

# ESSAY

May 2021, sa.org

The International Journal of Sexaholics Anonymous

## What Makes Meetings Strong?

Read all about The Game on p 10

She Shares How She Evolved From Believing The Lies to Adopting the Slogans

Tough Love Changed Him From a Chronic Relapser to an Old-timer in North Hollywood

What Makes Meetings Strong in Nashville, Chicago, Melbourne, Munich, Bogotá, Slovakia, Saint Petersburg, Galway

This Old-timer Recounts How He Found a Life of Unlimited Service and Fulfilling Relationships

Inmate Sponsor B. Shares His Letter to a Member in Prison

Read All About the Interregional Convention That Got Translated in 12 Languages

# 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](mailto:essay@sa.org)

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

*Adopted by the Trustees and General Delegate Assembly in May 2016*

Editors' Corner



ROAD TO RECOVERY

May 2021

Dear *Essay* readers,

We hope you find inspiration in this issue on how you can turn your local meetings into strong spiritual gatherings by reading contributions from fellows from all over the world. You can also find out which pieces of literature on meetings our fellowship has to your disposal.

Furthermore, a member from Idaho reported reprogramming her mind using the Slogans; a Tennessee old-timer found a life of unlimited service and fulfilling relationships; a German fellow went abroad to find a different way of meetings and brought this new way back home; inmate sponsor B. shared a letter to an incarcerated brother; and the Asia Pacific Online Unity Conference as well as the Interregional "Our Common Welfare" Convention sent us an account of how the events went.

This issue also reports on the first round of the fun, international recovery tool called "The Game" on pages 10-11 and tells us what the participants learned after 28 days of spiritual competition.

*In fellowship,*  
THE EDITORIAL TEAM

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“We sit in meetings and listen, not only to receive something ourselves, but to give the reassurance and support which our presence can bring.”

12 Steps & 12 Traditions 110

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*On the cover: Worldwide shares of fellows on how they make their meetings into strong spiritual gatherings.*

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## Dear Essay



### Regarding The Choice of Cartoon

**THE FEB 2021 ISSUE** had a cartoon of a male in recovery witnessing those of various religions squabbling over 'who is in the right,' and engaging in fisticuffs. The 'observer' stands aside, witnessing the fray. The message of freedom from anger and resentment could have been conveyed much better. Anger, in particular, is a complex issue. Rendering it so simply does not do justice to finding recovery from anger and rage.

In the AA Big Book, we are asked to take advantage of what religious people do offer. Additionally, the cartoon promotes racial stereotypes, objectifying and rendering judgment of the world's internecine battles. I found it visually offensive and in poor taste.

ERIC S., California, USA

## Today Is My Favorite day

**YESTERDAY THE** principal of the university I'm in sent a picture of Winnie the Pooh to all the students. Winnie and Piglet are sitting on the trunk of a tree laying on the ground. Winnie asks his buddy Piglet "What day is it?" When Piglet answers "It's today," Winnie says as simply as profoundly "My favorite day."

Under the profound dialogue of the two protagonists the principal added: "It's no coincidence that Pooh and Piglet face the world together. Currently, we have little to no choice but to live in the moment and face the world together. It's difficult to look far into the future. So let's try to make the best of each day, because you'll never get it back."

The words of the principal made me think of our program, and of how Pooh

### Read Essay and Learn Polish!

**THE POLISH FELLOWSHIP** had for some years the wish to translate the *Essay* into Polish but hadn't found the right team of committed servants for it—until recently. We are very happy from now onwards to offer the full *Essay* in Polish to our members.

OREST, Poland

and Piglet are like me and the SA fellowship.

I am in the process of learning to live more and more in this moment, in the here and now, and face life on life's terms—together with you, my brothers and sisters in recovery.

I want to let go of my stinkin' thinkin' like: "Will I feel this bad my whole life?" or "It hurts so much, how much long will I be able to handle these painful feelings?" As well as the self-sabotaging thinking like when I feel good: "Yeah, but that's coincidence, tomorrow it will be the same as usual."

Like Winnie, I want to learn to say: "Today is my favorite day!" Today I am grateful for the gift of sobriety; today I am grateful to have found the fellowship of SA; today I am grateful for all the meetings that are available due to the pandemic.

Have a great day today, dear SA family.

NATHALIE V., Antwerp, Belgium



## World Wide Walls Of SA

## SA meetings can be held just about anywhere ...



Tuesday night "Design for Living" Rathdrum, Idaho, USA



Tuesday group, Bratislava, Slovakia



El-Tahrir meeting Cairo, Egypt



### Share your photos

Send your meeting place to [Essay@sa.org](mailto:Essay@sa.org).

### Remember:

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

# We absolutely insist on enjoying life!



Departing after workshop, Saint-Petersburg, Russia



Skiing fun among fellows, Vail, Colorado, USA



After-meeting socializing, Galway, Ireland



Relishing home-cooking, Slovakia



Ice cream after meeting, Jerusalem, Israel



## Share your photos

Send your socializing photos to [Essay@sa.org](mailto:Essay@sa.org). We will make the faces anonymous.

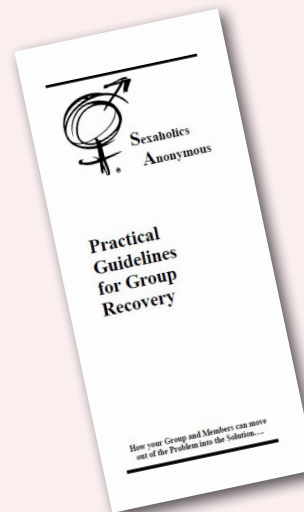
**Remember:** Include your name, address, group name, and location of the fun activity.

## SA's Wonderful Pamphlets on Cultivating Strong Meetings



**R**ead this powerful and inspiring pamphlet on the need for a home group. It explains how the home group is in fact a spiritual entity. It elaborates on common home group issues; the role of each member in the group; group business meetings; the benefits of group service.

By reading this you get answers to questions like "Do I have to join a 'home' group?", "How do I fit in?" and "What can I give back to the group?"



**W**hat can we do to keep our groups centered in positive sobriety? There are times when groups need recovery. That is simply a fact of life.

The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions are to group recovery what they are to individual recovery.

This indispensable 13-page brochure offers many suggestions that various groups have hammered out on the anvil of experience and found to work. It emphasizes the solution over the problem.

To buy these pamphlets for you and your group's literature table, just surf to the SA Store: [sa.org/store/](http://sa.org/store/)

## Selfless Service Is the Solution

**A**ll my life I have been surrounded by loved ones with fatal and sometimes incurable diseases. The first person I knew to pass away from a disease was a three year old girl named Amy, who died of leukemia. My mother just finished chemotherapy for B-cell Lymphoma. She was diagnosed just after her retirement from the Veterans Hospital where she worked tirelessly for thirty-plus years for men who served in the US Military. My sister's life was permanently altered while she was in her twenties. She was diagnosed with a large brain tumor. It took two major operations, over the course of seven years and two years of heavy medicine. She was in a support group for those with brain cancer. Of the twenty-plus close friends she made in that group, my sister is the lone survivor. A childhood mentor of mine, Mike, passed away last year as a result of diabetes.

The above examples all have a few things in common:

1. Nobody asks for cancer.
2. Without the right outside help none of them would have survived, and even with the right help, some still do not survive.
3. Loved ones also suffer.

Such is reality. I used to never be able

to accept it, life on life's terms. I was always full of fears and resentments and self-pity, wanting the world to be different. It was only when I got to grips with the principles and concepts in the Big Book of AA that I found peace.


Today, I've come to learn that when I experience those fears and resentments and self-pity, it's my ego in the driving seat, plain and simple. Sometimes my ego tells me I should be farther along in life, in recovery; that I should have already mastered everything. Other times, my ego will tell me that I'm "less than" because I'm addicted to negativity, negative energy, and negative emotions.

Part of my qualification as a sexaholic is "using a resentment like a drug." Resentment toward myself plays just as well as resentment towards another. It works every time. Better, in fact. That's my default. It's ego shattering to simply be right sized. To be just another one of God's kids.

Comparing is not healthy for me. Comparing what I feel on the inside to what I see on the outsides of others leaves me losing every time. So I have to let it go. All of it. Self-seeking, shame, guilt, resentment, feeling better than, or less than.

Instead, I get back into service, throw myself into the program and let the results follow. The inevitable results for me have been that as I strive to do the next right thing, listen to my sponsor, attend meetings regularly, and throw myself tirelessly into 12-step work, I have become free of the obsession to lust and from my debilitating obsession with self.

Selfishness and self-centeredness, that is the root of my trouble. (AA 62) Selfless service is the solution.

JESSE S., *Alabama, USA* 



## Zooming into the Next Right Meeting

**R**ecently, I was exposed to someone who tested positive for COVID-19. I had symptoms, so I called my physician who referred me to a "drive thru" test site for the virus. After the test was conducted, I promptly pulled my car into a parking lot while gripping the steering wheel, feeling so alone and afraid. I had symptoms for the virus, didn't I? Why did I even need a test? I thought "This is probably the last few weeks of my life!" With my emotional sobriety at risk, I said a quick prayer which provided a little relief.

I had a vague sense that it might help me to call my sponsor or grand sponsor but that thought faded quickly. By that time, I noticed a message on my smartphone from one of my SA friends in one of our emerging communities. It was a Zoom link to an Arabic-speaking SA meeting which started minutes earlier. Although I do not speak, write, or understand Arabic, I thought that this might be an answer to prayer. So I clicked and went onto the Zoom meeting to which my SA friend in Egypt invited me.

Immediately I felt peace in that meeting in spite of the obvious

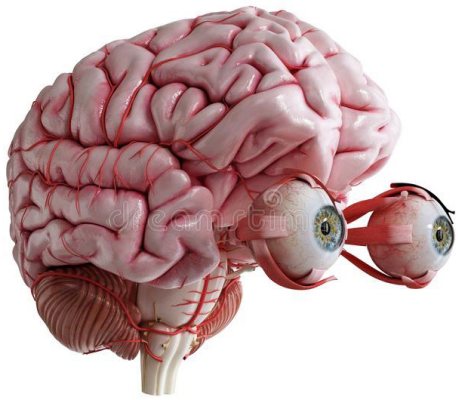
differences in language, culture, religion, etc. As I wasn't able to read the Arabic texts, I clicked the Participants list and noticed a sponsee.

Before I could even send him a message, he messaged me and offered to translate for me. I accepted his support and read the reading that the group was discussing, which was the AA Big Book pages 67 and 68 on the topic "Fear." How timely for me? My Higher Power knew just what I needed! As soon as I read it, it was as if I was at an English-speaking meeting. I was welcomed by the group and even realized that I knew a few of the members at the meeting. I tried to lead with my weakness in my share. It was so nice to be in a meeting, to feel a part of something like SA!

Isolation is for the birds! My favourite line from the reading was the promise - *At once we commence to outgrow fear.* (AA 68)

By the way, the COVID-19 test came back negative. I appreciate the SA international fellowship and look forward to seeing what God will do as we try to carry the message of our recovery to those who are still suffering from this disease.

HAL C., *Virginia, USA* 



## Further Anatomy Of a Lust Hit

Those of us with a little experience in recovery know the various strategies of the “18-Wheeler” for dealing with a lust hit (SA 157). I would like to add a “Number Zero” to the list. I have learned through prayer and through discussion with my daily sobriety renewal partner that part of the power of a lust hit is in the belief that the object of my lust has something I do not.

My DSR partner is same-sex attracted, so he admits that he feels jealousy of his lust objects’ bodies. I have long noticed that my most forceful lust hits are with people who seem to be “out of my league.” Of course, there are no leagues, but sometimes fantasy tells me that someone’s physical beauty gives them a power, a confidence, that I need.

We all know the intense yearning that characterizes some lust experiences. In examining these feelings, I have found that they falsely promise to make me whole. “It’s all I ever wanted” is the thought that accompanies them. *What*

*if the thought is right, but the object of my yearning is wrong?* The White Book does say that we need to find what we were looking for in lust if we are to be satisfied and happy (SA 163: “I was beginning to have what my lust had really been looking for”).

I have learned that lust is most forceful when I think the object of my lust has something I do not. The belief is that if I can be with them physically, I will shore up my inadequacy. If I feel whole and complete, the intensity of the lust hit diminishes to being nothing more than a nonsensical suggestion that getting entangled with someone (and maybe harming them) will help me.

The lust claim is like sympathetic magic: if I touch that person and own them I will become them, control their prized quality. They seem confident and beautiful; if they assent to being with me physically, then, the belief suggests, I will be able to cannibalize that quality from them, steal that life from them.

**“It’s all I ever wanted” is the thought that accompanies my lust experiences. What if the thought is right, but the object of my yearning is wrong?**

But “thinking through the slip” shows me that this has never worked for me. It brings mutual pain and a deeper disappointment, as acting out creates another burden of guilt, and the difficulty of waking up from a drunken stupor.

So I add to my list of ways to overcome lust and temptation Item Zero: *Know from my Higher Power that I am enough.* Know that my Higher Power does not see me as broken, or as an addict or as less than. My Higher Power loves me as I am (but wants me to grow and mature).

The reason why I receive the measure I give is because giving activates my awareness of how much I have—potentially, a long list of good things, including self-assurance, kindness, generosity.

Roy K. writes in *Anatomy of a Look*: “And God’s provision is for me just as I am” (Recovery Continues p.42). I need to take actions to know that I have everything good and that I am

enough; I need to have a Higher Power so I don’t need to make someone else my higher power. I need to act my way there through all the tools we are familiar with: steps, meetings, DSR, program literature.

By surrendering my erroneous thoughts bit by bit through daily prayer and surrender (Steps 3 and 7), by knowing that Life is bigger than my harms to self and others (Steps 9 and 10), by knowing my Higher Power (Step 11), and by learning that I can do good for others (Step 12). I learn in my being (not my intellect) that I am enough, that there is nothing I need to crave for or lust after.

MIKE M., Taipei, Taiwan



**WE ARE NOT  
A GLUM LOT**

One of the most effective Practical Tools is HUMOR.

A man in a hot air balloon realized he was completely lost. He was overwhelmed, in despair and utter bewilderment. He saw a person on the ground and yelled down to him, “Can you help me? I don’t know where I am.”

The man on the ground replied calmly, “Sure, I’ll help you. You are in a hot air balloon

hovering 30 feet above the ground ... between 40 and 41 degrees North latitude and between 59 & 60 degrees West longitude.”

“Wow, you must be an SA sponsor”, said the man in the balloon. “I am”, said the man, “but what gave me away?”

“Well”, answered the balloonist, “everything you told me is technically right but I am still lost. Frankly you’re not much help at all and you might even have delayed my trip.”

“You must be an SA sponsee”, replied the man. The man in the balloon was amazed and said, “I am, but how did you know?”

