

# ESSAY

## SUPPORTING WOMEN IN SA

Aug  
2021  
Edition  
SA.org

The  
International  
Journal  
Of  
Sexaholics  
Anonymous

# 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

August 2021

Dear *Essay* readers,

I was asked to introduce this special edition, as I had the wonderful privilege to chair last May's worldwide online event "Supporting Women in SA." You may have wondered why it is necessary to support women in SA or thought it is an outside issue or a controversial topic. Well, then this issue of *Essay* is for you. After reading the articles, you might well have other thoughts, opinions, feelings, and even maybe questions ...

You might try to imagine how recovery might have looked if you were a man and called the SA phone line but instead of a man answering the phone, a woman was on the other end of the line. You had to tell her about your addictive patterns. The meeting available to you was all women and you would be the only man there. The women declined to give you their phone number because you had to call another male fellow when triggered and you should find a male sponsor, even if there was no other male in your country or speaking the same language.

This is still often what women encounter when coming to SA. It takes character and persistence to break through these barriers to recovery. This issue contains brave stories about overcoming these challenges, including having to wait a long time for another woman to come into the local fellowship. You will also find female old-timer stories, accounts about the history of women in SA, the recovery story of a woman in prison, practical tools, and befitting SA literature. It also contains encouraging accounts of men who have welcomed women and helped them onto the lifeboat.

*I hope you enjoy spending extended time with this edition.*

RAQUEL J., Madrid, Spain





# August 2021

What better place to work on overcoming temptation than the sanctuary of a meeting where temptations may be present?

Sexaholics Anonymous,  
"Mixed Meetings" 178



On the cover: How hearts touched by God's love, and His pruning, bring about lots of green foliage and fruits for others to rest under and enjoy.

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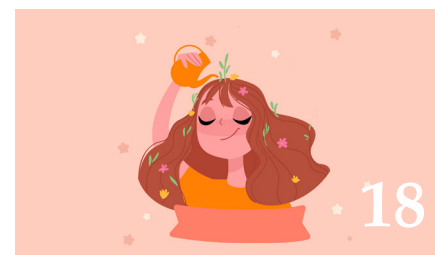
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## There Is Such Joy In Face to Face Connection

**I READ WITH GREAT INTEREST** the May issue on *What Makes Meeting Strong?* It made me reflect on the importance of SA meetings for my recovery, especially when the global lockdown could potentially have shut down SA meetings. Fortunately, our fellowship has responded strongly by using virtual meetings.

Yet, Step Zero echoes in my mind. As a loner at the start of my journey in sobriety, phone and Skype meetings were important lifelines for me, but my sponsor urged me to attend 'open' AA meetings, and travel sometimes long distances to conventions and other SA events.

While virtual meetings have a lot going for them, I note that they tend to gravitate to being not just "meetings" but groups,

having service positions, service rotation, collect a 7th tradition, and being focused on the primary purpose of carrying its message to the sexaholic who still suffers (Tradition 5). This reminds me that I need to commit myself to my group, because "the measure of such commitment will be the measure of your recovery" (SA 64).


And if my online meeting is not collecting a 7th tradition, then are we harming the ability of the Intergroup, Region, and eventually SAICO, to serve sexaholics? As a member of my Region's Finance Committee, I have seen how a drying-up of Intergroup donations to region has, in turn, started to potentially affect donations upwards to SAICO. At the root of this lack of group donations to Intergroups.

My home group has been meeting again face to face since Sept 2020, as the group conscience indicated a deep desire for face to

face connection. We make it possible for members who are housebound to join via a high speed internet connection, using a condenser microphone. We don't advertise our group's virtual meeting availability outside our geographic region, as the group conscience decided to keep the meeting local.

We have held a face to face recovery day attended by 12 fellows from across the country. Our group has grown, and has had several newcomers: we keep on with the practice of meeting a newcomer for a coffee and a chat before they step in to their first meeting, and try to connect them with a sponsor as soon as they can accept that. What a difference from the months of lockdown, when we had only one newcomer, who never attended a (virtual) meeting. How many newcomers to a virtual meeting really receive the help they need, if there is no 'after the meeting' opportunity to connect? They can just click and disappear!

I also sometimes talk to fellows from previously large meetings in large cities, where meetings could now happen face to face, and yet they are still happening only virtually. This surprises me: there is such joy and recovery in face to face connection, and when I am tempted to attend meetings virtually instead of face to face I wonder if my disease is convincing me to short-change my recovery.

*A sexaholic in the UK* 

## World Wide Walls Of SA

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



*Umm al-Banin meeting  
Isfahan, Iran*



*Better Living Center meeting  
Nairobi, Kenya*



*Solo Por Hoy  
Madrid, Spain*



*Q&R Fellowship  
New York, USA*



### 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.



# “A Heart That Blooms”

## The story behind the cover illustration

In my mid-forties I found myself full of fear, uncertainty, and loneliness—not knowing why my life did not have the shades of color I saw in nature, the sunsets, the immensity of the flowers. I felt that I did not belong—that perhaps my Higher Power had made a mistake. Lust had always been there, but at a very high cost.

At the beginning of my healing path, I was devoid of life; my fear and hopelessness brought me grim shades of gray only. I had no idea who I was. Sadness and brokenness brought me to wanting to change and escape the misery lust had created. I wanted a life, not in shades of gray, but in the colors of my Higher Power.

In the process of leaving that inner desert, my Higher Power invited me to let go of the reins. I didn’t know what this meant, until, from His hand, I experienced the deepest pain of my entire life. With a single incision I experienced the lifelong poison that had been piling up and festering in a childhood wound.

After this deep pain, my Higher Power took me in His warm arms. The healing began to take hold when I admitted I could no longer take the place of His true, patient and gentle love. I found that He had always been waiting for me, ready

to generously bandage and heal my wounds. The heart at the bottom of my illustration represents this “Living in His Grace”—the roots of my heart experiencing healing by the love of my Higher Power.

Trees have various growth processes. Many must go through complex periods before being mature and sheltering others with their foliage. Sometimes they have to lose almost all their foliage, everything that gives them false security. Sometimes they experience storms, loneliness, fear of dying, being completely exposed. My experience of healing is similar to that of a tree that must be pruned. I have discovered in recovery that there is no other way, but that the “prunings” of my Higher Power have always turned out to be deep healing experiences.

His deep pruning has brought about a lot of green foliage. From the place of defeat have I been able to experience seeds of faith that have germinated, and fruits that have arisen from prayer, meditation, service, and fellowship. Everything has gotten color. The experience of life invites me to create, trust and love myself.

God’s daughters can rest in the great tree of life. The loving Higher Power that sustains His daughters now holds them in his arms (the branches of the strong oak where the cages are open) with the promise that they will never again have to experience that painful emptiness. Life has begun to flourish. The gifts of recovery are carried in their healed hands with which they can care, feed, bless, honor life, paint.

*By giving, we found true union with others and God, and lo and behold, love itself. But it slipped in unrecognized by the back door. “Surprised by joy.” (SA 148)*

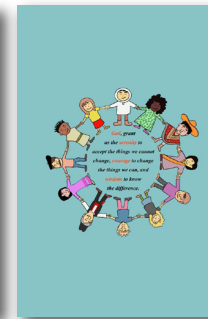
ANGÉLICA MARIA, Bogotá, Colombia



## What About You Designing the Next Essay Cover Page?



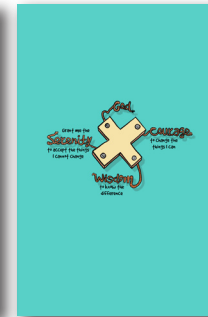
August 2020 “Found in Translation”



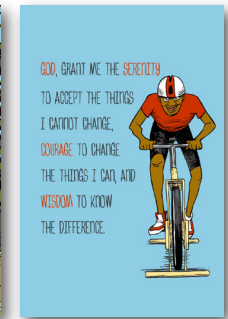
October 2020 “Prejudices & Challenges”



December 2020 “Happy & Joyous Freedom”



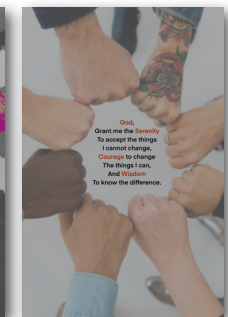
February 2021 “Young & Sober”



May 2021 “What Makes Meetings Strong?”



August 2021 “Supporting Women in SA”



- ✓ Angélica Maria explained how she illustrated the cover of the August Issue and we were glad to use her stunning submission.
- ✓ Now we invite YOU to illustrate the cover of one of the next magazines! You can do so by drawing, painting, photos, collage, computer graphics, ... The logo and typography will be put on by us. Look for the themes of the next issues on p. 35.
- ✓ We decide which design will be used. The member whose design is selected will receive a free print version of “his” or “her” Essay.
- ✓ For more information, mail us by [essay@sa.org](mailto:essay@sa.org)



## How I found My Sponsors in SA

*God guides the processes if she does the footwork, every day again.*

I'm a sexaholic from Luxembourg, sober since May 31, 2004. My first SA meeting was at a convention in Germany in 1995. I was in a lot of pain and went after one of the meetings to one of the women and asked her to be my sponsor. She agreed.

In the process of finding a sponsor, pain has been an important factor. It pushed me to reach out and to ask for help. Because of my pain, I became willing to do things I would never have done before: I talked to members I didn't know; I went to as many meetings and conventions as possible; I told people about it.

After I had been sober from sexual acting-out for five years, I relapsed in masturbation. At that time, I had stopped working with my SA sponsor. I couldn't stop acting out, I was desperate. I shared it with a friend from a food program and asked her to be my sponsor. This worked for me. I started working the Steps in that program and became sober from food anorexia, as well as from sexual acting-out.

I had always continued going to SA meetings, but I realized in 2014 that I needed to work the Steps again with an SA sponsor. I was obsessing about a priest and needed help to look closer at the different faces of my lust: emotional dependency, obsessing about men, fantasy.

Finding a sponsor was a longer process this time. I talked about it to friends in SA and one of my SA brothers provided me with a long list of email addresses. Often, the women I contacted were not available any longer for sponsorship. I went to an International Convention and shared in the meetings that I was looking for a sponsor. At one of those meetings, three women were available for sponsorship and one of them has become my current sponsor.

For me, conventions seem to work best to find sponsors. I believe God has been guiding these processes and, if I am willing to ask for help, if I take little steps every day and reach out, I will get the help I need.

MARIE-PAULE C., Luxembourg



## Read the very helpful and indispensable SA pamphlet "SA Is For Women"



As the Fellowship grows in numbers and sexual recovery, so too, is the number of female members and their depth of recovery growing.

Those who seek recovery are finding in SA the help and a spiritual solution to overcome our once-hopeless addiction.

The pamphlet is divided in different interesting parts like: How to know if SA is right for you; In Sexaholics Anonymous, women have found a way to stay stopped from; Working the program of SA; Members share.

Here are two excerpts:

*Since the Fellowship's inception in the early 1970s, women have made an essential contribution to the growth and development of the SA Fellowship and program of recovery.*

*As a woman, you may have difficulty "identifying in" or feeling "part of" an SA group which is predominantly made up of men. You may feel you cannot or do not want to relate to men in an SA meeting or even find their presence triggers lust. Hang in there. In recovery, many men and women have discovered that issues with others go beyond those who trigger our sexaholism—and that the sexual obsession has damaged our ability to relate to all people in ways we were not even aware of. In recovery, each member has the opportunity to re-learn entirely new and non-sexual ways of relating to all others, and attending a mixed meeting is a sound place to start.*

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



# The Practical Tool of Maintaining Physical Boundaries

I found out when I started to sober up and get into recovery that part of not lusting required keeping physical boundaries. In my active addiction, I did not pay attention to this and had no idea that there are healthy boundaries. For me, this means no intimate hugging with men and women and making sure I have enough space around me to stand or sit. So I need to pay attention to this at meetings or conventions.

In the beginning, I was angry and expected that others would know and respect my boundaries. My sponsor enlightened me that it was my responsibility to take care of my own boundaries. She shared with me how she took care of herself and I will share with you now how I do this.

I avoid hugging. If a person steps towards me, I may step back. Most of the time I will put my hand out first, with enough room for a handshake. Sometimes with members who I have known for longer and are sober, I will hug. This is not an intimate hug but a hug in the form of capital letter A. Minimal body contact.


Sitting in a car or elsewhere, I make sure there is space between me and the other person. In a situation where there is less space, I sit on the outside and can put my bag between me and the other person. Or I ask for space. If that is not possible, I can always get up and move to where I have more space.

