

ESSAY

October 2021, sa.org

The International Journal of Sexaholics Anonymous

LEARNING FROM OUR OLD - TIMERS

A collection of shares from our
long-term sober members from all over the world

SA Purpose

Sexaholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop lusting and become sexually sober. There are no dues or fees for SA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. SA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization, or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sexually sober and help others to achieve sexual sobriety.

Adapted with permission from AA Grapevine Inc.

RESPONSIBILITY DECLARATION

I am responsible. When anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, I want the hand of SA always to be there. And for that, I am responsible.

Sexaholics Anonymous STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLE

We have a solution. We don't claim it's for everybody, but for us, it works. If you identify with us and think you may share our problem, we'd like to share our solution with you (*Sexaholics Anonymous 2*). In defining sobriety, we do not speak for those outside Sexaholics Anonymous. We can only speak for ourselves. Thus, for the married sexaholic, sexual sobriety means having no form of sex with self or with persons other than the spouse. In SA's sobriety definition, the term "spouse" refers to one's partner in a marriage between a man and a woman. For the unmarried sexaholic, sexual sobriety means freedom from sex of any kind. And for all of us, single and married alike, sexual sobriety also includes progressive victory over lust (*Sexaholics Anonymous 191-192*). (*Adopted 2010 by the General Delegate Assembly.*)

The only requirement for SA membership is a desire to stop lusting and become sexually sober according to the SA sobriety definition.

Any two or more sexaholics gathered together for SA sobriety according to the SA sobriety definition may call themselves an SA group.

Meetings that do not adhere to and follow Sexaholics Anonymous' sobriety statement as set forth in the foregoing Statement of Principle adopted by the General Delegate Assembly in 2010 are not SA meetings and shall not call themselves SA meetings. (*Addendum to the Statement of Principle passed by the General Delegate Assembly in July 2016.*)

Essay is a publication of Sexaholics Anonymous

essay@sa.org

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

Adopted by the Trustees and General Delegate Assembly in May 2016

Editors' Corner

October 2021

Dear Essay readers,

As we considered our options for the "old-timers" theme of this edition, we looked firstly at limiting ourselves to articles from members with 30+ years' sobriety—all but one of these would be from the US, but thought this too narrow. Therefore, we decided to broaden the review, taking articles from members who are not simply sober for years, but that each of them would have either the longest sobriety or be a pioneer in his/her country.

An Irish old-timer shares what he has learned over the last 25 years; Masoud from Iran tells how he worked his Eleventh Step; Hubert from Poland saw that he had to change his attitude while sobriety has given Joanna, also from Poland, the peace and space to work on her problems; the longest sober member from Russia tells us how he would not have made it into recovery without the help of his sponsor; Atefeh, a female pioneer from Iran tells us about the notebook she uses to write to her HP. Stories of courage too from Venezuela and Australia; and from the US, stories of experience, strength and hope from members attending SA since its inception.

If each of these completely powerless sexaholics can stay sober, happy, joyous, and free for so many years while helping to build up SA in their respective countries, then all we have to do is to follow in their footsteps, a day at a time.

In fellowship,
THE EDITORIAL TEAM

October 2021

“My experience as an old-timer has to some degree paralleled your own and that of many others. We all find that the time comes when we are not allowed to manage and conduct the functional affairs of the groups, areas, or, in my case, A.A. as a whole. In the end we can only be worth as much as our spiritual example has justified. To that extent, we become useful symbols—and that’s just about it.”

As Bill Sees It 169



On the cover: Our old-timers are like tall trees giving shadow, protection, and inspiration to the younger and smaller trees around them. Moreover, they point the way upward, to the One Who created all of us.

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Dear Essay



The Aug Essay Is a Roadmap to Recovery for Women

DEAR ESSAY, I WAS SO GRATEFUL when I saw the August magazine titled "Supporting Women in SA." Topics such as getting a sponsor, working the steps, mixed meetings, boundaries, service, and participating in the fellowship reminded me of my journey to recovery.

Unfortunately, this was not my initial experience in SA. I didn't know anything. My women's SA meeting and my sponsor never mentioned the Sobriety Definition. It was explained that I didn't have to read the

White Book. I took the Steps from a workbook from another 12-Step fellowship.

Later, I came to know that my sponsor had never worked the SA steps, and wasn't sober according to the Sobriety Definition while in a service position for the group. I was never given The Message.