The man on the ground said, “Well, you don’t know where you are or where you’re going. You have risen to where you are due to a lot of hot air. You are expecting other people to solve your problems and the fact is that you are in exactly the same position you were in before we met, but, somehow now IT’S MY FAULT” !

Have a good joke, wry observation, funny SA story? Did you make a funny recovery cartoon? Or Send your Humor gifts to [essay@sa.org](mailto:essay@sa.org)

# "THE GAME!"

The February edition announced a new practical tool called "The Game." After a successful pilot project in November with six teams of four members each, The Game was kicked off for the worldwide fellowship on April 4.

On that day, 130 members from all over the globe looking for fun and recovery formed 26 teams to play The Game in order to learn new habits over a period of 28 days. In order for it to be an effective way to make new program friends, the teams were put together randomly.

Like everything in our program, The Game is about team work. The teams work together to earn recovery points by using SA Tools. The team, not the individual, with the most recovery points at the end of the 28-day challenge wins.

Each tool has to be practiced for a minimum of 10 minutes per day.

Each member has had to choose his/her own four recovery tools which had to be the same for the 28 days:


1. A daily phone call to one's check-in buddy of the week
2. An activity of self-care
3. A recovery action
4. A spiritual activity

All players reported to have had a heck of a time and lots of fun and fellowship while practicing their new habits. There was a lot of "healthy spiritual competition" between the teams, trying week after week to get the highest ranking. Each of the members of the winning team got the print version of this May edition for free.

On the next page you can read of the some anecdotes sent to us by the players. Below you can find how you can register for the next round of The Game, which will be on July 4!

**The Game starts again on July 4. To register or for more info: [theessaygame@gmail.com](mailto:theessaygame@gmail.com)**

The Game helped me to inventory something that happened 22 years ago. I shared the inventory with someone I trust. As much as I remember it was the first time that I cried about that loss.

GABRIELE M., Wiesbaden, Germany 

I have been writing in my journal every single day—the events of the day, resentments, gratitudes. It was awesome. I had never done it daily. And I am sticking to it now day after day.

SAMAR F., Cairo, Egypt 


"Praying for others" was my spiritual action tool. First, I did it singing, which was fun. Then I started using this tool during the day as soon as I became aware of a resentment. It helped so much! Next, I started praying in silence while sitting in the sun, which made me feel so near to my HP and so pure and happy! I learned to pray in 10 minutes for all my inventory-people. I added praying for myself and the little girl in me. I added praying for all little girls. It helped me to get compassion for and connection with my inner child and other little girls.

KRISTINA, Germany 

I am glad to announce myself as the winner of The Game: I won new habits of recovery tools which gave me a new experience and growth in my spiritual journey. I won new fellow friends from around the world whom I can share with and get ESH from. I won the enjoyment of playing a safe game with fellows which was really fun. I won the lesson that Priority is not what I say it is, or I want it should be. It's what I actually do!


NUTI F., London, UK 

I was reminded that the program works one day at a time and I have seen how one day at a time adds up. I now have 28 more days of sobriety. In addition to my sobriety I have improved my mental, physical and spiritual health as a result of The Game. I've met and connected with people worldwide. I began to understand the importance of self-care.

CAROLYN G., Georgia, USA 

The Game has motivated me to reach out when I normally wouldn't, as well as to


consider others' needs over my own.

LEO W., Wellington, New Zealand 

I started waking up earlier and earlier in order to meditate. Dawn is sooner each day!

RAQUEL J., Madrid, Spain 


By practicing the tools of recovery every day, I have become more responsible and disciplined. The words from the prayer-song that I have been singing every day have become my reality!

OLGA S., Alchevsk, Ukraine 

It was and is challenging for me to work on my 4th Step inventory on a daily basis, but the commitment to my team helped me to do so. I am looking forward to playing it again.

MOEIN M., Tehran, Iran 


What I loved about The Game is that it gave me another reason to do the Steps. I want so badly to improve as a person, because if I don't improve, I might go back out there. And for me, that would be "death." I didn't look at it as a competition, in the way that a boxer wants to "beat" his opponent. I did it to improve myself in the same way a musician might be motivated to improve. It helped me to get "better" at life, so that I can enjoy my "music" more, and be a better "instrument" to help others.

MICHAEL J., Texas, USA 


The Game has been a real blessing for me. Through it I have been granted a meditation discipline, I have been taking daily action on my steps 8 & 9 and not procrastinating. I have been in contact with new fellows—practicing honesty and thinking of others. I have been conscious of how I can care for myself by eating well and working out.

DAN, Nairobi, Kenya 

I finished a whole book thanks to The Game. It has been a long time since I've read a book of 214 pages!

EMAN M., Manama, Bahrain 

Through my self-care tool I learned to stretch my stiff muscles in the evening, as I suffer from a meniscus injury. Thanks to it, I can sleep much more relaxed now!

ELAINE P., Munich, Germany 



## Believe the Lies or ADOPT THE SLOGANS

**C**an I differentiate the true from the false? In my disease, I never thought about that question prior to recovery. It simply did not matter. I am a pleasure seeker. What makes me happy or comfortable was what was important. In recovery, I have the opportunity to examine my beliefs and ask the God of my understanding to help me see the truth.

Paraphrasing *The Doctor's Opinion* (AA XXVIII), I lust essentially because I like the effect it produces. That was pleasure. The sensation (produced by lusting and my acting out behaviors)

is so elusive that, while I admit it is injurious, after a while I cannot differentiate the true from the false. I think my sexaholic life is normal. I surrounded myself with other sexaholics so my perception was that my behaviors were the norm.

As I worked the Steps with a sponsor, I found I believed some lies that had a direct effect on my decisions in life. Many are common cultural beliefs. I will share some of my favorites, which I used to justify my acting out behaviors of flirting, having affairs (regardless of his or my marital status), keeping many secrets, objectifying men and leading a double life. Here are a few examples of the lies I believed and the associated effects in my life as I see them today.

The lie I believed	Effects of that Lie on my Life (What I did)
I have to have a man in my life to make me a complete person.	Started seeing other men before divorce from first husband. Frequently started another relationship before terminating the current one.
What he does not know will not hurt him.	Kept secrets. Hid correspondence and pictures - was sneaky.
All is fair in love and war.	Did not respect boundaries, like marriage status. Betrayed friends by seducing their boyfriends or flirting with their husbands.
Do not put all your eggs in one basket. (This saying means do not risk everything in one endeavor).	Juggled multiple relationships at the same time. Always needed the security of knowing I was involved with someone or had someone else in mind as my next relationship - or hostage or victim might be a more accurate term.
Just because I am on a diet does not mean I cannot look at the menu.	Even if I am in a relationship, I can still look at (objectify) other men.
It is normal to go outside my marriage if sex is not satisfying at home.	Totally selfish and self-centered thinking. I did not recognize that sex was more than a physical act for pleasure. True intimacy was impossible. This lie provided justification for affairs.
I deserve to have what I want, when I want it. I am entitled to sexual pleasure.	Arrogant self-centered thinking - resulted in sexually transmitted diseases and an abortion.
Someday my knight in shining armor will arrive, sweep me off my feet, and I get to live happily ever after. Then it will be easy to leave my current marriage for the knight.	Fostered fantasy and dependency. Allowed me not to take responsibility for my own happiness. Nurtured the blame I assigned to my husband.
And one that can be a danger at any time, even throughout recovery: "I got this". I do not believe I need help.	Allows me to make independent, unilateral decisions. Based on believing all the lies - does not produce sound decisions.

You can imagine the unmanageability of my life based on such beliefs. What inspired me to want to change? After all, having affairs had been fun at first. Flirting, intrigue, planning rendezvous, exchanging secret cards and letters was exhilarating for a while. I did not have any legal incentives. I was not discovered or publicly exposed in any way.

I was simply miserable. Between my brief episodes of indulging in lust, I was "restless, irritable and discontented." (AA xxviii) In addition, I was easily annoyed, chronically malcontent and quick to blame others for everything I found wrong. Without putting words to it at the time, I started to experience the saying, "I am violating my standards faster than I can lower them."

Thank goodness for the 12 Steps, meetings, our literature, and sponsors who helped guide me to more healthy beliefs. Many of which are summarized in healthy slogans of recovery such as, "I am as sick as my secrets." Wow. That started opening my eyes to how sick I was. It helped me start to see that I am powerless over lust and that my life might be unmanageable by me.

The slogan, "If I spot it, I've got it" was especially irritating and helpful to me when I went through Step four. I call it the mirror. Whenever I am annoyed by another person's behavior, I need to look at how I do the same behaviors in other circumstances; of how I disturb others in the same way.

I can always notice a negative characteristic in another person before I can see it in myself. So, "Thank you" to all who have annoyed me in the past as that has helped me see my mistakes and character defects! Today after a brief moment of irritation, I

recognize the mirror and the gift ... usually. Sometimes it is during my 11th Step nightly review when I really see the mirror and feel the gratitude.

Steps eight and nine suggest I list people I have harmed. What is

**In recovery I was becoming humble, taking responsibility and making right the wrongs I had done to the best of my ability with God's help.**

harm? My addicted brain filled with justifications to remove people from the list. From our AA book *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* I learned that harm includes physical, mental, emotional or spiritual damage (12&12 80).

Of course I was doing harm living a life based on the lies I believed prior to recovery. In recovery I was becoming humble, taking responsibility and making right the wrongs I had done to the best of my ability with God's help. I was starting to shift from behaviors stemming from the lies I believed to the truth. I was supported by others who had gone before and by the new slogans I learned in recovery such as:

- Let go and let God.
- One day at a Time.
- Keep it simple
- Acceptance is the key.
- Without God, I can't. Without me God Won't.
- If I spot it, I've got it.

- Don't quit 5 minutes before the miracle happens.
- Easy Does it, but do it.
- Progress not perfection.

As a result of working the steps, I have experienced a spiritual awakening of the educational variety as described in the Big Book, Appendix II, page 567. I have had a "personality change" and I have experienced a "profound alteration in my reaction to life."

I no longer crave men's attention, flirt, lust after men, lie, keep secrets and all the other things I did pre-recovery. I continue to try to become fit for service to God and my fellows. I am active in my home group, my intergroup, a women's meeting, and other online meetings. I have a sponsor and many others I can call for support. I have sponsees. I seek out ways to study the Big Book and SA literature with fellow sexaholics. Clearly, I am a different person from the one I was when I lived according to the lies

I chose to believe regardless of the consequences to anyone.

Here are other tools I use to support my recovery in addition to the 10th and 11th Step daily practices. These four questions continue to guide me well:

1. Am I willing to go to any lengths for my recovery?
2. Is what I'm thinking about doing going to support my recovery?
3. Is what I'm thinking about doing something I want to keep secret?
4. Did I remember to pause and ask God for direction?

Today I reject the lies I used to believe and embrace the simple slogans I find in the program. May you uncover any lies you unconsciously believe so you too can choose what beliefs will guide your actions.

SUSIE B., Idaho, USA



*take in lust.* In the active addiction I chose to pursue lust so I didn't have to experience uncomfortable feelings (even good ones).

With a euphoric recall, I am doing the same thing, even if it might be on a "smaller" scale. This is my drug. It may not be a technical breach of sobriety, but my choice here is certainly an action of lust, for I choose to take in lust. This is the first step down the scary road of addiction. In order to walk the path of recovery, I need progressive victory over lust. I have no choice if I want real lasting sobriety and recovery.

How can I calm myself when I am uncomfortable going to sleep? I can talk about what's bothering me with my wife, sponsor, fellow member or another friend. I can pray to a loving G-d for help with what's bothering me. I can meditate. I can write an inventory or just journal about what's bothering me. I have a choice: I can choose to take an action of recovery or I can choose to be stuck with my discomfort (which will lead me into lust). I can't choose to simply not lust because I'm not capable of that. All I need is a simple action of recovery. One day at a time, one hour at a time, one decision at a time.

This program of recovery has given me many gifts and tools. They have to start with an awareness of myself and what is going on around me. That comes from seeking the truth. I can't hope to be honest and truthful if I don't even know what that looks like. I need to recognize the situation I am in and what my stinking thinking is telling me so I can do something as simple as ask G-d to take away my lust right now.

NACHUM B., New York, USA



## Awareness and Surrender of Euphoric Recall

Sometimes when I am on edge, I want to take in lust to calm myself. I obviously can't look at porn or masturbate (or act out with another person). Because I would lose my sobriety and I'd have to disclose my actions to my wife. So my disease whispers in my ear that a "euphoric recall" is the perfect answer. I tell myself, "This will take the edge off my anxiety - and I haven't taken any action of lust."

I don't even have to tell my sponsor since I literally didn't do anything. I can use recalled sexual images to help me relax so I can go to sleep and I don't have to move at all. My eyes are closed. There is no action at all since I am not looking at anything nor am I moving my body to stimulate myself in any way. I tell myself "This is what I need, there can't be anything wrong if I haven't even done anything."

*But this is all a lie. I have chosen to*

[www.sa.org/essay](http://www.sa.org/essay)



HOLLYWOOD

## Tough Love Changing Lives

He got sober in North Hollywood in 1993 after six years of not finding sobriety thanks to a group who dared to give him tough love

I came into SA in 1987 in Los Angeles. I attended meetings, went to international conferences, had three sponsors in succession, made as many as four phone calls every day and followed directions from those three sponsors. I was never sober for the first six years.

People ask what changed. In 1993 there was a confluence of several factors. I was broken, I had no job and drove a car that was so battered that people couldn't agree on what color it was. I had no hope for change in any area of my life let alone sobriety and I was desperately lonely. Two friends tried to get me to go to a meeting where they saw something different. My friends told me the guys at the meeting could help me.

The meeting was in North Hollywood on Friday night. Through the influence of two guys who had experience in another 12 Step program, the meeting became known for a tough, no-nonsense approach to recovery. The SA meetings I had attended up to that point were not helpful. Members just shared whatever happened to them that week or in the past without regard for how what they were sharing

affected others in the meeting. We seemed to be glad to dump whatever we were carrying at the time.

The North Hollywood meeting focused on sharing the Solution. If a problem was brought to the light the person sharing ended with the solution and the eventual outcome. People were encouraged not to indulge in self-pity. Usually, if this happened, one or two recovering members would confront the person during or after the meeting. They would ask questions like "What is the solution?", "What are you going to do about that?" "You are sucking all of the air out of the meeting; when are you going to contribute something?"

They would frequently ask random members, "What have you done to save someone's life today?" That was code for have you cared enough about another person to ask him how he is today? Have you packed anything into the stream of life or are you still just taking? We asked each other what Step we were currently working on and when we could finish that Step and move on to the next one. Having a sponsor was important so they asked people if they had a sponsor. The next question might be, "When was the last

time you called him?"

