift of sobriety, 5 Sept. 1993. Near 75 yrs of life, two bouts of cancer in sobriety, I see the Fellowship of Sexaholics Anonymous entering, evolving into a spiritual path of healing us oldtimers could not have imagined over thirty years ago. The spiritual significance of sobriety at this junction of history cannot be overstated. To have a positive sobriety is to realize it is not about us as individuals anymore. More than ever, we can be of maximum service to our fellow man thru this wonderful fellowship. Let us recommit to Our Primary Purpose and sobriety.

Bob H.



From Technical Sobriety To Proactive Sobriety

joined SA in 2017, but I'd heard about it six years earlier... Yes, it took me six painful years to come to the point where I could say: "I am a sexaholic. I am powerless over lust because I am sick".

Denial, the desire to control and a lack of understanding about my hopeless condition kept me from the road of happy destiny. But thank God that, when an addict doubts his being an addict, the evidence will arrive, one way or another. This is what happened to me. After breaking all my boundaries, one after one, I was finally ready to admit: "I can't procrastinate any longer; this thing will destroy my life; I need to join this terrible scary Program. And guess what happened: I got sober!

I acted out one more time, two weeks after my first meeting. A week after that, I watched pornography for the last time after which I reset my sobriety date to August 24th, 2017. I remember the conversation I had with my sponsor after that episode. It was hilarious: "I watched porn for about one hour last night, but thank God I didn't lose my sobriety", I said. "Who told you didn't?" came the response. Here, I was introduced to the SA sobriety definition and I embraced it—or at least I thought I did.

For a couple of years I strictly adhered to the principle that sex with self and watching pornography would

mean loss of sobriety. But I got bored and restless with these constraints. The program became tedious and repetitive, and I started becoming irritable and finding fault with my fellows.

Being sober, I entitled myself to laugh at those who used to qualify their sobriety, saying for example they were twelve years sober from masturbation and three months sober from pornography. By now, I regarded my sobriety as a personal achievement. I became blind with pride. I ignored the fact that, beyond actual pornographic websites, movies and images, there were things which were pornographic "to me"; that lust is not solely what I do, but also what I think; what I allow to happen inside my head.

So I would keep fantasizing, spying on my neighbors, taking risks walking

I practiced what I've heard since called "technical sobriety", and it stinks.

undressed in my courtyard, reading articles in the news that aroused my lust; watching filtered images (because I am one of those with filters!) from innocent Uncle Google. And I would minimize it because it was not "forbidden"; it was not lust. I practiced what I've heard since called "technical sobriety", and it stinks.

A major stress at work pushed me over the edge; my disease became more aggressive and I started taking more risks. My sponsor suggested I try working with a new sponsor. In July of this year, I began working with a new

sponsor and straightaway adopted his perspective that this program is a ZERO LUST program.

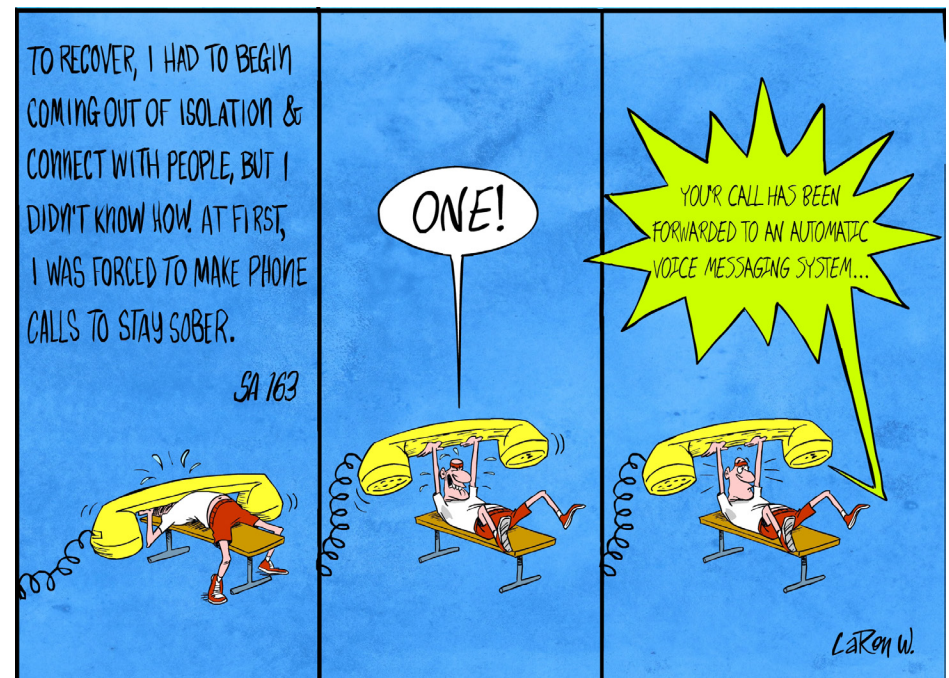
I spent three months working on Step 1 before I really, at heart, came to accept that I am totally powerless over lust; that I cannot indulge in sexual fantasies; follow people with my eyes or with my feet; read news with sexual content... I can't do any of these things because if I do, I become sick to such an extent that it could endanger my very life.

I celebrated my third year of sobriety two months ago, and I shared with my fellows that I was actually really sober just a couple of weeks. Little by little, one day at a time, practicing this program over and over again, I see a new attitude developing in my mind: I not only stop looking for "occasions", but I can even step back from them. I can, for the first time in my life,

acknowledge that there is perhaps something lustful going on over there, and move in the opposite direction. What a blessing! What a blessing!

Today I can honestly say that I do not support technical sobriety. I don't say this from some theoretical point of view, but rather from my own painful experience. Technical sobriety was a barren way of life for me. Just refraining from something bad didn't fill my inner void. Being proactive and turning to God, surrendering every slightest sip of my lust does fill the void. And every time I practice it I can feel the skies smiling at me and the angels singing their favourite: "Way to go! It works if you work it! Keep coming back!"