One day, when two men were speaking at our meeting, I heard The Message of Recovery. We were invited to attend their meeting, and after months of prayer and dragging my feet, I attended a mixed meeting.

This group introduced me to the SA program and told me that even though I needed to work with ladies at all stages of this program, I absolutely needed support from women with good recovery or I would not make it.

One of them gave me the number of a woman with 30-plus years of sobriety and she became my sponsor. She put me in contact with ladies in recovery and my life has never been the same since. I value women's SA meetings. I started one for an intergroup. Yet, my recovery began meeting with women

and men carrying The Message.

The August *Essay* Magazine carries The Message and is my message too. This is what I want to carry to the female newcomer who might be scared and feeling alone. My hope is to have a roadmap to recovery for women who have to face so many challenges coming into SA.

For me, the August Magazine is that roadmap and I want to share that with newcomers. One of the ways I've found is to attach the link of the August edition at the bottom of every welcome letter I send to newcomers. That way they have something that can show them the way to go, something to hold on to, something that they can read, people they can hear The Message from, that will carry them from the first welcome letter to their first meeting.

I want to invite local SA websites to put a button on their homepage called "Welcome Packet for Newcomer Women." This would direct them to a page with the link to the magazine; strong audios of sober female speakers; and women-related pamphlets.


Laura W., Florida, USA 

World Wide Walls Of SA



Northern Toms River group New Jersey, USA 

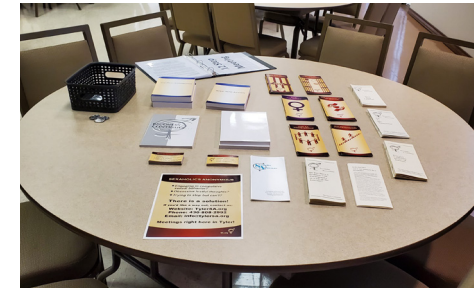


Shafa (healing) group Yazd, Iran 

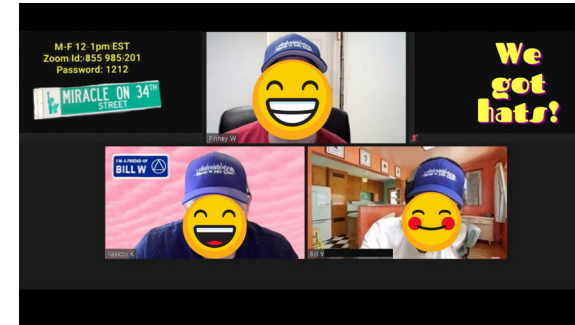



Wednesday meeting Bruges, Belgium 

SA meetings can be held just about anywhere ...



Tyler group Texas, USA 



The Miracle on 34th Street group in New York bought hats with the group's name on in order to increase group camaraderie 

Share your photos

Send your meeting place to essay@sa.org.

Remember:

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

Living in Reality Through Practicing Program Tools

Fantasies in my life want to corrupt the real. They are not from God. They want to kill me. It's the highest form of selfishness relating to my life during a 24-hour period. They are an enormous danger to my freedom. So I pray to God and beg him to give me the program actions during the day to live in the real world—not in fantasy. The White Book says on page 24: "I found something better than lust—reality."

If I respond to God's love, I perform good deeds during the day. Sometimes it's difficult, I want to bring in something from my old way of thinking. But the more I connect with Him, the better my day.

During my sobriety, I came to understand my powerlessness much better. God suggested that I do that through the *Essay Game*, in this way doing meditation, journaling and physical exercise on a daily basis.

My Higher Power tells me to feel my feelings—even to cry if I need to. Today, I am less likely to fall under the influence of my disease. I do phone calls and receive calls. Actually, it gives me trust in our fellowship and I can be part of something. It fills my emptiness and loneliness. I was proud of speaking in English with my team in the Game.

My state of being has vastly improved. During the Game I've started walking, doing physical exercises, and eating less food. I lost about three kilos. I stopped watching films on TV and using my telephone till late. Now, I go to sleep



earlier and wake up earlier. Also, I visited the doctor and hairdresser, and bought some clothes.

I couldn't do this before, I was captured by fears. Speaking with God and doing ten gratitudes in my meditation help me to overcome such fears. I even did that when workers were doing the repairs by jackhammer in the next room. God loves me. Also, God told me: "Nick, pause and be quiet when you have emotional instability." It helps me to remove fussiness and hurry.