I am not able to share a room with other women that I don't know well enough. I need to be careful with this as I also lust after women.

Some years ago I was at a 12-Step women's retreat where we had to sleep in rooms with bunk beds. My bed was the bottom one. I had brought some extra scarfs or towels so I could put these around my bed like a curtain. This way I would have privacy changing clothes and I did not have to see others changing. On one occasion, a woman who had showered and walked around naked was dressing in the middle of the room. I wanted to ask her not to do this. I could hear my sponsor saying that this would be a controlling behavior. I needed to take care of myself so I prayed and started to read my pocket AA Big Book. This worked (had it not worked, Plan B would have been to remove myself from the room).

At a convention held in a language other than English, there were a few male members who sat very close to the foreign members and whispered the translation in our ears. This did not work for me as I found it very lustful. I had to say no to the translator. That meant I did not understand what was being shared, but felt still part of the meeting.

At another fellowship I go to, it is more normal that men and women hug each other, which is fine. At the face to face meeting sometimes there will be a group of men standing outside. I don't join that group, I greet them and go inside. If I hug, it will be somebody I have known for a longer time. I don't go around the room hugging everybody. Sometimes when there is a newcomer, they want to come up fast and hug straight away. I don't do this, I step back and give a handshake. They are a bit surprised about this but I don't have to explain why I do it. I just need to take care of my own physical boundaries.

JACKIE H., *Den Hague, the Netherlands* 

# The Obsession of the Sexaholic Mind

A lust drunk was stranded on a desert island with no lust hits or any other way of escaping his loneliness. One day he saw an old brown bottle washed up on the strand. He picked it up, dusted it off and at once, a genie appeared. "For joy, you have freed me!" cried the genie. "Ten thousand years I have spent in that bottle. For your pains, young man, I will gladly grant you three wishes for freeing me."

"Can I have anything I want?" the drunk asked. "Yes, three things, anything you want!" the genie replied. "Think well now, before you cast your wishes. This is a once-in-a-lifetime, life-changing opportunity and you might consider all the implications and ramifications for yourself and everyone whom you love before you make your wishes.

"Oh WOW!" said the lust drunk dancing around in front of the genie. "WOW, WOW", he cried. "I want a laptop. I want a laptop that never needs to be recharged, that never runs down; that is always connected, forever connected, unlimited connection, everywhere and anywhere, and will never break down, even if sand gets into it or salt water or whatever. And is always updated."

In a flash, the laptop appeared. The lust drunk fell upon it and saw that it had the clearest picture he had ever seen, the most perfect internet connection ever, even though he was thousands of miles from anywhere. After two hours of crazed internet surfing, the battery was as full as ever; after hitting it into a tree trunk, after holding it under the salty sea water for ten minutes, the magical laptop did not just continue to work perfectly, but did not show signs of a single scratch. The lust drunk was overjoyed because it was clear that the device would last forever.

"Oh WOW, WOW!" he shouted, holding the laptop close to his breast. The genie looked at him then while the young man lost himself on another binge of lusting. After some time, the genie interrupted, reminding the lust drunk that he had two more wishes.

"Think carefully young man," he said, "because your first wish has gone on a material thing. You might want to consider what might bring you peace, love, joy, real connection before making your next two wishes."

Holding the laptop high in the air like a trophy, the drunk said, "No, I don't have to think at all. I want two more of these!"

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







## To Recover, She Needs a Village of Recovering Sexaholics

*Having had several sponsors over the years taught her to not depend on one person only.*

I am a gratefully recovering sexaholic living in California. My sobriety date is November 26, 2009. At my first SA meeting, there was one other woman in the room who had joined SA four months before. She became my first SA sponsor. At that time there was only one meeting in San Diego. We spoke often by phone. I was grateful to have a companion who wanted what I wanted.

After several years, another woman joined SA. I knew her from another organization. We developed a friendship and she became my second sponsor. After a few years, she died. I was in much grief with the loss. It took me several years before I was ready to find another sponsor. At an International SA/S-Anon Convention in Chicago I asked someone for recommendations for a woman sponsor. He gave me

the names of two women, who I contacted. One of them accepted me as a sponsee. I continued to have a connection with the other woman. Several years later this sponsor had a relapse and decided to leave SA. The other woman agreed to become my sponsor. We communicated mostly by mail because of her living situation. I met her in person at the International SA/S-Anon conferences.

Meanwhile, a female member in California began a California phone meeting for SA women. Over time, we developed a relationship. She asked me to be a Daily Renewal Partner. In this way we found we had other things in common. When I lost my sponsor, I knew who would become my next sponsor. We lived in different areas of California and met at conferences. She was a great support for me. She died in February 2019. I was in grief and had no desire

to find another sponsor.

By November 2019, I wanted to start connecting with other women in SA. I signed up for the SIM event in November 2019. I related to one of the female speakers and was able to get her phone number. She was in the same time zone that I was in. We had several conversations by phone. In January 2020, someone asked me to be her sponsor. I knew in order to be of service, I would need a sponsor. I asked this woman to be my sponsor. She agreed and has been my sponsor since January 2020.

Recently, I asked my sponsor if I could start SA as a newcomer. We agreed to work the Steps using the *Step into Action* book. In the pandemic I discovered a whole international community that had sprung up in SA. I found that SA had evolved into an International community. This was new for me as I have been in SA since March 1989.

Sponsorship is about developing a relationship. Relationships are not easy for me. In my childhood I was not taught or shown how to have a healthy relationship. Sponsors help me in learning how to have a relationship by their own example.

I feel more comfortable asking someone to be a sponsor after I have gotten to know them. Sometimes it is not possible and I have gone into sponsor-sponsee relationships without knowing the other person. Fortunately, these situations have worked out for me. My SA program comes alive when I have a sponsor. I learn from a sponsor how to be of service to others in SA.

Ideally, I will have met my sponsor in-person at my local SA fellowship. With this past year of global pandemic, in-person meetings have

been canceled. In my city there are not many women in SA. With Zoom and Whatsapp it is possible to connect with others in other countries. I find it helpful to have women who I talk with on the phone other than my sponsor.

I do not want to only depend on one person to help me to recover from this

**In my childhood I was not taught or shown how to have a healthy relationship. Sponsors help me in learning how to have relationships by their own example.**

Just problem that has been with me since childhood. To recover, I need a village of recovering sexaholics. I am grateful for my sponsor. I pray for her everyday. I appreciate her example of being of service.

LILIANA M., San Diego, USA







## Recovery Means Letting Go of the Ego

*This German member entrusted herself to the Big Book as the basic recipe book for recovery.*

I am a female lust addict, my home group is in Munich, and I am grateful for 11 years and 4 month sobriety. I am grateful for the pioneers of the 12 step groups and proud to be part of it. I am especially grateful for Roy and his wife Iris, who recently passed away. While devouring the White Book, I found Roy, my first friend in SA. I was overwhelmed that there was someone who spoke of a problem that I had been hiding inside me for decades without ever finding words of understanding for it myself.

Through enslavement to lust, I had become a kind of top-heavy zombie. I could only laugh superficially and not cry; feelings were vague. I was mostly dissatisfied, annoyed with others, isolated, and full of self-

hatred, fear, hidden shame and so on ... anyone reading this can recognize the condition.

How then, did the steady change to recovery start with me? I entrusted myself to the Big Book as the basic recipe book for recovery. Sandy Beach, an AA pioneer, summed up the program in two words: Let go! And he meant his ego-protective gear and old ideas. This makes room for new ideas.

Many feelings surfaced in my first year of sobriety—mostly difficult feelings of anger, pain and emptiness. Then, at some point, surprisingly, a real new laughter came out from within me. I immediately recognized it as a sign of recovery. It came from my belly and rolled over my neck like a gentle stream from my mouth. And

that feeling was joy.

This was before I had seriously tackled the 9th Step for the 2nd time to finally get through the first nine Steps. It says in the Big Book at the end of the 9th Step: “Before we are halfway through, We will know a new freedom and a new happiness.”

I felt safe, accepted and heard in the meeting. There was a gentle net of basic honesty between people, which became a secure cocoon for me, and which I actually needed as a child to develop. This was my experience for me in my home group, and I was the only woman for the first five years or so.

I know that for some women it is much harder if not impossible to become so familiar with a group of men alone. Personally I had more problems with women, men were comrades for me. But it was of course crucial for me to connect with a female sponsor and a female fellow from another city. I had met them both in our big German-speaking Regional Convention.

The two of them helped me with my surrender in the first Step. I don't think I would have been able to do that with a man. However, I also had male friends after a few years in sobriety as well as today. I would not want to be without them. Familiarity with these SA women helped me get over some difficulties and conflicts with subsequent sponsors and other women.

In general, there were conflicts that we could solve honestly and in a protected framework, I learned to accept boundaries and set them myself. This brought us all the more together and created a closeness and trust that could flourish.

I have really enjoyed group

fellowship activities outside of the meeting room. Christmas dinners and birthday parties, outings like hiking and boating, hosting meetings, and spending holidays together have brought me together with so many friends from the fellowship, also internationally. And I've also visited friends in the hospital and even helped clean an apartment one time.

The more my isolation mania turns into community spirit, the happier I am. And I carry that out into the world.

**Personally I had more problems with women, men were comrades for me. But it was of course crucial for me to connect with a female sponsor and a female fellow from another city.**

I have become socially acceptable. I am becoming finally and hopefully what God wants me to be.

Doing service for and with others, especially having sponsees, is the real highlight and I have the impression that I learn so much from others and I am happy because I also have something to pass on. My disease has become a treasure that can help others and I get back so much more in so many ways. All this fills me with deep and new joy. I can feel it in my body, it is real.

Before SA, I was excited and felt charged with lust when I would


chase after one of the 'gods' that I worshiped. All my other methods to satisfy myself—with whatever—brought me only a short rush and then the vicious circle of destruction.

The best thing for me today: I am in a spiral of happiness. It seems to get better and better ... colors become more intense, insights clearer, gratitude brings new joy ... and more recovery eventually attracts more female friends—meaning more work and ... more joy!

We are growing as a fellowship of women here in Germany. When

I started I knew only two and now I can spontaneously call 15 women in our country. I need women, for identification, and for maturing into an adult.

And this is a secret why the 12 steps work at all. As summarized in the promises: There has to be something better for us addicts than our addiction. Otherwise, we'll binge again. I gladly bear my testimony before you: it works.

ELAINE P., *Munich, Germany* 

## Recovering From Our Common Problem

**H**ello, my name is Ilona and I am a sexaholic. My sobriety date is January 14, 2016. When I walked into SA I was the only female in the room. This was expected, if at first, unsettling. I discussed this with my sponsor. She told me "What better way for your recovery being in a room of recovering men and learning to relate to them non-sexually?"


The SA White Book, page 178, has something similar: *Our problem is lust, misplaced dependency, and defective attitudes. What better place to work on overcoming temptation than the sanctuary of a meeting where temptations may be present?*

So my recovery journey began. Both places I've lived had one meeting I

could attend. The other was men-only. I added open AA meetings. I asked that the men-only ones be changed. They voted no. The reason I was given was an outside issue. Some of the wives didn't want their husbands going to mixed meetings. Where I am now, they voted yes the second time.

We are all sexaholics. We need to be able to attend as many meetings as possible. Yes, I'm a woman. It's already challenging being a woman with this addiction. Our stories are similar. We need to help and support each other. What better way than attending meetings together. Learning and recovering together. A few women have attended meetings. Other than myself, none stayed.

I want recovery and I want it for everyone. It's important to retain the women when they come through the doors of SA. Let's welcome women with open doors and open meetings.

ILONA B., *Singapore* 



## Relational Growth Is Possible For Everyone in SA

In SA she found the answers to her lifelong seeking of how to be relationally "normal."

**P**racticing healthy interactions in SA has been a passion of mine. I have known near my entire life that I am not good at relationships. My longing to find how to be relationally "normal" has been a lifelong seeking.

Coming to SA, although not immediately, I started finding answers. I saw others with more recovery acting normal, even men with women. I knew if I kept coming back, I too would grow relationally. How did I learn and grow? I kept coming back. I kept coming back not just to meetings, but times of fellowship. Times of fellowship meant going to restaurants.

Hanging out with other SA members even if I was the only woman. As long

as I was NOT one on one with one male member only. If I found myself with one male member only, then that was the time to leave even on a Zoom meeting in most cases.