BENNY D., Jerusalem. Israel





It Was And Still Is A Miracle

Lust and acting out had poisoned my soul from early teenhood. A double track had developed in me: On the one hand, a deep desire for a true love, a loving union, for family life, house and kids; on the other hand, an ill and poisoned desire to right away have sex with women, without any sense for personal relation, love or respect. I had even acted clandestinely touching a woman on the metro. I had felt shame, I had known how wrong I was, but I had been a prey of excitement and lust.

God had had no relevance whatsoever in my life. I had been agnostic, without any spiritual

experience or prayer routine. I had tried to make my way through life on my own and had never asked for help. I had seen my siblings make their way so I needed to find mine, too, on my own. "I am from an intelligent family, I will make my way"—hidden arrogance!

Probably these are the roots of my disease: "Arrogance—I can and must be Master of my life." But unconsciously in me and hidden under feelings of shyness was inferiority: "I, the little boy, how can I manage life." This dichotomy is how I remember my childhood: On the outside, in daily life, I would function well. But on the inside I felt lonely and unhappy, and dreamed myself away. In an illusionary world, where

I would be strong and powerful. And loved—by a wonderful princess!

As a young fellow, I had always had a deep desire to be relieved from loneliness by a beautiful "princess-woman" and to experience sexuality. My fantasies had been overwhelming, but nobody had told me that I must be patient and wait for the right person to come! I had been shy, fearful and felt inferior and inappropriate, and I had been deeply afraid that no girl would want me. So I had remained alone with my desires.

I had always been longing for "the princess" who would fill my life. I had met a girl at university and we soon had had sex. I had not even loved her, my desire for finally having the sexual experience had been so overwhelming. She had gotten pregnant almost immediately and I had felt trapped - marriage, spouse, child, family. Settled! I was only 22 and I was crying for experiencing life! *I saw then that my dreams had not been for her, but for having sex with her. Too late!*

In this first marriage I should have been happy because my wife was pretty, intelligent, practical, and loved me. We got three more boys, but I was never able to be happy because she was not "my princess"! My dream remained unfulfilled, I never experienced peace. And there was my desire for sex, and hidden lust. I was married and I wanted legitimate sex, three times a day! My wife withdrew more and more. I developed terrible frustration, and started with prostitutes and affairs—blaming my wife.

I was not able to admit my part, but was always blaming my wife. I acted out with sexual fantasies, prostitutes, and masturbation. I had affairs, even at work; four women took abortions because of me. I felt

evil and unworthy, but could not stop. I contracted a venereal disease. I felt terrible for infidelity and immorality. The infection quickly was gone but the side-effects started, pain over pain. I had ruined my health, to never gain it back in fullness.

One day in 1982 I met my "princess" and fell in deep love. I felt loved as I always had imagined! In a painful process I left my wife, our kids, our home, in order to be the "prince of my princess". But I was 40 now

A figure of light standing in my room, an incredible power, a stream of love radiated from Him to me, a love I had never experienced. It flowed over me and streamed into me.

and had responsibilities, not 20 and independent anymore, and, of course, I loved my wife and kids. My "princess" had her life too, and we did not match. She got pregnant, she left and married somebody else. That was the end of my "princess" desire for many years - a void illusion, my life torn to pieces. And it was the end of my first marriage.

I fell into a deep depression. A deep spiritual hunger arose in me. Alone in my small apartment I realized how my life—first by my desire for love, then by the hunt for lust and sexuality, had developed in a chain of catastrophes. Was there a way out? I plunged into

a new world of spiritual life, different from everything I had chased for so far.

The answer came some days later in August 1982. I had a spiritual experience like that written in the Big Book. A figure of light standing in my room, an incredible power, a stream of love radiated from Him to me, a love I had never experienced. It flowed over me and streamed into me. It filled the deep abyss of all my longings, desires, wishes. It filled me and made me whole. I knew who He was. All pain and fear vanished from me. I overflowed with love. He was - and still is - the end and the aim of all my lifelong desires.

I was newly born, in love and in life. Depression vanished in a moment, to never come back. My quest for the source of life came to its end; HE was my life. HE filled everything, nothing in me remained empty. This day remains the most important in my life, my spiritual birth. Many times since then I have experienced His presence, His love, His mercy and grace. And everything in my life became new, came into a new order:

1. I had, from this day on, a Higher Power. I will never forget the strange feeling awaking the next morning: I was not alone anymore in the universe! I was not alone anymore in the universe! I had a God who was in the deepest sense connected with me, who, in a certain sense, *was* me! He was around me, was in me, loved me, was responsible for me! An absolutely new and strange feeling. And in this new feeling I realized what I had made my "higher power": Women and sexuality, lust and greed, arrogance and inferiority
2. My life received sense and aim.

My HP is the sense and the aim—not me.

3. He healed my deep pain from the loss of that woman. In one moment, all pain was gone.
4. He brought me in contact with other people who love Him.
5. He gave me a new wife, Christine. He directed me into the Program through her. She found the White Book, which brought me into SA in 1987. Reading Roy's story revealed to me my life's disaster: "Lust" was the key. Meeting soon Roy in person was my HP's grace, a great privilege.

Having now found what I was suffering from, I understood that He had made me sober. But now my task was to acquire and to preserve this sobriety. Sobriety from acting out, I was given from the first day. But I kept underestimating the impact of lust within me, "acting in" as a friend called it, the invisible monster.

This led me in 2008 to losing my SA sobriety of over 20 years. I left my second marriage of 22 years and resumed the relationship with the "dream-princess" I had fallen in love at the end of my first marriage—and with whom I had a daughter. But this quickly turned out to be too much for me. I felt overwhelmed, confused, chaotic, and full of fear. I felt that I did not have the strength and life power to break up and my Program, and my marriage, and my Higher Power! I was struggling for clarity and for direction.

I flew to the July International Convention in Akron where I hoped to find clarity and direction. When I arrived there, I asked for a check meeting with a group of longtime sober members and told them what I

had done. I also shared in big meetings and received helpful response.

As a result, I broke off the relationship, renewed my sobriety commitment—and restarted my program from zero. That day, July 10, 2008, was when I accepted for the second time that I was completely powerless over lust and unable to manage my life on my own, and is my current SA sobriety date.