I experience that my Higher Power gives me joy when I set limits in my conversations with relatives. Lately, I agreed with my father and accepted what he said for the first time. Sometimes I need to stop talking. I keep quiet when I have irritation when speaking with my grandfather. When I write in my diary for ten minutes each day, it allows me to speak distinctly with my renewal partner. It helps me to see my obsessive thinking.

My sponsor said to me: "Nick, whether you like your program or you don't, you need to do it." And it's amazing that he has the same thoughts about my problem. God says to my sponsor: "Look, Nick is trying to be coherent and responding to you through accepting your recommendations. Reward him with your attention and right words."

God puts the mosaic of my life together into something attractive today! And that is the most wonderful thing He can do for me.

Nick N., Minsk, Belarus



We Are As Sick ...

As Our Stories

The saying goes, "We're as sick as our secrets." I now also think that "We're as sick as our stories." My sponsor surprised me when we did our first Fifth Step by limiting my second column sharing to "ten words or less." I was ready to explain the psychological nuances of everyone listed in my fourth step. He limited me because, "more than ten words, and you're justifying bad conduct and certainly a false belief in victimhood."

When I came into recovery, I had a very false sense of self and of reality encoded as a story. The stories I told about why I acted out, why I practiced character defects such as lying only reinforced the patterns of thinking and acting that constituted my addiction. As I imagined a new self in the Seventh Step, my stories shifted.

Going even further is not having stories. Much of what constitutes "knowledge" is an outside issue to my recovery, to the main purpose of my life. I do not need to make a story of the facts at hand but simply act on them. Even the story of my recovery changed as I drew closer to my Higher Power. I am not as certain as I used to be of reasons why things happened. The truth is so simple, it does not seem to reside in the complexities of a narrative but rather in the frame in which every narrative resides—a loving Higher Power who was always calling me to peace and health (the "Great Reality" found deep inside each of us, AA 55).

I used to say, "it's complicated" when asked about why I was not living up to my marital or parental duties. It was only complicated because I could not face the simple truth that I was committing adultery and taking advantage of women. My sponsor had to apply labels such as "adulterer" and "sexual predator" to me to help me break through the complex lies I told myself and others.

Stories change as truth becomes manifest in our actions. For example, the story of the acting-out partner with whom I hit my SA bottom changed quickly in recovery. When she left, I had a clear and not very charitable diagnosis of her life and motives, of how she had harmed me, and why she was wrong to leave. Now I only know that her greatest gift to me was leaving me, was walking away from my toxicity. There's not much of a story left other than, "I lied, I cheated, I manipulated, and the results were painful." This reminds me of the Big Book, "Years of living with an alcoholic is enough to make any wife or child neurotic" (AA 122). Since "I'm the key" (SA 133) I have no interest in disentangling who caused what.

In surrendering even the stories I tell, I feel more free, lighter, more certain of the Truth. I don't have a strong opinion about my family of origin issues or why I am an addict, why people in my life act the way they do. I am certain that a Higher Power was always there, quiet, simple, and true.

MIKE M., Taipei, Taiwan





Grateful for the Fear and Gratitude List Tool

I joined the program in December 2014 and found my first sponsor from Ireland/USA through SAICO. Back then, he was based in Jordan and sober for 22 years. During my first call with him, he introduced the program and asked me to read the whole AA Big Book before working the Steps. I agreed and we ended the call.

However, all kinds of fears overwhelmed me; the disease started fighting back hard. I sent him that same night an email and he replied to have a call the next day.

In that call he shared with me the Fear Inventory from Step Four (AA 68)—though we hadn't even started the First Step! He showed me a simple way of doing it: listing the fears in short sentences; then asking myself: "Why do I have these fears?"; and continuing, "Because I am self-reliant and self-reliance has always failed me." And finally, doing the

Fear Prayer: "God, please remove these fears and direct my attention towards what would you have me be."

To complete the action with the fears' antidote, he instructed me to write a Gratitude List; the rationale being that if one keeps focusing on one's fears, most of them will be fulfilled. However, in gratitude, I count my blessings and see how my Higher Power has done amazing things with little to no contribution from my side.