Times of fellowship meant routinely staying after the meeting to talk with others. Times of fellowship meant getting involved in the business aspect of SA. Like going to business meetings or group conscience meetings. Or going to intergroup meetings. Or hanging out with delegates and trustees at the conventions. Or simply hanging out with those with more sobriety and recovery than myself. It also means hanging out with newcomers and those with less sobriety and recovery than myself.

As I especially was reminded, I do not want to start my sobriety



and recovery over again. Growing relationally means being involved with the entire SA family. It means showing up wherever two or more other sexaholics hang out. What did I find? I found that in general I was cared for like never before in my life.

Yes, there are always some, usually with little to no recovery, that were not safe. Yet, my SA family was safe, both men and women. If anything, I felt safer around the men because I knew I would be protected.

There were times the SA guys would let myself and other women know, who was unsafe to hang around because they cared for their sisters in SA. There were times the SA guys would make sure I left safely on a bad weather day. If it were not for my SA brothers, I am not sure where I would be today. Note: I have since learned not to risk my life to get to an SA meeting.

What does growing relationally look like in SA? It means realizing that I can learn from anyone in SA. It means listening to others, meaning those with sobriety and recovery, as they talk. It means realizing that I have a lot to learn. And to be open-minded that I can learn from anyone including men.

It means being open to criticism and realizing that those with more sobriety and recovery have something to teach me. It means celebrating when someone has a new child or gets married. It means grieving when someone dies or leaves the program or gets divorced. Because that is what family does.

It means giving hugs to each other as support as hugs can be healthy. It means being open-minded to learn how to hug in a healthy way. It means that even if someone is inappropriate or wrong, they will be corrected in

love and not thrown out (usually). It means it is safe to tell a brother who is sober if I am uncomfortable. It means it is safe to share my fear of men or whatever in a meeting as the response will be love and support if around recovery.

That is the beauty of growing relationally in SA. This is the beauty of being in a healthy family. Not a perfect family, but a healthy family. Whatever I do wrong, I will be loved and not thrown out. That is not possible in

**We laugh because we are family who has grown together for years now and each of us would not trade that relationship for anything and we also want to do whatever it takes to love others.**

most other areas of my life. It was not possible in any other area of my life when I first started recovery.

There truly is hope in SA. I do realize not everyone has the privilege of a nearby SA family. Yet there is still hope. I know women in remote areas with no face-to-face meeting that take extra care to involve themselves with more Zoom meetings, more online events, and more phone calls across the world than most other women. I have watched as they make friends both with men and women in SA. Yet they grow and thrive in recovery as they continue working their program. Just like anyone else in SA who truly

wants recovery.

Especially in COVID times, there is no excuse for not fellowshipping around the world with SA and joining the SA family. If you want what we have, come, and join us. It is not a joke. It does work if you work it. And I mean hard, uncomfortable work. As putting oneself out relationally is not easy. I know, as I was terrified of all SA men when I came in. Men in that first meeting I went to will tell you I was terrified.

Yet today we both laugh—those men and I. We laugh because we both realize I had a lot to learn. We laugh because we both realize it is normal for a woman to be terrified. We laugh because we both realize I was treated with love and patience. Just as any

other newcomer is treated who has no clue of what recovery really is. As with time, and lots of love, newcomers turn into those with a lot of sobriety and recovery.

We laugh because we are family who has grown together for years now and each of us would not trade that relationship for anything and we also want to do whatever it takes to love others. So, they too can eventually not be terrified. Yet putting oneself out relationally even though it is extremely hard, is necessary to grow relationally. There is simply hope for everyone to grow relationally in SA if they want to put in the work to grow relationally.

KATHY R., Oregon, USA



## DISCUSSION TOPIC

### Is my local fellowship safe—both for the men and women who are in it?

**K**athy describes in great detail what has been making her grow relationally for the last 12 years. She talks about her lifelong passion to have healthy relationships and the many answers she has found in SA.

She discloses the difficulties she had as a woman coming to a predominantly male fellowship. Her fears and struggles. But also the things she learned from others and that she started to put into practice. She embraced the fellowship as her new family and has since been taking many subsequent actions.

Am I really treating my fellows as my family of choice? What actions am I taking to have it be a non-perfect, but healthy family?

Am I hanging out with the others after the meetings? Am I involved in the business aspect of SA? Do I participate in the times of fellowship? Am I hanging out with longer sober members, while not neglecting members with less sobriety than myself?

Do I take sober and healthy care of all members—also those of the other sex? Do I truly care for everyone to feel at home in my group?

Is my local group and fellowship safe—both for the men and women who are in it? What do my local group and fellowship do to welcome the female members knocking on its door?

Does my group put the spirit of the “Mixed Meetings” section on pp. 178-179 of the White Book into practice? Does it encourage women to step forward in service on every level?

*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)*



## The Long and Short of It Is, I Just Kept Coming Back

I started in SA as a young, widowed, single mom in June 2005. At that time there were three other women in my homegroup. Within a year, they were gone. My sponsor was one of them. She decided to go back out and try some more controlled lusting, my grand-sponsor moved, and the other woman quit coming because of health reasons.

Thankfully, by this time, I had worked the steps and knew beyond a doubt that SA was where I needed to be if I wanted to continue living and be a healthy mom to raise my four young kids by myself.

At first, being the only woman was very intimidating, but I didn't let that deter me, I couldn't. My sickness had already destroyed two marriages. In addition, about six months after my sponsor and the other women quit coming to my homegroup I nearly committed suicide. I'm thankful that there was an old-timer man I was able to call that night after my four-year-old son walked in as I was about to take a handful of pills and asked, "What ya doin mommy?"

I sat in meetings for the next year – year and a half staring at the floor

just so I could stay focused on the topic of the meeting, and not let my lustful mind wander. In doing this, I was able to focus on the shares, and not the men sharing them (what they were wearing, what they looked like, etc.). I was able to focus on how we were similar, instead of the obvious difference of being male or female.

Slowly, over time, listening this way was rewarding because I started to relate to the shares of the men in my group. This helped me begin viewing them as humans instead of objects to be lusted after or "something to chase" to lust after me.

During my third year, I stepped up to do service as the Literature person. Then I found other ways to give service by arriving early and getting the materials out, chairing meetings occasionally, passing out chips, being the woman of contact for when women called the phone line. Whatever form of service I knew I could do without being too time consuming, and taking me away from my young kids and university studies, I did.

Over time, after about the third year of just continuing to "come back" and doing small acts of service, the mood of the guys in my group changed. I

could actually "feel" the change. I was finally welcomed when I would arrive at a meeting. Sometimes, I was asked after meetings about something I had shared. The men started asking to hear my perspective on a topic to gain different insight.

**Slowly, the men in my group changed from being "the men in my group" to being my "Brothers." They became my biggest cheerleaders and advocates for seeking other service positions.**

Slowly, the men in my group changed from being "the men in my group" to being my "Brothers." They became my biggest cheerleaders and advocates for seeking other service positions. They have willingly walked some very tough journeys with me. They have unanimously voted to scholarship me to International Conventions, just

so I could meet other women in SA. Many have expressed their thanks for my willingness to just "keep coming back" because they have learned much just from me being there through my experience, strength and hope when I share, as I have learned from them.

Over the years, other women have come and gone, but none ever stayed, primarily because of the uncomfortable feeling of being the only woman when I couldn't attend. It has only been in the last year and a half that two other women have become part of my home-group, and stayed.

Today, nearly 16 years later, I'm thankful that I just kept "coming back" because the men have told me that I have gained their respect, admiration, and their friendship simply because I'm willing to keep coming back.

I've been asked, "What can men do to support the women in their fellowships?" And I would relay to do what my brothers did, but don't take so long. Welcome the women in, fight for them, walk with them, be their advocate because we need this program as much as they do.

With that, I will take another 24. I'm a grateful recovering sexaholic.

TENCHA S., Texas, USA





# In Recovery She Learned to Have Fun

**After having done a lot of work on her oversensitivity, erroneous ideas about love, and fears, her life today is focused on fun.**

It was hard to have fun *because I was so sensitive*. When I came in, I didn't know I was sensitive. I thought everyone else had problems and they were bothering me. I also thought everyone else should figure out in advance what would bother me (in order to avoid doing so). I was like a crab without shell, or an animal without skin ... just "walking sensitivity."

Because of that, I could hardly "live"; I could hardly work; I was such an addict that if someone was nice to me I would basically "melt." The "melting effect" could have been with the parcel man, postman, or any worker. My reaction to kindness was a total overreaction. This was because I was so lonely.

Part of recovery for me was learning to deal with this sensitivity. I needed to learn to admit it as MY OWN SENSITIVITY, and not blaming others, but figuring out what layer and what history of betrayal, anger, and

frustration were causing all of my sensitivities.

To start healing my sensitivity, everytime someone else said something that triggered me, *I wrote it down. The exact words*. Not different words, the exact words. I then discussed those trigger-causing words or phrases or sentences with another person in recovery—so I could process all the feelings that came up (and if needed learn to set boundaries). So in order to have fun ... I had to get rid of that huge sensitivity.

The second thing to have fun was to know what love is. When I began recovery, I was clueless, I had zero idea what love was. Here's the definition I like to use:

Love is Emotionally Safe,  
Love is Emotionally Defended,  
Love is Emotionally Belonging,  
Love is Emotionally Cared About,  
Love is Emotionally Accepted,  
And Love is Emotionally Special.

In my addiction, when a guy said I was special—that was love. Nowadays, these parts or aspects of love, I can get from women instead of men. I can be emotionally safe with women. I can be emotionally defended and cared about and accepted, with women. I can be emotionally special with women. The women who are close in my life know that they are a priority and special to me.

When I came into recovery, I did not trust women. I was 1000% more sensitive to women. Today, I am choosing better women to put in my life. My discernment on which women I bring into my life is better.

Now I want to talk about having fun. *Before recovery I was always afraid*. Life was like walking on a tightrope, where I could fall at any moment. I was always in a panic. I was always concentrating on the fears of what was ahead of me. I lived in terror.

By participating in the program, life became more chill. Life got softer and more comfortable. All that brain time on fear—had to GO! Other Twelve Step programs—on money, on career, were, for me, a zillion percent essential, not optional, to reduce my fears and to gain confidence.

My life today is focused on fun. My job is insanely fun. My life is fun. I hike all the time. I travel all the time. I talk on the phone non-stop. I try to coordinate people seeing each other all the time. I go to conferences. I'm happy to go to all the conferences. I can't wait to go to Singapore, Italy, Greece, Egypt—please have conventions.

Spending time with my sponsees is awesome fun. I invite my sponsees to come along to the conventions. For me, socializing is fun. I'm an extrovert.

I have fun with my large family. I do lots of sporty things. My life is about fun.

Some background on me. I came to SA in 1993. Today I have over 18 years of SA sobriety. I sober dated before I married for four and a half years. I married a guy in the program. It doesn't look like we'll ever leave the program. I'm going to be here until I'm 99 years old or 112. Same with my husband.

To conclude. I hope you find love in the program—which is emotionally safe, emotionally defended,

**In my addiction, when a guy said I was special—that was love. Nowadays, these parts or aspects of love, I can get from women instead of men.**

emotionally belonging, emotionally cared about, emotionally accepted, and emotionally special. I hope you let go of your sensitivity and stop blaming others. Write down trigger words or phrases that you react to, and then talk about the feelings there with program people.

I hope you share the love you find in SA. It's a family—an upgraded family for many—with people as substitute aunts, cousins, grandmothers, children. I have my chosen substitute children here. So join the family, visit the world and have fun with us.

JULIE F., California, USA







## SA's History Shows That Together Is Better

The brochure *Beginnings: Notes on the Origin and Early Growth of SA* has become one of my favorite pieces of SA literature. Roy's account of SA's early history stresses that men and women together have been centrally involved in our fellowship's development from the very start.

If we could only know what became of those pioneers. Roy mentions a Beverly and a Kelly at the first SA conference in July of 1981. At the second Fellowship-wide conference in January of 1983 there was a Lisa and a Dolores. By the third National Convention in December of 1983, there were 14 delegates, of whom six were women: Sylvia J. (Oklahoma City), Carol B. (Edmonton, Alberta), Tandra G., Barbara T., and Elizabeth-Ann M. (Salt Lake City), and Lynn C. (Seattle). Sylvia has stuck with the fellowship all this time—and is closing in on 40 years of sobriety by God's grace.