My experience of the meeting on that Friday night gave me a shock. There were people there who were changed. One guy in particular showed such radical growth that I was amazed when I talked to him. He demonstrated the attitude and the priorities of the meeting by asking me two questions: "Do you want to be sober?" and "Will you work with a sponsor?" He selected a sponsor for me from a pool of volunteers. That man is still my sponsor after 28 years. At last I had a sponsor who had a sponsor and who had taken the actions described by the Steps.

I was told to read the White Book and the AA literature. The first 164 pages of Alcoholics Anonymous contain the solution. The White Book tells us to look for detailed instructions on working the steps in the AA Big Book. So meetings, sponsors and individuals became steeped in the White Book, Alcoholics Anonymous and the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.

I was welcomed into a fellowship of recovery. I was encouraged to get involved, talk to people and contribute. We met in members' homes. We drove wives to jails to meet their husbands. We went to Court to support a member on trial. We met before meetings and showed up early. I learned to go to meetings to see what I could give. I was to listen during the meeting to identify someone who might need help and talk to them after the meeting. Look for the guy who is on the fringes and not engaged with anyone.

Helping others find sobriety and recovery is why we meet. If I revert to being as selfish and self-centered as I was, I will sink into that horrible dark place that is lonely and keeps me

in slavery. Alcoholics Anonymous has this gem: *Our very lives, as ex-problem drinkers, depend upon our constant thought of others and how we may help meet their needs.* (AA 20)

After some meetings we find a place to talk. We might stay for hours talking about baseball. Other nights there is confrontation about recovery. There are sessions where there are tears.

The purpose of meeting after the meeting is to provide a place where members can talk about anything and find solutions. North Hollywood

**Having a sponsor was so important so they asked people if they had a sponsor. The next question might be, "When was the last time you called him?"**

was never a social club. We had one purpose—to help sexaholics find relief from the horrible condition of sexaholism. The meeting was not interested in hearing what drunks had to say. They wanted people who had experience taking action, the actions in the Steps, or as the White Book says, *the actions of love.*

No one was trying to be mean or severe. The aim was always to be available for the addict who was suffering. The availability was not so that we could commiserate with him, join him in a pity party, but to offer a solution.

It scared me to realize that those guys were not going to baby me or

take care of me. They showed me that I was responsible for the quality of my life. I could look to or blame no one for being responsible for the condition of my life. I was responsible to take action. No one could do it for me. I had to grow up quickly. That was hard at age 42.


One of the strengths of the meeting grew out of familiarity members had with the literature. One example was when I complained about another member to a recovering member of the group. He looked at me and quoted page 90 of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions: *It is a spiritual axiom that every time we are disturbed, no matter what the cause, there is something wrong with us.*

But I repeated that conversation two or three times, always going to the same guy to complain about how another member had hurt me or

offended me. After maybe the third time, I began to see what my friend and the book were trying to say. I needed to look at myself when I was disturbed. Strong meetings have members who know the literature and have applied it to their lives and helped others apply it to theirs.

Everyone participates as an equal in a strong meeting and rotation of leadership is practiced. These are my opinions based on my experience. Nothing I have written should be accepted until it is compared with what is in the White Book or the first 164 pages of Alcoholics Anonymous. I may be wrong on some point.

There are no rules, but there are lessons we have learned from being in meetings. What I have written are some of the lessons I have learned.

GARY W., California, USA 

## DISCUSSION TOPIC

### Does your home group do everything that it takes to be a strong meeting?

The author of *Tough Love Changing Lives* describes what made the change for him back in 1993. Apart from the Gift of Desperation, he had friends who cared enough for him to take him to a strong meeting, which he describes for us in detail.

Does your meeting have a tough, no-nonsense approach to recovery? Does it discourage dumping and focuses on sharing the Solution?

Are members who

indulge in self-pity confronted after the meeting? Are you asking each other which Step you are currently working on?

Does everyone in your group has a sponsor who has a sponsor and who has done all 12 Steps?

Is your meeting steeped in the AA and SA literature?

Do you socialize? Meet in each other's homes?

Do you show up before the meetings to see what you can give? Do you take care of the

ones that need help? Do you do after-meeting fellowshiping?

Do you take care of the newcomers? Do you look for the guy who is on the fringes and not engaged with anyone?

Is everyone equal in your meeting? Is rotation of leadership practiced? Are your meetings and your lives governed by love?

*You may use this topic in a discussion meeting, or send us a story of your own recovery journey to [essay@sa.org](mailto:essay@sa.org)*

## ASK AN OLD-TIMER

### "What do you think made the Nashville meetings the way they are, Harvey A.?"

There I was sitting at an AA meeting In early Feb '84, when a man announced he was starting an SA group in Nashville, TN. I surrendered six weeks later when I met at his apartment for my first SA meeting. Soon we outgrew his apartment and moved to my office building. That first year we had one meeting a week with about 100 people coming and going, mostly going. After a few months we had our first woman attend who became a major sober member to help anchor the meetings. From the beginning we drew many women to the fellowship.

We outgrew my office and began meeting at churches. After a few years we were up to two meetings a day. Along came a young man who needed more meetings. He began meetings during the day also which made our meetings more accessible, especially to members with younger children at home. We began to notice the more meetings we had the more people would show up.

In the early years we sent out brochures to all the helping professionals and clergy in our community. It took us two years to complete

this task. The concept of abundance not scarcity was a centerpiece for our growth.

We utilized the practice of the 30-day sobriety imperative (SA 198), meaning people with less than 30 days sobriety would be able to share only after the first 30 minutes of the meeting. This kept our meetings in the solution rather than the problem.

We began having more and more longer term sober people attend our meetings. Today there are at least five people with 30 years or more of sobriety still in the fellowship from those early years of SA in Nashville.

We tended to not have strong intergroups but emphasized the individual autonomy of each meeting group.

We emphasized having guest speakers from around the country come to speak to us twice a year. We looked forward to having ideas presented to us from other parts of the country.

In addition to having women at all our meetings we realized the women increased their sobriety numbers by also having their own meetings too.

Before COVID we had at least 45 meetings a

week in our vicinity. Many of our meetings would need 2-4 breakout groups because of the large attendance. What has lead to our growth in Nashville, in my opinion:

1. A miracle.
2. The willingness for outreach into the community.
3. The willingness for many of us to break our personal anonymity in our community on a one to one basis.
4. Basing our model on the AA disease concept.
5. Having meetings focus on the solution not the problem.
6. My willingness as the longest sober member to not get involved in intergroup after the first few years in order to avoid influencing the direction of the growth of the fellowship.
7. To emphasize that a loving God of our understanding is running the show through our group consciousness, not through any one or a few people.
8. To stay out of any international SA controversies and just let time deal with them.
9. Last but not least is to remember there are no big deals and that our essence as a fellowship is unity.

What would you like to ask on old-timer? Send your question to [essay@sa.org](mailto:essay@sa.org)



# VOIP Meetings As a Loner in Northern Africa

*Living for the last six years in Northern Africa the internet has become his bridge to meetings, fellows, and his sponsor*

**W**hen I hit my bottom on April 16, 2014, I didn't know if my wife would stay with me after I disclosed to her my double life between my family and my secret lust garden. I was not only mentally and spiritually sick but also physically ill because of acting-in. I suffered from terrible pain. I knew that I had no other choice but to come back to SA and to restart step work.

I restarted recovery work by going to meetings, getting a sponsor, and working the steps. I had the chance to have a face to face meeting not too far away. I do remember when I came back to my first SA meeting after many years, I cried listening to the readings. "What is a Sexaholic," "The Problem," "The Solution," the shares, I really felt home realizing what I missed: spiritual union with fellows in recovery.

There was a lot of long-term sobriety and honesty, and the shares gave me strength and hope for my own recovery and sobriety. We had post-meeting activities and met during the weekends to share activities together. It worked for me, going to the meetings and feeling at home

with fellows when reading, sharing, praying, and doing service. With my Higher Power's help I stayed sober and I progressed in recovery, one day at a time.

One year later, I had to move to Northern Africa where I have been living and working for the past six years. Here in Northern Africa all issues around sex and lust are strongly taboo and don't appear in public.

**Isn't it a miracle? The Internet became an important medium for my recovery, it became a bridge to meetings, to fellows, to my sponsor.**

Parental and conjugal violence against girls and women is very common. The same with sexual harassment. Homosexuality is considered a crime and punished by law with prison. People accused of being homosexual do not have their human rights

guaranteed and risk cruel treatment.

I didn't know how to manage working the steps because there are no 12 steps meetings here. I found an SA VOIP meeting on Skype and I engaged with the fellows to show up regularly and to do service. Step work and reaching out to my sponsor was also via Skype. My recovery work was digitised. And it worked, with my Higher Power's help I could stay sober, not perfect, but progress in recovery, one day at a time, learning more and more about my shortcomings and my spiritual hunger.

Isn't this a miracle? Originally the Internet was an instrument of my slave master, lust, when acting out with lusty images and videos. Now it became an important medium for my recovery, it became a bridge to meetings, the fellows, or to my sponsor.

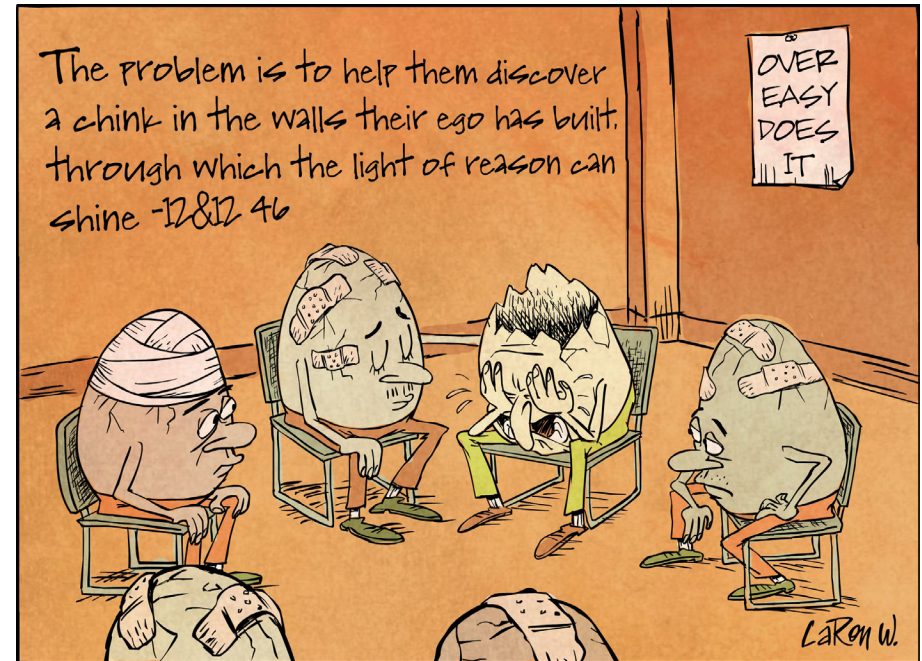
VOIP meetings are not the same

as face to face meetings. But for me they work, we share strength and hope, we feel honesty and spiritual or emotional intimacy. And I appreciated the digitised SA Buddy List which served as a communication platform to reach out. No more self-cheating when triggered in the night by saying to myself, "it's too late for outreach, I won't disturb fellows at night." With the help of these technologies I can reach out any time because there will be a fellow still awake or already awake around the globe.

With current pandemic conditions all over the world the fellowship had to switch over to virtual meetings and conventions. What is your experience during this time? Did it work for you? For me it did. Hamdoulillah!

Keep coming back, it works if you work it, even virtually. You are worth it.

TOBIAS S., Northern Africa



# Strong Meetings

## Need Committed Members

I have no doubt that if every SA meeting was conducted along the lines as prescribed in our White Book (185-187), our fellowship would have thousands of strong meetings globally and many, many thousands of members with strong recovery.

However, I asked myself, what is the purpose of meetings in 12 Step fellowships? I came up with three answers to this question:

**The conundrum in having strong meetings is that the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop lusting. Yet the strength of the fellowship is based on members with more than a desire to stop lusting.**

(1) Not only to get my secrets into the open—but also myself. Mine is mostly an addiction of hiddenness, secretiveness and privacy. In meetings I work in the opposite direction.

(2) The core activity for recovery is to work through the 12 steps, have a spiritual awakening and live the steps. All other things I do are to support

that process—including meetings. Meetings are where I learn and see for myself what worked for others with the same problem. I take baby steps out of myself, remove my ego and leave behind what I perhaps think recovery should look and feel like. Rather I allow myself to take direction from what I see in others.

(3) Meetings consistently remind me that this is a fellowship of men and women with a common problem, doing the best to help each other.

I have the good fortune to be a member of a strong, reasonably committed group in Melbourne, Australia, with the once in a while weak meeting, generally strong meetings and the occasional magical meeting, where undoubtedly we feel God's presence. Until COVID—when we went to Zoom for nearly 12 months, our meetings were often thought of a little too formal. (We stood up and went to the front of the hall to share!) I came to feel very at home and comfortable in our formality.

I don't recall any issue dealt with in a group conscience meeting to be divisive or acrimonious. Perhaps an occasional bit of acrimony and spice in a group conscience meeting is a good thing.

Here in Australia, we are by nature consensual and relatively easy going. The quality of shares are mostly on topic and we are spared any Big Book or White Book thumpers, quoting text instead of sharing experience, strength and hope. We are also usually spared a preponderance of war stories. In terms of getting ourselves into the open, our fellowship has created an ethos and an expectation that regular members attend regularly. Most members with strong recovery attend each week.

When I think of my program and what worked for me, nearly everything was gleaned from others at face to face meetings. In my first meeting a long-time sober member said that he was committed to come to this meeting every single week. Since he had what I wanted, I took on the same commitment. In my first two years or so, there was a member who

**Somehow, the newcomer, the crusty old-timer, the member who can't get sober, the member who grapples with whether they identify as an addict, the member who attends regularly—all come together in fellowship and recovery.**

had attended SA regularly for over 15 years but had little, if any, recovery. To me, that seemed to be a fate as bad as remaining in the addiction. We learn from others what can work for us, and what not to do.

The conundrum in having strong meetings is that the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop lusting. Yet the strength of the fellowship is based on members with more than a desire to stop lusting. A strong group needs the majority of members committed to, and engaged

in the recovery process.

That ours is a fellowship of people with a common problem committed to helping each other is where the magic in a meeting can really unfold. When I see the member who was once so helpless, clocking up a length of solid recovery and expressing their gratitude to the members and our program. When I take a call, and a member seeks advice on a problem or an issue, and the words I speak are not mine, but a transmission of what I have learnt in the rooms of SA. When I look around the room at a meeting and I see people from all walks of life and I can't help but feel an incredible bond with these strangers.

