

ESSAY

FEBRUARY 2021, SA.ORG

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SEXAHOLICS ANONYMOUS



YOUNG & SOBER

in the fellowship of SA

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



February 2021

Dear *Essay* readers,

Our Fellowship continues to attract more and more young people from all over the world—men and women who learn from the experience of those who have gone before them and do not have to descend so deep in the bottomless abyss of the addiction. You can devour their stories under the heading “Young & Sober in SA.”

Essay launches a fun, international recovery tool on April 4, called “The Game.” It is a proven way to establish new habits in 30 days. Read all about “The Game” on pages 10-11.

Relish how a US member works his program on his yoga mat; follow how a Canadian fellow did 90 meetings in 90 days in order to obtain the needed shift in attitude; marvel at how SA sobriety is growing in Kenya; and get inspired by the story how Australia got its first ever SA program in a prison.

In fellowship,
THE EDITORIAL TEAM

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February 2021

“As this trend grew, they were joined by young people who were scarcely more than potential alcoholics. They were spared that last ten of fifteen years of literal hell the rest of us had gone through.”

12 Steps & 12 Traditions 23

PRACTICAL TOOLS

The Program on My Yoga Mat.....8

His daily confrontation with the program while doing yoga

We Are Not A Glum Lot.....9

Coronavirus and addiction

Play “The Game”.....10

A 30-day challenge to create new recovery habits

90 in 90 After Losing Sobriety...E3

This Canadian member obtained an attitude shift by daily meetings



*On the cover:
More and more
young people
are joining the
world wide
fellowship
and making
it stronger for
everyone*

ON THE COVER: YOUNG & SOBER IN SA

A Young Adult in Recovery.....12

This Iranian fellow got rescued by God through SA

Joining SA At Such a Young Age...E12

It sounds like two galaxies crashing together

A Girl Enters SA At 19.....E14

She found her recovery home in SA Jerusalem

Surrounded By Experience.....E16

This Polish young man learns from the experience of his older brothers

Accepting SA Was God's Gift..E18

The years ahead of her are full of opportunity and joy

Brought Up With The Internet..E19

At age 21 he got into meetings with most members double as old as himself



Are You Sure You're a Sexaholic?.. 16

This young Argentinian member notices the little beautiful things of life today

He Found "The Textbook" 17

His religion had given him the theory, but in SA he started putting it into practice

The Root was Lust.....E20

He commenced living on a new clock: 24 hours

Being Young and Sober..... 18

Having started his recovery in Iranian Kurdistan, he is now instrumental in SA Greece

SA STORIES

Sobriety grows In Kenya.....21

Sober since 2016 he experiences the blessings of the fellowship

The Drawing Slowly Appeared.E22

His recovery drawings still make his eyes brim with emotions

Sobriety and Longevity.....24

He shared the secret of how to become an old-timer

STEPS & TRADITIONS

Writing Amends Letters.....27

Discovering the healing grace of anonymous amends letters

Positive Connections E24

Whenever I am disturbed, ...

Relinquishing Control.....E25

His HP set up a beachhead in his Soul

WORLD WIDE NEWS

Report on the Atlanta IC.....29

Prison Program in Australia..... E26

Online Services Task Force.....E27



ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

SA Purpose.....	2
Responsibility Declaration.....	2
Statement of Principle.....	2
Dear Essay Letters.....	6
Participating In The Fellowship.....	E6
Worldwide Walls of SA.....	7
Literature News.....	9
Ask An Old-timer.....	E13
Discussion Topic.....	15
New Meetings.....	E26
Finance Report.....	E26
SA CFC.....	28
Events Calendar.....	30/31
SA Notice Board.....	32
Coming In May.....	33
Submissions to Essay.....	33
Steps/Traditions.....	34/35



It Works — It Really Does

I LOVE HOW SIMPLE THIS PROGRAM IS.

Being someone who overthinks, I start obsessing over what I need to do about this or that. If I make a mistake or don't do something, I immediately think I'm going off the rails into a relapse. None of that is true. We are practicing 24 hour living. I can start my day over at any time. I can make adjustments to get back on course.

I am also a compulsive overeater. Over the last 3 months I have gained weight. When I shared that with my sponsor, he made some suggestions to get back on course. Nothing drastic. No crash diet or extreme exercise program. Simple changes.

Over the last 3 days, I have missed morning meditation. Again, my brain tells me I'm heading towards a cliff. The solution is simple. Start my

day over. Sit down, relax, breathe, read AA 86-88, pray, ask for direction.

I have been skeptical from the beginning about Bill's instructions for morning meditation. It can't be that simple, but it really is. And I love the promise he gives us. It's short but powerful. "It works-it really does." AA 88

MICHEAL B., TN, USA



Barney Shared His Life With US

OUR BELOVED FRIEND AND GUIDE, BARNEY

W., has passed on to his reward. He was a founder of SA Pittsburgh who really carried the message while encouraging us in our own journeys to freedom. Barney shared his story and his life with us and our families, and did it in such a way that won him great respect from us, the Central Office staff, and SA's founder.

Barney's sobriety date has always been May 3, 1986. He was one of ten clients of a therapist who was using the "Twenty Questions" as a guide working with them in a group. Then he offered them a meeting room and told them to help each other. This building was in the red light district, and after their meeting, the guys would walk each other to their cars so as to safely depart the area. One day the other guys gave Barney the registration fee

and plane fare to attend the SA Convention in LA, with the instructions to get all literature he could lay his hands on and all the information about tools to work with. He found out that there was a central office in Simi Valley, and was soon on a first name basis with them.

He agreed to be my sponsor also. He had several men living with him at different times when they lost their homes. When he considered remarrying, he told her about his work, saying she had the right to say no to him, but she had met several of us, and said yes. Throughout the years, Barney maintained his leading sobriety, and every year we had a dinner celebration eating out with him; eventually some of us brought our wives, and one member brought his parents. When Barney's sponsor left the program, there was no one with more sobriety to be his sponsor — he said we would sponsor each other. Barney was always a humble man and praised those with tech skills who could use a computer. He always had our intergroup office in his house, and had a couple of us as backups in case something happened to him.

Barney had a stroke and had had heart problems for years, but his heart was always big and strong for all of us. He is being sorely missed, but will live on in our hearts.

LARRY H., PA, USA



World Wide Walls Of SA

SA meetings can be held just about anywhere ...



Friday evening meeting,
Fayoum, Egypt



Thursday group "Sobriedad",
Alcala de Henares, Spain



"Living Sober" group,
Bogotá, Colombia



Thursday "Domaniewska" group
Warsaw, Poland



Share your photos

Send your meeting place to
Essay@sa.org.

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

Participating In The Fellowship Of SA

We absolutely insist on enjoying life!



*Ukrainian fellowship,
Kiev, Ukraine*



*Skiing retreat,
Slovakian mountains*



*Fun on Curracloe Beach,
Wexford, Ireland*



*Walk in medieval city center,
Ghent, Belgium*



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.



*SA after-meeting in park,
Jerusalem, Israel*





WANT TO HELP ANOTHER SEXAHOLIC?

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

Sexaholics Anonymous 205

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

The *Essay* is a Great Twelfth Step Tool!

Give a gift subscription of the print version to a sexaholic who needs it.

Great for: ♦ Sponsees ♦ Newcomers ♦ Prisons ♦ Rehab Centers
♦ Doctor's Offices ♦ Giveaways ♦ Group Celebrations ♦ Intergroup
and Regional Events

Get your group, intergroup, region, or SA friends to join in.
Carry the Message, it's easy!

How About Giving A Print Version To Yourself?

- ♦ Get the five annual print issues for only \$20/year to addresses in the United States and Canada.
- ♦ Outside North America for \$26 USD/year.
- ♦ Group rate (10+ copies sent to one address) for \$17.50/year to USA addresses. Multiple year subscriptions are welcome.
- ♦ Visit www.sa.org to subscribe or for information.

Working the Program on My Yoga Mat

Yoga has become a parallel and interconnected path on my physical, emotional, and spiritual recovery. Recently, I took a Yin Yasa yoga class. The theme of the class was “letting go.” Hmm, I thought as we proceeded, where have I heard that before?

During a pose centered around opening our hips, the teacher came back to the notion of “where can I let go.” Her statement stirred two reactions in me. First, I realized how much tension I grip in my body, which allowed me to work deeper into the pose as I let go at the muscular level. Second, and more profound, the statement brought to my mind the adage of “let go, let God” from our literature. And the more I thought about this (amidst thinking my hips were going to explode), the more I asked myself, where am I holding on too tightly in my recovery which raised the following questions ...

1. Why do I fight the unmanageability and powerlessness of my disease despite nearly 40 years of adverse field research and relapsers returning with emotional and spiritual hat in hand?
2. Why is my default mechanism “self-reliance” instead of a Higher Power?
3. Why do I wrestle with control and try to fix, cure, judge, opine and shape rather than just let go?
4. Am I being honest and fearless enough with my character defects, or do I clench up to avoid the necessary pain that precedes emotional and spiritual release?

5. Am I fully willing to bring my defects to the light, or am I holding back because I can't really trust the process?
6. Can I really trust something bigger than me to fully remove these character defects, or am I holding onto them too tightly because there is comfort in my discomfort?
7. Can I submit myself to a higher power as I understand it and truly shed the dysfunctional baggage, or do I want to grip too much to the old, rotted ways?
8. Is my amends list really thorough, or am I holding on too much to the fear of reprisal and accountability?
9. Can I make all the amends I need to, or do I hold on too tightly to my ego, pride and shame?
10. Am I taking a daily inventory and fixing my errors in real time, or am I gripping too hard to complacency and arrogance?
11. Am I seeking out conscious contact with my HP, or am I holding on too much to my will?
12. Am I being of enough service, or am I too stuck on me?

Each day is different on my yoga mat. Some days are fluid and effortless, many days are like turning squeaky wheels without lubricant. Each time I get onto my yoga mat, I get to set an intention and delve deeper into my recovery. Each day I arise, I get a chance to ask myself, “Where am I gripping on too tightly?”

Bill K., Huntington, NY



Is SA For Me? Am I Too Young To Be a Sexaholic?

Is SA for Me?

Am I Too Young to Be a Sexaholic?

Note: This pamphlet is intended only for those who are legally eligible to attend SA meetings; legal minors are not permitted to attend SA meetings.

What is a Sexaholic?

We sexaholics are men and women who had lost control of our sexual thinking and behavior. Before coming to Sexaholics Anonymous, we were unable to stop the thoughts and actions that continued to bring us guilt, shame, and despair. Some of us were compulsive masturbators, voyeurs, exhibitionists, unfaithful spouses, and viewers of pornography, among many other things. Regardless of the sincerity of our resolutions and other attempts to quit acting out these behaviors, our addiction drove us to do them, even though we knew they were ruining our lives.

"I was baffled by my inability to stop doing something that made me feel bad about myself and that I truly wanted to stop doing."

"Masturbation and fantasy became huge and compulsive. Eventually I would just get the thought to masturbate and I would have to go do it."

Read this wonderful pamphlet written for young members and discover that YET stands for "You're Eligible Too." Some excerpts:

Those of us who came to SA at a young age often found ourselves surrounded at meetings by people much older than we were. ... The disparity in age caused many of us to question whether we really belonged in SA. ... As we stuck around, however, we gradually realized that this was a progressive illness and that what we could truly say was that we hadn't gone as far as the others yet.

Also, even though the specifics of our stories did not match those of the older members, we discovered that the feelings of isolation, guilt, and shame caused by acting out were common to us all.

To buy this pamphlet for you and your group's literature table, just surf to the SA Store: sa.org/store/



One of the most effective Practical Tools is HUMOR.

CORONAVIRUS AND ADDICTION

We were MADE to survive this!

We are USED to an unseen illness that is trying to kill us. We live through that every single day.

We are USED to taking things as they come, one day at a time.

We are USED to isolation. We have survived loneliness innumerable times.

We are USED to quarantine, jails, institutions, detoxes, treatment centers, and more.

We are USED to turning to a Higher Power for faith, hope, and constancy.

We are USED to letting go of what we can't control, to turning it over.

We are USED to working every day to keep others alive, to keeping hope alive.

We are USED to fighting against the odds to RECOVER from a disease, to helping others RECOVER.

We have the best skill set in the world to make it through this. And somehow, someday, at the end of the day, we will be better from this. We know how to allow that improvement to happen. One day a time ...

ANONYMOUS

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



Wanna Practice an International & Fun Practical Recovery Tool?

“The Game”

New Habits for a New Freedom

The Game is a fun recovery game played in teams of five members for 30 days. The teams work together to earn recovery points by using SA Tools, one day at a time for 4 weeks. The team with the most “recovery points” after 30 days wins! It is a proven way to make friends and get support with your recovery! Newcomers are encouraged to attend. Old-timers will give their recovery a great boost. Do you feel isolated? Are you struggling to stay sober, or having difficulty establishing healthy recovery habits, or wanting to deepen your program? Join us to learn SA solutions. Do you want to have more fun AND recovery? This game is really for you!