To let go of this "dream-love" was painful, but at the same time a relief. Accepting this truth was painful as I had always had the deep desire, well-hidden in my heart, to live with that woman, sometime, somehow. In Akron I received the honesty and clarity that this "love" had been in

That day, July 10, 2008, was when I accepted for the second time that I was completely powerless over lust and unable to manage my life on my own, and is my current SA sobriety date.

reality an addictive move, an illness, not able to carry me. And without Program and HP there was no way to continue! So I turned home from Akron, and turned back to my own life and wife.

In the months after this I started seeing how this relapse turned out to be beneficial for my recovery. Being free from the icon-like reputation

of "over 20 years sober" in the German fellowship was good for my humility—if I ever had had something like humility! After some time, people started addressing me and I gained a bunch of sponsees, where before I hardly had any lasting sponsee relationship.

Today, I am very vigilant about the impact of lust within me, the "acting in", the invisible monster. This is and has to be my ongoing work. Listening to others in the program, inventorying my disease, inventorying my character defects, learning to surrender my glances, learning to surrender the curiosity from my childhood for women and their bodies, and for the sexuality of others—a never-ending task.

This is a life-long disease. I am powerless over my life and lust. "Life is not designed to be manageable by me and my strength", I heard in a meeting. So recovery is one day at a time! Of course I would love recovery at once forever and in totality! But this is not the gift of the Program. I need to do my work, each day—the results come from Him. What incredible relief is it today, that I don't have to take any decisions on my own anymore, that I have my sponsor, my program, my friends, my HP!

Nothing on earth, in this life, is really mine. It is all loan from Him. But He is mine—if I want Him. The program makes life a daily challenge, never ending, infinite as He is infinite. In my disease, life was chaos. The Program sets an order. The opportunity to make mistakes is there as much as ever. But when I make them, they can be corrected, and do not need to ruin me—as before. Life is much more simple.

HANS L., Munich, Germany



It's A Purely One Day At A Time Journey



Thank you Lee T. for agreeing to be interviewed for Essay. Your sobriety date is 1986. During your 34 years of sexual sobriety, what have been some of the key habits and behaviors you have built and maintained to stay sober and grow in recovery?

In all of my addiction recovery programs I just use the term "recovery" instead of "abstinence" (OA), "clean" (drugs) or "sober" (SA /AA). For me, it better conveys the depth of the process of achieving a "spiritual awakening" and then continuing with "spiritual progress". It's also a purely one day at a time journey for me such that when each year passes I take a 24-hour chip instead of one for the number of years.

To your question, the most important would be participating in meetings and fellowship on a regular basis. For me, that includes meetings in other 12-Step fellowships, OA and AA. Secondly, lots of one on one sharing, maybe up to six people a day. I find there is a lot of power in this. Doctor Bob and Bill W started it all off well before there were meetings and literature. Thirdly, identifying lust as my key issue, whether that be sexual lust, or lust for food or drugs. I have to continue to pursue progressive release from lust. And finally, being patient as I utilize the tools and principles of the program.

What was SA like when you joined?

Well, Harvey A. started the first Nashville meeting with one other person, in 1984, and I joined up in 1986. There were just six of us then and only one meeting a week. Today, there are many meetings in and around Nashville. There was no telephone line or internet for the group and I remember I used to answer all the correspondence by hand.

What have been some of your major challenges over the years?

One has been the constant progression of technology. This has led to more and more powerful forms of the drug, to the point where lust now permeates our society. For example, already by 2007, the combined income of Yahoo, IBM and the American National Football League was less than that of Internet pornography. Over time, I've seen the introduction of cable TV, the 900 numbers we have in the States (phone sex), the internet and smart phones. You can now literally carry the addiction around in your pocket. People can choose to be totally immersed in it, or released from it. Thankfully, my commitment to the SA community has led to progressive release from lust as the new technologies developed. I have also had to deal with my own personal obsessive/compulsive behavior in areas like busyness and workaholicism.

What about 2020?

This year has been difficult, especially with the isolation. With my program meetings and being a retired physician, I'm used to sitting with people in a room and connecting with them. However, I've been able to embrace technology in a positive way and attend plenty of SA and OA Zoom meetings. With AA, I have depended on phone conversations with other alcoholics. I've also been staying in contact via text messages and telephone calls more than ever before and have stayed committed to the program. Also, Covid-19

has meant I've had to leave Nashville for most of the year. While I still have a house there, I now spend 4 out of 5 weeks near the Great Smoky Mountains, a beautiful place in East Tennessee where it's safer for me and my wife.

Lee, you mentioned earlier about overwork. Are you enjoying a better life balance these days with hobbies and recreation?

Yes. Where I am most of the time now, I go for regular walks, about an hour each day. I really enjoy the wildlife, wildflowers and

Recovery needs to be your main priority- everything else in your life is built around it.

walking my two miniature dachshunds. I'm also a bit of an information "junkie" and love to learn new things. I'm interested in science, literature, linguistics and cooking.

What would you say to newcomers, or to anyone who is struggling to get or stay sober?

Firstly, I have never seen anyone I would call a "hopeless" case. At one time, I was so powerless and depressed, I wanted to die. I had tried using psychiatric resources for four years without success. I was very near dying before I began recovering. But today, I lead a productive life which has included 27 years practicing medicine before I retired. To those who struggle, I would ask them – "Are you investing as much energy in your recovery as you did in the active addiction?" "Are you willing to go to any lengths for release from lust?" "Do you understand that recovery is not a part-time job? It needs to be your main priority – everything else in your life is built around it".

Finding Positive Reasons To Stay Sober

What is positive sobriety? I think that it's focusing on why I want to stay sober as opposed to why I don't want to act out. On page 69 in our White Book it says, "Instead of running joyously to heaven, we seem to back away from our hell, one step at a time." In early sobriety, getting out of the pain was all that I could think of. Unfortunately, once out of the immediate pain, it was very easy to remember the pleasure (real or imagined) of acting out. The White Book continues, "... often shying away from full slips, some of us think we can allow ourselves partial slips, enjoying the temporary relief they bring." What that means to me is that I need to find positive reasons to stay sober, in other words positive sobriety.