Somehow, the newcomer, the crusty old-timer, the members who can't get sober, the member who still grapples with whether they identify as an addict, the member who attends regularly—all come together in fellowship and recovery. Nothing is more powerful, nothing is stronger.

MARCUS C., Melbourne, Australia



# Hearing God's Voice By Keeping Silent

He took the advice of his sponsor to keep his mouth shut at meetings and listen instead.



Two months ago, a member told me that several members of our fellowship were angry with me. I told the situation in a very long audio message to my sponsor. He suggested to me to shut up for a while and to not speak in meetings. He also told me that he had experienced that himself, which had been a very enriching experience for him. He added that people would be able to hear my voice even if I did not speak; and that I would feel closer to God by not reacting and rather listening.

Today, I have not spoken at a meeting for over a month, and yes, it is a blessing! People are sharing things at the meeting that I need to hear. I can really hear God's voice through them, and now, more people have started to visit my home group. It is really special.

I wanted to organize a regular workshop. This was probably also the result of my own self-will. After praying and talking it out with my sponsor, I saw that it would be better if I stepped down from the position and from organizing the workshop. What happened as a result! We have an amazing workshop, with many people involved in making it happen. Each time it happens, there's a member who

leads the workshop with a different oldtimer. It's fantastic to see so many people get together through the Steps.

So, in my experience, "What Makes Meetings Strong?" Service rotation, listening to the group, doing what I don't want to do, following instructions, and not trying to fix everything.

Sometimes it seems to me that if I don't fix something, no one will fix it, and we will crash. But God always uses someone to prepare the meeting, to translate for a guest, or to lead the meeting instead of me :-). I am just a small part of the fellowship. My sponsor told me that the fellowship was here a long time before I came and will also be here without me, and I now see clearly how true this is.

I am grateful that I can use my ability to be of service, even on the international level, and wish all the best to the people who are doing service - not to control them. And I see how God shows His Love and Power through others.

MARTIN S., *Senica, Slovakia*



## Building Positive Sobriety By the Members in Bogotá

When I came to SA in 2006, we were holding the meetings in the building of a foundation where a fellow member worked, but soon after it closed and we had to move. For about a year we were meeting in a park, sometimes in the rain, sometimes in the sun. Then we moved to the garage of another foundation, which also closed its doors soon thereafter.

At that time our local fellowship had two groups. In the other group, a fellow with years of being in SA decided that it was very difficult for him to state his length of sobriety so he began to say in each meeting that he had 24 hours, and he eventually left. This had a negative effect on the others and they all began to relapse and that group closed after two years. Out of this we learned how important it is for everyone to say our sobriety date instead of being vague about it.

For about five months we held our meetings in the cafeteria of a big department store where we had to speak in low voices to protect our anonymity. In a back room, we had a board that we hung on the wall, writing there what we considered most important of what we read, looking to hold that message in our hearts. This board helped our

meetings a lot in the sense of being very literature-focused. We also used a dictionary to better understand the meaning of each paragraph.

After several years, we decided by group conscience that only those who had more than seven days of sobriety could speak at the meeting. This helped the meetings to emphasize sobriety and recovery. On one occasion, someone who was coming from another 12-Step program said, "How is it possible that someone who has an urge to speak is not allowed to speak?" But we stuck to it as that policy had been helping our group maintain a positive sobriety.

A last tool that has helped us a lot to build strong meetings is to organize recovery events with long-term sober people from abroad. In our group in Bogotá, the Conventions in Colombia were born. The first was in our city, with last year being the ninth Convention. Over the years, we have been visited by several old-timers: David T., Priscila C., Arsenio from Mexico, Marco from the Netherlands, José from Buffalo, NY, Nelson from Venezuela, and Brendan from Ireland, to name a few. We are still a small group in numbers but with great servers and strength in recovery.

Members are part of the Committee for Prisons, IT Committee, Intergroup, Translation Committee and we walk together towards our happy destiny.

OSCAR M., *Bogota, Colombia*



## Recovery in SA Is Like A Three-legged Stool

**W**hen I think of meetings, I think of something that my sponsor said early in our relationship: “Recovery in SA is like a three-legged stool, you have to have a sponsor, the Steps and the fellowship in order for the stool to remain standing.” Meetings are where the fellowship happens and when I consider the attributes of a strong meeting two ideas come to mind: the structure and something I would call the personality of the meeting.

The structure involves how the meeting operates on an on-going basis. The best meetings I have attended follow the meeting guidelines outlined in the White Book (188-189). Service positions are filled during regularly scheduled business meetings where sobriety requirements are established for each position, usually chairperson, literature and treasurer. Meetings start on time and the chairperson comes prepared with a topic. Members are asked to participate by making sure the meeting space is prepared, distributing the readings and welcoming newcomers. Where appropriate, the chairperson serves as the representative to the local intergroup where matters of local importance are discussed and SA unity is the primary focus. Ideally, the meeting spends time on an annual basis reflecting on how the meeting is achieving the one primary purpose of every SA group as described in Tradition 5: to carry the message to the sexaholic who still suffers.

The personality of the meeting depends on the personalities attending the meeting! The qualities that I

appreciate most are the member’s willingness to be vulnerable regarding the state of their recovery by leading with their weaknesses and staying focused on the solution and not the problem. I need to know that it is safe to share the things that sometimes I might feel reluctant to share because the voice in my head says it might damage my reputation. As I have heard many times, I am as sick as my secrets. In my program, I know that the things that I find myself trying to rationalize or feeling embarrassed about are exactly the things that need to be shared in a meeting. It always amazes me that when I take the risk to be vulnerable in a meeting, the other members do likewise and we all benefit from the honesty that is achieved in those moments.

In meetings where the focus is on the solution, I need to hear and witness how people are working their Steps. I witness people working their steps when a member shares their First Step with their home group. I call these shares holy moments. A member that has worked on their First Step with their sponsor and then requests time during the meeting-announcement-time to share their First Step at a future meeting leaves me looking forward to seeing another member making this essential beginning on their recovery journey. A thorough, well prepared First Step is an encouragement to all that hear it and often motivates others to follow suit.

Another opportunity to witness someone working their steps is when a member requests the group to participate as they recite the Third Step Prayer after a meeting. Oftentimes, the group joins the member on their knees or they stand over the member each placing on a hand as the prayer is recited. These are powerful moments

that knit the group together and inspire all to continue to work their Steps.

I have learned to work my Steps by listening to others share about how they are working theirs. Meetings focused on the solution often involve members talking about the Step that they are currently focused on with their sponsor. Meetings dedicated to working through the Steps as a group are an opportunity for the group to develop a bond that often leads to lifelong relationships in the program and a powerful reminder that we aren’t alone and that we don’t have to figure this out by ourselves.

Besides the obvious benefits of a well-run and solution-oriented meeting, my life has been greatly enriched by what I call the after-meeting. In the early days of my recovery as a single sober man in SA recovery, the highlight of my week was the after-work meeting on Friday when a number of us would go out for dinner after the meeting. These were special times of fellowship with other recovering men and women where I felt like a “normal” person enjoying the company of my friends. The friendships that developed from these dinners blossomed into other social gatherings outside the fellowship and for me, an opportunity to be around women where I could just learn how to be me and not someone trying to get something from another person.

After I had been sober for six or seven years, a group of single men and women in the program started a book club where we met on a weekly basis to discuss several popular books of the day focused on building healthy relationships. I had been dating in sobriety for a year or two and the insights that I learned through my book club proved invaluable as I

ventured out in the “real world” to practice the principles of my recovery in all of my affairs. Several years later, all of these friends would serve as members of my wedding party on the most joyous day of my life!

**The qualities that I appreciate most are the member’s willingness to be vulnerable regarding the state of their recovery by leading with their weaknesses and staying focused on the solution and not the problem.**

Now, 35 years later I look back at all the meetings that I have attended and cannot believe all that has transpired in my life since that first meeting where I and three other sexaholics shared our stories. In a year when many of us have been unable to gather together in person, the spirit of recovery has thrived through the miracle of technology. Recently, I was able to attend a virtual meeting where a member from Africa shared his First Step! I have also participated in meetings originating from Spain and England. I hope to meet some of you in an upcoming meeting as we all trudge the road of happy destiny! May God bless you and keep you until then.

DAVE H., Tennessee, USA





## Rigorous Honesty in Meetings Is Such a Huge Force

**T**he first characteristic that makes face-to-face meetings attractive for me is openness and honesty. During the meetings there is an “evil monkey” inside my head, constantly whispering to me, telling me how different I should be to the person that I am, whom I should compare myself to, and what other people think of me. But I am not the person the monkey describes. I discovered in recovery that that whispering monkey never tells the truth; it is not trying to help me, but rather to confuse me, to drive me back into isolation, to take me away from the fellowship.

During my time in recovery, I have had to face a number of difficult and painful situations—divorce from my

**Bearing witness openly and honestly inspires others, gives them the strength they need to keep trudging the road. This is how God makes me useful to others.**

wife, challenges at work, constantly obsessing about finding a new relationship, problems relating with my son, paying my bills, etc. Rarely do these problems have quick solutions;

sometimes there is no solution at all, and I have to live day after day with painful thoughts and feelings.

This is when the “monkey” is most active, telling me I don’t need to share what is going on for me in the here and now: “Don’t tell them what is going on for you! What you have to say is too embarrassing. No one will understand anyway. Don’t even think of mentioning what is on your mind right now. What will the women in your group think of you? Smooth over the problems as you share. It’ll be okay. Sure, be honest, but not completely honest, otherwise everyone will think you’re a needy and weak person. Yes, the program encourages you to talk about the Solution, but you don’t have a solution so keep your mouth shut - otherwise people will think you are making no progress in your recovery.”

There is a technique in propaganda journalism: in order to impose an opinion on the reader or listener, some well-known truth is taken as a basis and a lie is added to it. The lie is the main message that has to get out there. The technique works so well that those on the receiving end don’t have the least doubt about it. The same methods are used by the “monkey” in my head.

When I started sharing honestly about myself at meetings, a miracle happened—God did for me what I could not do for myself: suddenly, intuitively, I found the Solution and the strength I had been looking for; people supported me and as I heard other similar shares, I supported them. But more than anything, I felt such a sense of peace, such comfort and strength in being able to accept life’s challenges; to live with them because, in many cases, there is no quick solution to them.

The words of the Third Step prayer, which I pray daily now, assure me that I will experience difficulties in life. But I understand that, in order to bear witness to God’s transforming power, I must be open and honest as I share at meetings, otherwise people will think I have always been this happy, joyous

**Humor unites us, it banishes pain and loneliness as we laugh at the humorous aspects in various stories.**

and free—which I have not! Bearing witness openly and honestly inspires others, gives them the strength they need to keep trudging the road. This is how God makes me useful to others.

A second characteristic I like in strong, attractive SA meetings is humor and laughter. Humor unites us; it banishes pain and loneliness as we laugh at the humorous aspects in various stories. The laughter is not offensive, or sarcastic, the kind that belittles a person; rather, it is kind and warm and encouraging, a reassuring gift from God.

The third characteristic is fellowship outside of meetings—the collective, informal activities of our group. Simple things like friendship after meetings, picnics together, walks to cafes, entertainment, quizzes, games, etc. Our group does lots of fellowship activity. I can say for myself that I have never experienced such a feeling of belonging, unity of love, and joy anywhere else.

After my divorce however, I got

fully involved in our group activities and quickly came to realise just how much I had been depriving myself of for so long. I really enjoy participating today, especially as the activities make so many other people happy. For me, the greatest dividend of shared participation, of fellowship is the realisation now that the people in the room with me are no longer just colleagues of the Problem, but Friends with a capital letter, teammates in the Solution, sitting right next to me.

We organize these activities by passing around a second “hat” at our meetings—the first “hat” is the collection for our regular running needs; but this second is for our holiday fund, where we raise money for “outside” events. When a “round” sum is collected, we decide at a business meeting what to do, where we will go, and appoint members to organise it.

To conclude, I would like to emphasise that face-to-face meetings are a huge force for good that bring blessings of happiness, of team-spirit, joy and fellowship.

ALEXEY A., Saint Petersburg, Russia





# The Chicago Experience of BUILDING A CULTURE OF SOBRIETY

Essay interviewed old-timer Mike C., Chicago, Illinois, USA 

**Hi Mike, thanks for your time today in sharing your experience, strength and hope. Could we begin by asking your sobriety date and home group?**

Yes, June 3, 1984 and the Holy Innocent group in Chicago. For a long time previously it was at St Teresa. We have been on Zoom for about a year now; when we were face to face, attendance was around 55-60 and we meet for 90 minutes.

**Can you briefly describe what life was like before SA ?**

In my teens I became addicted to porn and masturbation. I was hooked from the very beginning and while I could often stop, I couldn't stay stopped. I grew up in a large Irish family where this subject wasn't talked about; there was a real silence around it. My older brother had the problem too and I would look at his porn magazines. It wasn't something we discussed

but I knew where to look. I began to study for the priesthood and was 10 years in the seminary system. The values were great but I couldn't live up to them; I recall once borrowing a priest's car to visit a pornographic book store. My brother got involved in recovery with SAA and I joined him. I was angry the first six months that I had to be there, but stayed for over two years. The fellowship was good but I found myself asking "Is there something better?" In particular, I felt the need for something stronger around how to define sobriety and in 1986 I joined SA.

**Can you recall events around your own spiritual awakening?**

I remember I was working as a sales rep and travelling to make a call. I stopped at a café for something to eat and noticed an adult book store across the road. My heart was racing

with the thought of going in. But I remembered something my sponsor had told me—"call me before you act out." I rang him then and he told me to pay the bill, go home, call him and tell him that I was still sober. This I was able to do—it was an important moment of surrender for me.

**Mike, can you select a few things of prime importance that have helped you stay sober over 36 years now?**

Early on, it was basic things like looking at the sidewalk to avoid lust triggers and only looking up when I really had to. I don't have to do that so much today but can still do it. Also, avoiding nudity etc. in movies and taking a different route to avoid going past adult book stores. If my wife was driving, and I needed to, I would just close my eyes. Taking directions from my sponsor was very important as was total honesty and transparency. We can want to look good, e.g. come up with the perfect comment at a meeting. But I've learned I need to share the very thing I don't want to talk about. I'm as sick as my secrets.

**What motivates you to serve today and which areas have you particularly enjoyed?**

I love this Fellowship and have helped out with organizing conferences in Chicago, speaking at conventions and sponsoring others; currently I have around 10-12 sponsees. I also coordinate twelve guys in Chicago who write letters to members in prison.