Members practice the SAME FOUR TOOLS for four weeks FOR A MINIMUM OF 10 MINUTES A DAY (except for the phone call, which can be short)—in this way creating new recovery habits:

1. Call

Each team member makes a daily phone call for seven days to the same member to check-in his/her progress on the tools. The next week to another member, etc. ONLY if the person doesn't answer can one leave a message. The other person checks in with another member of the team.

2. Self-care

E.g. doing something nice for oneself, e.g. a walk in nature, physical exercising, cooking a healthy and tasty meal, playing an instrument, doing a hobby, doing back stretches, reading a novel, ...

3. Recovery Action

E.g. journaling, written Step work, making amends, phone calls, daily literature reading, Daily Sobriety Renewal, check-in partner, attending a meeting, translating SA literature in your language, ...

4. Spiritual

E.g. prayer, meditation, spiritual literature, yoga, positive affirmations, gratitude lists, religious practices, praying for others, ...

Each player chooses three tools to practice each day during one month. A tool done on a given day gives 25 points. The fourth tool is a daily phone call with one's check-in buddy of the week, which gives another 25 points. So, in total, one can get 100 points a day and 700 a week.

Each player also gets one joker per tool per week. These jokers can be used for a day that one isn't able to practice a tool. E.g. in the case a player doesn't do his/her walk on a certain day, he/she can put in his/her Self Care Joker, and get the 25 points anyway.

The Game is, like everything in our program, *about team work*. It is the team, not the individual, with the most “recovery points” after 30 days that wins! Each member of the winning team gets a free print version of the next *Essay* magazine delivered at their home address in an anonymous envelope. But, as in spiritual games there are no losers, every player gets by email a real Game Certificate.

Last November a pilot project of 6 teams with members from the USA, Egypt, Israel, Dubai, Germany, Poland, Brazil, Iran, Austria, Sweden, Belgium, Slovakia, Croatia, and Spain played The Game. It was a fantastic experience for each of the players. The first day the teams competed to create the coolest team name and logo:



Here are some anecdotes of the players:

I was talking to customer support yesterday for more than 40 minutes about a problem and did not get upset or angry or even impatient. The Game helped me through this challenge because I had already done some writing which helped me find peace and serenity.

Ed R., Georgia, USA

I have always filled my life with activism to the point that my quiet days or times were anything but quiet. I am like a tank charging ahead at all times. Yet through this game and being "forced" to seek true quiet time everyday, I sense a different attitude in me, grateful for the moments of silence.

RUBÉN, Manchester, UK

A super nice moment was that yesterday I prayed a 20-minute prayer of my religion (as it is my Spiritual Tool for this month). But this time, my wife Kathleen and I prayed it with a member of my team on Whatsapp! They prayed it in Latin and I "mentally" prayed in English!

MICHAEL J., Philadelphia, USA

My sponsor reminds me once in a while that recovery is a combination of a lot of things. The Game has echoed that truth for me. It's been nice to not obsess about sobriety but enjoy recovery. I'm also grateful for the opportunity to enlarge my circle of connections. It's been nice getting to know you all.

LARON W., Georgia, USA



I had a knee surgery in Australia in 2002. The operation went well but after having some sessions of physiotherapy I never really did proper post-op training/exercises to restore the muscles ... until now! My self-care tool is "15 min of physical exercise" each day, which is focused on my knee.

And for the first time in 18 (!) years my knee is getting back to normal, and has become much more stable. I thought it was too late, but - oh, miracle! - it seems that I actually got a second chance! Without The Game I would have never been so persistent over such a long time. Thank you all for being part of this!

BERNHARD R., Freiburg, Germany

- Can't wait to play The Game? We are eager to play it again too!! It will be set up every 3 months, starting from April 4, 2021. All you need is to have the free app Whatsapp on your smartphone as this app is used to connect with your team members and the other teams during the 30 days. The teams will be male-only or female-only.
- For more information and to register, contact Jakob, Germany, who will serve as your Game Coordinator: theessaygame@gmail.com
- We are looking forward to meeting and playing with you!

THE PILOT PROJECT MEMBERS

90 MEETINGS 90 DAYS

Doing 90 Meetings in 90 days After Losing Sobriety

I went back to my home group and shared what had happened. I had slipped and now it was time to face the dreaded walk back into the rooms and face the fellows I had been lying to for many years. The group was welcoming and supportive, I heard supportive and encouraging words like “It’s OK, it’s progressive victory” and “Keep coming back.”

I had to face the task of having to assist my sponsees with finding a new sponsor. I gave up my service position and could not share until everyone with at least thirty days of sobriety had shared. I could not chair another meeting until I had 90 days of sobriety. I felt judged by others—because I had sat in the room so many times and judged others who could not stay sober.

I never could have imagined the blessing that this would become. After eight years of not having the willingness to work the program, I was back to feeling like a newcomer. This time, I was ready to put the shovel down and stop digging, I had

hit the rock at the bottom. I was finally ready to abandon myself to God. He opened my eyes and showed me the truth about myself. I had a renewed energy to really immerse myself in the program.

The first step I took was to commit to attending 90 meetings in 90 days. I ended up attending 150 meeting in the 90 days. I attended my first major SA event and actively participated in the meetings I attended. I made contacts with people around the world. I started to call people in the program that I did not even know. I was doing whatever I could do to stay out of my own thoughts, thoughts that always turn to fantasy.

I live in a small town in Ontario and somehow, I found myself chairing nightly reflections meetings based out of Long Island New York. I was all in. Here I was, the guy who used to attend one meeting a week and only picked up the phone when it was convenient for me. I was now living in the solution, working the steps, attending meetings - carrying the message has now become a way of life.

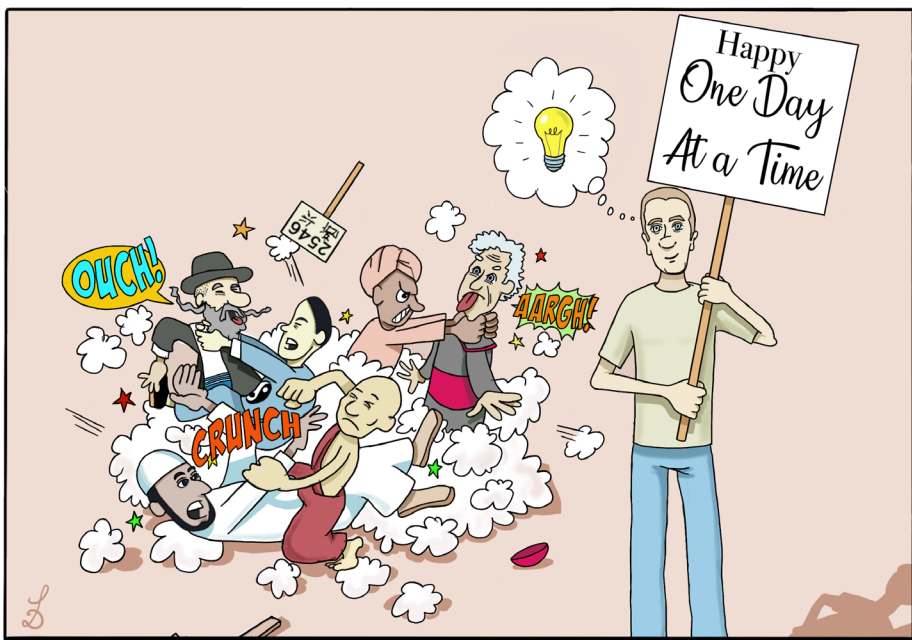
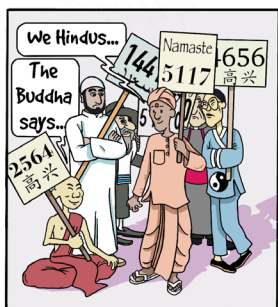
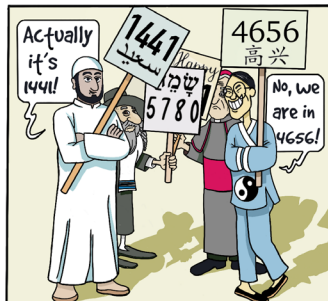
I have mentioned to other members that sometimes I feel like I should go see a doctor because my body is not used to this sustained overwhelming joy I have been feeling. I hope that my experience can help other members find comfort that there is hope after losing long-term sobriety. My recovery really only started after I slipped and fell. Out of this experience God has given me the willingness to continue to take action in this program from the moment I wake up. I do not know what tomorrow will bring but I do not concern myself with that. I am grateful that God has given me this change of attitude.

DENIS B., *Ontario, Canada*



The Practical Tool of Focusing on What We Have in Common Instead of How We Are Different

"We represent no particular faith or denomination. We are dealing only with general principles common to most denominations." BB 94



My Experience as a Young Adult in Recovery

When I stepped into my first SA meeting I was about 25 years old. When I think back on what I had experienced up to then and how I was feeling at the time, I am astonished at myself today; at how the program has changed me; the extent to which it has helped me. It's a miracle, a miracle which is still unfolding.

I was less than six years old when I was visited - uninvited! - by lust. He was a predator, nine years older than me; a relative who purported to be a friend. We were to play a game. And the game? Here, lust showed its real face, a face full of pain and abuse. I should have known it right away. LUST manipulated this person who was supposed to be my playmate, protector, and trusted relative into a deceiver, aggressor, and violator who made me the victim of the worst kind of emotional, physical and sexual abuse. I still remember the physical pain, and I will never forget the

emotional consequences. This abuse continued for another nine years, bound helplessly to people who were themselves enslaved by lust.

But in the course of it all, lust enslaved me as well. How was I going to live with this uninvited slave-master?

Before reaching puberty, I started masturbating. I don't remember if someone taught me how to do it or if I, myself, discovered it; but, in a world dominated by lust before I was even going to school, it was a natural progression. In the beginning I wasn't really aware of what I was doing. I was a child copying what the sick, abusive people around me were doing with me. But, I recognized how it acted on me, like a drug, numbing my feelings as a sexually abused little boy. The abuse was not only sexual; I was mocked, beaten, humiliated and threatened whenever I resisted my abusers. They started telling others and little by little, more and more of the older boys took advantage of me

so that after a while nowhere felt safe, not my school, not my neighborhood or even my home. I was running away from them as well as running away from myself and my feelings. In this situation masturbation seemed to be my only friend. I lived with it for hours, masturbating, until I didn't feel anything anymore.

But slowly, slowly the remedy became a bigger problem. I had been using masturbation to numb away my feelings, my reality, my life. I did not like the reality of my life. Instead of facing it and doing something to change it, I ran from it.

This made a bad situation much worse. I could have asked for help or have thought of something - anything - to help myself. Later on, I saw other children in the same situation as me who defended themselves. I don't know how they were able to take care of themselves while I couldn't; there must be some reason why. Anyway, I helped to ruin myself by my lust and by the lust of others.

For years, the abuse went on, by myself and by others—masturbation, sexual fantasies, pornography, my everyday behaviors. And the consequences came one by one - unable to make healthy connections with others; living in fear; terrible stress, anger and anxiety all the time; inability to concentrate on my studies; difficulties with family and others; memory loss; isolation, deep depression; these were all my experiences by age fifteen. This was my age too when the last of the sexual, emotional abuse episodes occurred.

By now, I was in a horrible mental, emotional and spiritual condition. I was thinking about suicide everyday, hoping every night to not see the next morning. I couldn't finish high school. I began to wonder if I had a

problem, maybe an addiction. I began to wonder if, maybe, masturbation was a problem, maybe even the root cause of all my troubles; and maybe that, if I could stop masturbating, then all my problems would be solved. For the next ten years I did whatever I could to stop masturbating. I followed a variety of strict religious practices, exercises, books, therapy; I set boundaries, asked religious leaders for help, took medication, etc.

But none of these stopped me, not even for one week. I experienced ever more guilt, shame and depression as I crossed boundary after boundary, doing things I never could have imagined myself doing. And because of my religious beliefs I felt greater shame and assumed that I was the worst, most worthless person in the world. That was a really tough situation and I felt so helpless and frustrated that I began to numb myself with other things along with lust. I blamed my family for my problems, claiming it was they who didn't take care of me when I was a child and because of that, now I am here in this situation. I also used to blame society, culture, country, financial states—anyone and everything other than me.

After trying everything I could and failing, I decided that I must get married - my last chance to get myself out of my life, the way it was. I tried hard for two more years to marry a particular girl and when I did marry her, I got many of the things I had always dreamed of—love, independence, respect, new family, job, freedom, new community, new friends, hope, ...