By following this recipe, I was able to outgrow my fears that night and I have kept outgrowing them every time I've followed these simple instructions. I have been sober since May 17, 2017 and I am really grateful for the Fear and Gratitude Lists tool that this kind man taught on my second day of actively working the program.

SHADY Y., Cairo, Egypt



Have you read this amazing collection of old-timer shares yet?

Member Stories 2007



This collection of thirty-five recovery stories was written by members of Sexaholics Anonymous over a period of years beginning in the 1980s. Generally, they tell what it was like living in addiction to lust, what happened to change that course, and what it is like living in sobriety and recovery.

Some of the stories are new, but most appeared previously, either in *Member Stories 1989* or in the *Essay*. Many have undergone revisions by the authors based on feedback and suggestions by editors and other SA members.

These [personal stories] give a fair cross section of our membership and a clear-cut idea of what has actually happened in their lives. We hope no one will consider these self-revealing accounts in bad taste. Our hope is that many [sexaholic] men and women, desperately in need, will see these pages, and we believe that it is only by fully disclosing ourselves and our problems that they will be persuaded to say, "Yes, I am one of them too; I must have this thing. (Alcoholics Anonymous 29)

To buy this indispensable resource for you and your group's literature table or to buy the e-book version, surf to the SA Store: sa.org/store/



WHY COMPARE AND
DESPAIR WHEN YOU
CAN ADMIRE AND ASPIRE?

Practicing a Lesser Known Slogan: Compare Is Despair

There are, as we know, precisely twelve Steps; but there are countless recovery sayings—"Keep It Simple," "One Day At A Time," and "First Things First," being just a few of the most popular slogans.

Of course, sex drunks like me know all too well the consequences of mistaking priorities, of not putting "First Things First." "Whatever I place ahead of my recovery, I will lose; whatever I place second to recovery will have First Class results." If I don't prioritize recovery over all else, I stand to lose it all; everything, including my life.

There's a lesser known saying in recovery: "Compare Is Despair." This saying asks me implicitly, to be true to myself while explicitly warning me not to compare myself to others or to, judge myself against others; to do so leads only to hopelessness because I cannot be anyone but myself as created by my Higher Power—and He did not create me to be a slave to lust ...

I've spent much of my life comparing and despairing. In fact I still do! After all, had I been struck sober at my first meeting, I'd have over 30 years' sobriety now! No doubt I'd be a Richy Rich instead

of a Peter Pauper; a homeowner—not a room renter; a husband and a father—not a 50-year-old bachelor, whose sole companion, a Chihuahua, only loves me because he doesn't know any better!


I first started comparing myself when I thought I was different from others. I was born with both a cleft-palate and a cleft-lip. My mother always dismissed my insecurities about these, but of course I knew better! I rejected myself because I was different whilst I held others in awe. Maybe this is when I also discovered lust: who knows?

I was worthless, according to my jaundiced view, because my insides and outsides did not match the outsides of others. Soon after, probably due to my ADHD and correlative learning disabilities, I determined that I was simultaneously stupid. Ugly and stupid: imagine my despair.

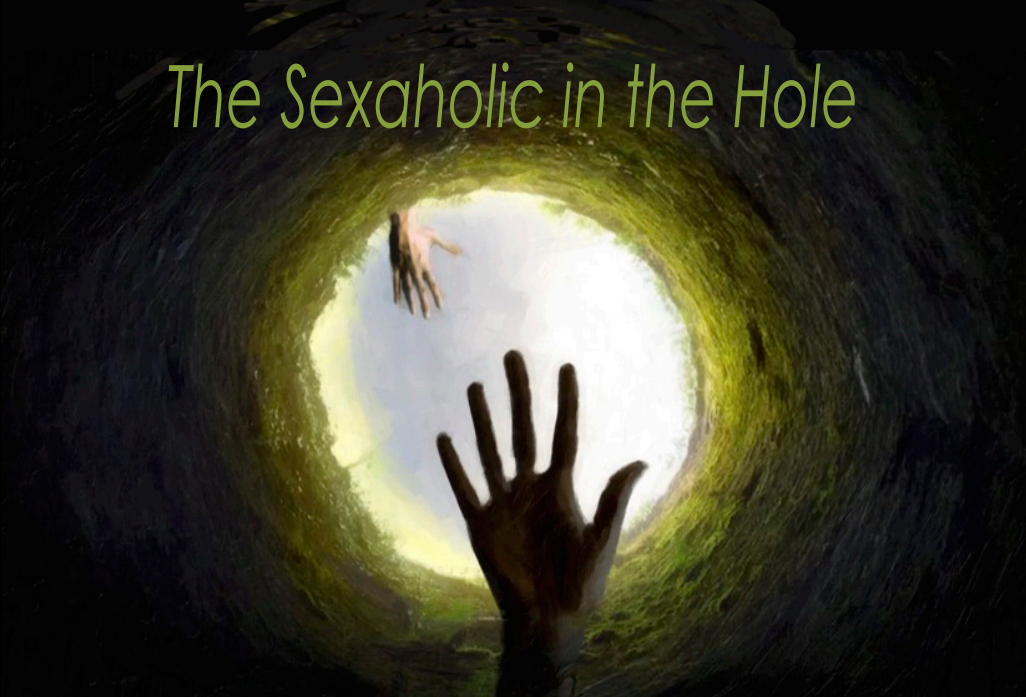
Here's where lust stepped in; it promised me salvation so, unknowingly, I turned my will and my life over to it, my first Higher Power, and for far too long I lusted away my desperation, only to discover how desperate I truly was, and am!