**We understand you have been very involved with others in building a culture of sobriety in your home group when it was at St Teresa's. How did that start and can you list some of the changes and initiatives that were made?**

We started realizing we were

unconsciously enabling relapse in the group; we were good at support but not so good at challenging others. Changes included things like only having someone with good sobriety give the closing prayer. Previously, we would ask someone who had had, e.g., the most dramatic relapse that week! We also started asking only people with over 30 days sobriety to speak in the first round of sharing. These measures aroused

**We can want to look good, e.g. come up with the perfect comment at a meeting. But I've learned I need to share the very thing I don't want to talk about. I am as sick as my secrets.**

some controversy at first; some said people were being made to feel bad or were being shamed. But I think most of the shame we feel is from our own behaviors. If we want to experience self-esteem, do something esteemable. We felt it was important that no one leave the meeting without a sponsor (unless they wanted to). We would walk up to people after the meeting and ask if they had a sponsor and did they want one. We also decided to embrace the idea of group sponsorship. With particularly difficult problems, a sponsee could meet with a small group of sober members outside of the meeting. At a

sponsorship workshop we identified that we had been strong and clear with newcomers but had become complacent about challenging longer term sober members and turned that around.

At newcomer meetings, we usually read Step Zero or Step One from the White Book and we all shared from our own experience. Some larger meetings have special breakout sessions for newcomers, but we felt it important for the newcomer to stay in the meeting, not take them outside it. We wanted them to experience the culture and hear the shares. We wanted newcomers, and all members, to know we loved them, not their behaviors. And particularly with newcomers, we wanted them to walk out saying "These guys really mean business!"

We had an emphasis on Traditions 1 (unity) and 5 (carrying the message)—what was the message of our group. Was it clearly sobriety and recovery?

**Thanks Mike. Before leaving meetings, do you have any thoughts on what constitutes a strong Zoom meeting?**

Yes, we had someone tell us recently that while on the Zoom meeting they were working and trying to be part of the meeting at the same time. We had a group conscience and decided that to respect the meeting we should treat it as if it were face to face. No working, no exercising, just focus on the meeting.

**What about the idea of some people zooming in to a face to face meeting, not uncommon today?**

We're still on Zoom only, so I haven't tried this. I have mixed feelings on it. For me, it would depend to what degree the in-person experience was

diluted by the technology. One other thing about face to face meetings, we ask that cell phones be not just turned off but out of sight.

**Any tips for any of us who may be struggling to get or stay sober?**

I have been given the gift of sobriety. And if I can stay sober, anyone can. But we need to stick at it. We have to get to where we are sick and tired of

**We wanted newcomers, and all members, to know we loved them, not their behaviors. And particularly with newcomers, we wanted them to walk out saying "These guys really mean business!"**

acting out and be prepared to listen to someone else's ideas.

**Thanks again for your time Mike. Can we finish by asking how you relax and enjoy down time?**

I enjoy playing baseball (with a mask at the moment), reading history, being active in my church and being a mentor in a big-brother group. With the SA fellowship, it's fun to meet for something to eat and we would regularly meet at a Porta Rican restaurant before the meeting.

**Thank you very much for sharing your experience, strength and hope, Mike.**

## There Is Value in Co-ed As Well As Women-only SA Meetings

**W**hen I entered the room of my first SA meeting in September 2018, I was the only female. I sat down at a table with five men of varying ages and I felt very alone and fearful. What would these men think of me? It wasn't until the meeting progressed and these men around me started sharing their thoughts and feelings about working their SA program that I began a slow journey towards being able to view men as people rather than as objects.

I spent most of my life in active SA addiction and objectified men from a young age. Boys around me at school and church, my brother's friends, my dad's co-workers, my teachers, peers, etc. They were all simply a target to me. It has only been through the blessing of SA and the meetings I attend that I've been able to learn to view men in a different light. I can now see them for the imperfect humans they are. Humans with feelings, emotions, struggles, successes, addiction, and sobriety. My vulnerability in meetings is my greatest strength because it allows me to open up. When I see others being vulnerable, it shows me they are human, just like me. They are no longer objects of lust.

For me, a great SA meeting has three key elements. 1) Everyone in the meeting is there for their own sobriety and the meeting's FOCUS is on sobriety. 2) Each member of the group works towards keeping the meeting productive and keeps

the meeting alive and going. 3) Members volunteer for service and volunteer to share their story. If all of these elements come together, it yields a great meeting. When I'm in a meeting, I try to volunteer to keep time or read, and I always try to share, even if I don't feel like it. As our White Book says, take the action and the feeling will come.

During COVID, several new women-only meetings have sprung up. Women from all over the world come together and share about their SA journey. By joining in these meetings, I have learned that other women share my same struggles of objectifying men and seeing them as "things" rather than people. I've also learned that there are some deeply held secrets among female SAs that they only feel comfortable sharing with other females. I value their shares and I applaud their openness with their SA sisters.

I've come to realize that there is value in co-ed SA meetings as well as women-only meetings. I get different takeaways from each and I am able to grow in sobriety in different ways.

EMILY J., Idaho, USA



Maxey  
By Jimmy M.

Vulnerability is a gift to everyone!



## Committing to the Sobriety Definition Unites the Galway Group

In February 1995 an Irish SA member living in the USA, was informed by a friend of another “S Fellowship” meeting in Galway. He carried the following message to that meeting: “You are all newcomers. You will only relapse back into your disease unless you get a sponsor, make calls and have fellowship after the meetings.” SA began in Ireland late 1995 early 1996. The first Galway SA meeting started in November 1996.

At our Saturday meetings, we are now reading the pamphlet “Practical Guidelines for Group Recovery,” which is written to foster group recovery and make meetings strong. Our group has a strong emphasis on the Solution, sponsorship, Steps, service, literature and developing a relationship with a Higher Power. Our Higher Power keeps us sober. We lead with our weakness, share our gratitude lists and don’t get into the debating society!

Giving our sobriety date makes our meeting strong and more spiritual. We focus on the solution not the problem. *We are committed to the sobriety definition that unites us; when someone says they are sober we all know what this means.* We focus on progressive victory over lust. Hearing and giving away First Steps to the group has been liberating.

At one meeting, the secretary was outnumbered by members with insobriety. These new members were complaining about giving the sobriety date. The Secretary got into giggles when reading the format in the first part of the meeting—“only those with

30 days of sobriety can share first”—as he was the only member with 30 days! He suggested that if they wanted to change the meeting format to come to the Group Conscience next week. Well, they didn’t show up and soon left SA.

The most heartbreaking time was when we lost our dear friend Ian, who took his own life in March 2016. Ian touched the lives of many, here and overseas. This was a real shock to our group. We held a beautiful Remembrance Day for Ian at our meeting venue, sharing stories, music, poetry and song. This helped the group grieve.

We had difficulties dealing with a member with some legal problems, but the group faced into and dealt with it as best we could - this gave us more strength and increased safety. After this a statement that protects the meeting was inserted in our format.

There is a commitment to service, encouragement to serve on the different levels and rotation is important. The group is committed to carrying the message (our group’s purpose) to counsellors, priests, doctors and health professionals.

We have been blessed with comfortable meeting rooms and a good rapport with the owners. Keeping to the meeting format and guidelines, starting and finishing on time is adhered to. We introduced spiritual time-keeping so that everyone would have adequate time to share. We have regular monthly group consciences, separate from the meeting, and this is working well. Pre-covid, we invited monthly speakers to share with us, from both within our group or from other groups or even abroad via Skype. This helped greatly to connect and stabilize our group.

On one occasion, a member stormed out of a meeting, throwing the chair and White Book across the room! Unfazed, the Secretary continued with the meeting as if nothing had happened! Another version of Problem and Solution!

Two members meet prospects for tea, (or virtually for coffee!!) introducing them to SA, informing them of the sobriety definition from the very start. We ask the 20 Questions and share some of our story before asking them if they want to come to a meeting. We follow up calling them, encouraging them into the group. When a newcomer attends a meeting, we have an appropriate reading. There is a real desire and spiritual energy to try to help and welcome the newcomer. We encourage getting temporary sponsors immediately.

Members of our group testify that they value the sense of fellowship

that “lightens the load.” Organising conventions and “Gratitude Days” (meetings, recreational time and sharing meals) as a group helps us connect. We have stayed overnight for some fellowship, cooking together. We have fun, laugh and cry together. We share with each other. We phone each other. Attending conventions in Ireland and travelling together overseas, members have connected more and come back to the group sharing their renewed enthusiasm for SA.

A female member shared: “I feel safe and comfortable here. At first when I attended a phone meeting, I felt overwhelmed but another female member contacted me, and I felt secure. Anonymity is protected for members and the venue.”

Please come visit us.

THE GALWAY GROUP, Ireland





## He Came to Believe and Found a Life of Unlimited Service and Fulfilling Relationships

**M**y name is Bill, and I am a recovered sexaholic. My sobriety date is September 4, 1993, and for that I am never sufficiently grateful. When I arrived in SA, I was hopeless and suicidally depressed from over 35 years of untreated addiction.

I had my first drink of beer when I was four years old and was drinking for effect by the time I was seven. I recall that during this period I was fantasizing about a different life. I was born into a family riddled with alcoholism, sex addiction, drug addiction, and mental illness. As early as three or four years old, I felt inadequate, unworthy, alone, and afraid.

At age nine or ten a graphic image of pornography altered my feelings in a new and powerful way. From that moment, I began the futile search for the image, person, or experience that would give me that feeling again. As my addiction progressed, I sought darker, more perverted pornography in an attempt to experience the original thrill.

At 15, I had sex with a girl for the first time. Around this time, I was prescribed amphetamines which I promptly began abusing. Her father was a nasty alcoholic, and this relationship started a pattern for me of finding vulnerable girls or women and seducing them into selfish sexual relationships, without regard for their welfare. This pattern continued into

my 20's when I met and married a woman who also had an alcoholic father.

In 1990, at 38 years old, I got into AA and stopped drinking and drugging. I did not work the Steps because I knew that God hated me and was afraid that if I started praying, He would turn His attention back on me and punish me cruelly.

Troubles with my wife increased and in May of 1993, I moved out of the house. I remember that during this time, I would decide that I had to stop masturbating, but before the day ended, I would fall again.

During the summer of 1993, I became severely depressed, and I began to have suicidal fantasies that were every bit as powerful as the sexual fantasies. I was in a very dangerous place. I knew I had lost the power of choice and control in my sexual behavior. There appeared to be only one way out.

In August of 1993, I was sitting in a meeting when a new person, Greg, shared that he had started attending meetings of Sexaholics Anonymous. Not wanting to overreact, I asked some professionals whether they thought I might qualify for SA. Their decision was unanimous, so the next time I saw Greg I asked him how I could attend a meeting of SA. He told me about a blue portable building behind a church in Nashville, and that there would be a meeting there at 9 am that Saturday.

That was Labor Day weekend and I had nowhere else to go, no one else to be with. I walked into my first SA meeting and saw my psychiatrist from 25 years before. There were several other members there who are still sober members of our Fellowship: David M., Lee T., Judson, Dave H.,

and Priscilla. As someone read the first sentence of "The Problem", my eyes filled with tears—they were reading about me! I was home.

Over the next few weeks and months, I continued to attend meetings, asked a man to be my sponsor, wrote my First Step and shared it with the group. I remember having the fear that after I shared my First Step there would be a special meeting and I would be

**At age nine or ten a graphic image of pornography altered my feelings in a new and powerful way. From that moment, I began the futile search for the image, person, or experience that would give me that feeling again.**

told to leave. Instead, those present welcomed me to SA. But there was still this God problem. My depression got worse, and the fantasies of suicide became more immediate. This landed me in a psychiatric hospital.

The hospital had programs for sex addicts and other survivors of childhood trauma. I also met a chaplain who spent hours speaking with me about my conception of God. He helped me develop a tentative conception of a Power that might help me recover. When I made my Third Step decision, I surrendered to that Power—the one I had seen help other

sexaholics and alcoholics recover.

Before I was discharged, one of the therapists, who was in recovery herself, told me that when I got home I needed to get a sponsor to take me through the Steps, and work them as if my life depended on it. She suggested that if I failed to do this, I would likely be dead within the year. I believe she was correct.

When I returned from the hospital, I spoke to my sponsor about working the Steps and discovered that he had never worked them with his sponsor. I was terrified and realized that God had brought me to the edge of recovery just so He could snatch it away. The bottom fell out of my depression, the fantasies returned with furious power, and I was in hopeless despair.

Fortunately, I was placed under the care of a psychiatrist who had experience with patients who had suicide fantasies like mine.

During this time, I was waiting for an AA meeting to start, wondering how much longer I could continue before I killed myself. A man I had seen in many meetings before, walked in and sat down next to me. I was a bit frightened of him because he had spoken of making amends to the IRS to whom he had owed \$925,000. After the meeting was over, I asked him to show me how to work the Steps. I was aghast. Of all people to ask, I had asked this radical. 26 years later, Rick is still my temporary sponsor.

As we worked the Steps, the feeling of futility and despair decreased. I was terrified that when I shared Step 5 with him that Rick would tell me to leave and never return. Instead, he listened to me and shared some of his similar experiences.

On one occasion suggesting a

modification to the Steps which would better fit my unique situation. Rick listened patiently and told me, "Try that if you have to, and let me know how it works, but if you get drunk again don't you dare tell anyone that the Program doesn't work, because what you're doing is not the Program in the book." It took me seconds to realize that if I did not follow his instructions I would likely die. "What do you suggest I do?" I asked. Since then I have followed his directions about the Program with great results.

## After the meeting was over, I asked him to show me how to work the Steps. I was aghast. Of all people to ask, I had asked this radical. 26 years later, Rick is still my temporary sponsor.

When I began making my amends, I began to experience the promises that appear on pages 83 & 84 of the Big Book. I began to experience moments of happiness, serenity, and peace.

The first five years of my recovery brought many changes. My wife divorced me. I made friends with men in recovery, and then men and women in and out of the recovery fellowship. One of the women friends became my wife in January of 2000.