Then the day came when this, my last solution, failed just as my previous efforts had failed. I began lusting again, even more than before and I realized that, while everything

on the outside had changed, I was the same on the inside.

Finally, I entered the program. I had come across SA on the internet before. I can hardly describe how bad my life was by the time I entered the program. After almost 20 years of lust, I was dead to myself and to the world. I was craving lust-hits all the time, and raging and living in fear, in guilt and depression and in abusive, codependent relationships; comparing myself with others, consumed by negativity, always running from my responsibilities; always isolated.

At that first meeting, instead of feeling at home, I judged everyone there, seeing myself as different from them: they were able to share, to talk about their feelings; they were free of guilt and shame; but I was so full of shame and embarrassment that I couldn't share about myself. I felt like I was the worst person there and that if they knew who I really was, they would kick me out. I attended meetings for the next few months, but couldn't talk to others. I could not let them see my reality; I felt I was going to have to hide it for all of my life. Slowly then, little by little, I dared to think that maybe someday, maybe after a year or even more, I might be able to share something about myself.

In time, I was able to share about my past with my sponsor as he helped me through my first step. I was so surprised and relieved when he smiled after hearing my deepest secrets and said, you haven't done anything that we haven't done. He said that lust was our common problem; that lust made us do the things we did and that we are so much more, as people, than our lusting-selves. As someone with a deep religious faith, I used to regard myself as a sinful person who deserved the

worst punishments. Because of this, I very often had nightmares and panic attacks. But my sponsor told me that we were powerless over lust; we could not control ourselves at the time because we did not have any control and that God understands this. It was amazing. That day, so much of my shame disappeared. It was the first miracle in SA.

But it wasn't enough to keep me sober. What I didn't understand at the time was that this disease, my disease, is deeper than I thought. I had been working my program just like a recovery or treatment plan—parallel to, but separate from my plans in life; it wasn't my priority. I wasn't

I was so surprised and relieved when he smiled after hearing my deepest secrets and said, you haven't done anything that we haven't done.

making enough use of the tools; was not going to enough meetings, not making enough calls, not surrendering enough and doing enough step work; I hadn't told everything in my first step, especially around my feelings about being abused. Another obstacle was my interpretation of the sobriety definition—I still used pornography and engaged in lust-behaviours in my marriage. So you can guess what happened? I relapsed not once but several times over the course of the next three years.

The other thing that kept me from recovery was my resentments; severe

negative feelings towards myself and others. These feelings were so intense that I never had peace, no serenity. I was in SA for about four years by now and felt that I wasn't able to move on to the next level of recovery because of all my problems. Now I decided, OK, I worked this program but it's not helping me any more. I left the program, but, because there were no other options, I came back. I remember thinking at the time, OK, but don't expect any more help from SA ... maybe other members have thought like this before?

But God had better plans for me. Through one of the fellows who became my sponsor, He showed me a very practical way of working the Steps. After working the steps on my resentments and writing all of them out on paper, identifying my part in them, admitting my mistakes, my wrong decisions in the past, my resentments were replaced by acceptance of myself and others. And now another miracle happened—I was freed of the torment of those resentments and had a level of peace which I could never have imagined. I was able to forgive myself and those

who abused me and came to accept all the things that happened in my life.

After that, I began the next level of recovery. I got involved in a big workshop where a fellow spoke about the sobriety definition, sharpening my understanding of it. After the workshop, I got connected to the bigger, international SA fellowship which helped me to work the rest of the steps and find more peace, trust, love, acceptance, and a willingness to help people who experienced sexual abuse in their childhood.

I can say with all my heart that I am rescued by God through SA; if I hadn't found this program, this way of living, I can't imagine how my life would be today with all the negative feelings, the resentment, and hatred I had been feeling. Instead, God shows me every day now a new, exciting path in life which is way better than anything I could have imagined or have achieved on my own.

Life is so different today. And so am I. And, while I still have a long way to go in recovery, life is new, fresh, joyful, and amazing for me ...

HAMED T., *Isfahan, Iran*



DISCUSSION TOPIC

Hamed describes how he wasn't making enough use of the tools, hadn't told everything, didn't really work the Steps, had his own interpretation of the sobriety definition, etc.

He goes on by telling how his resentments kept him from recovery; how after four years in SA he felt he wasn't

Have I been working my program like a recovery or treatment plan—parallel to, but separate from my plans in life? Is my program really my priority?

able to move to the next level because of all his problems.

Am I making enough use of the tools, really? Have I told everything, every and each of my deepest secrets? Do I really work the steps to the best of my ability? Do I have my own

hidden interpretation of the sobriety definition? What is blocking me from moving to the next level of recovery?

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

I'm Glad I Joined SA At Such a Young Age

Young and sober? It sounds like two galaxies crashing together! I am sexually sober by the grace of God, yours and my sponsor's help since October 7, 2015. I have heard people say "Some guys get the grace from God, others don't." I do not believe in this. In my opinion, everyone has the same chance for recovery - and my God is a fair God.

I believe recovery is possible for us all. Our SA brochure "Am I Too Young to be a Sexaholic?" says: *I came to realize that the age differences and the differences in our stories didn't matter. We were all sexaholics - sick people trying to get well.*

In my experience, it is actually a gift coming into the 12- Step program as a young person, reaching bottom and getting sober. Painful but possible. Peace and joy await us!

Reaching my bottom by watching violent and ugly porn, I reached out as a very young adult (I was still a teenager) to the life raft of Sexaholics Anonymous. I eventually came into SA at the age of 20, when most of my friends had a lot of parties, drugs, sex and relationships. And what about me? I needed to sober up! Staying sober and getting well? It's up to me. We all have a "golden ticket" to recovery - the 12 Steps worked in a fellowship with my brothers and sisters.

I always wanted to lust, taking drugs, and drinking alcohol like all my friends and school colleagues who seemed to use these things without

problems. It was very hard in the beginning of sobriety. It sometimes is a problem nowadays, too.

Coming to SA young has advantages. Now, with clearer thinking, I find that I do not have to destroy my whole life, my career, my family relations, my body or my mind like lots of other people did. I can step out of the elevator early enough, before going

I choose everyday to stay sober—just for the next 24 hours. I do it for me. For a better life. For my family. It's really worth it!

downstairs to hell. I can get sober before the disease progresses too far, as it will if I leave it untreated.

As the brochure says - Our literature confirms the experience of our older members: *Our lust or sexual activity escalated over the years, crossing one line after another, first in our thought life, then in our behavior. We were assured that, should we choose to remain in our addiction, we were likely to cross the same lines and suffer the same dire consequences - jail, divorce, even death - as those who came to SA later in life.* (SA 30)

Sobriety or relapse is an active decision! And I choose everyday to stay sober - for just the next 24 hours. I do it for me. For a better life. For my family. It's really worth it! Join me - I really need you!

FLORIAN K., Regensburg, Germany



“How was it for you to be ‘Young & Sober in SA’ ... 36 years ago?”

My name is Mike and I’m a sexaholic, sober since June 3, 1984. I imagine coming into the program at the age of 28 or 29 today would be much different than it was when I joined in the mid-1980s. Today, depending on where a person begins their SA journey, a new member might join a group in which most of the members were substantially older than they and also be blessed with much long-term sobriety.

When I got sober, I was among the first few just getting SA started in Chicago. Yes, some of the members were older than I, but not substantially so. And there was no such thing as long-term sobriety. So, the real issue we dealt with as a group early on had less to do with our age and more to do with how to learn how to support one another first in staying sober as individuals and then, later, how to form a group that would support sobriety rather than enable relapse.

Those early days for me contained much excitement. First, I managed to stay sober. I couldn’t believe I’d

found a solution that actually worked. I met people who walked with me in the journey into deeper recovery, some of whom are still trudging the road with me today.

I learned simple tools like looking at the sidewalk so that I wouldn’t take looks and trying never to miss a meeting if at all possible – and if I did miss one, always to make it up the same week. Over time, we learned we had to be absolutely honest with each other, that our job in meetings was to “look bad” not “look good.” All this learning took place in countless conversations both on the phone and in person before and after meetings in the basement of our meeting place at St. Teresa’s or at nearby coffee shops. We were changing for the better and that could be exhilarating.

Of course, things were not a bed of roses. Without a doubt, we struggled with our personal defects, not only at home and work, but also with one another. And when we began to try to strengthen our group by implementing changes designed to put more emphasis on continued sobriety,

watch out! Things got pretty contentious at times; accusations got hurled; feelings got hurt. It reminds me of some of the early A.A. stories in the 12 and 12. But we persevered and eventually established a strong group with a primary purpose.

After a couple of years, I discovered SA International Conventions and that opened my eyes and changed my life. First, getting back to the age issue, here I often was one of the younger people, at least with any length of sobriety. At early conventions, I stood in awe of people like Roy K., Jim E., Jess L., and Harvey A. But eventually I befriended these people as we put the shoulder to the wheel to try to carry the message to the conventions. Because of those early conventions, I have a host of SA friends from all over the world and from every race and religion.

I’m grateful to God and to so many in the SA fellowship for the grace I received from those early, youthful days in SA.

MIKE C., Chicago, USA



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

I Joined SA As a 19-year-old girl

My first memories are of fear, resentment and separation. Lust first came on the scene when I was four, my mother moved with us to a foreign country without my father. During my first few months in this new place I was sexually abused by kids several years older than myself. I was terrified anybody would find out, I was sure it was my fault and I felt guilty for enjoying the physical aspect and attention.

We moved again and the abuse stopped, I blacked out what happened but it left something behind. When playing with dolls I would undress them and have them kiss, I would intentionally play with my underwear in a way that provided physical stimulation. I primarily did this when agitated or afraid. Already then as a five-year-old it calmed me and helped me face the world. This progressed to fantasizing about what teachers would do with their spouses when they were home alone, what would the prince and princess do together, etc.

When I was a little older I went to a bat mitzvah workshop, in which they mentioned in passing that it is normal to start touching ourselves and not to worry about it. Naturally the first thing I did when getting home was to seclude myself in my room, touching myself for several hours. I remember the first time I managed to climax, I started chasing that high and sense of relief.

I started fantasizing for hours upon hours trying to escape things in my life I couldn't cope with. I started

looking up pictures of nude women and then going to act out. Not feeling good after these episodes, I told myself it was because I was looking at pictures of women and not men. So I tried forcibly to be attracted to men. Me being the good sexaholic that I am, I managed to be attracted to men as well. I found the solution to getting my fix without feeling guilty afterwards but it wasn't enough.

So I started looking online for something, I didn't know what to call it but I was sure that I would know it when I saw it. During this time my brother was sexually abused, and as a result there came up in my family a discussion about pornography. Instead of showing compassion for my brother I was off, consuming pornography. It fascinated and grossed me out at the same time, I told myself I would stop after that first time, but I went back time and time again.

I temporarily dropped out of high school at the beginning of the 11th grade. When I went back after a few months I enrolled in a school for dropouts and druggies. During this time I intentionally avoided all interaction with men aside for my family members. I didn't want to have sex before marriage and I was sure that if I was in contact with guys we'd end up sleeping together. I thought I could control my lust, but I just ended up lusting after all the girls in school. I felt cut off and alone all the time, I compensated with more acting out.

At the end of high school I heard for the first time about 12-step fellowships from a true friend who was attending a teen meeting for anons. I started coming to that meeting and working the steps with a sponsor. One of her assignments was a daily powerless and gratitude list, I started thinking

I might have a problem. Every single day pornography and masturbation was on the list of things I was powerless over. I convinced myself I was overreacting. But the more difficult emotions came up as a result of working the steps the more I acted out.

This brought me to a point where I was in contact with a guy who was 26 while I was 18. Depending on the day, I either wanted to cut ties altogether or decided that he was going to solve

I started to think I might be a sexaholic, before talking to her I didn't realize that the disease could be just acting out with myself.

all my emotional problems if he just would lust after me enough. This ended up with me spending the night with him and acting out. I very vividly remember desperately telling myself not to take the right turn to his place pleading with myself to turn left. I felt terrible after the fact, this didn't stop me from obsessing the very next day about him.

I got in contact with a woman that I knew from my other Fellowship who also is a member of SA. I started to think I might be a sexaholic, before talking to her I didn't realize that the disease could be just acting out with myself. I thought you needed to be a pedophile, a rapist, or have been to a prostitute.

Despite relating to almost everything she said, even though I admitted I had a problem I still thought I could control

and enjoy my lust. It took bleeding as a result of acting out, sexual fantasies about children, constant fear I would sexually abuse someone, fantasies about animals, promising myself that I would stop only to find myself acting out less than 24 hours later and 6 months for me to come to a meeting. It took another month and a half to surrender to the sobriety definition fully, without manipulation. I found a sponsor, called him everyday on time and did everything he told me to do. I worked all 12 steps with him over the course of a year and three months. It wasn't always smooth sailing but I'm grateful to say that my higher power has kept me sober since October 10, 2018.