The Program is simple, not easy. I need motivation to be willing to work this Program and not to revert to my old self-defeating behaviors. To do that, I need to feel good about myself and my life. Instead of just not feeling suicidal, I need to feel happy, joyous, and free. The way I do that is to focus on all the good that working the Program has given and will continue to give me. Today in sobriety, I focus on the healthy relationships in my life. They are healthy because I have learned to separate myself from people who bring out the worst in me and set boundaries with the rest so that I can protect myself from hurt and feeling resentful.

I've learned how to talk and how to listen. I've learned to be honest with myself and others and to take responsibility for my actions. This gives me greater self-esteem. Not lying

or justifying my thoughts and actions allows me to focus on problem-solving instead of excusing myself and blaming others. I've learned that there is such a thing as constructive criticism and I think about things that are said to me. Sometimes they

I have a second chance to live a life instead of just surviving. To me, this is the gift of positive sobriety.

apply and sometimes they don't. Instead of taking things personally and then working on trying to forgive people, I remind myself as things

are happening that everyone has character defects and if the "shoe doesn't fit" I don't have to wear it. Instead, I focus on what would be the most helpful way to respond, if at all. Then I move on without any extra baggage to weigh me down.

Above all is the fact that I have a Higher Power. I trust my Higher Power. I believe that He loves me and only wants the best for me. I believe that He knows everything and takes it all into account as He guides my life. This is not always obvious, but I believe it to be true, and just believing it helps me continue doing the next right thing.

I have a second chance to live a life instead of just surviving. To me, this is the gift of positive sobriety.

CLAIRE Z., *Jerusalem, Israel*



My Higher Power Did Not Abandon Me

In December of 1999, I was 10 years sober in SA and working for a defense contractor. It was the era of Millennium bug, and no one knew what sort of effect the change of millennia would have on computer systems (the answer: not much). To help out in this effort, I was sent from my home in Maryland to Tampa, Florida to assist U.S. Special Operations Command with documenting their Y2K compliance.

This was the first time I had ever gone away for an extended length of time by myself, and I was a bit fearful about this prospect. My wife would not be coming with me; I would visit her on a few weekends, but she was

only able to come to Tampa once. It made for an emotional Christmas, the first time I ever "came home" for the holiday. When I returned to Tampa, I rang in the new millennium at a party hosted by another S-fellowship.

I had to adjust to a lot of things: staying at a hotel alone, figuring out my per diem, making my own meals so I didn't have to go out for dinner all the time, learning the lay of the land, avoiding the abundant trigger locales, and so forth. I had to surrender the nagging feeling I had that my presence there did not matter to anyone. I also had to pray for the pretty lady coworker who came down with me; I knew nothing would be gained by spending time with her, but that didn't mean I had no desire to do so.

I made lots of phone calls to SA members back home, running up a

bill of hundreds of dollars. Eventually I obtained a cell phone which helped considerably both in price and convenience. Those calls helped keep me sane. I was part of the SANet email list, another way to stay connected to the fellowship in the days long before phone or Zoom meetings. I also tried to carry the message to others whom I encountered.

Weekends (other than those spent back at home) were the greatest challenge for me because I had no idea of what to do with myself. I had time on my hands and no one to spend it with. All I knew was that I was going to find nothing but lust by staying put in my room. While I did not have my TV removed, I did return the remote control to the front desk. I talked it over with the base chaplain who admitted to having the same issue of aloneness, and told him about SA as well. At his suggestion, I began taking walks through various state parks. I avoided the really touristy areas and enjoyed the flora and fauna of west central Florida. I joined a community choir and appreciated having something to look forward to during the week. God was giving me what I needed, if not what I wanted.

Speaking of things to look forward to, I cannot possibly write this without a hat tip to the members of the Thursday night SA meeting in Lakeland, about an hour away from where I was staying. I did not miss a single meeting while I was there, and I clung to it like a shipwreck survivor to a life ring. It kept me focused on recovery during this difficult time. There were no SA meetings in the Tampa Bay area back then, although I did meet a member who had just relocated to a northern suburb for his retirement, and had informal meetings with him and another interested SA, often in

my hotel room. On some weekends I would drive to meetings in the northern suburbs of Orlando or even over to Daytona Beach or Titusville on the Atlantic coast. Finally, I managed to fly up to the January Nashville "Together 2000" convention.

My work tour was supposed to last until the end of March, but I was instead sent home early that month, meaning I would not be able to perform with the choir at a famous music hall. Within two weeks of returning to Maryland from Florida, I was laid off because the follow-on work the contractor expected from Y2K never materialized. That led to several months of unemployment, but just as with my Florida sojourn, my Higher Power saw me through it.

One of the first things my first sponsor said to me was, "One of these days, you will realize you are never alone." It may not have always felt that way in Tampa, but when I look back on that time, I see how Higher Power definitely had me in His care. I was able to do what I did not think I was capable of doing, and He did not abandon me.

PAUL T., *Nevada, USA*



Faith Was The “Antidote” FOR MY FEAR

Recently, I was waiting for some medical results, which, if negative, may have meant some serious consequences. Fear gripped me, but I did not share my feelings with anyone. Without even making a conscious decision to do so, I found myself back in self-reliance, relying on finite self instead of infinite God.

At home, I began experiencing a series of “mini-disasters” in the kitchen with some canning and cooking I was doing. This didn’t normally happen—what was going on? In this frame of mind, I went shopping for some needed household items. Walking into the store, I found myself uncontrollably taking second looks and lust “drinks”. I was incapacitated. Again, I asked myself “what is going on?” I was absolutely dumbfounded because it had been so long since I felt like this.

I stopped and reviewed the last couple of days and saw my life was becoming “unmanageable” again. Recalling how things worked so much better when I was connected to my Higher Power, I reached a moment of acceptance and cried out, “Help me God.” I sensed His response—“Write out a Fear Inventory”.