In 1999, I moved to Lafayette, LA. There were no SA meetings there, so

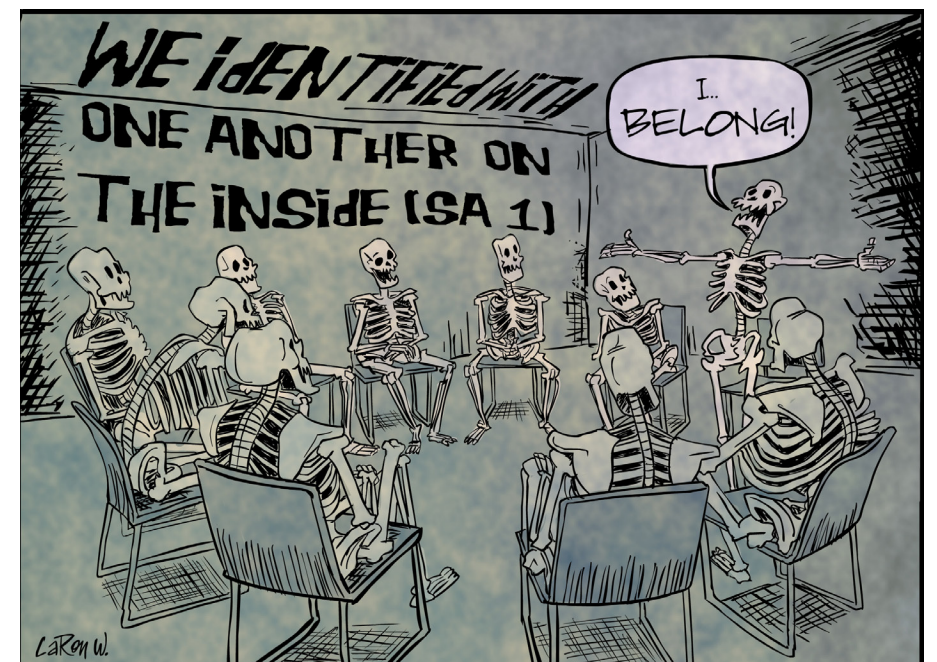
I fell in with a group of AA's. Here I experienced the power of working the Steps with a group. In 2000, I moved to Spartanburg, SC. The nearest SA group was an hour away. SAICO connected me with a member who lived between the two cities. He asked me to sponsor him. We worked the steps rapidly so that he could stay ahead of the two men he started sponsoring.

In 2001, I was asked to serve the Southeast Region as a delegate. This was my first experience with service at this level. I believe that I cannot keep what I have today if I do not pass it on.

I have traveled the world to carry the message I was so freely given. Over the years, I have watched the Fellowship take root in new places around the world. Thanks to Zoom, I regularly meet with groups around the world. God has given me the fellowship I crave.

As Bill Wilson noted in his story, this program "... is a design for living that works in rough going." (AA 15). In addition to the divorce and job loss I mentioned earlier, I have had numerous family members pass away. In all of these losses, I have been able to be a loving and supportive relative and I have been held up by a loving and gracious Heavenly Father who has loved me all my life, even when I was unaware of His protection and presence. As I approach the final chapters of my life, I am grateful for so many blessings. What I treasure most are the relationships that I have which are possible only because of my recovery. I am truly blessed, and I am looking forward to seeing what God has in store for me. And when my life is over, perhaps the most fitting epitaph will be: "He came to believe."

Bill S., Tennessee, USA



# Meetings, meetings, meetings



Meetings abroad changed his recovery; his recovery changed his local meetings.

**A** woman in AA told me after she spoke in a meeting, quoting Chapter 5 in *Alcoholics Anonymous*, that “God could and would, if He were sought.” And that’s how I did it. By letting God do it. Because I couldn’t. But God could and would - and did. But I had to go to meetings to learn things like that. “Meetings, meetings, meetings, meetings, meetings ...” That’s what they told me. “Just keep bringing the body.” (SA 158)

## 1. My first meeting - May 2012

At the age of 51, some time after my wife discovered my double life, she gave me the SA White Book. When I read the title, I was inwardly outraged. How could she think that I was a sex addict? I was “only” having an affair and so I put the book aside.

Months later, during a visit to our couples therapist, I agreed to read the book and attend an SA meeting. When I called the number for the Munich meetings, a man asked me questions about my motivation and I answered honestly. He said that there were three meetings per week. I said that I only wanted one meeting a week, at least initially. He replied then that I was probably not ready yet. That’s how it used to be then in Munich and in the German-speaking region.

I believed him and thought I had done my part. SA meetings were probably not for me. Our therapist disagreed. She explained to me that my willingness to stop lusting was my ticket into SA; that I should just go without a preliminary talk - they couldn’t kick me out.

After a few weeks, I took the plunge and attended my first SA meeting. I entered the group room excitedly and without invitation; I explained my concerns, and was met for just a moment, with incredulous perplexity. After some discussion, the group agreed to hold a Newcomer Meeting for me. I told them my story and told them of my desire to stop lusting, that I could not do it alone. After a vote, I was allowed to stay. What I remembered most after the meeting was that there was hardly anyone who had long term recovery.

## 2. Relapses in meetings

After a few meetings, phone contacts, and reading the white book, I recognised that I belonged in SA. I could identify especially with Roy’s description of lust and was willing to begin my recovery. I attended phone meetings and asked one person about sponsorship. So far so good. However, the many relapses within my group were irritating. Even my sponsor

relapsed after a few weeks. Why was recovery apparently not working, or only for a very few? I too had a relapse after a few months. I realized my powerlessness and that I needed more than meetings.

## 3. Recovery begins - Meetings with an old-timer and his wife - Spring 2013

A few months later, an American old-timer and his wife visited our community and shared their experience, strength and hope with us in a 12 Step Workshop. That weekend changed everything for me. I had never encountered recovery like this man before. He lived and spoke a life in recovery. With simple, clear words he showed how to make recovery work. “Learn to give instead of take,” it says in the White Book, page 162. He emphasized again and again the importance of the AA Big Book, as being the foundation of our White Book.

His basic message was: *I am not a bad person getting good, but a sick person getting well.* To me, his recovery seemed full of ease and joy. I felt an urge to explore more and was inspired to begin serious work on the Steps. That weekend changed everything for me.

## 4. New York and Nashville - January 2014

On my way to an International Convention in Nashville, I made a three-day visit to New York to get a taste of the city. I decided to base my sightseeing tours around meeting times and places and was surprised to find how accessible this information was; in our region, the fellowship at the time was quite rigid in its approach to open meetings.

I was even more surprised when no one at the meeting asked me who I was, even though I was obviously a

stranger. At the end of the meeting, I asked how they would have reacted if I had been a newcomer or journalist? “Then we would have held a newcomer meeting,” was the reply. Other meetings were just as open and friendly. Three days later in Nashville, I recognized some New Yorkers at the airport and they invited me to travel with them in their cab to the convention hotel. And then, at the convention itself, I encountered that very spirit that I had read about in the White Book where everything was simpler, bigger, (spiritually) wider, inviting. I felt that I had “come home.”

**His basic message was: *I am not a bad person getting good, but a sick person getting well. To me, his recovery seemed full of ease and joy.***

Back in Munich, I told the local members about it all and challenged them to re-think our closed, rigid way of taking in newcomers. The groups accepted the challenge and opened up. Since then, every newcomer in Munich can simply walk into a meeting. We offer him a preliminary talk if he wants it. Anyone who wants to stop lusting, is welcome here.

## 5. German Convention - Autumn 2014

In the fall of 2014, I heard a member from another European country speak at a German Convention. Five years before, when his recovery was not progressing, he decided to go for six months to Nashville, attending meetings and immersing himself as

fully as possible in recovery life there. When he returned home, he continued with many of the practices he learned in Nashville. I was impressed by his determination.

When I got to speak to him, he recommended that, if I really wanted to develop my recovery, I should go to Nashville for a time. A few months later, I did go and am very grateful for his advice. For the 14 days I was there I fully lived the lifestyle of recovery, morning to night. An SA friend there arranged a temporary sponsor for me. He and an old-timer were very generous with their time; they called me and accompanied me to meetings (there are over 50 meetings/week in Nashville). He explained the Steps to me and gave me assignments which I fulfilled. Between meetings we would talk on the phone or meet up for lunch. I was reminded, most importantly, that it is perfectly acceptable to be joyful in recovery. I was told that if I wanted to continue to develop my recovery, I should start a new group in Munich, working with at least one other SA member who also wants to develop his recovery. This was going to be a painful challenge; it filled me with dread because, after all, I had a strong sense of belonging to the existing Munich meetings. It took me some time before I could carry it out.

From my experience at the International Convention, I got to see how speaker meetings work; how women and men share their experience, strength and hope, and afterwards take questions and hear shares from the floor. So, with an SA buddy, we organised telephone speaker meetings and these have now been running every week, for years, in Germany.

The 2015 German-speaking

convention in Zavelstein was hosted by the Munich group. It adopted this concept of speaker meetings. Three meetings took place in parallel: one German-speaking, one English-speaking, and one open meeting. This type of meetings had already been introduced at the 2013 Düsseldorf Convention and are well established in the German-speaking region today.

#### 6. *Foundation of a new group*

All these developments led then, in 2017, to the foundation of a new group in Munich founded together with

**The most important phrase I learned is that it's not what's on the outside that pollutes me; pollution is an inside job, and so is recovery.**

another SA friend, where, starting at 7:00am, we would make time to write and study literature in the meeting before sharing. This led on then to our having breakfast together, before heading off into our daily lives, really nourished. We founded a second meeting then where the focus was on bringing SA closer to newcomers.

#### 7. *Retrospect and Outlook*

Looking back, I am grateful to every SA person I met—especially to all those oldtimers who started up these meetings in the first place. I am a very different person today after learning so much from my SA friends and sponsors. The most important phrase I learned is that it's not what's on the

outside that pollutes me; pollution is an inside job, and so is recovery.

I am not overwhelmed today by resentment or other character defects. They reappear in my life, certainly, especially when I mistake what is going to make me happy. Chasing people, places and things has always made me miserable. My awareness of this is so much sharper today after so many, many meetings and lots of step work. I have learned a healthy self esteem and have experienced the joy of being accepted by others as I really am. I know it is only one day at a time; that there is always the trap of going back to seeking approval and fulfillment by the world's standards. When I fall into this trap, I change, darken; become unkind and controlling—controlling even of my recovery and that of others. This is when I need meetings and my sponsor where they act as a kind of “mirror.”

Since the Covid lockdown, attendance at meetings in Munich has at least doubled. Today, our recovery and our fellowship have really grown. Meetings teach me how God transforms us all if we let Him—how interest in our fellows, service, Step work and honest sharing have replaced old sick, selfish thinking and behaviours. Every person's honesty inspires honesty in others. And the more meetings there are, the more God can get around doing His work, keeping us safe from our old, ingrained addictive patterns. And as we experience the happiness, joy and freedom of recovery, the less we want to go back to the old life; we see the truth of the words, “God could and would if we sought Him.” I did seek Him and am so glad, letting Him do it because I couldn't. “But God could and would - and He did.”

BERND S., *Munich, Germany*



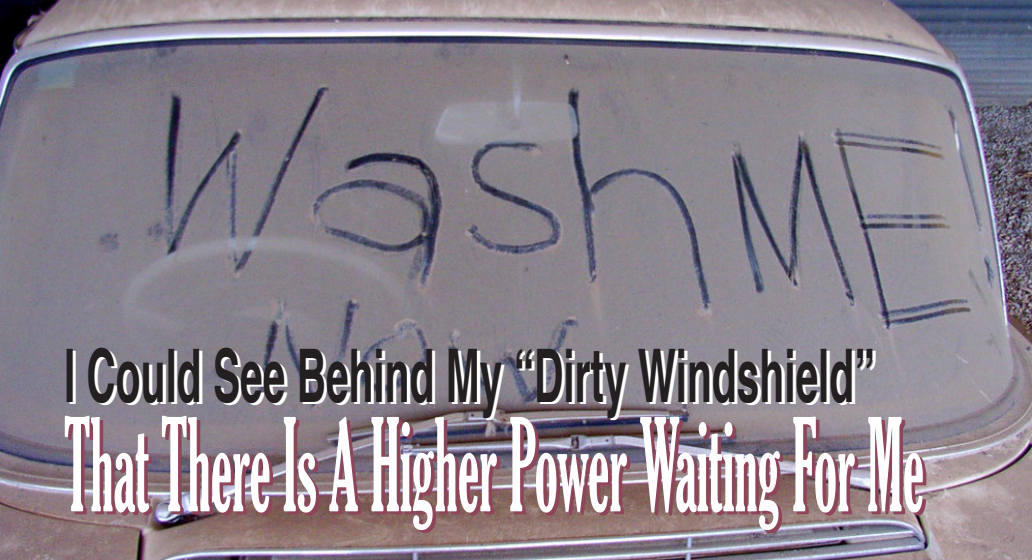
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## I Could See Behind My “Dirty Windshield” That There Is A Higher Power Waiting For Me

**T**his year I celebrated five years of SA sobriety, one day at the time, one moment at a time, one hour at a time and so on ... This is a miracle that I have been blessed with. Could this have been possible before? No, it was not possible.

I have been in SA since 2014, and been through eight different sponsors (I am grateful for each one of them). My first sponsor was really nice and I pretended I was listening to him, but in reality I took what sounded fun and easy to do, and left the rest. I would just fill the things that I thought were great for my recovery. I did not open his emails when he sent me material. It was just a false sense of reality, thinking I was working the steps, but really I was doing something totally different ... The sad truth was that I kept relapsing and got resentful.

Some years went by and during this time I went through a few sponsors, trying to find the “right” sponsor that would “jibe” with me. One day I was cleaning up my emails and found my first sponsor’s email that I had never opened. The topic was about slipping

and relapsing. It had a couple of PDF files that were made for SA. As I read, I felt that I was seeing a program that I had never seen before. It spoke about cultivating different attitudes. If a person relapsed, increase your activity in the program it suggested. Everytime I relapsed I just wanted to

**I did everything he suggested from his own experience, I asked questions from him and if he did not know, I would call many other people and hear their experience, strength and hope.**

isolate myself away from the program and others. Sometimes I would wait a week before going to meetings so I

would not feel the shame of saying “I am one day sober.”

I printed out the paper and took it as a guide for attitude changes. Suddenly the sponsor who I had at that time, started to feel like a real sponsor. I did everything he suggested from his own experience, I asked questions from him and if he did not know, I would call many other people and hear their experience, strength and hope. I was willing to mirror my sponsor and how he was working the program.

Today I can be free of lust, I can’t promise tomorrow. I am able to have a connection with a Higher Power that I thought had abandoned me, Step 2 and 3 changed that. I could see behind my “dirty windshield” that there’s a Higher Power waiting for me, His hand reaches out. Today, I can be

grateful that sobriety has enabled so many things in life.

By the way did you know that Pikachu is unable to evolve like other pokemons? If Pikachu wants to evolve to the next form, he needs help from his trainer, who has to find a specific item. I am Sanjiv who was unable to evolve on his own. I needed the care of Higher Power to show me the way to go. I needed the books, and the experience of others so I could find the light. The “trainer” who had worked the program before, a Sponsor. And the miracle of finding me within a Higher Power.

I have found out that “willingness” is the key, and that the promise that “it keeps getting better” is true!

SANJIV, *Fellows International Group*



**W**hen I came into the program about ten years ago, there wasn’t much Persian-translated SA literature. We didn’t have any translation of the SA White Book yet. This led to an imperfect understanding of the Sobriety Definition, which caused our fellowship to have loose or erroneous interpretations of it for many years.

Due to our isolation from the international SA fellowship, the only reliable resource giving us insight

into how to work the program was the literature. I remember reading the few available translations over and over again.