Several things that were important for me coming into SA as 19-year old girl:

- *Boundaries, boundaries, boundaries.* There's no reason for a man to share with me as a woman, especially if he's not sober. When I came in there was not a lot of female recovery in my country and so I had a male sponsor and talked to male members. This being said I took a sponsor whose disease was primarily towards men, I did not talk to members with under a year of sobriety and without my sponsor's recommendation—with the exception of service work.
- *Fellowship. I cannot do this alone, however, I need to stick to the winners.* This doesn't necessarily mean only women who were sober for a very long time, but it was important for me to be in daily contact with people working the steps and who realized that our problem was lust and not different forms of acting out. Sometimes this entailed choosing

to limit or entirely cut off contact with certain women.

- *Service.* I took a service commitment my very first meeting. I continued to take service positions in the meeting I attended regularly. Eventually including committee work on Intergroup and Regional level.
- *Have a home group.* In the last year-and-a-half I've had the same Home Group, I want what the members there have, I respect the spiritual journeys they're making. I feel comfortable and safe there even when I'm alone or only with

one other woman and 50 men. Group members have encouraged me to deepen my recovery, go to step workshops, International conferences, fellowship before or after the meeting, service work, etc.

- *And of course this goes without saying, work the Steps!* Work the Steps with a sponsor who has what you want, who has a sponsor him/herself and has done the Steps. This program does not work if you don't work it.

MAZAL E., Jerusalem, Israel



I'm Surrounded By People With Longer Longer Experience Than Mine

Hi, I am a 20-year-old sexaholic from Poland. I was told about pornography on the internet by classmates about the age of 12, but didn't get sucked in instantly. Around 13, I discovered masturbation, and then things started to get out of control. I come from a very religious background, so acting out was never comfortable for me. From the beginning, I felt remorse about my actions and thoughts. My disease gradually progressed, with one longer episode of sobriety due to a big religious experience of mine, which happened quite early in the process.

In high school things got worse, as I was surrounded by people I knew were regular porn watchers and due to social anxiety. Back then, I thought I was immune to any pressure, and acting out was only an effect of others making me angry. Additionally, my religion isn't common here and it was

an isolating factor too. At times I got ridiculed by the others.

I had a particularly bad summer in late high school. I spent most of it acting out, which was somewhat stopped by falling in love later that year. I got a girlfriend, and contrary to what I thought, it wasn't a solution, nor even a little help in overcoming the problem. We didn't have sex, as we both believed that was wrong, but we got physical. We were making out daily, which was my drug at the time. At that time I watched porn one to a few times a month, with maybe three porn-free months, but I don't consider them sober at all.

That's how the following year and a half looked—a period of daily making out, then some arguments, uncertainty, and repeat. There were a few times we almost acted out sexually, but luckily God spared us that. The relationship was toxic, it drained us both. The periods of careless pleasure were shorter and shorter, and in some moment it just stopped. For the last few months we were just making each other

feel bad and arguing. I felt stressed and misunderstood. The blow that finished the relationship was when I, due to some remorse, told her about a big part of my addictive behaviors, my history and my acting out. Some time after that she broke up with me.

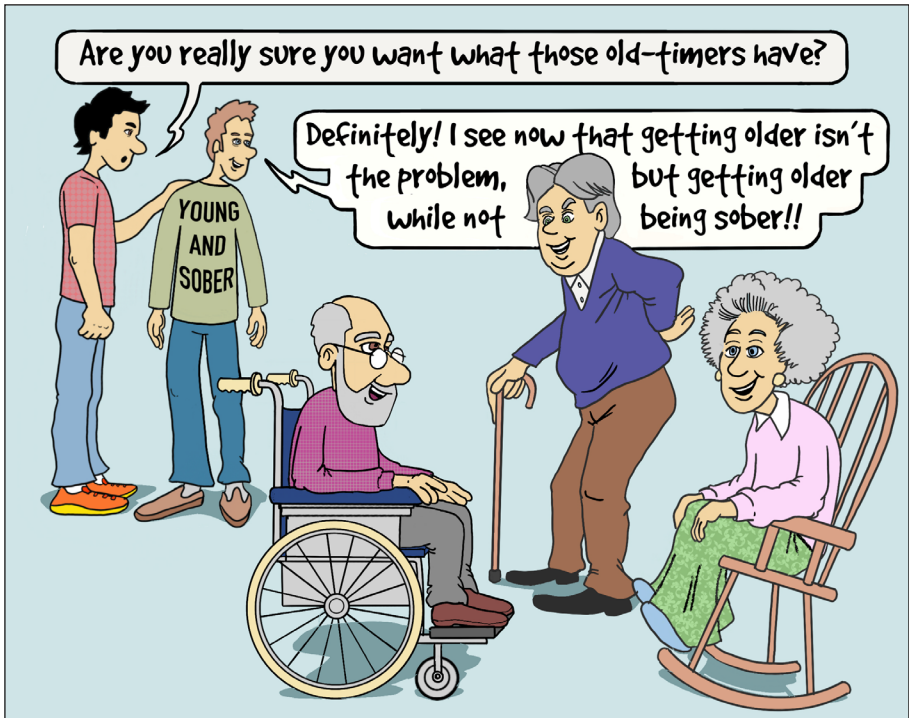
By this time, on the advice of my therapist, I had joined SA. After a few weeks, thanks to the program and God, I began my sobriety which I thankfully hold to this day. The thing that stressed me a lot in the beginning was wondering if it was possible for me to have a Step One experience as I now enjoyed a much better quality of life. I finally accepted my powerlessness by seeing that my life had been unmanageable for years. It had been a true madness, doing the same thing over and over again with the same pain and shame, and

doing things I perceived as wrong on a moral, spiritual and social level.

Even though the majority of SA members are older than me, I don't find it to be an obstacle. The opposite is true. I am surrounded by people with longer experience than mine. I really find it helpful to hear about the lives of other brothers, their struggles and how they got out of them thanks to SA. I'm also grateful for the fact our fellowship is a place of respect, where, for example, age is not a factor affecting perception of others.

I feel very thankful for the Fellowship, even though I have struggles. I also have hope. I'm also very thankful for last year's SA Internet Marathon (SIM), which helped me to connect with SA members from around the world.

JAN K., Cracow, Poland



Fully Accepting SA When Young Was God's Gift

I found SA shortly after I turned 28 years old. I heard an old-timer once on a tape say that he didn't know why anyone under 30 would come to SA – they still had decades of good lusting left!

I knew I had zero years of “good” lusting left. My drug had quit working for me and I was stuck in a cycle of pain, occasionally masked by short-lived pleasure, which ended up causing more pain.

I had tried what seemed like everything – religion, therapy, self-help, even quitting my job to try to fix my problem. I came to SA desperate to stop, yet also having accepted that ‘this is never going to get better’ (from my own efforts or outside circumstances).

I cried a lot in my first meeting and related so much to the stories of other members, but I wasn't really sure I was a sexaholic. I was explaining to another female member a few weeks later why my situation was unique and different and she suggested “Why don't you do some more ‘research’?” My answer was NO. I didn't want more pain than what I already had.

This is almost exactly what it says in AA's 12 & 12, *To the doubters we could say ‘Perhaps you're not an alcoholic after all. Why don't you try some more controlled drinking, bearing in mind meanwhile what we have told you about alcoholism?’ This attitude brought immediate and practical results.* (p 23)

I can only speak from my own experience—God somehow brought me to a place where I was ready to

accept SA fully when I was young, for which I often shake my head in wonder and gratitude.

I surrendered myself to working the program as directed by my sponsor and participating in the fellowship – and it worked!

Meetings, step work, having a sponsor, making phone calls, service, retreats and conventions are all part of my program. One day at a time, I have been sober for five and a half years – a real miracle.

Before I found SA, I thought my life was basically over despite my age—nothing satisfied me. Now I see the years ahead of me as full of opportunity to see what I can give to others and what God will bring my way. It's a pretty big attitude shift for a self-centered sexaholic like me!

My old thinking still crops up from time to time, but through the help of God, my sponsor, and others in the fellowship I am able to recognize it, surrender it, and continue on the path of recovery.

ANONYMOUS



Unlike The Older Members, I Was Brought Up With The Internet

I had just turned 21 when I entered the SA fellowship. I immediately knew SA was the program for me but I didn't feel comfortable in the local fellowship since everyone else was at least twice my age.

Fortunately for me there was one other young adult at the meeting who was visiting the country. He became my very first SA sponsor and dear friend in the fellowship. Still I considered my age as an obstacle and even an excuse against some suggestions fellows gave to me.

For instance, some fellows from my home group suggested surrendering my computer and internet usage because I kept relapsing with those technologies. "Easy for you maybe. But unlike you, I am brought up with the internet!", I said. I was astonished when another young newcomer joined our meetings who had given up his internet with ease. He shared that he just tried it out for one week and then stuck with it. One week sounded doable for me. One week at a time. I was sad when he left the fellowship and even more when my sponsor's vacation ended soon after.

A long time sober fellow from my home group introduced me to some young adults from other countries. We started a whatsapp group for young adults which is still active today and currently has more than 60 members! I was so happy to finally be in contact with other young members. We shared experience, strength and hope with each other but also funny jokes, anecdotes and memes.

When the twelve steps were read

aloud in the meetings I couldn't imagine myself sponsoring any time soon. Who would want to be sponsored by someone younger than himself?! I certainly didn't want to.

But as I worked the steps and shared my experience on the meetings someone asked me to sponsor him. I assumed that he thought I was older than him. I remember shying away from any topic that could reveal my age, like the fact that I was still living with my parents

Eventually I learned to live the slogan "Focus on the similarities instead of the differences." Calling members from the meetings, even the very "old" and "weird" ones, has helped me a lot in experiencing that they are actually very much like me! I began feeling very comfortable in the fellowship and joined in all the fun activities we organized like going to the cinema, museums, concerts, etc.

After the latest SIM convention our whatsapp group for young adults has seen a tremendous growth. We even started a weekly Young Adult Zoom Meeting!

Now, with over 4 years of SA sobriety and recovery, I have gradually received wonderful gifts such as a full-time job, mortgage, drivers license, lease car and even a bald head with glasses. It has also been a wonderful experience to hand over the title of being the youngest member of my home group. Even that service position has a limited term. I still have a few years to enjoy being a 'young adult' according to the definition made in our group conscience. But you know, growing up in SA is great; each day it's getting better and better.

FERRO B., *Purmerend, Netherlands*



Are You Really Sure You Are a Sexaholic?

My name is José and I am a recovering sexaholic. I am only 25 years old and I joined SA when I was 19. Many ask me how I joined the fellowship so young and if I was really sure that I was a sexaholic. And my answer is always, “The fact that masturbation and lustful thoughts made me suffer so much and I wasn’t able to get out of it, said enough about my condition.” I am also used to saying, “The very fact that I came to you to ask for help, says it all—no one asks for outside help if they can manage it on their own.”

Despite being a serious person with a lot of willpower and being devoted and responsible, the power lust had over me was getting out of hand. That is why I came to SA.

I have had many ups and downs in these years but today by God’s grace I have a year of sobriety. How do I do it? I really don’t, I just remind myself that I’m allergic to lust and that whenever I mess with it, I end up badly, ashamed, disconnected and with a nasty hangover. I must work the steps and develop spiritually, as well as monitor my feelings and emotions, and be in a grateful and positive attitude towards life.

On second thought, being young and already being in SA is a pure and great blessing! Whereas I used to be completely absorbed in my disease, my thoughts, technological devices, etc., today I am free to notice the little things of life—the clouds, flowers, trees, ...

JOSE N., *Buenos Aires, Argentina*



I Had the “Textbook”, but in SA I Found the “Workbook”

I am grateful for being a sexaholic and not being alone having this disease. A priest told me about SA when I was 26, I googled and read some member story's and thought it was not so bad in my life. "I only had a problem with porno and masturbation. I didn't cheat on my wife, I didn't have sex with a prostitute, I didn't have sex outside my marriage, ... After all, it was not so bad." I thought I still could manage it on my own. If I only would pray hard enough God would help me and fix my problem.

One year later, the same priest told me about SA after I confessed. This time he told me *his own* story, how he found SA, and how SA changed his life. I had witnessed the change in the life of the priest and knew what had brought it about. I wanted that change as well.

When I stepped into my first meeting at age 27, I heard stories like mine and stories of people who had gone down the scale way deeper than me. In that same meeting I discovered something else: all the things they had done that I hadn't done, were things I hadn't done ... YET! "I didn't cheat on my wife YET, I didn't have sex with a prostitute YET, I didn't have sex outside my marriage YET, ..." They told my story of what could/will come if I don't work the program. In their stories I heard my 'future' story if I hadn't received and started working with this beautiful program.