But since those early years, we men have come to predominate in SA and many meetings have zero or just one or two women. It can sometimes seem like women are nearly invisible in SA.

I'm in another fellowship for a different addiction, and in that

program it's the opposite picture. The overwhelming number of members are women. In my home meeting we're five men among nearly 40 women. But I am welcomed by the women members and our friendships with each other go far beyond any differences among us. I don't feel like I'm in a minority because of the way the women are with us men.

Back in January of 1990, five of us—three men and two women—piled into a rented van and drove 10 hours from DC to Nashville to attend my first SA international convention. It felt like we were somehow rediscovering our innocence as brothers and sisters in the spirit of the "Mixed Meetings" section on pp. 178-179 of our White Book.

Today, in 2021, I'm learning that I can do more as a man to make sure that SA is truly "a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other." I try to do my part to appropriately welcome women at meetings. I encourage women to step forward in service on every level as best I can. I am advocating that the whole fellowship join in this effort, including creating a Support for Women Committee of the Trustees that will focus our collective attention on this. I make it a point to treat our sisters as equals and invite them to SA gatherings. I try to keep in mind how much I appreciate how the women in my other fellowship include me in every aspect of that fellowship.

In SA we have a common problem and we are seeking a common solution. We are "united by [a] common commitment to sobriety and recovery" (SA 179). I wouldn't have it any other way.

L.A., Yerevan, Armenia



## When God Is First, Everything Else Is in Its Right Place

When I was three, I had to stay at the hospital due to pneumonia while my parents couldn't be there with me, which was quite a traumatic experience. I knew the "touching game" from the nursery and knew it was a nice feeling.

My mum caught me a few times when I was masturbating and got very angry. So I started hiding it from others. When I was 13, my father touched me inappropriately. He also offered to look through porn magazines together, which, he said, was a kind of sexual education. I got exposed to inappropriate touchers, exhibitionists, and rapists many times.

Masturbation had turned into a big problem by the time I became an adolescent. The therapists I was referred to said that it was normal among young people and that I felt bad because I was too religious. This didn't solve my problem. I became suicidal and tried to take my own life many times.

After I got married in my late 20s, I had a gap in masturbating for a couple of years. I was happy that I'd been cured. But it wasn't for long.

About five years ago, I found a group on Facebook for people suffering from depression and anxiety. Soon, we started sex-chatting, which lasted for two years. I was doing things for them which I'd never done before. I realized I was a prisoner in my head.

I became desperate to seek help. The next counselor told me I'm a sex addict. That was a shock to me. I knew I had a problem but an addiction?

Soon after that, in Nov 2018, I found a local SA meeting.

After a couple of months I was still acting out—lost and locked in the world in my head. I thought I was happy, but in reality I was completely powerless over lust. I was dying inside—I lost all my faith, hope, enthusiasm and willingness. I left SA.

After three months I came back. I took that first step into the unknown and the feelings did follow. I got my faith, hope, enthusiasm, and willingness back. I'm blessed in many ways today and grateful for every positive and negative experience. They were all needed so I could grow. I see the difference in my attitude towards sobriety and recovery.

Whereas the first time around I was in touch mostly with male fellows, I find it easier this time to be in contact with the women. It is exciting because each of us is different, comes from a different country, culture, and has an unique experience of addiction. Today I pray to God to show me "what I can offer to others." I want to give what I've received, instead of crying for what I've lost or that I have only a little. There is always someone who has nothing. By doing service and sponsoring newcomers I can share my skills, my experience, strength, and hope with others.

Thinking of tomorrow doesn't work for me, so I try to focus on today, without looking into the future—it's too far away. Giving my life and my will over to the care of God is the only way to experience visible and permanent changes in my life. Today, I put my Higher Power first because I do believe that "when God is first, everything else is in its right place."

AGA M., Edinburgh, UK







*Her group members interacted with her in a “lovingly boundaried” way.*

**F**or somebody who related to the reading *The invisible Monster* in our book *Recovery Continues*, it is a miracle that I can share something on “Practicing Healthy Interactions in SA” today. I think the key word for me is “practice” as I will never be perfect and it is progress not perfection.

As a sexaholic arriving in the fellowship I was full of lust and self-will run riot. I sat in the meetings listening but bewildered. I also had the added burden of being the only woman in my meeting though at the time I was out of my head that I was not really aware of it.

I am so grateful that I was met with respect, love, and tolerance in my meeting. My fellow members

loved me until I was able to love myself. The way I can describe the interactions the male members had towards me is “lovingly boundaried.” I was treated as any other newcomer would be treated with some small yet meaningful differences:

- Only long term members had my number and took my calls.
- There was no one on one contact with me.
- I was included in the social events i.e. the meeting after the meeting.
- I was encouraged to do service.
- When some members found it difficult to have a woman in the meeting, both I and they were supported individually and through the group conscience.

- In my fellowship the phrase there are no women or men in SA but only members is heard and practiced often.

Today when a newcomer comes into my meeting—man or woman, I greet them and wish them well. If they have questions, I can answer them, but if a male newcomer wants to talk more or

**For me today there are just members of SA. I identify with both men and women and practice surrendering my defects with all the people I meet in the rooms.**

exchange numbers, I will gently direct him towards the male members.

There are a couple of boundaries I personally have, one of which is to not have phone calls or friendships with men outside of service and the meetings. That way I am free to enjoy getting to know my brothers in a safe, non-objectifying way.

Another boundary is to respect my own limits and if I feel uncomfortable or triggered in any way I pause and turn to my sponsor or my Higher Power, and then respond from a place of surrender and safety.

If I need to withdraw or change something about the situation I find myself in, I do so by taking ownership that the other is not causing the discomfort in me but that the discomfort is coming from inside me

and that I need to listen and take care of what is happening inside me. Lust is inside me not in others.

My interactions with women are different and it is a joy to have sisters in this program. It is great to heal my relationships with women. Coming from an enmeshed unhealthy relationship with the primary female caregivers in my family, many old wounds and traumas come up for me when interacting with my sisters in the program.

I am blessed to have a wonderful sponsor, sponsees, and female friends in the program to help me grow and heal. I bring the tools of the program and the power of God into my interactions. Doing service and hanging out with the female members is essential to my recovery and I am grateful for them all.

For me today there are just members of SA. I identify with both men and women and practice surrendering my defects with all the people I meet in the rooms. I am so much better knowing you all.

DENISE O., *Dublin, Ireland*



## My Attitudes Towards Women Have Become Increasingly Healthier

I first joined SA 28 years ago, when SAUK was a very small fellowship with very few meetings. My main form of contact with other members was through the phone. I did, however, meet other SA members face to face, including quite a few female members at the only regular UK Convention held in those days.

There were only a few of us and we used to do our own catering in those days. It was a wonderful way to get to know each other better by working together, sharing together and having social time together. The female members were just part of the team. I learnt a great deal about the opposite sex, myself and my attitudes towards women while attending those conventions and the positive effect has never left me.

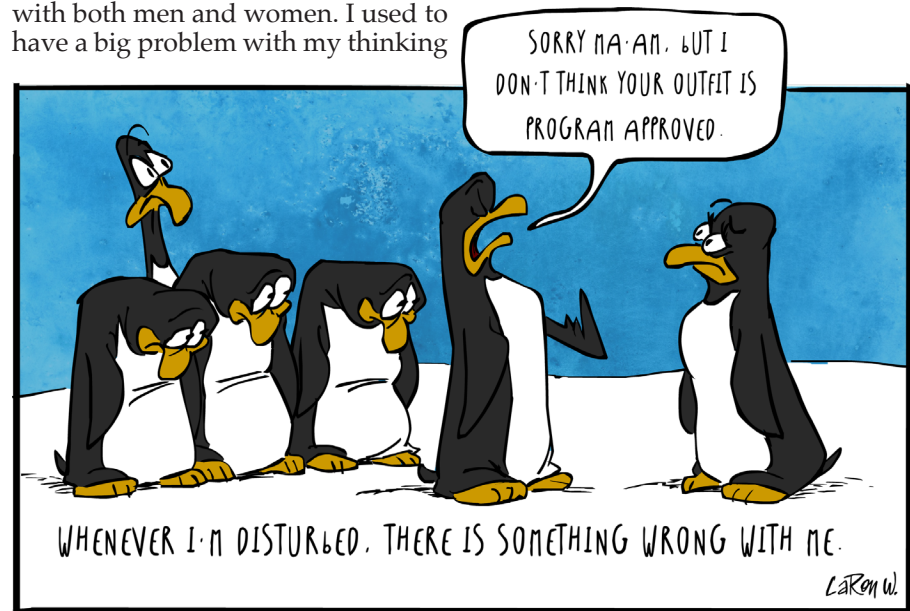
In my regular daily life and family life I have working and social relationships with both men and women. I used to have a big problem with my thinking

and attitude towards women but more and more in sobriety my thoughts and attitudes have become increasingly healthier.

The first SA group opened in my home town some years ago and we did get quite a number of females coming to their first meeting. None of them stayed around for more than two or three meetings but it was so very enlightening and a very emotional experience for me to hear “my story” and “my pain” told by a female about themselves. I never knew that men and women had so much in common.

My attitudes, opinions and thoughts about women were all wrong in the past. The program teaches me that whenever I’m disturbed, there’s something wrong with me. Attending meetings with women where we all share honestly about ourselves gives me a completely new healthy perspective, not only on women but on the world I live in.

RAYMOND H., Leeds, UK



My first meeting was on October 11, 2011 and by the grace of God I’ve stayed sober since. In the beginning I found joy in my home group in Barcelona. I was the only woman with about five or six men. They were very nice to me and helped me to stay sober. After some time, I started to feel isolated as I saw that the men used to do activities together and had a special relationship among them, which I wanted too. It was a very lonely time as there were no other women in Spain.

In 2013, I went to a convention in Poland and met other women, which was a great joy. We started a Skype meeting and Whatsapp group, which kept us united. More women started to arrive in SA Spain, which was great for me. We also started S-Anon.

I got involved in a lot of service in the Spanish Intergroup, where I was mostly in contact with men, and the collaboration went well. However, during my service I met women from other parts of Spain and Europe, and came to realize I felt more comfortable

with them—I identified more and felt at ease.

For the last 3 years I have been more focused on building relationships with the women in SA, especially the Spanish ones as they live closer and I can keep in contact with them more often. My gratitude partner is from Germany and my sponsor from Luxembourg, and I have a few sponsees from other European countries.

I realize now that, even though I like to be in contact with the male members because they are my brothers, I do feel much safer and comfortable, and I identify more with SA women; I laugh with them and we understand each other.

I’ve found a new joy in the Fellowship through my deepening relationship with the women in SA. I love spending time with them and sharing our journey of recovery together. I feel I belong among these wonderful group of sisters.

YVONNE C., Barcelona, Spain







## Today She Chooses Life and Love

Sexual abuse led her to self-hatred; sexual sobriety is leading her to healthy self-care.

I am a recovering sex addict from Ukraine, sober since the fall of 2015. I am completely unable to cope with lust, which manifests itself in objectification, fantasies, and an unhealthy obsession with one person or a group of people. I have lost control of my thoughts, feelings, and actions.

I am 57 years old, and from a very young age I tried to achieve success in everything I did. The desire to achieve success still helps me in my recovery from alcoholism, drug addiction, and sex addiction. The desire to succeed in my personal life and to marry, for the third time, another object of my lust, led me to the SA community.

From the very first meetings, I began to feel the purity of a small child surrounded by other small children in the bodies of adult men and women. The SA literature, personal stories, and shares of the members resonated in my heart with identification, compassion, and belonging. I realized that I had come home.

I needed a sponsor, which turned out to be a problem since there were only men in the group that I attended. So I started to learn the language of a neighboring state and to go to SA events in this country. In November 2019, I got a sponsor, and if there is a need, we use translation programs

**From the very first meetings, I began to feel the purity of a small child surrounded by other small children in the bodies of adult men and women.**

when communicating. I get the necessary guidance and emotional support from my sponsor to work on the Steps and see God's Providence

in this.

Currently I am living in the city where I was born and spent my childhood. It is a region of political and military conflict. There are no 12 Step groups in my city. I could leave, but I think it is God's will for me to be here for the time being, in order to have healing from my childhood traumas and deprivations.

Working through the Steps in SA revealed the events that formed the basis of all my addictions. I clearly remember my first forced sexual encounter with a drunken male relative when I was only three years and three months old. Soon I became a witness and victim of an even more terrible crime and ended up in the intensive care unit, where they fought for more than a year for my life.