Thanks to the rise of the internet we were able to connect to the worldwide fellowship, which helped us to develop a better understanding of the concept of lust and how to recover from it. But even today this understanding is still not accessible to everyone in our fellowship as most fellows don’t understand English.

The mission of the Persian Translation Committee is to translate the newest SA literature in the fastest and most accurate way in order to carry the correct SA message to every fellow in our region. To motivate and thank the committee members they receive a brass badge for each translation of literature they complete.

HAMED T., *Isfahan, Iran*



## Stepping into the Light AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

Ironically, I spent the first nine months of my existence in a dark place, a sort of tunnel, sheltered from the light, from real life, as it were. Then, I was thrust into the light, into the real world. But, over time, I found this light blinding and painful. All I knew to do was to look for a dark place to escape back to, somewhere that made me feel better.

As the White Book, p. 47, says: *part of me retreated into that dark tunnel, way inside myself.* But, once there, I found myself in a darkness I could not see my way out of - and the pain was worse than before. I realized this "safe place" would likely be my tomb.

The tunnel was collapsing around me. Holes in the floor had labels like "lost job", "broken vehicle", "child failing in school", "wife asking 'what's this all about'" and "bill collectors". There were small side tunnels that appeared to provide light and relief, but when I entered, they began to close me in. Those tunnels were labeled "acting out".

Suddenly I see two guys with torches. One asks, "Are you ok?" I answer in a meek voice, "NO, I need help." The other says, "There is a way out, follow

us." They reach out their hands and say, "Don't let go, stay with us."

Maybe they have wings and maybe they haven't. They tell me "It's only 12 Steps to get out and you just took the first one!" They guide me, helping me around the holes and smaller tunnels. I start to feel safe and let go of their hands.

Now I find myself further back in the tunnel than ever. I call for their help and instantly they are there with extended hands. This time I grip tight and they tell me to stay connected or I will be lost again. I notice a shimmering rope around their waists and ask how they got that? "God", they say simultaneously. I ask God for help and my own rope appears. A second Step taken. "Ten more to go" they say.

I now see a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel and ask God to guide and protect me—nine Steps to go. Suddenly, I realize there are people around me, people just like me, some Steps ahead, some Steps behind.

I explain to my guides what I have done to get to where I am and they tell me what they have done—seven Steps to go. I ask God to help me not do the wrong things I have been doing

(actions and thinking)—five Steps to go. I see the persons I have harmed and ask their forgiveness and try to make things right—three more Steps to freedom. When I start to go in the wrong direction, I immediately tell my guides. Two more Steps to take.

Now I pray to God for the peace to take these last two Steps into the light and I sit quietly to think and connect to God. This leaves me with one more Step. I huddle up with the group I have been walking with, and

we encourage each other to take this final Step. Finally, I emerged into the light, into a whole new way of living.

Then I learn the only way to stay in the light is to re-enter the tunnel and help others out of their darkness by taking the same Steps I took. I can do this as my eyes have adjusted to the darkness and I can see clearly to help others and avoid the dangers of the tunnel myself.

DAN S., Oregon, USA



## Taking Responsibility to HEAL FROM VICTIMIZATION

This is what Step 4 is designed to achieve. The question "What was my part?" is not designed to blame the victim who has a resentment against a wrong that was done to them. The question goes to what part of me is broken that keeps this pain alive? How have I taken myself out of the land of the living because of this resentment?

When it comes to a married adult man with kids who hugged me, grabbed my 13-year-old rear, and made a sexual comment comparing me and my older sister, naturally I had resentment. A legitimate one. But I found myself at 45 still resenting something that happened 29 years ago.

What was my part? My sponsor helped me see that my part was feeling spiritually and morally superior to him. It kept me forever in the judgement seat where I repeatedly sentenced him and condemned him to an eternity in the prison of my

contempt. Unfortunately, the more I kept him in jail, the more I had to stay in that jail as his warden. I didn't want to be a prisoner any more. By surrendering that resentment to God, I became free.

Beyond surrendering resentments to God, I also surrender them to people. On my worst day in recovery, I texted 27 people before 9:30 am for support. Many things had been burning me up for years. The BB says to be "fearless and thorough," and 12&12 emphasizes how great is "the need to quit living by ourselves with those tormenting ghosts of yesterday ... things which really bother and burn us ... distressing or humiliating memories."

By regularly "turning over" my inventory to recovery partners daily, I come to see when my reactions are irrational. I become more willing to surrender both the harms done to me, as well as my reactions to those harms. When the pain comes back, I pray and ask my Higher Power, what I should think, be, do, and feel instead. That shifts my attention to receive power to live another day.

RINA R., New Jersey, USA



# Building the Arch Through Which I WILL WALK A FREE MAN AT LAST

**T**he photo below was taken from a bluff overlooking the Turnagain Arm and the Chugach Mountain Range of Alaska. Let me share with you the story behind it.

The AA Big Book describes the arch through which we can walk to freedom on page 75: "We are building an arch through which we shall walk a free man at last." I very much desire to walk through this arch and I know by working the first three Steps I am creating this arch through which I can pass in working Steps four through nine.

So, how do I proceed to build this mysterious arch? As in everything else in the program the Big Book tells me

everything I need to know to build it.

The start to any building project is to lay a strong foundation on solid ground. As I came into the program, I was lonely and an expert at escaping. I could isolate in a room full of people. When I was feeling any strong feeling, I would run away and turn inward, turn to my addiction.

Coming into the program I had to learn to open my soul and be vulnerable. I had to rely on others and be there to support others. Page 97 says that "helping others is the foundation stone of our recovery." For me this began by making phone calls and sharing in meetings. This was Step zero which was the foundation of my program and my arch.

To affix the stones together a strong mortar is needed. Page 17 says: "The feeling of having shared in a common peril is one element in this powerful cement which binds us together." The main component of a mortar is the cement. It is the bonding agent which holds the mixture together and the stones.

For me I know I have a fellowship that can understand where I have been because they have been there themselves. Just like when Bill W. and Dr. Bob walked into a hospital room in Akron, Ohio, just a couple of drunks to save a third. They shared their common peril and saved a man. When I took my first Step, I admitted to myself, my sponsor, and my fellowship that I was powerless over lust and my life was unmanageable. I took this Step as others had before and shared in that common bond of all sexaholics.

On a strong foundation are placed the cornerstones. Large stones that support the entire arch. Page 47 asks me "am I willing to believe there is a power greater than myself ... It has been repeatedly proven among us that upon this simple cornerstone a wonderfully effective spiritual structure can be built."

My relationship with my higher power was one way. What could my Higher Power supply to me today? I never doubted God was present, but I had to change the way I approached my relationship with my Higher Power. I had to change from a self-centered view of Him to, as it says on page 56, to living in conscious companionship with my Creator. Thus, I fixed my cornerstone in place through taking the second Step.

At the top of the arch is the keystone. This small stone which holds the rest

of the arch up. It is the final stone placed and requires two people to place it. Page 62 says, the keystone is "I must quit playing God; God was our Director; He is our Principal, we are his agents; He is the Father, we are his children."

In working my third Step with my sponsor I had to memorize this section. I had to fully turn my life

**For me I know I have a fellowship that can understand where I have been because they have been there themselves.**

over to my Higher Power. In doing this I placed my keystone of my arch with my sponsor saying the Third Step Prayer on the bluff I mentioned in the beginning of the story overlooking such a beautiful part of God's creation.

In the first three Steps I built the arch to freedom. Before I walked through it fully it had to be checked. After taking the fifth Step the Big Book has me on page 75 check on the arch by asking "Are the stones properly in place? Have we skimmed on the cement put into the foundation? Have we tried to make mortar without sand?"

I know my arch is built on a solid foundation of fellowship and trust, with strong cement of a common bond with those brothers and sisters. It arches up to heaven and my connection to my Higher Power; with whom I walk through the arch to a new way of life.

THAD H., Anchorage, Alaska



Dear New Brother,

The first thing I want you to know is that I will honor your anonymity; I will not use your name nor give you mine. At a large Saturday morning meeting of our 12-Step program your sponsor read your First Step letter. It resonated with me, and I want to give back to the fellowship by writing my share to you.

In early July 2020 I was granted an early release from a low-level Federal prison where I spent four years of a six-year sentence for receiving and sending illegal pictures and video clips. I am happy to be home; appreciate what the program did for me before, during, and after my stay in prison; and have dedicated the remainder of my life to pay it forward.

I don't know how long you've been incarcerated. It took about six months for me to become moderately relaxed as an inmate. At first I spent time trying to hide my offense from other inmates, but when it was apparent that many knew anyway, I decided to try ignoring those inmates who did any emotional bullying. The rumor was that 30% of the 1000+ inmates in my prison were there for the same reason; so, it was easier to limit my contact with negative people.

I am in my mid-70s and had many years of addiction. I thought I could not live without acting out. There were times the frequency diminished to twice a week, but mostly I fantasized and acted out at least once per day.

During the time on pre-trial, I was able to remain sober for a year, but fear was the motivation. Unfortunately, sobriety did not last in prison. However, because I was in recovery, I was able to maintain sobriety from one to two weeks up to one to three months at a time. Before recovery, whenever I slipped from a solo, white-knuckle resolution to quit, I would give up, become depressed, and binge. In prison, the program gave me the serenity, spirituality, and courage

**I began to accept that instead of a critical, judgmental father figure, my HP was a partner in recovery. I just had to do my part, and my HP would keep presenting opportunities to be helpful to others.**

to "get back on the horse" with the knowledge that my family, the SA fellowship, and my Higher Power were with me.

SA produces a lot of literature. The International Service Office makes publications available without cost and mails them to inmates in plain envelopes with a SAICO return address. There is also an SA magazine called *Essay* that has five editions per year. Ask your sponsor for a literature list. If you can email, you can put SA's International Central Office in your

contact list: [saico@sa.org](mailto:saico@sa.org).

The next suggestion is to "work the steps." You'll find that the program is more than dealing with your addiction. It's a new and healthier way of life. An admission to yourself and others that you have all sorts of traits that need attention and improvements – "progress not perfection" is the mantra. Your sponsor is your guide and mentor.

For me, the revised relationship with my Higher Power has been a blessing. I recognize that there's a similarity between us. Both of us suffered from isolation and a craving for, but fear of, intimacy in our youth and young adult years, and I don't mean just in sexuality. Mine started as early as eight years old. I was socially backward. I had some difficulty with my parents, with my mother being abusive, and my father being uninvolved until he died in a car accident when I was just 13.

I spent years latching on to various older men as father figures. I thought I had a good relationship with my Higher Power, but in reality my HP was also like a father figure who helped me only sometimes. I just never trusted my HP with my secret. I was ashamed.

Just before prison I began to accept that my HP loved me, accepted me with all my faults. I was still guilty for what I had done, but I didn't have to wallow in shame. I started to actually listen to the opportunities to help others that I believe my HP presented to me. I began to accept that instead of a critical, judgmental father figure, my HP was a partner in my recovery. I just had to do my part, and my HP would keep presenting opportunities to be helpful to others. It was a blessing I've received and continue receiving, and,

God willing, in a week I will reach a year of sobriety. Just not in fear this time.

If you can find a 12-Step meeting in your prison, try to join it. It may take you some time to find one. It will take some time to build trust with fellow inmates who will share the existence

**You've made a start with your First Step. Keep working it, because you're worth it and know that there are a growing bunch of addicts who are with you in spirit cheering you on.**

of a meeting. That's how it happened for me. Or, how about starting a meeting of your own? Your sponsor, SAICO, and the White Book will give you a road map.

I've asked your sponsor to send this letter to you. I cannot communicate directly with you, as I am restricted. My id initial is "B." if you wish to communicate with me further; however, working and communicating with your sponsor is your first responsibility. You've made a start with your First Step. Keep working it, because you are worth it and know that there are a growing bunch of addicts who are with you in spirit cheering you on.

Inmate sponsor B.



## How SA Got Its Start In South America

In 2005, my AA sponsor told me: "I found the solution for you, SA has arrived in Venezuela." He put me in contact with a member who had several copies of the White Book. I read it in one sitting, from beginning to end, and totally identified.

When the fellows from Venezuela all fell away, I had to look for a sponsor outside my country. To my surprise, there were no sober Spanish-speaking fellows in all of America. By email I met a fellow, Jose Maria, from Madrid, who was the longest sober Spanish member. He began to sponsor me by weekly phone calls. At the beginning I didn't like it when he told me "The problem is the lust you have inside you," but thanks to my Higher Power, little by little, I was catching on to the program. It was especially important for me to learn how to make resentment inventories, how they are related to lust, and that in every resentment, there are other character defects involved, mainly pride.

In October 2005 I started answering the inquiries from South America using the Venezuelan SA email. If the inquirers identified themselves as sexolics and accepted our definition of sexual sobriety, I would put them in touch with a group in their country or encourage them to form a group if one did not exist near them.

I had a relapse in 2006, but thank God kept going and have stayed sober since. It has helped me greatly to be in contact with fellows. There was no way to make a free long distance call outside the country, there was no WhatsApp, but I did not mind paying roaming fees on my cell phone and I called fellows in other parts of America,

from the USA to Argentina. Sometimes it was expensive, but I remembered that a relapse always turns out to be more expensive. Many times I saved myself from relapsing by reading about the suffering of those who asked for help on the internet or by phone.

The first copy of the White Book in Spanish that arrived in Peru was sent to our recovery sister, Marjorie, in Lima in 2007. The shipment took almost two months. A member from Bogotá sent us a piece of literature and we were able to pay her with some difficulty due to the exchange control in Venezuela. Through SAICO we sent literature to Ecuador and Bolivia.

We had a lot of contact with fellows from Cali and Bogota in Colombia, and with Arsenio from Mexico and Ruben from Peru. By December 2009, there were groups in Colombia, Venezuela, Peru, and Bolivia, and lone members in Argentina and Chile. In February 2010 we were part of the committee that worked on the translation project of *Step into Action* into Spanish. When MSN groups closed we migrated to Multiply, then to Yahoo groups. Since Whatsapp exists, we can be united and participate in several SA groups in Spanish in America.

It was very exciting to attend the First National Congress of SA Colombia, held in Bogota in June 2013, where I had a very pleasant experience sharing with my Colombian brothers. It gives me great joy to see the growth that SA has had in Colombia. It is a blessing from our Loving God that the literature tells us about.

Thank God many other servants arrived, and in 2017 the Latin American Region was formed, so now there is a structure to pass the message in Spanish.

I am very grateful for the SA program, which has saved my life. One day at a time, when I get up I put myself in God's hands. I pray, I keep in touch with other companions, by any means available to me. In this fellowship is where the magic is and where the joy of living is possible, being sober in SA's way.