One of the prejudices that kept me one year from going to that first SA meeting was the following: I was very religious and active in my church and was afraid that there would be

a conflict between SA and my faith.

But I discovered something incredible when I started working the SA program with a sponsor. I had learned many good things in my faith, the theory or, as I call it: the "textbook." I knew if I could bring it into practice, it would bring me closer to God and away from my addiction but I kept on stumbling to bring it into practice because of my addiction. In SA I found the "workbook", I found a way how I could bring everything I learned in my faith, in the textbook, into practice. They were the perfect complements. And never has there been any conflict between them.

I want to encourage every fellow to not be afraid to tell people who struggle with compulsive sexual behavior about SA. Even if the person doesn't take your advice right away—as I said, it took me a year and a friendly reminder before I dared to take a leap of faith and go to a meeting.

I have found such a big treasure, worth more than all the gold in the world. I have found TRUE life. Freedom in surrender. I can not keep this treasure to myself because by sharing it, it becomes bigger.

FRIES M., *Wevelgem, Belgium*



SA Told Me That Actually The Root Was Lust

Throughout my adolescence I was progressively consumed by same-sex behaviors and fantasies. I thought that the problem was being attracted to men. Acting out for 17 years shaped my whole thinking. "I was restless, irritable and discontented." SA told me that actually the root was lust, and this was music to my ears. I began to detach from lust one day at a time and stopped carrying around my wound as a trophy.

I commenced living on a new clock: 24 hours. It was a totally new lifestyle! I can be focused on today and surrender my anxiety for tomorrow and my regrets from the past to other fellows or to the God of my own understanding. This was cool! I had spent so much time being disconnected from everybody and from everything.

None of the psychotherapists I went to or my church experiences could give me the serenity I sought. I wanted to stay in charge. That's why God and thus, healing could never get to me.

In August 2019, I attended my first SA meeting but didn't hit my bottom until three months later while on a journey abroad. Traveling had always been a way to feel unleashed and act out which I couldn't do where I lived, since I felt too much shame

should I be discovered. The people I hooked up with in that last trip were probably sexaholics like me, and also drug addicts. I realized my addiction would end in complete disaster.

My life had become completely unmanageable and I had no boundaries left. My brain was in other people's bodies and my fantasies ruled me. I needed to act out anytime my compulsion was there.

Today I am 29 and I am still a love cripple. Although I've never been in a relationship and I am looking forward to it, after almost 9 months of sobriety I am starting to experience true freedom, comfort and connection in all parts of my life. I spend on

average a few hours on the phone every day, speaking with fellows and attending meetings.

It broadens my mind to attend any meeting, even if it's on zoom. The anxiety to speak is decreasing but I am still affected by my perfectionism sometimes, for example speaking

correct English in international meetings. Thanks to our program, meetings are the perfect place to get new phone numbers and find someone else I can rely on to help me work the program. Sometimes I get triggered by people in the meetings, connecting with them and working the Steps together makes it almost always disappear, thankfully.

God. "It was only a matter of being willing to believe in a Power greater than myself. Nothing more than that to start the new path." However, I was



very much disillusioned by the many years I had been going to spiritual retreats and different church groups. My God was not healing me. So who was I praying to? My memory is still foggy. For me sobriety began when I let God enter my addiction during crisis and the only solution was continuing, telling myself "This too shall pass" or "This experience, too, can be transformed into a benefit." Then I went promptly down on my knees admitting my powerlessness to God or to a fellow on the phone.

Thank God a new era has begun for me, but it is still one day at a time. It's funny now opening and looking at the list of my personal character defects: egocentrism, self-pity, jealousy, envy, judgment, expectations, victimhood, moodiness, resentfulness, impatience, procrastination, greediness, always needing to feel good, moody, need of approval, and I recently added narcissism.

In the past I used to think that I was okay and that only others had to change, but there I was and still am with my own stuff: physically abstinent but emotionally not yet free.

Perfectionism. As a performer I grew up not allowing myself to make any mistake and that consumed me. Judging myself and judging others soon became my norm. Acceptance is the asset which is out there, waiting for me to long for, wish for and ask for. The opportunity to ask God for character assets, opens a new attitude of joyfulness, happiness and freedom for me.


But how to do that since I have this constant need to feel bad? I practice acts of loving kindness to myself and others. Lusting helped me form a hard to beat habit, the need to always beat myself up. Now there are days

where I feel happy, joyous and free but even then I may experience something or some person who can trigger my compulsive need to feel bad. It's difficult to reshape that and I can only work the program one day at a time, surrender it and pray for the opposite.

What is encouraging for me now is the opportunity to serve others. And that is something that I've always wanted deep inside of me. I've always had a healthy desire for other people to be happy.

Now I realize happiness can be an attitude of doing things even when I don't want to do them. It's turning my judgmental attitude into acceptance, love and service.

I've been asking God for so long to heal me and to be able to serve Him. Sexaholics Anonymous allows me to share strength and hope to those who are committed to living a lust-free life, and at the same time they get to be of service to me, always ready to answer my next call, hear my next failure and celebrate my next victory over lust.

MATTEO P., *Italy* 



Staying Sober in My Twenties Has Its Own Challenges

I was born in 1989 in Kurdistan, Iran, in a family with 3 older brothers and no sisters. The concept of women and girls was always a mystery to me. The only female that I had a real connection with was my mother. That was not my only challenge though.

As far as I can remember, I was living a double life. There was a whole world inside my head, and another world outside me. And I was constantly trying not to let the outside world know what is going on inside my head. I must have started lusting much younger, but the first lust memories that I remember are from the age of five or six, when I was obsessing and fantasizing about being cuddled and adored by our female relatives.

As I grew older, I continued to develop this double life. And my inside world was pouring out into the real world, making my life more and more unmanageable. I was progressing at my lusting career and I was adding more features to it; masturbation, pornography, sex with self, with same sex, with opposite sex, with other species, prostitution, adultery, and so on. By this time, I was around 16 years old and I had already started taking drugs as well, since lust alone was not medicating enough. I had reached that point where I could not or would not resist any ideas that my head was bringing to table. Actually, the situation was one of "I am thinking of it, therefore I have to do it." This ordeal went on for another 10 years, and I lost almost everything that had any value; emotionally, socially, spiritually, and materially.

With the help of AA and another fellowship, I got clean from my drug addiction when I was 26. Although I was working a rigorous program in the other fellowships, my lusting issue was not solved. I was hoping that once I am past Steps 6 and 7 in AA, then I would get a reprieve from lusting, but I was wrong. There were some short periods that I would stop acting out, yet they were always followed by another lust binge.

I had reached that point where I could not or would not resist any ideas that my head was bringing to table. Actually, the situation was one of "I am thinking of it, therefore I have to do it."

Now I realize that what I was doing back then was merely stopping the physical acting out while I was still lusting in my head. Had there been a solution, it had to be one that would deal with lust and sobriety from lust on a physical, emotional, and spiritual level, and guess what, there was a program who was particularly designed for the same purpose: SA.

I went to SA for the first time in 2015, and I stayed sober for a couple of months without having an SA sponsor or working the steps in SA. Not surprisingly, I relapsed. I finally joined SA on 21st of June 2016, when

I was 27, and I have stayed sober since. This time round I was serious about my recovery. I had an SA sponsor, I was working the Steps, I was sponsoring other sexaholics, I was going to meetings and I was doing service. Most importantly, I had decided not to willfully entertain lust in any form, one day at a time.

I sobered up in Iran where there is an abundance of SA meetings, and was there for the first 6 months of my sobriety. Then I moved to Greece and have been here in Greece ever since. When I came to Greece, there were no established SA meetings. I was basically a loner. But, against the odds, the program did not fail me. I was in touch with my sponsor, was working the Steps with sponsees remotely and I was surrendering every lust thought, being sure that once I consent to enjoying lust in my head, I will not be able to stop.

After a couple of months in Greece, I started searching to see if there were other members in the country. I found a couple of members and we started meeting in parks and public places. Unfortunately, our meetings never took off and my fellow SA buddies did not manage to get a substantial amount of sobriety. Recently, we have started an online meeting for Greek members, and we are meeting once a week on Zoom. We are around 6 or 7 members now.

Today, I practice my SA program on a daily basis. I wake up, pray, meditate, and go to work. During the day, whenever lust thoughts come up, and they do come up, I start praying and surrendering them. If a specific thought or fantasy lingers even after praying, I call a member to share with them. However, most of the time, praying does the job. Also, if I feel disturbed with negative emotions, I

start writing an inventory on the spot and share it with someone as soon as possible.

At night before going to bed, I ask myself if I have been selfish, dishonest, fearful, or resentful during the day. If the answer is yes, I ask God to forgive me and to help me be and do better the next day. I also check to see if I still have any lust thoughts or images in my system that I have not surrendered. Once spotted, I surrender the thoughts and pray for the person(s) involved. Then I ask God to keep me sober during the night while I am asleep.

Staying sober in my twenties has its own challenges. The thought that “Am I really a sexaholic?” is almost a constant. It comes and goes all the time. Also, peer pressure can be

The difference is that now I can coexist with these feelings without having to act out on them, knowing that God will take care of me.

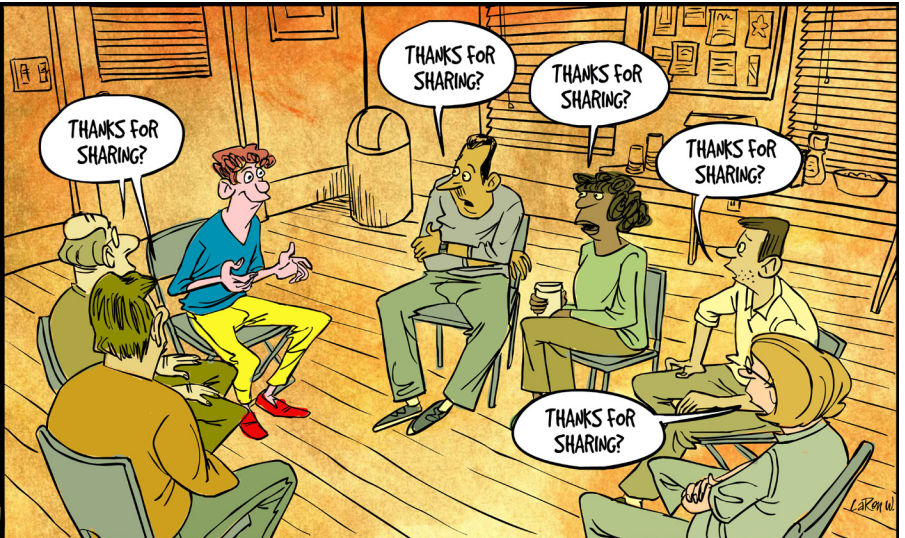
dangerous at times. I have friends who can lust like gentlemen and they sometimes try to convince me, with a good will maybe, that I am being too strict, and I am missing out big time. The solution that has worked for me is not to try to convince people about my SA sobriety. I almost never talk about it with people who are not in SA. However, sometimes I brag about being celibate when I talk with my friends.

A lot has changed during these five

years. I live a life beyond my wildest dreams. I have a relationship with the God of my understanding. I feel alright inside my own skin and enjoy life. I also went back to school and got a graduate degree. I have a job and I am financially independent. I have lost my fear of people and financial insecurity. Please do not get me wrong. It is not that I am full of

joy and happiness all the time. There are many times that I feel unpleasant feelings. The difference is that now I can coexist with these feelings without having to act out on them, knowing that God will take care of me so long as I turn over my life and my will over to His care.

FARZAD P., Athens, Greece



SA Sobriety Grows in Kenya

I grew up in a dysfunctional home with all types of abuse. My father was a workaholic and my mother was codependent. At the age of 4 or 5 I was subjected to sexual abuse by a female member of my household. The abuse continued for some years and totally altered my life. Something inside me closed up and I knew instinctively that this had to stay a secret. To add on to this, I received frequent and painful verbal and physical abuse from my parents. I was told that I was nothing, that I would always amount to nothing. To escape my insecurities I strived to be the good kid. I always did what I was told. I became an overachiever at school and used that as my way of proving I was good enough and escaping the difficulties at home. From a young age, I learnt to escape from reality into fantasy to avoid pain. I also built up an emotional wall to protect myself. My self esteem was totally destroyed by the consistent verbal abuse as well as by the guilt and shame I felt due to the sexual abuse. I was an addict waiting to happen.