Working the program helped me see that at that time, despite my very young age, I made a fateful decision, which became the main attitude of my life and the main defect: "I don't want to live this life." I was taught from childhood to meet the needs and desires of the people around me, and this became the meaning of my life and the choice of my professions. I was successful in my profession and business, but it didn't help fill the gaping hole inside my soul. Only careful, dedicated work on the 12 Steps in the SA fellowship helped me to see, identify, and stop my unhealthy obsession with self-hatred.

In order to stay sober and recover, I pray and plan my day so that I have the opportunity to attend virtual events (conferences, games) and SA groups. I write, call my sponsor and sponsees, and communicate with newcomers. I study the language of my sponsor.

I had to do a lot of work on the

feelings of hatred and rejection suppressed by external piety. Now I allow myself to feel without fear—not to suppress, but to constructively experience the feeling of hatred for events and people that do not suit me.

Today, the time of isolation and solitude is a blessed opportunity to feel the presence and protection of my HP, and to see His guidance in my life and in the lives of others. This is the time when I can feel myself and understand myself. I can understand what I like, what I don't like, how much sleep I need, how much food I need, how much time I want to spend with other people.

When I do the right things and calm down, a feeling of happiness comes to me as a gift from God. Step by step, I live my recovery, and I thank God for

**My new attitude of "I choose life and love" has become my obligatory and desired prayer of every day.**

the time that I can spend with Him in solitude. I am now in Steps 8 and 9, and God is ranked number 1 on my list of amends. My new attitude of "I choose life and love" has become my obligatory and desired prayer of every day.

I thank you all for sharing in our shared recovery, which opens the door to the joyous and happy freedom to fulfill our need for God Himself.

OLGA S., Alchevsk, Ukraine



# These Years Have Been So Much Fun

Sober since 1983, she would need a few hours to show all the different miracles and things that have happened to her.



**M**y name is Sylvia and I am a grateful recovering sexaholic. I was a lonely child. I was a daydreamer. I was never present. Growing up people would tell me things I wouldn't hear because I was always off in my head somewhere.

My older sister was a very smart person and got good grades, did well in school and with people, while I didn't do well—both with people

and in school. My younger sister was very pretty, and everybody thought she was adorable. So, I felt like I was misunderstood all the time. I discovered when I got older that my problem was that I had ADD, because I would disassociate, and not know what people were saying to me.

I felt "less than" but found that I would get lots of attention by flirting. I had lots of boyfriends and thought that was "being popular." Flirting became my source of getting

acquainted with people. It worked quite well for many years but then it began to turn on me.

The first time I had sex I got pregnant. So I had to get married. I had a fine, healthy boy. After that, I had a daughter, who was not as dependable or as helpful as my son.

She kept getting into trouble and became an addict. In searching for help for her we found the AA program and counseling, and she joined that fellowship while I joined Al-Anon. I didn't think I was an addict. However, I watched an educational series one day on the TV that gave a description of addiction and described the behavior of an addict—the high and the low, and I said to myself, "That's me!" I had all of these feelings and that's exactly the way I act, that's exactly who I am. Only my addiction was to men, not to drugs.

I figured if I had to keep dieting, I had an overeating problem, so I got into OA. I was going to about six meetings a week of Al-Anon and OA. And then I overheard this man in an open AA meeting say that he was a sex addict in recovery and he was looking for people to meet with him. His name was Jesse. And I thought, "That's me, that's me! I need to get a hold of him!" But I didn't get a hold of him that night.

About a week later, he was the speaker at a meeting. I knew when I heard his story that I belonged in that program. And so, I sought him out afterwards and asked him what to do about that. He told me about a meeting at his house.

In the beginning, I was so desperate. I had been feeling so suicidal and anxious because I didn't like my acting out with the flirting and adultery. It was very hard to face because I was

raised in church and my dad was a Methodist preacher. I thought that I knew better, but I couldn't do better, and then no matter how hard I tried I could not change because I tried over and over. I was never going to do it again—and I would end up doing it again.

I knew that I had a problem and belonged in SA. I got sober right off the bat, early in the program. My SA

**I did all of that regularly, religiously, because I was so frightened of not getting well. I did not want to stay sick like that. It hurt too much. So, I focused really hard on it and got into recovery.**

sobriety date is May 10, 1983. They had told me I needed to go to three meetings a week. I was already going to the Al-Anon meetings and to the OA meetings, so I just added three SA meetings to that. I did close to nine meetings a week and I felt better after each meeting.

I basically did what I was told in the beginning, and for the first two years I was just adamant about my meetings, my meditation, my journaling. I did all of that regularly, religiously, because I was so frightened of not getting well. I did not want to stay sick like that. It hurt too much. So, I focused really hard on it and got



gradually into recovery.

And as I recovered there were many, many miracles that happened in my life. My daughter got sober from her addiction the same month that I got sober from mine and so we have a “same day” celebration every year.

I got into the program thinking that I would divorce my husband and marry this other person and live happily ever after. And, of course, my fantasy did not come true, for which I’m grateful today. But it took a while for me to become grateful, I can tell you. I continued to work on getting sober and continued to feel better.

I had bought a building at the beginning of our AA sobriety with my husband. It had been full of

**The miracles were that my father was sober, my husband was sober, I was sober. The other miracles were opening each of these halfway houses.**

addicts and one young man ended up shooting himself in the head there and had marijuana growing in his room. By this time, we had my daughter in a halfway house and she was doing well there. And so, we became really concerned that people needed a halfway house.

So, we approached an organization that was trying to start one in Oklahoma and talked about it. We started a halfway house with a counselor and one client. It began to

grow. It was inspiring and exciting and I loved it.

I started studying to become a counselor. We opened a second halfway house which was a boy’s house, for adolescent boys. And then the first house caught fire and burned, and we had to move it to another building, and, in the process, we opened a third house!

Then I decided that I wanted a girls’ halfway house. So, we started working with adolescent girls and we were able to open a girls’ house, and in the process of that I had what I guess the biggest spiritual experience of my life that I’ve ever had, and that was working with the girls.

We had some problems along the way with that. One was that our counselor was a sex addict himself and had sex with one of our adolescent girls. We ended up with a million-dollar lawsuit against us, so that was a very frightening period. We happened to have an AA friend who was an attorney. He knew the family of the young lady involved; the father was also an attorney. They talked and agreed to drop the charges if we just paid them back the money they had spent on her being in the halfway house. We did that gladly. That was another one of our big miracles.

The miracles were that my father was sober, my husband was sober, I was sober. The other miracles were opening each of these halfway houses. The people who lived there needed to be sober in order to live there and we had a good program for them.

My daughter came home sober from Nebraska, after about a year in a halfway house there and went to work for us at our office. We had a deep passion for the program and for the idea of the halfway houses, but we

weren’t very good managers.

So, due to financial difficulties, we closed the program in 1999. That was very disheartening, and I was very disappointed in myself. I struggled a lot with my feelings of failure, and I still have a problem with that. I loved doing what I was doing, and I loved having a program that was inspirational to me.

**I’ve served in all the different service positions they have for as long as they would allow me to serve.**

We have continued our recovery, we are active in our church, and active in the program. I was six or seven months sober and went to a conference that Roy K. did in Simi Valley and there were only 18 of us there. I thought that I was going to go and there was going to be all these women that were in the program, and they would tell me all about how to recover. But I was the most sober woman there. And the other person that had more sobriety that was there, other than Roy, was Jesse L.

At that first conference meeting we elected officers and had a business meeting and decided to do one every six months. We have had in-person conventions and business meetings once every six months since—until Corona happened.

Corona has really been a problem but now we are doing our meetings on Zoom—another one of the miracles in my life. I don’t know what we would

do if we weren’t able to communicate like we do today. This is fantastic and I am so grateful for it.

I’ve served in all the different service positions they have for as long they would allow me to serve. Mostly what I do now is I answer the phone and do some sponsoring and I have some great sponsees that make me work my program better.

These years have been so much fun and have helped me to grow and continue to grow and I am so grateful for Sexaholics Anonymous. I would need a few hours to show you all the different miracles and things that have happened to us.

At this point in time, my husband Gene and I are living in an independent senior citizen’s community and since Corona, we have three meals delivered to our door every day. It’s a beautiful place to be. We have a lake outside of the windows and I have my dog here. It’s a great place and everybody here is nice.

Thank you very much for reading and I hope that you keep coming back because it works, if you work it!

SYLVIA J., Oklahoma, USA 



# It Took Sobriety To Hear The Birds Singing



*She talks to God throughout the day, focusing on acceptance and gratitude.*

Imagine a little girl lost inside a book, playing the piano and always alone but feeling safe. Her world brought her happiness. What was happening around her? Sometimes being in the moment it felt too full of other's expectations, never fitting in, always different from what she saw on the outsides of others.

She hadn't heard the word lust and even if she had, she wouldn't have known that for her it meant staying in her head. Wishing that she had friends, for that something that would make other people like her more. Lusting and wanting to be lusted after. She believed she could turn the magical ideas into something real. After all, it worked in the books she read. Music and playing the piano soothed her and allowed her to pound out her frustrations and anger.

In case you didn't know, that little girl is me. At an early age, I learned all about manipulation and control and of course, learning how to be passive-aggressive. After all, you weren't supposed to be angry at anyone because they might get upset. It was OK though to find a way to get back at them. Through elementary

and high school, I never fitted in completely with any group. I wanted to be one of the "cool" kids, instead, I was one of the band geeks. Always believing I had to do whatever it took to make someone like me and want to be around me.

It was the first day of college when I realized I could be the real me. I didn't have to let my parents or anyone else decide who I had to be. That wasn't completely true, because those old messages were still deeply ingrained into my being. Even though it was an illusion, it was an amazing feeling. I met my first real boyfriend and just knew we would get married and have a family. However, after 1 ½ years he broke up with me because he said it seemed the only thing I wanted in the relationship was sex. I couldn't figure out what was wrong with that. What it did was awaken my lust and I began dating lots of guys.

I married quite young and thought that would fix all my problems. Wrong! I still craved someone or something to make me whole. So, I started some emotional affairs. That was the beginning of my thinking that at least someone "loved" me in my magical world for a period of time.

It seemed fun at first, but then I realized the men didn't really think this was a "relationship" with continuing times together. Rather, it was just a one night stand and I began to feel sleazy. It didn't stop me. I just changed the rules of my game. I had to find some way to keep my fantasy alive.

The addict part of me wanted more and more. It was like our reading—*this produced guilt, self hatred, remorse, emptiness and pain, and we were driven ever inward, away from reality, away from love, lost inside ourselves. Our habit made true intimacy impossible.* (SA 203)

More men, more dangerous places, more lines crossed. It was never enough; however, guilt and shame began to take away the fun of acting out. I wanted to control and enjoy acting out but instead, it was controlling me. I didn't know where to turn but finally went to a therapist who told me about SA. I finally got up the courage and when I walked into the meeting it was a room full of men. At that point it didn't matter. I was terrified but then someone read *The Problem*. Suddenly I felt like there were actually people who knew what it was like. I kept going back to meetings, got a sponsor and the real work began. I began to feel some of the heavy load of shame begin to lift.

I started working on the Steps. Somewhere deep inside, I believed if I finished them I wouldn't have this terrible shame and guilt that was debilitating and I wouldn't have lust come up. Wrong! My brain was still crazy but when I listened to members share, I realized I wasn't alone. What I did find was people sharing the "truth" of their day to day life and found out that's what intimacy was and how the Steps helped them "One Day at a Time."

I thought that once I began the Steps all my fears, guilt and shame would immediately disappear. Of course that wasn't true. Once I got sober I started having anger and resentment come to the top. I gossiped, judged, was prideful—I could go on and on. I was technically sober but my emotional sobriety was a mess.

About three months sober, I walked out and heard birds singing. What a surprise. It was beautiful and at that moment I realized I had lived in my head for so long that I hadn't really

**I was terrified but then someone read *The Problem*. Suddenly I felt like there were actually people who knew what it was like.**

been in the present. Those birds had always been singing, but it took sobriety to let me feel and be present.

I have been sober, one day at a time, since February 7, 1993. I talk to God throughout the day. When someone is driving me to distraction, I just say, "God, I give this person to you because you know what is best for them." I don't know how it works, but it does. Somehow I continue to remember that expectations are resentments just waiting to happen. Acceptance and gratitude are what make so much difference.

Today, I have choices which used to elude me. Today, I want positive sobriety. And today I want to stay in the now and be connected with God.