The program literature guided my writing. Answering the question “what is my fear”, I wrote “fear of dying”! Why? The unknown results of my medical tests. Then, “How had self-reliance failed me?”, “How could


trusting God help?” and “What would God have me be?” were answered to the best of my ability. I prayed for humility and the willingness to surrender the fear. Sitting quietly in conscious contact with God, I awaited His directions and guidance.

I sensed Him giving me words from the beautiful 11th Step prayer—“For it is by self-forgetting that one finds.” It was clear that I had not been focusing on God. Also, the Step Three Promises came to mind—“As we felt new power flow in, as we enjoyed peace of mind, as we discovered we could face life successfully, as we became conscious of His presence, we began to lose our fear of today, tomorrow or the hereafter ... ” (AA 63). I felt God was inviting me to trust Him.

I do not know what the future will hold. But I believe God will walk me through it as I continue to participate in the SA fellowship and practice the Steps in my daily life.

I reached a moment of acceptance and cried out, “Help me God.”

I thank God I was able to recognize the unmanageability and absence of surrender in my life and return to a faith that works. Faith was the “antidote” for my fear, as it appeared to be for Bill W, AA’s co-founder. He wrote, “In my own case, the foundation stone of freedom from fear is that of faith. ... To me, this means a belief in a Creator who is all power, justice and love; a God who intends for me a purpose, a meaning and a destiny to grow, however little and halting.” (The Best of Bill 15.)

DENNIS T., Alaska, USA 

Changing The Way I USED TO PRAY

It took me nine years in SA to realize that continually praying to God to “keep me sober”, and to “take away my lust” wasn’t working for me. I discovered that this kind of prayer was just another subtle way of trying to manage my life by asking God to do what I thought He should do for me. I was focusing on avoiding the negative, which actually kept attracting it into my experience.

I kept relapsing because I wasn’t praying for help regarding my four biggest painful feelings that created my desire to escape into lust; these feelings were some form or combination of Fear, Resentment/Anger, Shame, and Sadness/Loneliness .

I now trust that God knows my needs before I ask, and is already meeting them; however I am still often blind, and my job is to notice and affirm often that He is doing this. I have found that almost no matter where I am, or who I am with, I can always find a couple of minutes of complete privacy by saying, “I’m going to the bathroom; I’ll be right back.” Once there, I simply sit down, take a couple of deep breaths, and slowly say the following prayer out loud:

Dear God, please Remind me that I am Safe, regardless of how Anything looks. Remind me that you love me, regardless of my faults, so that I am forgiving of myself. Remind me that other people also have fears, pains, and sadness, so that I am forgiving of their faults too. God, I am now seeing your many blessings, and I am listening, with patience, for your suggestions. I am at peace. Thank you

God, for Everything.

Then, I sit in silence, breathe, and wait ... for that ‘gut’ feeling that is His gentle ‘voice’. I am grateful for my 5 years of sobriety .

STAN H., New York, USA 

Prayer AND Meditation, NOT PRAYER OR MEDITATION

Recently, I awoke early to start my day before it became hot and humid. I prayed my usual prayers, but thought to myself that I would save morning meditation to a more convenient time. Perhaps this was the beginning of obsession trying to creep into my mind as I ignored the line, “On awakening let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead. We consider our plans for the day ...” (AA 86). Later, I listened to an AA speaker podcast and was laughing along with the speaker, feeling inspired until the same speaker began to share the “What it’s like now” part of his story. He shared about his four years of marriage and six month-old baby. I felt upset, inadequate, perhaps self-centered. I said to myself, “Where’s mine? I deserve that!” I then said it to God. The next thing I noticed was a strange, dark sexual thought that I should act out sexually via porn and masturbation so I could know what my sponsees go through when they slip. Further insanity!

A warning concerning Step 11 from the Big Book came to my mind, “It is not probable that we are going to be inspired at all times. We might pay for this presumption in all sorts of absurd actions and ideas.” (AA 87). So, it is about “progress, not perfection” with

prayer and meditation. If I wanted to experience a reprieve from lust and defects of character, then I had better work the Steps on this. I texted a local sponsee. In the text, I worked Steps One through Four. I admitted my wrongs to God, to myself and the sponsee.

We worked the 12 Steps together, quickly, and urgently. I prayed silently, "God, please show me who to help?" I believed the action would be living amends, as the Big Book says, "So we clean house with the family, asking each morning in meditation that our Creator show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness and love." (AA 83).

I then noticed a notification on my phone about a sponsee in Europe who had another Step Five to give away. If I had spent time in meditation, thinking about the day ahead, I would have seen the appointment on my calendar. Forgiving myself, I gave a quick prayer of gratitude and prepared for hearing the 5th step. I probably got out of it more than the sponsee. We have different religions and cultures, but there was such unity and Real Connection in sharing with each other our Higher Power's will for us when we experienced quiet time/meditation together. There is a line in the White Book, "Meditation has proven to be not only beneficial to mind and body but one of the best natural methods of quieting our inner disturbance. These results can appear in meditation even apart from any prayer or religious association." (SA 139). I continue to get so much out of SA! Thanks to my sponsees, my sponsor and the fellowship. Thanks for letting me share!

Hal C., Virginia, USA



A Moment Of Serenity

The morning smells like smoke
A building is burning
The siren is running
But I am humming

The floor is shattering
The very ground cracking
Unsteady are the feet
But I walk to the beat

The battlefield raging
Guns and bullets racing
Life and death at a sudden chance
But I through the darkness dance

I have surrendered life itself
My ego shelved
To God I let my cards fold
And for a moment
I am just a living soul.

I wrote this during a hard time in the pandemic where I found calm through connecting with God and the program. I have had and continue to have hard times but once in a while God gives me a moment of serenity amongst the chaos and I feel happiness connecting to the soul within me.

ALLISON A., Israel



SA CFC



Dear sponsor,

First of all, I hope and pray that you and your loved ones are in good health, and under God's loving care. I want to thank you for the email. I appreciate your time and willingness to figure out a way to reach out to me. I am doing fine thanks to God. A lot of us came out positive with COVID and were moved to another yard for a couple of weeks. Anyway, there was a lot going on here for a while. Things seem to be getting back to some kind of normal. Thankfully, though positive, I never felt any symptoms. Unfortunately there were three inmates that died.