I discovered sex, alcohol and drugs in quick succession in my early years at university. Living far from home I was free to experiment all I wanted. My disease progressed quickly from

watching porn in cybercafes to acting out with prostitutes. I soon got into dysfunctional sexual relationships that I used to try and fill the void I felt within. A combination of my drug, sex and alcohol addictions took all my time and in my fourth year of university I was suspended for a year. This should have been a wake up call but the only result is that I got more time on my own to indulge in my addiction.

I completed my last year of university and joined the workforce. Things quickly became worse because my job involved a lot of travel and I had the funds to fuel my addictions. I looked forward to the trips when I could indulge in my lust and alcohol addictions in freedom amongst people who did not know me. I also discovered online chats as my porn addiction progressed. What followed was a period that I call the lost years. They were a complete haze. I went through multiple relationships all the while acting out consistently. On the surface things were going well and I grew in my profession and even got married and we had a child. But on the inside I was isolated, detached and lived only inside my head fueled by lust filled fantasies.

Years before I came into the program I knew there was something wrong and even searched for a solution online. I tried many times to quit but after a while I would always go back to

acting out. Over the years, acting out destroyed my ability to relate with others as I was always “not there”. My significant relationships suffered. Two years into my marriage we had our second child. By this time the marriage was barely functioning. I emotionally abandoned my wife and family as I spent more and more time acting out and looking to escape the financial and relationship difficulties I was facing at the time.

Coupled with my drug and alcohol addiction, my lust addiction brought me to my knees. I was at the end of my rope. I believed that life was not worth living and was in excruciating emotional pain from going against myself and my values repeatedly. I was completely powerless over the disease and my life was a total mess.

One day during a foreign trip and after another acting out session, I looked online for sex addiction recovery fellowships. Luckily there was an SA meeting not far from where I was staying. I was in this meeting for the three months of my trip, physically sober but lusting all the time. After I returned home I immediately relapsed. Humbled, I joined my local group and have been sober since.

To say I was willing would be an understatement. I thank my Higher Power every day for the desperation and pain that brought me to my knees and finally to the doors of SA. I got sober and, together with a sponsor, worked all 12 steps. Writing out my Step 1 and sharing it with the group allowed me to start getting out of the shame of secrets. This was extremely freeing and was the beginning of bringing all the secrets I held on the inside out. My sponsor also insisted that I do service and I took on multiple service positions. I made calls to

other members daily and went to an average of 5-7 meetings a week for years. Working Steps 4 and 5 was like a house cleaning. I was finally able to face who I was and start accepting myself. The fact that my sponsor knew who I really was and accepted me nonetheless was a great joy.

Steps 6 and 7 allowed me to surrender my defects to my Higher Power. Fear and resentment characterized most of my life. With my Higher Power I have been able to face many of my fears. My fear of rejection and failure, my fears of not being accepted for who I

The fact that my sponsor knew who I really was and accepted me nonetheless was a great joy.

was have all diminished considerably as I worked this step on them and did the opposite action by acting with courage. Once I was off the lust I realised I was just as addicted to resentment. I got a high from playing the tape of how I was wronged and how right I was and how I would tell them off next time. However, I soon realized that resentment (justified or not) cut me off from my Higher Power.

Steps 8 and 9 allowed me to start restoring my relationships. I am slowly mending my relationships with my siblings and parents after many years of being unavailable emotionally to them. I am also making the important amends that I needed to make to myself for the self-harm I did. My major amends to myself has

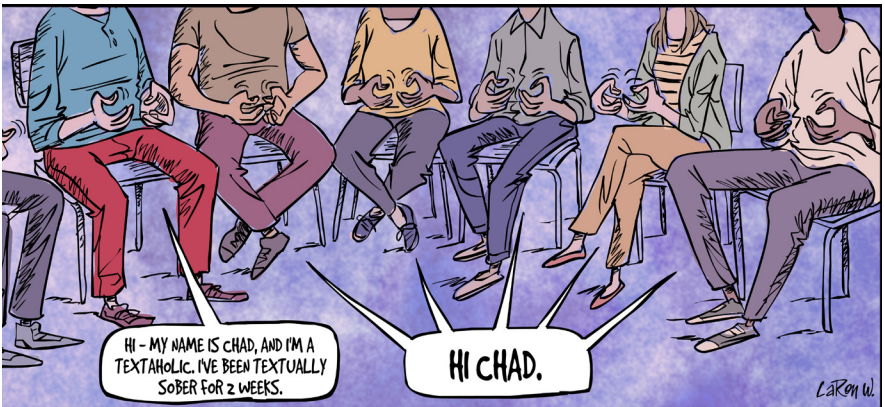
been to stay in the program no matter what. The program has brought me the joy and hope that I had all but lost from years of acting out. Steps 10, 11 and 12 allow me to stay sober every day. My transformation in ideas, emotions and attitudes truly came about because of working the Steps. I have begun to receive the Step 9 Promises of peace and serenity. I have also been able to pull through some of the most difficult moments of my life including losing a job. In recent times I have also been forced to face my codependency and lack of emotional sobriety.

It would not be true to say I am free from lust in all its forms. However, I am grateful for using the tools the program provides to surrender the lust rather than fight it. For me the program is my first priority. Without it I have nothing. I build my day around my program, not try to fit my program into my life. Where I live in Nairobi, Kenya, public meetings in churches and schools are banned or controlled by the government, so we have not resumed in-person meetings. However, we have four teleconference meetings per week. There are 55 members in

our WhatsApp group, 15 of whom attend the weekly meetings.

Sexaholism is a painful and progressive disease. For years I watched helplessly as I crossed one boundary after another, drugged by the seductive promise of release and validation, knowing always that I was killing the best parts of me. I am truly grateful to the program for restoring me from the scrap heap of humanity where I was always on the sidelines, living in my head. Since July 2016 (my sobriety date), I have slowly started to take part in life, engaging in my interests and growing new friendships inside and outside the program. I have also slowly started letting go of my need to control and manipulate others to fulfill my needs. I have started to accept myself as a member of the human race, no better or worse than others. To laugh at myself and my eccentricities. To start developing relationships with my children. To know just how blessed I am to have found this fellowship that has given me back my sanity and hope in life, not as I would have it be, but just as my HP sees fit.

MATHEW M., Nairobi, Kenya



I Saw The Drawing Slowly Appear On The Page

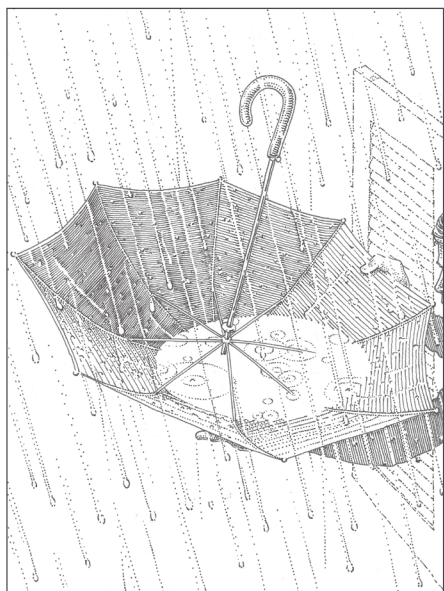
I had a pretty normal childhood and, thankfully, I experienced no sexual traumas. Looking back, I notice that I had an unusually strong interest in women, even as a child. Still, I don't believe I experienced genuine addiction until decades later.

At age 35, I lost a very prestigious and challenging job. By chance, I stumbled upon online porn as I was trying to regroup from that career setback. What I found seemed odd and even creepy, but it soon interested me. I found it had a strange, painkilling effect on me. Online images and chat became daily habits which quickly replaced my normal interests in work and family. I spent my days and nights looking at porn, sometimes for 10 hours straight. Days stretched into weeks, then into months, then into years.

My wife knew what I was doing because I told her. Her therapist suggested I was merely going through a phase and that I would eventually grow tired of it. That was probably valid advice for some people. However, I had literally become addicted by that time and an addict never tires of their addiction. When my wife's patience was exhausted, she filed for divorce. My addiction accelerated and I soon hit rock bottom.

For some, rock bottom arrives as an arrest or other major breakdown. For me, it came when I realized that the family that I cherished had fallen apart. I lost the respect of everyone I loved most. I realized my addiction had taken away everyone and everything I cared about.

I attended a local SA meeting. The people there seemed surprisingly similar to me, with one difference; they were completely honest about their addictions. Despite feeling desperate for sobriety, I did not really work the Steps and experienced no success. I was reading and rereading the SA book (the workbooks had not been published at that time) but that alone was not working. I lost all hope of becoming sober.



Accept v. To receive with an assenting mind. — WEBSTERS 1934

One day, I looked down and saw the "Serenity" drawing slowly appear on the page.

Then a relative recommended I listen to the Joe & Charlie "Big Book Comes Alive" recordings. I worked the steps the way they described. I soon found I was sober, and I remained sober for 2+ years. When I stopped working the steps, I lost my sobriety again. That scared me because I thought I had been permanently "cured." I pocketed my pride and picked up a white chip for restarting the program. This time,

I realized that only my Higher Power could keep me sober, one day at a time.

I feel peaceful on most days and am no longer insane with addiction. I work to keep a close relationship to my Higher Power. If a very religious person gave me a test, they would probably say I'm not very religious. That's okay. Recovery is for those who wish to stop ... not those who pass religious tests. I now pay very close attention when I feel disturbances (resentment, fear, regrets over harms to others) and I work the Steps on them immediately. I have stayed sober one day at a time ... never more ... just one single Today at a time since Valentine's Day, 2007. I thank God as I understand God. I thank the Steps for helping me seek His help. I thank the other addicts who always inspire me to keep coming back.

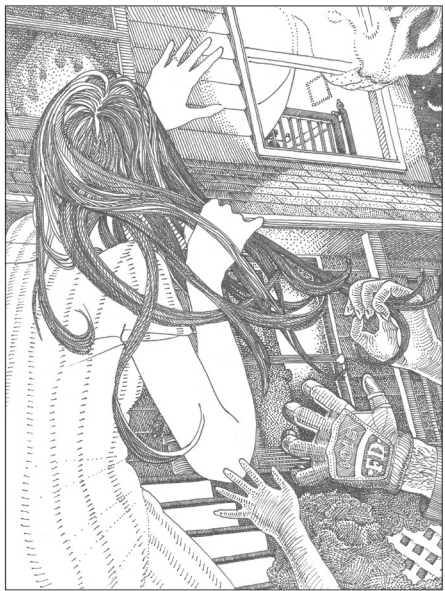
My message to the one who is still sick: The Steps worked for me. But only when I worked them. And only when I remain ready to work them every single day ... and minute.

I was born with the ability to draw, but for twenty years, my pen produced only idle doodles. One day, I looked down and saw the "Serenity" drawing slowly appear on the page. It startled me—as if our family dog suddenly stood on its hind legs and began calmly reciting Shakespeare. At that time, I had been in recovery for perhaps a year. I was surprised when more and more drawings sprang forth. Where were they coming from and where were they going? Then, I recalled that people in Twelve Step meetings often give "personal shares" and I realized that my drawings were merely my own personal share. They were not special; they were simply just different.

I created drawings like this one in

www.sa.org/essay

sets of twelve, never knowing when or if another one would be forthcoming. The sets emerged in this order: The Steps, The Traditions, The Serenity Prayer, The Promises, The Insanities, The Metaphors, and a final one I call "Religious or Not?" Four of the above sets are included in my website www.twelvedrawings.com.



Courage
n. The heart as the seat of intelligence, or feeling. —WEBSTERS 1934

Some drawings (like "Courage") still make my eyes brim with emotions every time I see them.

Ideas for my drawings formed after simple prayer and meditation. Sometimes, the emerging illustrations startled me. Certain drawings (like "Courage") still make my eyes brim with emotions every time I see them. My hair stands up as if God was pressing nearer to see. I hope you enjoy looking at the drawings. I hope they may make some small contribution to your living better Today. I hope you will keep coming back.

JOHN I., TN, USA



Being Blessed With The Gift of Sobriety and Longevity

ESSAY interviewed old-timer Art B., Georgia, USA 



Thank you for your time, Art. Could we start by asking how old you were when you joined SA and the length of your sobriety?

I was 44. I'm 80 now, with 35 years of sobriety. When asked how does one stay sober for 35 years, I say: "One day at a time, keep surrendering lust, and one day at a time, don't die!" I've been blessed with the gift of sobriety and with longevity.

How long were you struggling with the addiction and what "remedies" did you try?

In early adolescence, I felt I wasn't like other kids. I wasn't "normal." I was obsessed with deviant fantasies. I didn't know the word "deviant", but I knew the word "pervert", and that's the word I labeled myself with. I didn't want to be that way, but I didn't know a way out. I kept telling myself, "I'll figure this thing out." I tried to do it in my head. I spent decades trying to figure it out. I never did figure it out.