NELSON, Caracas, Venezuela



May 2021

## Have You Ever Thought of Serving As a Trustee?

Dear Members of SA,

Have you heard of the SA Board of Trustees? Do you have any idea what service the Trustees provide our fellowship? Have you ever thought that you might be a candidate to serve as a Trustee? Whatever your answers to these questions, we invite you to read on and learn more about this particular service opportunity.

We are the Nominations Committee and it is our mission to "serve the Fellowship by identifying, recruiting, screening, interviewing and recommending candidates for the Board of Trustees" ([SA Service Manual, Ch. 13](#)) and we want you to know about us, what we do and what you and we can do together.

Our Service Manual ([Ch. 11](#)) describes a Trustee candidate as "a member of SA who has a love of service, relevant real-life skills, and a willingness to take on a four-year commitment to an unpaid, part-time position for the benefit of the SA Fellowship." A candidate "will have at least five years' continuous SA sobriety." Our manual describes in a general way what a Trustee does. We encourage you to read the Service Manual, which is available as a download from the SA website at no charge.

We realize that words-on-paper come alive when we hear the actual experience of members who are or have served as Trustees. Upon request communicated to us by members through SAICO, the committee will schedule special Zoom meetings during which current and/or former Trustees will be available to describe their experiences and answer your questions.

If you already have sufficient information and are interested in serving as a Trustee you may request SAICO to send you the materials for making an application to the Nominations Committee.

As stated so beautifully in our program brochure, *The Spirituality of Service* ([SA Service Manual, Ch. 4](#)) "In Sexaholics Anonymous, as in all Twelve Step fellowships, service and recovery go hand in hand. Indeed, service on behalf of the Fellowship is recovery in action."

We thank each of you for the service you do at every level of our program and look forward to hearing from those of you who are interested in service on the Board of Trustees.

In Fellowship,  
SA NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

[www.sa.org/essay](http://www.sa.org/essay)



**1. SA Group**  
Elects and sends its GSR to



**2. Intergroup**  
Elects and sends its IGR to



**3. Regional Assembly**  
Elects and sends its Delegates and/or Alternate Delegates to



**4. General Delegate Assembly**  
Decides SA Policy and elects and instructs the Trustees



**5. Board of Trustees**  
a. Oversees SA International Central Office  
b. Supervises the International Journal Essay  
c. Appoints



**6. Committees**  
Carry out the work

## We Are Still a Small Fellowship, But We Are Here!

Our Hungarian fellowship was established in September 2019 on the closing day of the SA conference held in Budapest. The determination and enthusiasm that set us on the road is still with us to this day.

At first we had live meetings once a week in Budapest, but with the outbreak of COVID-19, we switched to online meetings. The Higher Power turned this social disadvantage to our advantage, as even members who do not live in Budapest can now easily join the meetings. About two months ago we started our second weekly meeting, which is well attended. Slowly but steadily we thrive and sobriety

is growing. Our fellowship is 15 members strong, including two women. The female members of our community are actively building international relationships. We are working to carry the message.

Most of us also attend English-speaking meetings on a regular basis, which helps us maintain the right focus. It is a great experience to hear the shares of our peers who show us the way with years, often decades, of sobriety behind them. Some of them even knew Roy himself!

From the beginning, we have received a lot of help from the international fellowship. We have set up a translation committee, which is working hard to make the White Book available in Hungarian. Together we look forward to being happy, joyous, and free!

PETER G., Budapest, Hungary



## ASIA PACIFIC SA ONLINE UNITY CONFERENCE *Growing Within, Growing Globally*



The third Asia-Pacific Unity conference took place on Sunday April 25, 2021. The real purpose of this one-day conference is carrying the message and strengthening small groups through unity with others. The event was begun by Jason C. of Australia in 2019 as part of an effort to create unity in the Asia Pacific region, where there are small meetings and little intergroup action. Australia and now India are currently the strongest fellowships in the region.

This year's event had 211 people registered, and more attended because, on the day of the event, the organizing committee distributed the meeting link via WhatsApp to non-registrants. In our introductory email to registrants, we stated our purpose thus:

*The purpose of our conference is to carry the message (Step 12, Tradition 5) to suffering sexaholics in our region and to promote unity (Tradition 1) between the loners and the various groups in the Asia-Pacific region. When reaching for the hand of recovery, there are numerous obstacles Asians and others in the region face, not the least of which is language and the lack of local members. The conference is designed to bring the hand of recovery to them.*

The conference began and ended with old-timers. In the middle, we featured a relapse prevention meeting with three old-timers. Some of our committee members, all familiar with life in Asia, conducted a panel discussion with audience questions on overcoming shame, a topic particularly relevant to Confucian-influenced cultures, where "face" is important. Our conference

ended with the Serenity Prayer spoken in Chinese, Vietnamese, Thai, Malay, and Hindi.

SA meetings in Taiwan, Thailand, and some other Asian countries have catered mostly to the expat community or those local people whose fluency in English and Western cultures makes sobriety in SA possible. Such fluency often correlates with access to education. Yet sexaholics are suffering in every Asian country with no knowledge of a solution. The current state of SA in such places is comparable to AA in its infancy. As Bill wrote in 1935, "Near you, alcoholics are dying helplessly like people in a sinking ship. If you live in a large place, there are hundreds." (AA 153) These are the hopeless suffering in Asia who need our message of hope. Every group is only as strong as its connection to other groups. Groups are cells in a single organism of recovery. We want to bring the light of sobriety and hope to our brothers and sisters whose first language is Chinese, Vietnamese, Thai, Korean, etc.

The best part of the meeting for me was how many reached out to the newcomers who chanced into the conference, newcomers who don't know what a sponsor is, who don't know how to work the Steps, and don't know where to find books. I saw this happen in real time in the meeting chat. Another bit of unity: I am in Taipei, and it has been a privilege to forge relationships with committee members in Australia, India, Singapore, Malaysia, Korea, Japan, the Philippines, and Thailand. God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

MIKE M., Taipei, Taiwan



### New SA Groups February 2021

#### North, Central, & South America

- ◆ Bismarck, North Dakota, USA
- ◆ Imperial Valley, California, USA
- ◆ Kearney, Nebraska, USA
- ◆ Kenosha, Wisconsin, USA
- ◆ Providence, Rhode Island, USA
- ◆ Utah County, Utah, USA

#### North, Central, & South America

- ◆ Lahore, Pakistan

### Financial Report 1st Quarter 2021

Revenue: \$ 90,636

Expenses: \$ 61,074

Revenue - Expenses: \$ 29,562

Reserves: \$ 322,685  
(12.9 months)

## Permission to Copy

The Essay in digital form is available free from the [sa.org/essay](http://sa.org/essay) website. You may make ten copies—print or digital—of that issue, to be shared with members of SA. In lieu of making copies, refer persons to the website so they can download a copy for themselves. We encourage all who are capable of subscribing to a print edition to do so. We encourage readers of the digital edition to make a donation to SA, as your financial support is critical to the work of our fellowship.

# Pandemic Unlocks INTERREGIONAL COOPERATION

The lockdown paradoxically brought our neighboring regions of Europe & the Middle East and the German-Speaking Region together in new ways.

On March 21 and 22, we held our first online Interregional Convention via Zoom entitled “Our Common Welfare.” In the process, we discovered that we could reach our non-English, non-German speaking members as well by offering live consecutive interpretation of the convention into 11 additional languages.

The result was a breakthrough event that has our regions still talking about the electrifying effect that it has had in unifying our members.

Our regions had been sensing a growing spiritual hunger in the last five years to gain from one another’s experience, strength and hope. Initially, we were visiting each other’s regional events,

and this whetted our appetites to increase cross-regional connections and to overcome linguistic and cultural differences.

We then had thoughts about co-hosting small cross-regional face-to-face events, but the pandemic halted those plans. But at the same time it opened the door to the idea of an online convention that first arose in May 2020. EMER’s Good Neighbours Committee and the equivalent Committee from the German-Speaking Region drove the process, supported by four joint subcommittees: Publicity, Interpretation, Speakers & Program and Technology.

We based our interpretation plans on the SIM’s use of Zoom interpretation channels and extended them to cover the 12 languages into which we wanted to offer interpretation.

The subcommittee for the program



and speakers went in search of new faces—people with at least five years sobriety who were not yet well known on the speaker circuit. This opened the door to many new contacts and these new speakers were completely willing to contribute to the event. One speaker started her talk with “I agreed to this service because I recently heard ‘Whenever SA asks you to speak, then you speak!’”

In between speaker sessions, the event organized breakout meeting times to give participants a chance to meet directly and more informally, to make deeper personal connections. In one such room, members could continue discussions from the meeting

before; in another, one-on-one discussions could be conducted to share more openly.

The EMER Correctional Facilities Committee also made a presentation about CFC work to those interested in starting such service or joining EMER’s work. Our experiment with breakout rooms showed us that they can be used not only to socialize but also to learn about SA service in each other’s regions. Without the strong support of so many people around the world we would have never been able to put on this event. Thank You God for this beautiful happening.

THE GRATEFUL ORGANIZERS

## Facts and Figures on “Our Common Welfare”

It was a veritable beehive of service on March 20-21. All in all, 67 people from EMER and the German-Speaking Region were busy as panelists (16), interpreters (37), moderators (4) and members of the Organizational Committee (10).

Consecutive interpretation was provided into 12 languages: German, English, Arabic, Dutch, French, Italian, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Slovak, Slovenian and Spanish! We had 423 registered participants from six continents.

Panelists shared their experience, strength and hope on the following topics:

- *Not Feeling Different from Others Anymore*
- *Living Without Secrets*
- *Unity While Honoring All Voices*
- *Working with Others*

Participants had the opportunity to ask questions in their native language as the interpreters then translated each question into the other languages.

After each session, breakout rooms were open and participants could choose freely among “continuation” rooms on the session topics, or Fellowship rooms, or individual one-on-one meetings, or an information meeting hosted by the EMER Correctional Facilities Committee describing outreach to sexaholic inmates. Various national rooms also formed spontaneously in their respective languages.


In all of these sub-rooms, you could feel the vibrant atmosphere of fellowship and optimism among the participants.

Having learned much along the way in handling the technical and administrative sides of this complex event, the Organizational Committee would be glad to share its experience, strength and hope with any SA member who would like to explore setting up an event like this.

We thank all the servers and collaborators who made this idea become reality!

Thanks, Danke, اركش, Dank je, Merci, Grazie, Dziękuję Ci, Mulțumesc, Спасибо, Āakujem, Hvala vam, Gracias

**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.

**SA, S-Anon & S-Ateen Virtual International Summer Convention**

## CONNECTION: KEYSTONE OF RECOVERY

**July 9-11, 2021**

Organized by the Utah, USA fellowship

**Early-bird price till May 31 of only \$15**

To register or if you have questions, go to: [keystoneofrecovery.com](http://keystoneofrecovery.com)



## A Workshop for Sponsors and Sponsees

Saturday, August 14, 2021  
11 AM - 3 PM EDT

Registration is required  
**Cost: FREE**

*Except for making amends and carrying the message to others, by the end of the workshop, you will work through the Steps!*

For more information, to register, and download the syllabus,:  
<https://casaig.wixsite.com/>

Sponsored by Capital Sexaholics Anonymous (CASA) Intergroup, USA



Send in your event to be listed in Essay and on [sa.org](http://sa.org). Please submit the following information: date, theme, location, and contact(s). An event flyer is very helpful. Send to [saico@sa.org](mailto: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 27<sup>th</sup> August – Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> August  
Friday 27<sup>th</sup> 15:30 till 22:15 (UK Time)  
Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> 7:30 till 22:15 (UK Time)  
Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:scottishsaconvention@gmail.com)

Sometimes Quickly,  
Sometimes Slowly.


**Inland Northwest Fall Regional Retreat**  
Post Falls, Idaho, USA  
<https://www.inlandnorthwestsa.org>

## 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](mailto:saico@sa.org).





# SA Notice Board

## Married Speaker Meeting Recordings

The EMER Region has a monthly Speaker Meeting in which a married SA member shares his/her experience, strength and hope in the marriage. The recordings can be found here:

<https://tinyurl.com/marriedspeaker>

## "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](https://d2deqbdk4xcrlo.cloudfront.net)

## Young Members Zoom Meeting

For young SA members under 30

Sundays 10:00am EST  
Email Ferro for further information:

[essay.fer@gmail.com](mailto:essay.fer@gmail.com)

## SA Fireside Chat



Fireside chat with SA Old-timers helpful for newcomers (useful for everyone!). Interviews with long-term sober members who tell their stories and share their experience, strength and hope on a variety of topics.

<https://safireside.com>

## Building Strong Meetings

Do you want to read more shares of fellows from all over the world on how to build strong meetings, and/or do you want to add your group's experience?

Go to this Google Doc:  
<https://tinyurl.com/strong-meetings>

## ANNOUNCEMENTS?

This is YOUR notice board!  
Send your SA-related announcements to:  
[essay@sa.org](mailto:essay@sa.org)

# COMING IN AUGUST



## NEXT EDITION

In the August issue, read about the worldwide event "Supporting Women in SA" that took place on May 15 and how women recover in SA.

## Supporting "Women in SA" event

International reactions on the worldwide event that took place on May 15.

## She Had Found Herself

Relish the beautifully illustrated story of a Colombian female member.

## The Tool of Having a Dog

His 11 y/o dog learned him so much about the program.

## Dried Nasal Mucus and Character Defects

This fellow in an Californian prison shares an insightful story of what a piece of dried nasal mucus on his neck taught him.

## SUBMIT YOUR STORY

**August edition: Supporting Women in SA (stories due July 1)** Tell us your story as a woman or a man on how we can make SA into the fellowship we all deserve.

**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)** Sponsees and sponsors alike, what is the tool of sponsorship doing for you? How is it helping your daily recovery?

Opinions expressed in *Essay* are not to be attributed to SA as a whole, nor does publication of any article imply endorsement by SA or by *Essay*.


## THE TWELVE STEPS OF SA

- 1** We admitted that we powerless over lust—that our lives had become unmanageable.
- 2** Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
- 3** Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
- 4** Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
- 5** Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
- 6** Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
- 7** Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
- 8** Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
- 9** Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
- 10** Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
- 11** Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
- 12** Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to sexaholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Steps and Traditions are adapted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, INC. Permission to adapt and reprint the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions does not mean that AAWS has approved the contents of this publication, nor that AAWS agrees with the views expressed herein. AA is a program of recovery from alcoholism only. Use of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions in connection with programs which are patterned after AA, but which address other problems, or in any other non-AA context, does not imply otherwise. Sexaholics Anonymous is a recovery program based on the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous and received permission from AA to use its Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions in 1979.

## THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF SA

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



Grant me the **Serenity**  
to accept the things  
I cannot change,  
**Courage** to change  
the things I can,  
and **Wisdom** to know  
the difference