Well, you say that you haven't heard from me but actually I sent you Step 8 and didn't get any response from you, this is a few months ago. I guess something happened and we both were waiting on each other. Funny, isn't it? Any how, I am more than interested in continuing working the steps with you, I need it!!

I am at the point in my life that recovery is not something I do, but rather it is my way of living, it no longer feels like an obligation or a burden, I enjoy it!!

I hope this letter gets to you and we can continue with the steps. Thank you for your help, and your time—God bless!!

Sincerely,

José B., California, USA



Ask CFC

Dear Ask CFC, When sponsoring someone via mail, how do you discern or "cut through" whether they are truly willing, or just bored in jail and want human contact/letters?

That's a great question! I try not to judge the reasons why a prisoner responds. That said, I always explain to a newbie the reasons wanting to reply—working the Steps and Traditions, for a start. We offer a well-defined program. They need to think it over, with an understanding of how we run.

Usually, a prisoner will not write at first unless they believe they are "qualified" and need help. If you want, we have template letters available. Isolation is a big part of wanting to connect.

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

Life Is Good Down Under



freedom. There was lots of laughter and some tears.

Two members talked about their experience with SA prison work. One of them shared the story of his US prisoner spouse which filled the room with so much love, the other spoke about trying to get SA into Aussie prisons.

We also had speakers talk about the NSW Intergroup and Australian National Service Board (ANZSB). We welcomed our first newcomers from the central coast, which is our newest growth area.

So much great stuff happened. It's really hard to write it down in a couple of sentences. The Aussie fellowship is alive and well and growing! "Fair dinkum!" (Keep it real.)

MONDAY NIGHT BEGINNERS GROUP
Newcastle, Australia



Last Sunday nine of us came together to celebrate at the 5-hour Newcastle Australia Conference, while an average of another 20 members zoomed and called in. Among us were two first nation Australians and one woman. We had guest speakers from all over our island—Gold Coast, Perth, Melbourne, Sydney and Newcastle. There was also a member from Alaska and Singapore, and two US fellows.

God stood up and showed us the way. We walked together through all 12 Steps to

Annual Fall Speaker Marathon counted 300 Attendees

We recently had our annual fall speaker marathon in the US Capital Area (District of Columbia, Virginia, Maryland), which we call "Gratitude Day". The 12-hour marathon on Zoom had several attendees throughout the day. With more than 10 speakers from SA Regions in the United States and Canada, plus a keynote speaker, the support was great. One session included questions and answers related to the theme "Carry the message".

We welcomed attendees from more than 20 countries around the world with approximately 300 attendees, representing the diversity that is the SA Fellowship. Here are some countries from which attendees joined us: United States, Canada, Mexico, Colombia, Brazil, France, Ireland, England, Belgium, Spain, Egypt, Kenya, Israel, Iraq, India, Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, and Sweden. Personally, I want to thank all those who came to support our Area's intergroup marathon, speakers, SA service "junkies" etc.

HAL C., *Gratitude Day 2020 Chairman*



To The UK Convention Committee Organizers

Greetings from an extremely grateful member, just 9 weeks into SA, and sober in no small part due to the UK November Convention. I am writing to thank you.

I tried to donate the next day, but must have been in good company, as it would not go through. Today I have successfully transferred a donation, as a goodwill gesture in thanks.

I was at just about every meeting, snatching snacks and drinks in the 15-min intervals. I only missed one or two, but had to leave at lunch Sunday exhausted. So I soaked up SA in all her glory. Any manner of tips and principles, on how to live this new life I have espoused.

I have already made friends in SA, and one in particular used to help me get through the long days, and answer issues and questions, privately in the chat box. Between these and the speakers, I absorbed tons of good guidance.

I could not have come across so much in months of regular attendance, even at my usual 3 or so meetings a day. And especially grateful that one meeting had 3 faith-centred speakers, who between the lines might have shared my Faith, although of course they would never say so. I was grateful to relate.

Another meeting had 3 women speakers. This was terrific for me as a woman, to identify with and feel comfortable.

I love SA dearly, it gives me hope where I had none, and promises a freedom I have never known! Peace, joy, fraternity, etc etc.

I wish with all my heart that I had been sent your way 45 years ago.

It was also great to meet so many sober old-timers. Sobriety lengths inconceivable to me! My Dad taught me the old adage that "95% of men [act out], and the other 5 % are liars", from his own life and his mates' experience. So to meet men who give dates in the 80s and 90s is mind-blowing to this struggling newbie. So I wish to thank you, for all the preceding reasons, and for your excellent choice of speakers.

Lastly, I was totally delighted with the talent show!!! There is comedy on my TV every night, but I am too dour to put it on, not feeling I deserve the recreational time off. I nearly gave it a miss, but was so overjoyed I came. I stayed at the lock-in afterwards, where they let me sing the *Regina Caeli* short Latin chant, and give over a clean funny joke and then a story. Three acts!

I have never ever done anything in a show before. I did pretty well with the quiz too, where years in AA helped with the general knowledge. It was an incredibly rewarding evening, and definitely the part I shall remember the most from the convention. Thank you for this boost in my early SA recovery. I feel much better equipped for the program, and have gone to bed at night far more frequently than prior to my attendance, where sexual panic kept me up.

What a resounding success!!!

KATHIE S., *Devon, England*



The Fellowship In Africa Is Beginning To Feel More Connected

At this moment there are strong and foundational fellowships in Kenya (54 members), South Africa (16 members), and Egypt (90 members). Other countries like Botswana, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Mauritius, Morocco, Nigeria, Tunisia, Zambia, and Reunion Island have only one or at best a couple of members.

Three WhatsApp groups are connecting the members who are scattered over this huge continent. The fellowships report that they are beginning to feel more connected to the worldwide fellowship and are mostly in need of literature.

If you want to help, please contact Juan Carlos L. at juancarloslessay@gmail.com.

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!



1,200
ATTENDEES
LAST YEAR!