As to remedies, I prayed, went to clergy, tried therapy. I got into my first marriage hoping it would make me normal. I continued to be stuck in the same cycle of obsessive fantasy and acting out.

Eventually, there were two things that prompted change in me: marriage counseling and the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. My first

marriage was rough because I was a raging sexaholic, but the counseling we resorted to helped me to see how rigid and controlling I was.

I stumbled into AA because I attended an open meeting with a family member who had a drinking problem; I went largely out of curiosity and was surprised to see those AA members with much more spiritual life than I could have imagined for myself. I qualified as an Al-Anon, of course, because of my family connection. I attended Al-Anon, but I attended many more AA meetings. I'm not an alcoholic, but I could attend open meetings—and I did, lots of them, over ten years!

I wasn't clear in my mind why I kept going to AA. Looking back at it, however, I can see that the meetings started to open me up. The alcoholics talked about staying sober and not taking the first drink; in some unfocused way, I wanted sobriety for myself, but I didn't know what that would look like.

Were you sober from Day One in SA?

The short answer is yes. But the fuller answer is that those ten years in AA meetings were God's way of preparing me for sobriety.

It was after an AA open discussion meeting in 1985 that a man gave me the answer to the problem I had

been trying to figure out for all those years. He told me that people who called themselves sex addicts were holding meetings and working the Twelve Steps. Sex addicts! That was the name for me. I had never figured it out, but now my powerlessness and unmanageability made sense. This man loaned me an earlier version of the White Book and gave me directions to a meeting in Atlanta, a 200 mile round trip from the little Georgia town where I lived then. I made that trip every week that summer. I was motivated!

I read the book twice in two weeks, but my brain was so muddled with lust that I didn't have a clear impression of what it said. The main thing I got from it was a sense of hope. I had real hope for the first time that there might be a way out of the hole I had dug myself

The Atlanta group he told me about was not SA. The members decided on their own sobriety definitions. So I asked myself: "What is sobriety for me?" I had the answer. I had learned about "the first drink" from the alcoholics. Over the previous ten years, I had come to realize that my first drink was sexual fantasy: taking a lust thought or image and building a story on it and investing myself in that story obsessively. Sexual sobriety for me would mean freedom from sexual obsession.

When I realized that, I thought I would have to fail at sobriety. I had been trying to stop the fantasy stories for years without success. But the alcoholics taught me to take the action and leave the results to God. I picked up a white chip and told the group I was going to try to surrender the fantasies as they came. I really expected to fail, but from that point my perception is that God let me see the fantasies coming. It was up to me

either to give them a place in my brain or surrender them. I have continued to surrender them. That's the basis of my sobriety today.

Art, which tools of the SA program do you consider indispensable for yourself?

Two things, to start with: gratitude and phone calls. The sober alcoholics taught me about gratitude. I need to keep seeing the gifts that God gives

When asked how does one stay sober for 35 years, I say: "One day at a time, keep surrendering lust, and one day at a time, don't die!"

me every day, and not focus on the problems that my ego and fear would like me to see. Without sobriety, I only saw the negatives; gratitude helps me to have a positive attitude.

From early in my sobriety, I've relied on phone calls to surrender lust when I couldn't do it by myself with prayer. I consider a phone call to another sexaholic to be a prayer to God. I'm so grateful for the technology of mobile phones and cell towers that let me reach out to others. Back in the 80s, long distance calls were expensive; my wife didn't like to see the phone bill come in the mail (although she accepted that I needed the calls). If lust hit me when I was out of the house, I had to find a phone booth and have the necessary change in my pocket. Thanks to this technology, I never have to be alone with my disease.

Meetings are an important tool

supporting my sobriety. Again, I'm grateful for technology: the Zoom meetings are a big help. I used to drive to three meetings a week, the total number of meetings my home group had. With Zoom, we've expanded to five meetings a week. And my sponsor hosts a weekly Zoom meeting for his sponsees.

Tenth Step journaling helps me to be aware of my feelings and keep some of my craziness at bay. And prayer and meditation—the Eleventh Step—

Regarding the internet, I ask them to agree that if they even click on a link or an image in search of porn that they will reset their sobriety date.

help me in my daily effort to maintain contact with my Higher Power.

Could you tell us a little about your service experience?

I've held offices at the group and Intergroup level, and from 1998 until 2000 was a delegate to the General Delegate Assembly. I worked on the subcommittee to the Literature Committee that wrote Step into Action, and I edited Member Stories 2007. In service work, I experienced a spirit of giving and cooperation and gained some beautiful friendships.

What about sponsoring others and your approach to sponsorship?

I tell each new sponsee that the primary reason we are together is to work the Steps. I don't have a "three

strikes and you're out" policy. Even if they lose their sobriety a number of times, I continue to work with them as long as they make progress on the Steps. I tell them I can't keep myself sober and so I can't count on keeping them sober; God keeps me sober, and if they work the program there's a good chance He'll give them the gift of sobriety. Regarding the Internet, I ask them to agree that if they even click on a link or image in search of porn that they will reset their sobriety date.

How do you look after yourself physically these days?

Before the pandemic, I used to go to the gym five days a week. Now my wife and I take a brisk walk each morning for at least two miles. This gets us out of the confines of the house, and at the same time we don't have to be around other people. This is good not just for us physically but also for mental wellbeing and for our marriage as it's a good opportunity to talk.

What do you like doing for recreation?

I enjoy reading, and I have a love for music: jazz and classical (J. S. Bach is a favorite) and some pop music from the 1980s and 1990s.

And finally, Art, do you have a daily "quiet time" or routine to set you up for the day?

As soon as I wake, I slide out of bed on my knees and ask God for the willingness to surrender lust for that day. Then I pray the Third Step Prayer. Then I get on my feet and go to breakfast—I wake up hungry! During breakfast, I do some readings, including scripture. After breakfast, I sit quietly for meditation.

Thank you very much, Art.

Writing Amends Letters TO ANONYMOUS PEOPLE

I have been struggling with my 9th step for almost a year now due to Covid and all that not being able to travel freely. But in the past two months at the encouragement of my sponsor I have discovered writing letters like this and have found much freedom in them:

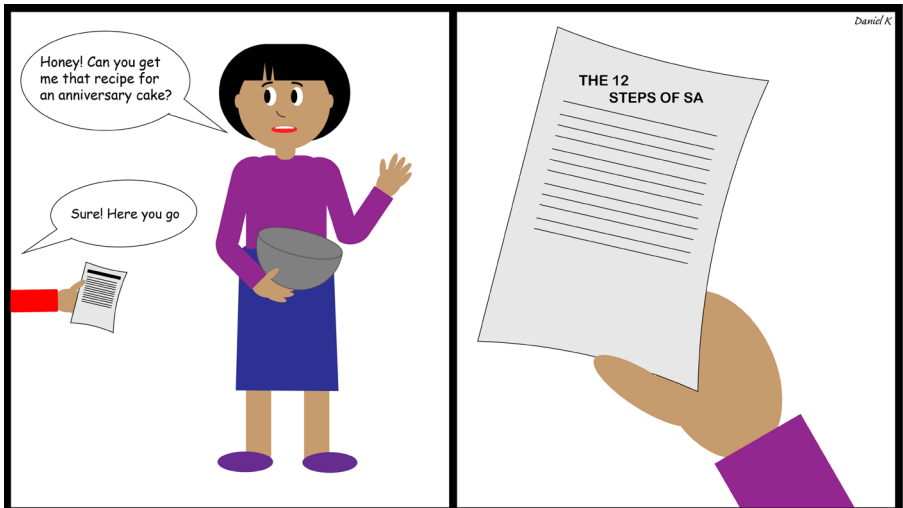
To the men that I have lusted after on the internet, either on Tumblr, You Tube, porn websites, erotic blogsites, or just by scrolling through image searches.

Gentlemen I am a sexaholic and am powerless to stop myself from looking at images; either still, or moving, of men in various states of undress or in the very act of having sex. When the craving hits all my good intentions disappear. I am so

sorry for all the harms I have done to you. I am just one of many that have fueled this culture of death that has you entrapped. Maybe you are like me and can't get enough sex and so see this lifestyle as the only one for you, so what is the harm? I see it in your eyes, there is a deadness there, a pain that you are running from. I know this pain for I have it too. You see we are one, it does not matter that I have been white knuckling it, and failing at sobriety for thirty years. I'm part of the reason you cannot get free. I see this as I attempt freeing myself. I am deeply sorry that I have been part of your enslavement to this culture of porn.

I would like to make this up to you somehow but I'm a poor man, all that I can do is say prayers for you and to offer up my pain, the pain that I would once have run to porn to cover over and forget. Whenever throughout the day or night this pain surfaces instead of running from it as I used to do I will offer it up as a pray for you. May the Lord grant you all that I desire for myself.

PETER G., Ontario, Canada



Many thanks to Daniel K. from Ramat Beith Shemesh in Israel who sent us this cartoon.

Working Step 10 to Make POSITIVE CONNECTIONS

Recently, I have been attending meetings where the readings were taken from our Recovery Continues book. In one meeting, we read: *Lust is a function of my ego, just as resentment is. I, the lord of my life - lord over that lust object and over that resentment object - unleash a spiritual force against them both, against their wills, perverting the reality of their person to suit my twisted need. What is that negative connection? Why must I keep on making it? So I won't have to look at myself.* (RC 43)

Last week, I drank in a resentment for a split second—and that was enough to start the negativity seeping in, wanting to take me over. When I have a resentment, I am focusing on the other person, their “wrong”, and creating a reality perversion. When someone says something where I defend my position, I feel disturbed, a sign that there is something wrong with me.

Could I apply what I read and “look at myself”? Immediately, I acknowledged my negativity. I surrendered it, wrote a short inventory, shared it at a meeting and brought it into the light with another member (even though only a voice message) before going to bed. I did not want to bring the resentment to bed, which in the past had resulted in lustful dreams. Thank God, that night, I slept soundly. This gave me great hope - the program works!

My inventory showed me I had thought too highly of myself—“I am wonderful, I can do this or that, I am

important.” Clinging to this idea of self, my ego had been up, my Shield (God’s presence) had been down and resentment had come in -RC 43. Even more challenging than these actions was taking it to the next stage, where I need to - take the action of love to reach out of myself and reconnect with that person, it completes the circle back into reality. God is the key, even here. (RC 90)

Another example. I was trying to find out some information from a Government agency. The person I phoned was not listening to me, and informing me what to do next. I was getting more frustrated. I said “You misunderstand me, can you let me finish please?” I felt angry and there was a disturbance again, in me. She listened, gave me directions and I thanked her. Putting down the phone, I was not happy with the way the call went.

Immediately I wrote a short inventory asking the question—“How could I improve on a situation like this in the future?” I prayed to God asking for forgiveness and was prompted to phone the number back (a national helpline).

There was little chance of getting the same person again, and I was welcomed by a fresh voice. I explained briefly what happened. I complimented her and her colleagues on their work, helping others at this particular time. She said “Thanks very much, and never mind, we are tough here!” and laughed. Connection again!

Thank God for letting me see that the sooner I apply the program the better it works. And thank You for the amazing literature our fellowship offers to new and old members alike.

ANONYMOUS, USA



Step Three - RELINQUISHING CONTROL

Once a beachhead is established, defeat of the enemy is inevitable. Even if the first sallies out of the beachhead meet with stiff resistance and are driven back, it doesn't matter; once a beachhead is established, enemy collapse is assured.

This is how I visualize taking my Third Step: by my surrender, my Higher Power sets up a beachhead inside my soul. This doesn't mean that I am saved at once from my old self, from my old ways of thinking and behaving. Not at all. That battle goes on, a day at a time. And sometimes old cravings, resentments and rage overwhelm me - but not Him. Once He knows He's welcome in my life, He'll wade in, sleeves rolled up. The more I surrender to Him, the more space He wins, and the more I win. So long as I stay surrendered, that beachhead gets bigger and bigger inside of me and I am freed from old tyrannies.

JAVIER S., *Guayaquil, Ecuador*



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www.sa.org/essay



BE A BURDEN

None of us can carry the pain of finality of letting go alone. That's why we are here. Lean on us. The best advice a guy gave me in a meeting one day was, "Be a burden."

That night I was crying my eyes out in the meeting, and I was afraid about texting people in the fellowship too much for support. After he told me to be a burden, I started texting dozens of people and letting them know when I was struggling, hurting, despairing, crying, or having a good moment of reprieve.

Your recovery matters. Lean on us and give yourself every chance to defeat this disease. What you're getting in the fellowship is true love and healthy love. If being a burden is what you need to do to make it another 24 hours in sobriety, so be it.

This is not a forever program. This is a one day at a time program. My first day, I tried to last for 3 minutes. When I didn't die, I wondered if I could make it a full five minutes. Then I wondered if I could last a whole 15 minutes.