PRISCILLA C., Tennessee, USA





# The Promises Are Real

*One of the promises for me was going on a family vacation with all my kids—we went to the beach and we all got a cabin.*

I was exposed to men's magazines at the age of seven and didn't realize it was abuse. At the age of nine, I was sexually abused by another girl, who was 10, and experienced a lot of confusion. The confusion increased when I was sort of forcibly converted to Catholicism at the age of 11, which led to a whole load of guilt.

So I was pretty confused and I think the fuse was lit, as SA's founder, Roy K, used to say. When I was 14 years old, I was babysitting at a very smart college professor's house and discovered a lot of "literary pornography" and couldn't believe it. I didn't know what to do with the feelings. But I got that power, that feeling of invincibility. All those little neurons in my brain lit up, although I actually didn't have the nerve, or really the inclination, to do anything physically about it.

Things were pretty conflicted in my family after I became a teenager. We moved to a different part of the country. I had a lot of responsibilities as a teen. I had a brother who was mentally ill and always falling into situations, thereby hurting himself. I felt responsible for him and the other problems in my family, but, any rate, I kept my head above water.

Things kind of went along and I was in a class play—a very historical, well-regarded play about a situation during World War II, and I got to play a flirt. And there it started. I had to kiss somebody and I didn't want to kiss him and I thought "I'm terrified." You know, it's like a peck on the cheek, but the way the character I played inhabited this sense of entitlement and power, I thought "Whoa, there's something there." I did not act on that impulse but I liked it.

When I was a senior in high school, I met somebody and kind of fell head over heels in love. A foreign student, very handsome, kind of troubled like me, but there was very little actual sex conduct. So for about 11 weeks, it seemed really great, and then this young adult got in trouble with his American family and he had to leave the country. He came out to British Columbia, which is pretty close to where I live in Washington, but I was devastated.



I didn't know what to do with those feelings. I had been invited to go out with my friends who were drinking on a regular basis, and they kept inviting me and I kept keeping it off. I knew they were just getting blotto. I had never gotten drunk.

But the very first day this young man left, I got drunk that night. I didn't quite blackout, but I just loved having that moment in time where I could forget who I was, how I felt and the enormous sadness of whatever had happened to me.

And that repeated itself through the next seven or eight months. I stopped caring about theater. I stopped caring about my violin. I stopped caring about myself. I was now the proud owner of hangovers every morning. And like a lot of people I swore off. I swore off on my birthday. I wasn't

going to drink anymore. I wasn't going to smoke cigarettes anymore because I knew I was getting hooked.

So by July 28, 1971, I quit drinking, but then of course I moved in with lust. I went to college and was terrified to be at this gigantic school with 45,000 people. I lived in a dormitory with 899 other students where we could mill around freely. My number-one objective was to have a boyfriend and to have a regular sex life. I found that I had a lot of power, or so I thought. That power was in exchange for low self-esteem. Doing whatever I thought I could do, and being completely unable to control my behavior, drunk or sober.

I was 12-Stepped into SA by the Dear Abby column. Liliana M. and I (and maybe there were others) were two folks who read the column written

by Roy K., who signed himself by “Set free in LA.” By that time I was in multiple relationships. I was like a junkie. I had to have physical contact with different individuals. I remember one week there were four different people. And again, I just thought, “Oh my God, how did this happen?”

I thought I would go clean, not having other relationships. I wanted to be somebody I could respect. And I came to the conclusion that I would go to any lengths to be that person. I decided I would give up sex one day at a time for the rest of my life. When I made that decision, conveniently, the poor man I was engaged to broke up with me. That morning, when I dropped him off at the airport, was the first day of my sexual sobriety.

I kept in contact with Roy. I would call him when I was really in a fix. People would call me and would write me letters. I got calls from Jesse L. and thought, “Why are you calling me?” And, it turned out that he got sober literally a month after I did. Some of you older members might remember him. He said, “Katherine, don’t worry. God’s not going to leave you without all the promises. But we must be patient and wait.” I think a lot of us come to SA, and we say, “When am I gonna get my family back?” “When am I going to be able to be married?” “When am I going to have sex again?” Let’s be honest. The Promises do come true, but in God’s time, not ours. One day at a time.

I didn’t really have a SA sponsor at the time. I did get sober in Alcoholics Anonymous, which was a great help to me because I never ever would have been able to maintain sexual sobriety while I was drinking. Although I did try for a few weeks and months.

I was able to get sponsors in AA but

I didn’t really have an SA sponsor to walk me through our Steps until I went, against my better judgment of course, to the St. Louis conference in 1986. That’s where I met Sylvia J., Jesse L. and other people, some of whom stayed sober, some of whom did not. Meantime, I was doing little things like going on a lunch date with somebody. At two years of sobriety that was a big deal! It wasn’t until I really got with you guys, that I was able to have the Promises realized for me. It certainly began in St. Louis.

**He said, “Katherine, don’t worry. God is not going to leave you without all the promises. But we must be patient and wait.”**

I went back home to live. I went to live with my Dad because I had crashed and burned and I thought I’ll just move back home to Washington and I’ll get a job quickly—which didn’t happen. My Dad was the first person I lived with, so to speak, in sobriety, and I had a chance. That was an amends for me. Our relationship was very conflicted; I did not have a good experience with him as a child and a teen.

“The Family Afterwards” (AA ch. 9) finally happened for me at about five years sober. I met my husband one week later after I had gone to the Rochester conference in 1988. We had no sex before marriage. I was able to do that with the help of Sexaholics Anonymous. Sylvia was my matron of

honor when I got married, which was a dream come true. It was incredible and I knew my husband loved me and I loved him. He would always say to me, “Katherine, I love you for who you are and what you are.” I needed to hear that over and over and over and I still feel that way today. My husband has never criticized any of the many failures that I’ve had. Not here in SA, not with alcoholism recovery, job losses, getting in trouble at work, and of course, dealing with my mental illness, which became very bad after my second baby. Postpartum depression. I didn’t know what it was and I didn’t get any help for four years.

One of the promises for me was going on a family vacation with all my kids—a vacation my husband planned that I tried to talk him out of. And we

did that a month ago. We live about an hour and a half from the Pacific Ocean and we went to the beach and we all got a cabin. My daughter the addict, and the younger one, and it was Heavenly. I’ve waited many years to feel like I actually wanted to do this.

So, if you’re wondering, “Does God want me?” Yes, He wants you! Hang in there! I am here to tell you it is real. The Promises are real. Sobriety and a life beyond our wildest dreams is real because I’m here. I get to be with you wonderful people and live a life I could never have even thought of. Welcome to all the new people. It will get better. So thank you so much. I’ve been sober since February 7, 1983 and I’m never sufficiently grateful!

KATHERINE D., USA



**!THE GAME!**

Haven't played "The Game" yet? This is your chance! The last round of this year will start on October 3. More information in the February 2021 edition p. 10-11 or email to [theessaygame@gmail.com](mailto:theessaygame@gmail.com)

- Practicing new recovery tools
- Fun competition between teams
- Meeting new members from all over the globe



# Serving Others



*Sobriety and service have brought the joy and contentment that had always eluded her during her acting out days.*

**A**s a pre-school age child, I learned how to use a vibrator as a sex toy. That's how it all began. I had never heard the word "sex" and knew nothing of sexual intimacy. But I knew what felt good, and was immediately hooked.

By the time I began first grade, I was masturbating regularly. Then I discovered the pleasure of shimmying up the Jungle Jim bar. I indulged that gratification every recess period I could. And so began my habit of acting out with myself and my toys multiple times a day.

When I was nine years old, my mom had the "mother-daughter talk" with me. She explained the details of sex and sexual intimacy. She told me that sexual pleasure was a way to express love between a husband and wife. She also told me not to touch myself "down there." I was somewhat stunned with my new knowledge. I didn't tell my mom that this talk came too late. I had been experiencing frequent sexual pleasure for years

without knowing what it was. I kept my secret to myself.

I did try to stop. But I couldn't stay stopped. I stopped, and started again, and stopped, and started again, over and over and over. This became the new pattern of my life.

I entered puberty at age eleven with my first menstruation. My experience with boys during my preteen and teenage years was frustrating. I had a crush on a junior high classmate for about four years. We were friends, but he never returned my romantic interest. When any other boy had a crush on me, I was not interested. My crushes were always one-sided, so I never had an adolescent boyfriend.

To substitute for real-life boyfriends, I developed an active imagination full of romantic and sexual intrigue. My retreat into fantasy short-circuited my ability to relate naturally with boys. They could never live up to my expectations. I then created more fantasies. It became a vicious cycle.

Throughout high school and then college, I enjoyed many friendships,

both male and female. Some of my male classmates affectionately called me "sis." However, as in earlier life, any romantic interests remained one-sided and came to nothing. I had my own secret love affair with my toys and my fantasies, and that short-circuited anything real.

At age 21, I met a 30-year-old man who fell in love with me. I was finally someone's girlfriend. I loved all of his affectionate attentions. This relationship was the closest I came to being intimate and vulnerable with a man. He knew who I was on the inside better than anyone else ever had. But I never came to love him as he loved me. I refused his proposal of marriage.

**To substitute for real-life boyfriends, I developed an active imagination full of romantic and sexual intrigue. My retreat into fantasy short-circuited my ability to relate naturally with boys.**

This failed romance brought me a new realization. Although I enjoyed this man's attentions, I did not respond sexually to him. The best we could do was mutual masturbation. He seemed satisfied with this, but I was disappointed. I felt unable to move beyond my childhood sexuality to adult love. I broke off the relationship and moved out of town (the geographical cure).

Most of my adult life, I lived in a

university community. As a young adult, I attended a church with a large young adult membership and many opportunities for fellowship. Again, I had lots of friends, both male and female, mostly without romantic interest. My fantasies and frequent sex with self continued.

A turning point came at age 40. I had a boyfriend I had met at church. Our attraction was mutual. He had many excellent qualities, and I fell in love with him. But he seemed unable to make a commitment to me. When that romance failed, I felt devastated. I started attending 12 Step meetings for people with repeated dysfunctional relationships.

The 12 Step approach was new to me. For the next two years I participated in Step writing groups, and faced some of my own self-defeating attitudes. I also discovered the existence of other 12 Step fellowships, including several that addressed sex addiction.

I decided to explore S-fellowships that allowed me to define my own terms of sexual sobriety. My goals were to stay in reality instead of living in a fantasy world, and to moderate my masturbation habit down to just once per day. By this time, my fantasy life was sabotaging my career ambitions, and masturbation had escalated into binge sessions to total exhaustion and finally injury. I could work only part time due to the time consumed by my addiction. I knew I was powerless, and was ready for a 12 Step solution.

In my first S-fellowship, I stopped watching soap operas and other media-driven fantasies. This helped to somewhat calm the storm in my mind, but I still couldn't masturbate moderately. In my second S-fellowship, I disallowed acting out with sex toys.

I thought masturbating without sex aids would be more natural, and I could act out moderately once per day. I was wrong.

My last day of acting out was a binge masturbation session without sex toys. When finished, I wept. I was heartbroken. My hope for a pathway to moderate masturbation was crushed. I cried out to God for help. I took a bath because I felt dirtied by my acting out. And I made a commitment to go to SA.

I hadn't been frightened to go to the other S-fellowships, but I was terrified of SA. I thought the members of SA were somehow worse than in the other S-fellowships. I was afraid I wouldn't be as safe. And I had heard the SA fellowship was predominantly male. But I desperately wanted support for a stricter sobriety, at least for a 90-day drying out period. So, I took a chance, not knowing what to expect.

There were about six men in attendance at my first SA meeting, including another newcomer. I was the only woman. It was a Step writing group, but they chose to become a newcomer's meeting that evening. One-by-one, the sober men shared short versions of their SA story – what it was like, what happened to bring them to SA, and what it is like now in recovery. I listened closely, and was astonished that I related to each of their stories. I had never heard men be so honest about not being perfect.

When the meeting ended, we stood and recited the Lord's Prayer together. I had heard these men be real about who they were and what they had done, and now I heard the same men seeking God in prayer. At that moment, I felt a warmth of assurance that this SA meeting was a safe place for me.

As a SA newcomer, I attended 90 meetings in 90 days. On weekends, I drove an hour or so to get to a bigger meeting where there might be a few women. I especially enjoyed the West LA meeting on Saturday night. I found a sponsor there.