SIM2020
MARATHON

REGISTER FOR FREE AT

simhp.com

(PREVIOUS ATTENDEES MUST REGISTER AS WELL)

that pointed out where we needed to improve the process.

We worked very hard to capture attention at a glance, to come up with a design concept that would feel welcoming, even to skittish newcomers who might have been concerned about anonymity. We maximized visual information, created several Zoom background images, and provided promotional pictures.

Numerous volunteers worldwide played a role, even while some personally battled COVID or were caring for sick relatives. They gave generously of their time, talent, and creativity. One participant commented, *“there was a very rich international contingent. This is a human problem. It shows up in all cultures. Which means we are not alone.”*

Multilingual talent collaborated with our very talented graphic designer to produce flyers in almost a dozen languages. Speakers and panelists from past SIM events, as well as newer members of the fellowship took time to advise us on strategies to increase outreach. Various moderators of phone, zoom, and in-person meetings regularly announced the event.

From newbies only 2-3 weeks in SA, all the way to others with 30+ years in the program, everyone knew that the 2020 SA Internet Marathon was the place to be. A new fellow from Australia said, *“I am a new attendee of an Australian group, so it was nice to see faces and hear more of their stories. Then I heard the young adult panel, and it was so nice to see others in the program around my age.”*

During various sessions on all channels, SIM volunteers encouraged participants to make a 7th Tradition donation to SAICO. The membership responded, and we raised \$2,600 USD to help ensure the future of this and other outreach events. The opportunities to interact with speakers and panelists were extremely valuable according to survey results and conversations overheard in the SIM Cafe.

One UK resident recounted her experience: *“I was impressed by how well organised the whole event was. The hosts were so warm and welcoming, and the*

speakers were incredible. A speaker talked about choosing a sponsor who you are afraid of so you can't manipulate them. Another panelist spoke of his respect for old-timers who continue to lead with their weakness and work the steps.”

The SIM Cafe WhatsApp group grew around 300%, as members of various SA groups spread the word, and as people joined from the link in the weekly newsletter. People obtained information about other meetings, sponsorship, and other resources. Best of all, it provided a sense of community to continue making the real connection.

There was a bit of competition about who would miss the most sleep in order to consume as many sessions as possible. Some got by on minimal sleep—only a few hours. Extreme? Maybe. But hadn't we been extreme at times in our disease also? Thankfully, we have recordings! The vast majority of speakers have already given their consent to share their talks. SIM Cafe was the first to get the link, and more recordings are being added as we speak.

Some favorite quotable quotes attendants reported were:

“Inventory my day instead of judging my day.”

“The steps keep me from committing suicide. The Traditions keep me from committing homicide. The concepts keep me from committing genocide.”

“I don't get the first step...It gets me.”

“Forgiveness is when you carry the weight of what someone else did to you without expecting anything from them.”

An early survey responder, who would have liked to be considered as a speaker, suggested that we cast a wider net for next year's speaker search. Another person who filled out the survey saw SIM as a potentially good service opportunity for their sponsees. Dozens more volunteered to be part of the extended SIM planning family next year. Our team intends to reach out to them right away, to strike while the iron is hot.

A speaker from Channel B was very moved by the opportunity, and said, *“It*

brings tears to my eyes to know I have been chosen to be a part of this. Sober or not, every one of us are part of something great and miraculous.”

SAICO trustees who participated in the SIM planning meeting a week after the event were pleased with the turnout and the effort that this team put together over the course of 12 months.

They had special words of appreciation for the team, as had one member from the midwest who said, *“I feel close to my S.A. fellows and grateful. Congrats everyone for SIM, for sobriety, and for another day sober. And thanks to the beautiful HP who keeps us all sober and helps us get well.”* Isn't that the transformation we are truly after? Not only having sobriety for its own sake, but to see the proof in our lives that we can go from unmanageability to being well.

As soon as the SIM2020 broadcast ended, our team immediately started changing our communications to reflect planning for SIM2021. This year's turnout held a lot of lessons for future planning, which will include having more members of the fellowship participate.

In the words of one of our speakers in Europe, *“SA is maturing,”* and he felt a lot of joy at the mix of presentations that ranged from conversations with old-timers, archive material, young people in recovery, and more women being heard.

We want to acknowledge Gene T for his service in chairing the SIM Planning Committee these last three years. A new chair and vice-chair will now lead the team, but we will all remain of service while making room for more committee members. And again we want to acknowledge everyone who chose to set aside other commitments and activities to be a part of the event.

We look forward to another great event next year!

In grateful service,

RINA R., New Jersey, USA
Head of SIM2020 Publicity



Recap of SIM 2020 & What's Next

Over 2500 sexaholics from 80+ countries around the world came to experience for themselves that God is surely for each one of us. That was more than twice the 1200 people who even registered for last year's event.

Some people brought the SIM broadcast into their normally scheduled meetings. One attendee in the US reportedly *“joined on Zoom but passed the numbers on to several members of my group who do not have access to the internet. It was awesome. I wish I could have seen more of the event, but the three meetings I attended were very very good.”*

In prior years, when there wasn't a pandemic, there were not many options for online recovery meetings. We needed to stand out from innumerable Zoom meetings that are now available. This is, in part, why the SIM planning team made an active appeal for our mailing list to amplify our reach. We published testimonials on the website and in the newsletter, and we incorporated feedback

Fly To Atlanta For Only \$15!!