Don't despise small beginnings, as the saying goes. Our spiritual disease is a fight to the death. It wants no less than to make us insane and/or kill us. Your Fellowship Army is here. Use it.

RINA R., *New Jersey, USA*





Dear recovering friend,

Eighteen years ago, I became sexually sober and started my SA journey. As a CFC member, then Vice Chair, then Chair, I've been engaged in 12-Step correctional work with those on five continents.

We have SA sponsoring and/or meetings running in prisons in several US states. Recently, for the first time outside the US, we've established contact with prisoners in Australia. International sponsors connect with SAs throughout the US by mail and email. South American members write to Spanish speakers. SACFC trusted servants create places for women who self-identify with SA in prison.

The prison SA community has expanded to several hundred men and women. Prisoner sponsees work with SA sponsors on defects like resentment, shame, and other spiritual manifestations of their addiction. Sponsees discover direction through the SA solution, in prison—parallel to our own experience. Psychic change takes most of us a lifetime.

I happily think of a certain sponsee who discovered SA in prison. A former prisoner, he lives in an automotive manufacturing state, is now a respected member of his free community. He got sober through working the Steps by mail nine years ago. In his first job after prison, he was in line for a promotion. But his employer fired him in 2019, because of his prison record. Then, after prayer and reflection (and action), a contact called him with information on a company looking to hire. He got the job and is in line for further promotion. He is married, owns a home, a car, and is sober in recovery.

Please share this letter with your local groups, your sponsor, your spiritual director, your fellowship, your spouse, and your Higher Power.

The very personal joy I get from helping another is the result of a simple daily question: "How May I Serve You Today?" Being a trusted servant has been the locus of continued joy for many of us. May you discover it for yourself.

I hope you will consider correctional service as part of your New Year recovery resolutions.

All blessings,

ERIC S., California, USA
SACFC Chair July, 2018 - Jan 2021



Atlanta International Convention KEYS TO FREEDOM

The very first 100% online SA/S-Anon International Convention took place from Jan 22 till 24 and was an incredible event gathering fellows from all over the world. There were 955 SA registrants, and 685 S-Anons and 12 S-Ateens, which makes it the biggest IC in our SA history! Fellows from countries where SA has been existing for many years, members from relatively young fellowships, and loners from many places all over the planet joined us to celebrate recovery.

There were four SA meeting rooms in which meetings were being held simultaneously every hour. A real highlight of the weekend was the Fellowship Room.

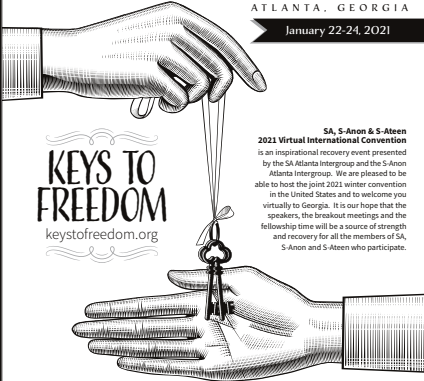
The technology enabled the creation of multiple rooms where attendees could gather for a variety of purposes: more questions or sharing after one of the hourly sessions, catching up with old or new friends, or support around special topics such as shame, criminal history and many more. Although there were no snacks served, the Fellowship Room captured the dynamism and connection of an in-person Convention.

The topics for the sessions were carefully curated for the needs of our current fellowship. Offering 48

SA · S-Anon · S-Ateen

2021 VIRTUAL INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

ATLANTA, GEORGIA
January 22-24, 2021




KEYS TO FREEDOM
keystofreedom.org

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

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

REGISTRATION BY	COST
Through December 15, 2020	\$15
December 16, 2020 - January 20, 2021	\$20



sessions (many with two panelists) over the course of the weekend was a tremendous undertaking and would not have been possible without the many members of our fellowship who volunteered or accepted an invitation to lead a session. Many thanks to each of you. Thanks also to our three mealtime speakers who told their stories. Hope is generated, renewed and strengthened by seeing the arc from active addiction to solid recovery and transformed lives.

If you experienced difficulties or confusion around registration, we extend our sincere apologies. Be assured that improvements will be implemented for the 2nd Virtual Convention, hosted by Salt Lake City in July 2021. May God bless you and keep you—until then.

KASEY K., *Georgia, USA*



PS: Speaking of Salt Lake City, keep an eye on keystoneofrecovery.com for more information.

The First Ever SA Program in an Australian Prison

It all started over nine years ago but that story is for another day. Fast forward to about one year ago. Let's say from the start that this whole story was inspired by an Amazing Loving Higher power. Three members of the Australian Newcastle Monday night Beginners Group formed a SA Prison Committee.

The Committee was made up of a young man in his 20s who was new to SA, an older man who was also new to SA, and a youngish old-timer/ friend from the USA who was our guide.

We rang the Cessnock jail Program Coordinator and asked if the prison would be interested in running a SA program in its compounds. They said they would be interested but we would have to create a proposal for them. We worked tirelessly to put a proposal together and submitted it to the Program Coordinator. We waited for weeks for a reply but received nothing. Until one day, we finally got the reply that the proposal had been rejected. We were devastated. But we did not give up, NO WAY.

We sent over 100 emails to prison chaplains, prison officials, and others. And got many rejections. It felt hopeless ... like throwing darts in the dark.

Somehow we kept going!! Then we got a big opportunity to apply to run an SA prison program in all the prisons of New South Wales, which is a state in Australia. We applied with high hopes but again to no avail. Another big disappointment. We really wanted to give up but our American friend kept building our hopes up.

Many more emails followed and many more disappointments. One day out of the blue, we got an email from a priest at the Junee Correctional Center informing us they were going to run our SA program in their prison in 2021! Late December, we received the first three requests for sponsors from prisoners of Junee.

We are so much looking forward to how God will continue to unfold His story of helping our brothers and sisters in prison.

MONDAY NIGHT BEGINNERS GROUP
PRISON COMMITTEE
Newcastle, Australia






2020 SAICO Budget Results

◆ Revenue	\$393,617
◆ Expenses	\$274,607
◆ Revenues - Expenses	\$119,010
◆ Prudent Reserve	\$132,676

New SA Groups February 2021

North, Central, & South America

- ◆ Dodge City, Kansas, USA 
- ◆ Kitchener, Ontario, Canada 
- ◆ Nelson, B. Columba, Canada 



SA Online Services Task Force

The pandemic has fundamentally changed the way members connect with each other. Where once a long-established home group might receive an occasional visit from an out-of-town member, nowadays members routinely pick and choose meetings from across the globe, “Zooming” or dialing in at the touch of a button. While this technology is a blessing, there are concerns that it might undermine the familiar structure of the SA fellowship; concerns too that this technology can be open to misuse.

In order to address these concerns, the Board of Trustees has established an “Online Services task force.” This body will explore how to get the best out of today’s technology whilst reducing the risks to our common welfare. The task force has identified the following implications, opportunities and challenges for consideration:

- ◆ How to carry the SA message online
- ◆ Online anonymity and security
- ◆ How the internet might serve as a primary point of contact for new members
- ◆ How to get people safely from their first online contact to their first meeting
- ◆ Support for online meetings, workshops and conventions
- ◆ Assisting loners
- ◆ Online and electronic measures to facilitate the 7th tradition
- ◆ Collaboration with the *Essay* magazine to help carry the SA message online
- ◆ Provide technical support to SAICO, helping them to maintain their online service
- ◆ Identify threats and promote safety measures
- ◆ Provide platforms for national, regional and international online service meetings
- ◆ Develop guidance for those organising or hosting online events
- ◆ Facilitate access to literature
- ◆ Provide a Social Media presence for SA

To find out more, or assist the task force in its activities, contact Brendan T. at brendanessay@gmail.com

SA Notice Board

International Zoom Meeting

For young SA members under 30

Sundays 10:00am EST

Email Ferro for further information:

essay.fer@gmail.com

"Next Meeting for SA"

A young Israeli member created this incredible tool that shows you all upcoming Zoom meetings and connects you directly to the meeting! Very easy to put as an icon on your phone screen: d2deqbdk4xcrlo.cloudfront.net

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

World Wide Zoom Meeting List

A team of dedicated fellows made this fantastic list of Zoom meetings all over the globe, which is being updated constantly! <http://bit.ly/SAZoomMtgs>

SA Recordings Hotline

Listen to many great audio recordings of SA & AA speakers, conventions, workshops and much more.

845-777-8001

Password – 1552

For any issues, questions, suggestions or to donate and support the hotline please email:

sarecordingshotline@gmail.com

If you would like to have a local hotline number for your area, please contact us and we will set it up.

A project by the O&R Intergroup (Orange & Rockland NY)

Accessibility Committee

Want to know more about this new SA Trustee Committee which is dedicated to serving and raising awareness of the needs of members with accessibility problems?

Contact: saico@sa.org

ANNOUNCEMENTS?

This is YOUR notice board! Send your SA-related announcements to:

essay@sa.org

COMING IN MAY



What Makes Meetings Strong?

NEXT EDITION

In the May issue, read what members all over the world do to build strong meetings.

Reporting on the Online Unity Event

International reactions on the Asia Pacific Area online Unity Event.

What Makes Meetings Strong?

Read why places like Nashville, Chicago, and others have grown into such strong and big SA fellowships.

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!

Boogers and Character Defects

This fellow in an Californian prison tells us the very insightful story of what a booger on his neck taught him.

SUBMIT YOUR STORY

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.

February 2022 edition: Sponsorship - Benefits and Challenges (stories due Jan 1)

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*.



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.

TWO-REGION JOINT ONLINE EVENT MARCH 20-21

“Our Common Welfare - Unser gemeinsames Wohlergehen”

SA's German-speaking Region and Europe-and-Middle-East Region invite you to a jointly hosted online Zoom event on 20-21 March, 2021. Both regions are collaborating to organize this event for the first time in order to strengthen the fellowship between them and learn from each other's experience, strength and hope. Speakers from both regions will offer their shares—with simultaneous translation through parallel German and English channels.

Meetings are on each day from 3:00-4:30 pm and from 5:00-6:30pm CET (9:00-10:30am and 11:00am-12:30pm EST).

Save the dates and consult sexaholicsanonymous.eu or anonyme-sexsuechtige.de for updates. Full details about the event, including registration, topics, and speakers involved, will be announced in the coming weeks.



ASIA PACIFIC AREA online unity event 2021

*Growing Within
and
Growing Globally*

25 APRIL 2021

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

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

SA's Europe-and-Middle-East Region announces an online event

“SUPPORTING WOMEN IN SA”

Saturday, May 15, 2021 from 1:00pm-6:00pm CET (7:00am-12:00pm EST) (open to all SA members on every continent)

Registration and other details will be available on EMER's website from the beginning of March 1

<https://sexaholicsanonymous.eu>

**SAVE MAY 15
IN YOUR CALENDAR!**



Send in your event to be listed in Essay and on sa.org.

Please submit the following information: dates, theme, location, and contact(s). An event flyer is very helpful. Send to saico@sa.org



#WELCOMEHOME

SANITY RETURNS

We welcome you to join us in the fellowship of the Spirit and participate in doing together what we cannot do alone.

The Scottish SA Convention with SAAnon participation 2021 has been arranged for all who are suffering from lust, the effects of lust upon us and our families and who wish to have progressive victory over lust and healing in their lives.

WHEN?

Friday 27th August – Sunday 29th August

Friday 27th 15:30 till 22:15 (UK Time)

Saturday 28th 7:30 till 22:15 (UK Time)

Sunday 29th 7:30 till 14:30 (UK Time)

Subject to minor alterations and full agenda to follow

PRICES FOR WEEKEND

(subject to slight change)

£160 single, full board inc meals

£270 double, full board inc meals

£80 self catering

CONTACT US

All booking or general enquires, please send to scottishsaconvention@gmail.com



Read about and register for the **SA/S-Anon/S-Ateen Virtual International Summer Convention** in Utah, USA: keystoneofrecovery.com

Convention Bids Needed!

SA holds an International Convention twice a year in January and July. Each convention is organized and run by a local Intergroup with help from the International Conventions Committee (ICC).

We currently have no Intergroup bids for conventions from January 2022 and beyond! In today's world, conventions may be either virtual (as the recent successful Atlanta convention) or live at a hotel of your choosing. The ICC is more than willing to hold an information session for your Intergroup.

If your Intergroup can consider hosting an international convention, please contact the ICC by sending a note to SAICO at saico@sa.org.




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.

A top-down view of several hands of various skin tones (white, light brown, dark brown) joined together in a circle. One hand on the right has a prominent tattoo of a red rose with black outlines and green leaves. The background is a plain, light-colored surface.

God,
Grant me the **Serenity**
To accept the things
I cannot change,
Courage to change
The things I can,
And **Wisdom**
To know the difference.