One Friday evening, I drove to the North Hollywood meeting. After the meeting, a kindly looking older gentleman inquired how I was doing as a newcomer in SA. I was still in the shock of withdrawal, and I blurted out my newcomer anxieties. "God can't restore me to sanity," I said. "I've always been sexually attracted to objects, not to humans. How can I be restored to sanity when I wasn't sane to begin with?" The white-haired gentleman said quietly, "God will restore you to what He had in mind for you. He isn't limited by what happened to you as a young child. God will give you the sanity He wants for you now."

Later that year while reading recovery literature, I came to the joyful realization that my Higher Power is also my New-Found Friend who has good plans for my future. At that time, I let go of my anxiety about trusting God. I found the serenity and contentment that come from living one day at a time, and leaving the future to God's care.

I loved to read SA and AA literature. My favorite meetings were Step Study and Book Study meetings. As I grew in my understanding of the Steps, I realized how much sense they make, and how each Step logically follows the previous one.

When I was two years sober, I discovered a way of working Step 10 that I have used ever since. When something is bothering me, I grab pen and paper, and cycle through the

first nine Steps on that problem. I first define the problem I am powerless over, and surrender it to God's care. Then I look at my part in it, and ask God to remove my defective way of coping. I amend my defect by finding a better way to cope. Often my amends is to pray daily for a person I resent. That creates an attitude of compassion in my heart.

Steps 3 and 11 have always been my favorites. In Step 3, I surrender my will and my life to the care of my

**Due to my addiction, I experienced failed relationships, failure in school, and failed career ambitions. In recovery, God has restored my ability to live in the real world, and has made me useful to others in ways that I had not planned.**

gracious and powerful Friend. In Step 11, I maintain contact with my Best Friend who gives me the power to stay sober, and who gives me a quality of life better than I deserve. Day by day, I discover my compassionate Friend really does have good plans for me. Even when bad things happen, my Best Friend gives me a power to cope that is beyond my natural strength.

One of my favorite Step 11 quotes is: "How fortunate we are, then, to be so needy that we have to find what


our lust was really looking for—the loving God who is our refuge and our strength" (SA 136).

Part of my Higher Power's will for me has been to experience the joy of serving others. The AA Big Book says: "Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us" (page 77). This is the real purpose of my recovery.

As I see it, God has blessed me with three families during my years of sobriety, with ample opportunities for service. Over the past 29 years, I have been privileged to serve my fellow SA members on all levels of the SA service structure, which I love doing. Over the past 21 years, I have served as caregiver for several family members. And I have held various service positions in my church family.

In meetings where we state what brought us to SA, I share something like this: "My bottom-line behaviors were compulsive sex with self, with or without the aid of sex toys and other objects, continued to the point of self-injury at the time I hit bottom; and compulsive romantic and sexual fantasy, with or without the aid of the media, continued to the point of failure to live successfully in the real world. Due to my addiction, I experienced failed relationships, failure in school, and failed career ambitions. In recovery, God has restored my ability to live in the real world, and has made me useful to others in ways I had not planned."

Sobriety and service bring the joy and contentment that always eluded me during acting out days. My powerful and gracious Best Friend restores my sanity day-by-day, in His timing and on His terms. And for this I can never be sufficiently grateful.

DORENE S., *Washington, USA* 

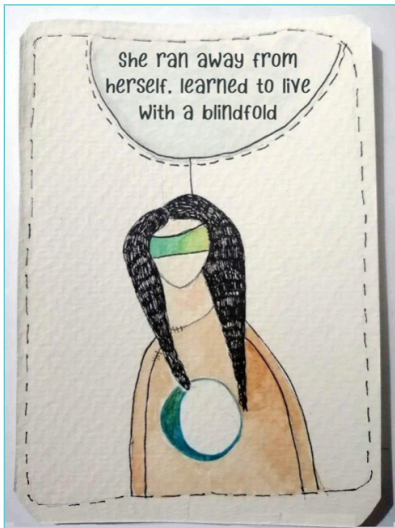


# Step Four Helped Me to Face My Wild Elephant

**L**ust corrupted my childhood. I was violated when I was very young—an inappropriate act that distorted my perception of sexuality, reality, and love. For years afterward I went around with an aching, infinite emptiness inside me. I bandaged the pain with a blindfold and contented myself to live in darkness, like someone living down a deep water well. It was only when I was writing out my First Step inventory I came to see the truth of this. These drawings here came to me after reflecting on my recovery journey, based upon the Fourth Step story, “Facing the Wild Elephant” (SA 105-107).

1

**S**he learned to escape. She fled from herself so as not to have to look at herself in the mirror; her own image terrified her. There was something inside her that always whispered to her in a “low voice.” She did not know how to identify her own voice from that hidden voice. She learned to escape from reality; a blindfold over her eyes completely removed her from the truth; the “low voice” led her to hide, escape and lie. She had gotten used to the feeling of emptiness in her heart. The “low voice” told her that she would always be able to fill the emptiness but should never take off the blindfold.



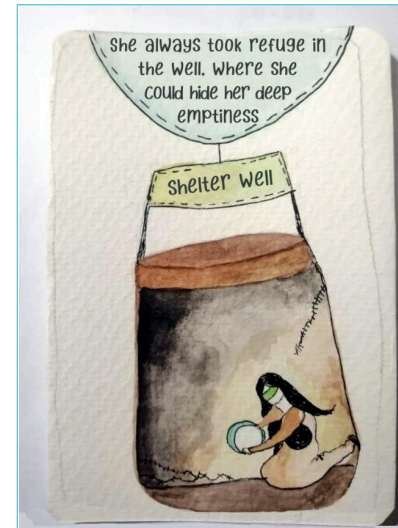
2



**T**he voice was low and cunning. It offered different blindfolds depending upon whatever form of reality the girl encountered; always switching so that she could hide from herself, from the various people she came across and most of all, from the light of her Higher Power. “Loneliness is solitude,” the voice said, “and darkness is a bandage, not a blindfold,” the voice told her when she said the pain was too much.

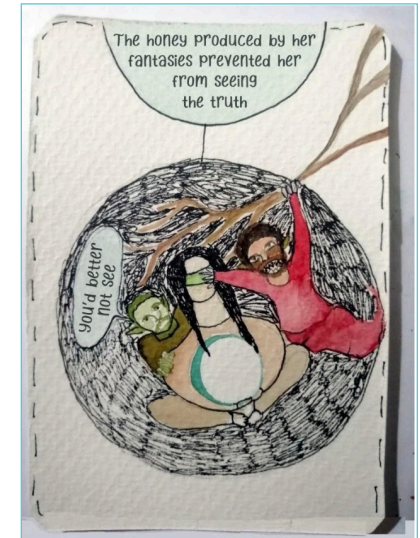
3

**T**he well of pity seemed to be a safe place, in which she had learned to hide, to escape. It was her refuge. The dark well gave her a false security. In this well, she hid the deep emptiness of her soul, which she tried to fill with things, people and her greatest drug—lust.



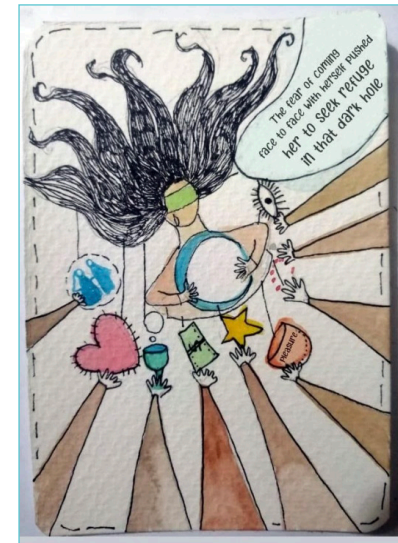
4

**I**n this well she was seduced by two rats that ate away the truth with their teeth. They gave her a false honey and wanted to lead her to ruin by its deceptive sweetness. She didn’t suspect a thing, as the honey seemed perfect to fill her deep emptiness.

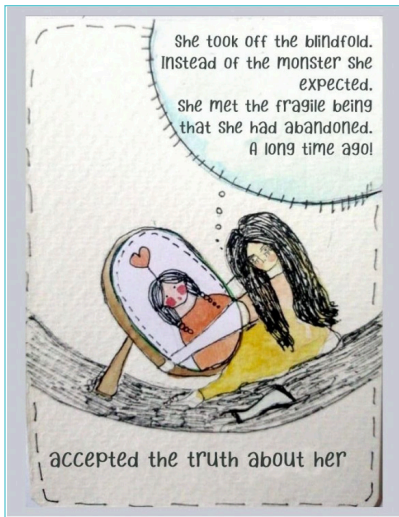


5

**T**he fear of getting face-to-face with herself was drawing her each time further and further away from her truth. She wanted to remain hidden; she wanted to distract herself from herself. Her fantasies enabled her to escape.







6

One day, the hope for freedom was born. She decided to get out of the well and remove the blindfold from her eyes. Instead of the monster she expected to find, she discovered the fragile being she had long abandoned—she saw who she really was. What a relief she experienced when faced with what she had feared the most: herself!

7



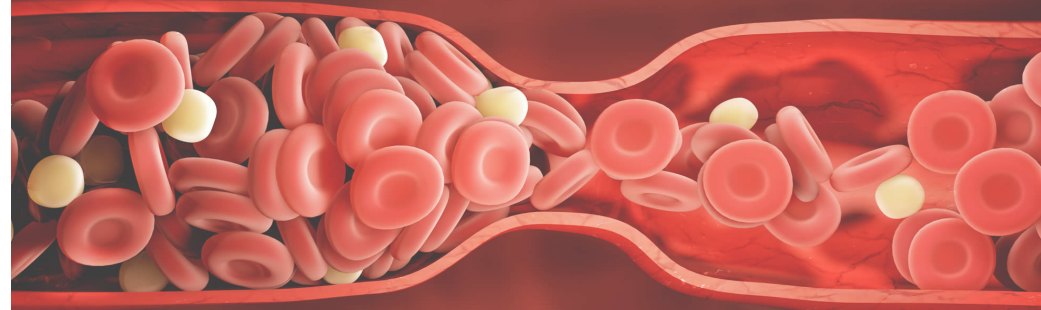
Slowly she started walking the Path of Happy Destiny. She found the true love of her heart: her beloved Higher Power, Who granted her a new heart and a new freedom. And she knew she was free at last!

**Epilogue:** To have the blindfold fall off took perseverance, going to many meetings, risking fellowship, trusting my sponsor who helped me through the Steps and surrendering myself to the loving guidance of my Higher Power. By continuing to trudge the road of happy destiny, returning Home, and walking in the present, the baggage is getting lighter every day. I am starting to rediscover myself. For the first time I am walking with myself. I am recognizing the fragility of my steps. I feel the living presence of God stripping the falsehood of my old illusory lifesavers.

Life is present; I breathe at every step. I had forgotten the intense vibration of life expressed in the plants, animals, the wind, the sunrise, the cold, the immensity of the sky inviting me to live. Prayer is the first moment of my day. I surrender every step of the way; I surrender and I am willing. I know now that I cannot do it on my own; I need courage and good will to let my Higher Power take over my life.

The warm Light that comes with recovery helps me to accept my minuteness; I don't resist Its immensity, but accept it. I find faith in the room of my Soul, where I am learning to recognize the delicate healing power of my Higher Power. To leave the well of lust is to step into God's life, enter his peace, and receive the clarity that only He can give me. I keep walking, one day at a time, one moment at a time, as I am no longer alone.

ANGÉLICA MARIA, Bogotá, Colombia



## Working the Steps In Order to Dissolve My Spiritual Clots

I brought a friend into the program, and encouraged her to feel free to share anything with her sponsor. She said, "Anything?" And I answered, "Yes, anything and everything." Then I shared more of my experience, strength, and hope with her. She asked if I could be her sponsor. Considering our friendships had its ups and downs over the years, and we were just reconnecting, I thought it would be wiser to help her find someone else. This would allow her to be completely open without the fear of offending them.

Because of her breakthroughs, she in turn brought in two close relatives into the rooms. I had no idea that she struggled like me, much less that those two others did also. Imagine that—both of us thinking we had a deep friendship, yet each of us struggling and trying to hide our pain. During the time our friendship was the most strained, we each thought the other didn't care about the friendship anymore.

In reality, it is the things that I hold back that are killing me. Those things are like a spiritual clot that blocks me from free-flowing communication with God. Just like a physical clot in the veins can paralyze or kill, a spiritual blockage works just the same.