SA • S-Anon • S-Ateen
2021 VIRTUAL INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION


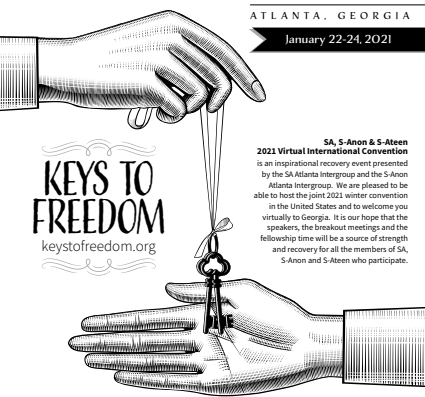
ATLANTA, GEORGIA
January 22-24, 2021

KEYS TO FREEDOM
keystofreedom.org

SA, S-Anon & S-Ateen 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









New SA Groups December 2020

Europe, Asia, and International

- ♦ Christchurch, New Zealand 

North, Central, & South America

- ♦ Idaho Falls, Idaho, USA (additional meeting) 
- ♦ Kenner, Louisiana, USA (women's meeting) 
- ♦ Provo, Utah, USA (additional meeting) 
- ♦ Bogotá, Colombia 
- ♦ Oruro, Bolivia 
- ♦ Mexico City, Mexico 

International Zoom Meeting

For young SA members under 30
Sundays 10:00am EST
Email Ferro for further information:
essay.ferro@gmail.com

2020 Will Be The Year Of SA!

The Spanish SA Winter Convention had a strong focus on staying sober with panelists from all over the Spanish-speaking world, among whom old-timer Harvey A. who shared his invigorating joy with us.

Each day began and ended with prayer and meditation. I really felt my fellows around me, despite only seeing their names or images on the screen. We all contributed at the talent show. There was a lot of joyful laughter.

Three days of service, dedication, and fellowship. God was with us during the weekend. I felt like running through the corridors to attend the next meeting, wanting to hug each of my fellow-members.

2020 will not be the year of COVID. It will be the year of SA!

JUAN CARLOS L., *Madrid, Spain*



Women Volunteers

Due to issues of security and privacy, the Trustees have had to shut down the international Sisters' List.

Therefore, like in the past, female newcomers have to call SAICO if they want to get in contact with another woman. SAICO is looking for names of sober women who want to volunteer to be contacted in such a way.

Sober women willing to be contacted by newcomers can contact SAICO to volunteer for this service: saico@sa.org

2020 Q4 SAICO Budget Results

♦ Revenue	47,961 \$
♦ Expenses	29,889 \$
♦ Revenues - Expenses	18,072 \$
♦ Prudent Reserve	132,676 \$

The Fellowship In India Is Growing!

In the last few months, paradoxically because of the terrible pandemic, more members in India (and other "remote" places) are able to join international meetings on platforms like Zoom. This allows newcomers to see "how it's done" from members with experience around the world. It is estimated that of our current 147 members, around 60 are actively working the steps with a sponsor, with about 30 of whom have several months of sobriety.

Several online meetings in Hindi and/or English exist, and the next step will be establishing an intergroup. A few members from Pakistan are also working the steps, joining forces with the Indian resources. A WhatsApp group, Essay India, is very successful and includes 197 members (147 from India, Indians living abroad, and several sober non-Indians to foster a more sober culture.)

If anyone would like to help in guiding our young fellowship—in terms of sponsorship, building an intergroup, being a speaker at our meetings, etc. please contact Sexaholics Anonymous India at essayindia12@gmail.com.



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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

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



WELCOME TO
 SA, S-Anon & S-Ateen
 2021 International Convention

Keys to Freedom: SA & S-Anon 2021SA & S-Anon & S-Ateen 2021 International Convention is an

Regional and Local Events

DEC 27 2020 **ONLINE** SA JACS Toronto Speaker Event
 From Lust To Love sajacs2018@gmail.com

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

26 April, 7:26 pm

SAVE THE DATE

ASIA PACIFIC AREA
 ONLINE UNITY
 EVENT 2021

25 APRIL 2021

"We have entered the world of the Spirit. Our next function is to grow in understanding and effectiveness." AA 84

WWW.SA.ORG

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

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COMING IN FEBRUARY

YOUNG AND SOBER



NEXT EDITION In the February issue, read how a growing number of young members all around the globe are enjoying a sober life.

Reporting on The Atlanta IC

International reactions on "The Keys To Freedom", the 100% online International Convention in January 2021.

Young And Sober In Israel

The Israeli fellowship is well-known for having loads of young members knocking on the door of SA for help.

A Little Lusting Doesn't Work For Me

His HP spoke to him through the meeting and he knew he needed to take some kind of action—or else!

Twice Saved

In addition to physical recovery, he doubled down on recovery.

SUBMIT YOUR STORY

February edition: Young And Sober In SA (stories due Jan 1) We'd like to hear your story of being a young person in our world wide fellowship.

May edition: What Makes Meetings Strong? (stories due April 1) How are you making your meeting into a strong spiritual gathering?

August edition: Emotional Sobriety (stories due July 1) Tell us how you went from mere abstinence to emotional sobriety.

October edition: Learning From Our Old-timers (stories due Sept 1) Hey, old-timers, let's hear from you! What was SA like years ago?

December edition: 1981-2021 - 40 Years Of Essay! (stories due Nov 1) Send us some stories or anecdotes of how Essay inspired your or your group's recovery.

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*.

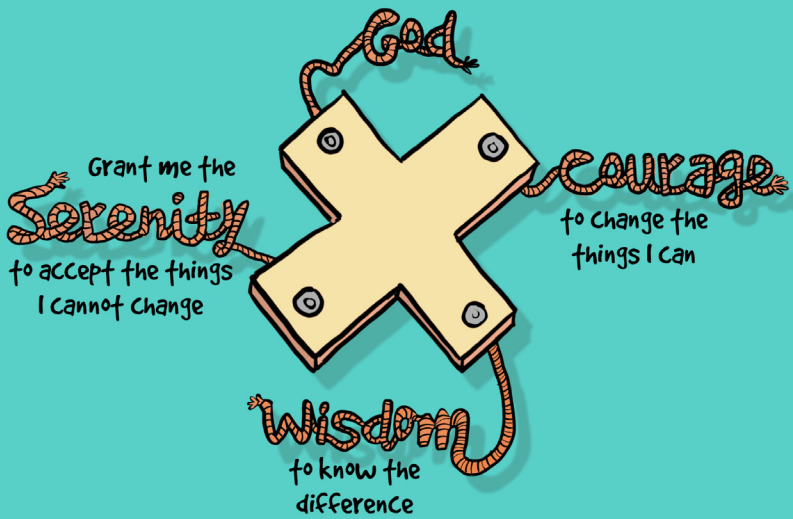
THE TWELVE STEPS OF SA

- 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

Wisdom

to know the
difference