When I do the Step 4 inventory, I start dissolving the clots so that the pain can be replaced with healing. Then daily Step 10 inventories prevent new clots from forming and multiplying. The turbulent flow in my mind becomes less severe. I am not always happy facing my character defects in Step 10. That's why the last part of it, "resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help," is a lifesaver for me. By yanking my attention toward helping someone else, I am relieved from beating myself up.

Rigorous honesty with Higher Power in meditation, with myself in self-examination, and with others in the fellowship keep me functioning and happy in my recovery.

RINA R., New Jersey, USA







## SA Helped Her To Develop A Sense of Peace

**N**o one as a child growing up ever thinks they might one day end up in jail or as a sexaholic. Yet, that's what happened to me. I am a female sexaholic, sober since January 19, 2020.

My parents were conservative, but not religious. My mother cared for me as best she could, but was at times physically abusive. My father was socially distant. Neither parent hugged me nor showed delight with my creativity and talent.

When I was eight, I was molested in a theatre. I never told anyone what happened. Growing up I also never told anyone I'd been molested by strangers, a cousin, and a couple of doctors. In my teens I found a stash of my father's pornographic material and became intrigued by the photos. That may have been the start of my lusting and wanting to be lusted after.

Eventually, I married and had a child. My husband and I had an

"open" marriage that ended after seven years. While divorced, I had a few one-night stands before I found a new love. We lived together for twelve years in a common-law marriage. I became a teacher but wasn't very good at it. I was conservative, strict, and distant most of the time.

When I became unhappy with my career and relationship, I "fell in love" with a student who had a crush on me. He was sexually advanced for his age, and I had sex with him. Talking to a psychiatrist about my misgivings, she reported me to the police, and after admitting the truth, I was arrested.

Losing my freedom devastated me. I was sentenced to a year. My incarceration nightmare lasted eight months before I was let go "on good behavior." Some nights I used my imagination and my mind's stash of porn images to help me act out and feel a sense of relief. But it wasn't safe for me to masturbate in those quarters. I didn't want to get caught in the act by

anyone. Later, I learned that open sex, even prostitution was occurring in my assigned ward. I didn't want trouble, so I ignored what was happening.

Once, a lady tried to get in bed with me after the lights were out. I forcefully pushed her away, and yelled, "You've got the wrong bed!" I thought of myself as being "straight" and only interested in the opposite sex, but after a few months behind bars, I became intrigued with a lady who was gay and promiscuous. It surprised me, but now, I can only link my feelings for her to that of a sexaholic attracted to another sexaholic. Although I wanted to act out with her, I decided that it would be best not to do so in prison for the sake of my own sanity and health.

Jail time can easily trigger guilt, shame, remorse, loneliness, fear, and other negative feelings. It can also trigger anger and resentment towards self and others. If the program had been introduced to me while I was incarcerated, I might have understood my feelings better and discovered the solutions to help me handle those feelings.

Right after my sentence ended and I was out in the world, I became sexually anorexic. I hid away from the world. Disconnecting made me vulnerable to depression and wanting to end my life. When I was at my lowest, someone told me about SA. I realized after attending several meetings, that SA and the fellowship was helping me manage and accept myself and my situation. I became happier and healthier with a sense of peace that I needed in my life.

Can imprisoned people benefit from exposure to SA? I believe so. Many inmates are sexaholics. Many offenses are offenses that involve sex. Most sexaholics don't normally become offenders, but a few have come close

to being arrested. Those that do get arrested are not the horrible characters of fairy tales and myths, but they're normal people who don't know how to handle the triggers that might set them up to act out in self-destructive ways.

Before SA I went through cycles of lust and wanting to be lusted after. I thought love and sex were the same thing. In the program, I learned the difference, and to admit my defects, such as jealousy, resentment, and unrealistic expectations. I reconnected with God, and I memorized the Serenity Prayer, which I now often say throughout the day. I've also worked the Steps. In the Third Step, "Surrendering to the God of my understanding" helped me to "let go and let God"—giving me a sense of peace with myself and the world.

At meetings I hear problems I can identify with. I also hear solutions to the problems. Calling, texting, or writing to a sponsor or friend in the program is very helpful. Connecting with someone who understands, saves both of us from acting out. That is why we, who have a measure of sobriety, can reach out and help a brother or sister who is incarcerated, and in turn be reminded of what brought us to SA. During the week I attend at least three meetings. Keeping in touch with my sponsor and female friends in the fellowship of brothers and sisters helps me stay connected.

My hope is that those incarcerated reach out to SA for a sponsor who can connect with them, and that those in the program make a connection with an inmate who wants spiritual help. Everyone, including inmates, deserves the chance to connect with peace and understanding.

ANONYMOUS, *California, USA*



## Why a Convention to Support Women in SA?

**S**A is my home today, but it hasn't always been like that. I came into the fellowship in 2008, after a few ineffective years in two other S-fellowships and with a lot of "over my dead body" ideas. I wasn't even sure SA was for me, because I couldn't identify with the strict boundaries of Sobriety Definition. It took me another six years of downward spiraling inside the fellowship to finally hit bottom and start facing the truth about myself.

One of those truths was my inability to have sound social interactions. My default setting has always been restraint. Same-sex attraction complicated my relationships with men and it took years of fellowshipping to build strong bonds with them. Before SA I always felt more comfortable in the company of women, but due to my disease they were often invisible.

Although our White Book strongly advocates under the heading *Mixed Meetings* (SA 178-179) for women and men to recover together, coming into SA didn't really change that. It wasn't until I joined my Region's Support for Women Committee, that I had the opportunity to meet women on another level. Hearing their particular struggles made me realize how difficult it must be to be a woman in a world and a fellowship dominated by men.

An Online event hosted by  
SA Europe and Middle East Region (EMER)

## Supporting Women in SA

Saturday May 15th 2021  
3:00 - 8:30 pm CET

Open to SA Women and Men Worldwide



To register, click on the link below

<https://lc.cx/yeLkGln3d>

The arrival of a female committee convener was a real game changer. She encouraged the female members to express themselves. Both women and men started reflecting together on the best way to support the women in our fellowship. When the idea of a virtual event popped up, we enthusiastically worked together towards this worldwide online event.

Choosing the topics revealed some obstacles on the road ahead of us. Women and men approached each topic differently. It took a while before we came to understand that though the focus should be on women, we shouldn't chase away men. I came to believe that our fellowship is the place where women and men can grow into recovery together, though our common disease tells us the opposite. It has been a privilege to get to know and work with my sisters in the fellowship.

JEAN V., *Sankt-Vith, Belgium*



## The Goals of the May 15 Convention

- To call both men and women to expand efforts to integrate women into the mainstream of our fellowship.
- To encourage more women to take on a more visible role fellowship-wide and for men to back women's greater participation in fellowship decisions.

## Facts and Numbers

- Nearly 100 women from around the world participated, as did several hundred men interested in finding out how they could help.
- Besides the four main sessions, there were breakout sessions and fellowship rooms.
- Speakers discussed how digital SA platforms could shine more light on women's participation in our meetings, service positions, sponsorship, and in carrying the message to newcomers, family members, and health and helping professionals.
- The convention got translated in 13 languages.

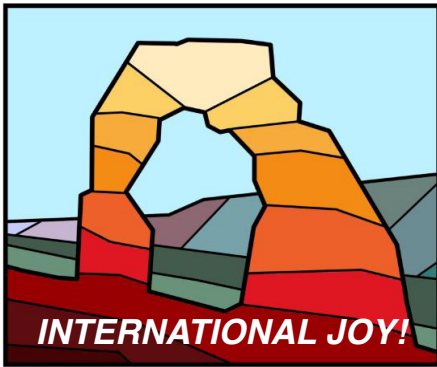
## Useful Resources

- Public information video "[SA is for Women](#)" on [sa.org](#). It is being translated to many languages all over the SA world.
- Pamphlet "SA Is For Women" available at [sa.org/store/](#)
- English-language Whatsapp group "Sisters in Serenity" provides SA women contacts of other women to call.
- Spanish-language Women's Whatsapp group.
- Contact details of worldwide female member groups are held at our central office SAICO: [saico@sa.org](mailto:saico@sa.org)

## Some Suggestions

- It is important to create Support for Women Committees within intergroups and regions. Forming an additional Committee under the SA Trustees would further advance this cause.
- The IT Committee and PI Committee could help by building resources for women and making the resources more prominent. It would be very effective to make videos, pamphlets, testimonies, stories, the history of women in SA, contacts, Whatsapp groups, meetings, lists of female patterns of acting out, etc. more visible and put them in one place.





**Serving at an International Convention truly is a Spiritual Experience.**

I am grateful for the miracle of SA International Conventions where I have been blessed to meet so many who have recovered or are recovering from the addiction to lust.

My prayers to know how to assist with one of these miraculous events led me to my service sponsor who had experience serving in several service positions for multiple local and international conventions. The service I had provided in several local SA retreats had brought me great joy and planted the seed to assist with the SA international convention.

I started learning about how to host an international convention about four years ago. From that first day I pursued encouraging my local intergroup on the idea of hosting a convention. Several others began to feel the same desire to serve. When

we were blessed with the opportunity to host the July 2021 International Convention I had only a little idea of how wonderful it would be to serve as the treasurer of this amazing event.

We watched and prayed as we started the registration for this event after having to change the event from an in-person event to a virtual event. I learned to trust in many others as they selflessly provided the support needed to make this event reality.

We were amazed as the registration climbed to over 1,012 registrants consisting of SAs, S-Anons, and S-Ateens; 629 of them were SA members. Over 70 SA women chose to sign up for this event and many served in various service capacities including technical support, host, speaker, panelists, and talent show contributors to help make this event amazing.

I felt great joy as I witnessed the forgiveness of others when there were various challenges with the virtual event hosting software, the payment process, and training.

I know that God makes joy possible in difficult times and amazing joy in service, and look forward to continuing to serve God and others the rest of my life knowing that joy is the result of that service. It is truly amazing what God can do with a sick sexaholic willing to follow His directions!







TIM B., *Utah, USA* 

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## New SA Groups August 2021

### North, Central, & South America

- ◆ El Mirage, Arizona, USA 
- ◆ Gonzales, Louisiana, USA 
- ◆ Jefferson, Georgia, USA 
- ◆ Walla Walla, Washington, USA   
2nd meeting (Thurs)
- ◆ Walla Walla, Washington, USA   
3rd meeting (Sun)
- ◆ Sequim, Washington, USA 

### Europe and Asia

- ◆ Vakathanam, Kerala, India 

## SAICO Financial Position Quarter April-June 2021

◆ Revenue	\$218,572
◆ Expenses	\$147,791
◆ Net Income	\$70,781
◆ Prudent Reserve	\$150,956

## 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 and Utah 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

SA ISRAEL PRESENTS  
A new weekly recovery blog by the English-speaking fellowship in Israel

*The Road to Freedom*  
RECOVERY WEEKLY

<https://sa-israel.org/en/blog/>

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



Some of the first AA members used the Two-Way Prayer method in order to cultivate a deeper and more personal experience of their HP. It enhances Steps 10-12.

A group of SA members meets weekly by Zoom to practice this method. If you have reached Step 10 and want to try this way of meditation, contact:

Juan Carlos L.: +34 680 731 391  
Udo J.: +49 160 991 930 33

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>

**Essay is looking for Assistant-Editors**

Are you a native English speaker who loves editing short articles and proofreading? We are especially lacking a female member in our team.

Contact: [essay@sa.org](mailto:essay@sa.org)

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# COMING IN OCTOBER



## Learning From Our Old-timers

**NEXT EDITION** In the October issue, read how SA was in the beginning and what has been working all these years for our old-timers.

### SA When I Started

Long-term sober members from all over the world describe how the fellowship looked like when they joined.

### What Has Been Working For Me

The most magical tricks and secrets on how to become an old-timer from the magicians themselves.

### What I Learned From Them

Fellows share how the example of long-term sober members has inspired and motivated their recovery.

### In-person Fellowshiping

Reports from the first in-person SA events after a year and a half of virtual meetings.

## SUBMIT YOUR STORY

**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?

**May 2022 edition: Emotional Sobriety (stories due April 1)** "Sober Is Not Well," we hear often. What is this thing called "emotional sobriety" and how to attain it?

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*.



# Sexaholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women

## THE TWELVE STEPS OF SA

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

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

## THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF SA

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

**GOD,  
GRANT ME THE SERENITY  
TO ACCEPT THE THINGS  
I CANNOT CHANGE,  
COURAGE TO CHANGE  
THE THINGS I CAN,  
AND WISDOM  
TO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE.**