And now I thank my Highest Power—"There is One Who is all-powerful"—everyday for my desperation, for hope is meaningless without hopelessness. So my hope for you is that, like me, you see your similarities, not your differences with others.

My Higher Power made me as I am and loves me as I am so I wouldn't want to be anybody else but me ... happy, joyous, & free!

BRENT S., Illinois, USA 

The Sexaholic in the Hole



I heard this story recently at one of the many meetings I go to and I wanted to share it with the Essay readers:

A sexaholic is cruising the pavement, looking at triggers everywhere, and falls into a hole. He tries and tries to get out but can't. He starts shouting, "Help me! Help me!"

A priest and rabbi come walking down the road. They hear his shouts, look down the hole and are filled with compassion. "My, my. This is a terrible situation. How did you come to fall into that hole, young man?" When the man tells them how he fell into the hole, they tell him that his situation is sad and that they will pray for him, very hard. They give him their blessing and pass on their way.

The man continues to shout. "Help me! Help me!"

Another man comes along and looks into the hole. He is a psychologist. "Oh my," he says and asks the man how he fell down the hole. "I suggest to you" the psychologist says, "that you did not fall down the hole so much as that you are hiding down there—from feelings. Tell me about your childhood." After one hour, the psychologist walks away, saying he will be back next week.

Eventually this other guy comes along, sees the man in the hole and jumps in.

"What have you done?" the first guy says, amazed. "Now we're both stuck and can't get out". "Don't worry," the second guy says. "I know this place. I'm a sexaholic in recovery and I know the way out. Just follow me."

FRANCIS P., Manchester, UK 

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

Number One Is to Stay Sober at All Costs

This Irish old-timer is still asking other members for help, as he can't stay sober on his own.



When I joined SLAA in October 1994, there was no SA in Ireland. In February 1995, an SA member who was a friend of one of our members, came over from the USA and attended our SLAA meeting. I had not heard of SA yet. He told us about sponsoring, working the Steps, phone calls, check-ins, and fellowship after the meetings.

SA started in Ireland in early 1996 with very few members. I attended

my first SA meeting in September 1996. At the time, when we attended SLAA conventions and were accused of poaching their members. One or two of the senior members were angry, saying we were splitting their fellowship. When I told one of them I was leaving for SA, he said the SA's were the "Presbyterians" of the "S" Fellowships.

In my home group, we had two to three members starting off. It took three years before a member stayed and got sober. For years,

newcomers would come in and leave and come back and leave again. Very few members stayed. It was very frustrating and disheartening at times. Our numbers were so low that if a member was away it might not be possible to have a meeting.

In Ireland we had an SA Convention in Spring and in Autumn. We also

attended SA Conventions in the UK. In 1997 in Dublin, there was only one meeting with two or three members. We sought sponsors in the UK and in the USA and the fellowship grew slowly.

Here are some of the things I learned over the last 25 years:

- Number one is staying sober at all costs.
- Working with, and learning to take direction from my sponsor and sponsoring members. To have newcomers get a temporary sponsor as soon as they arrive. If newcomers wish to change sponsors they are free to do so.
- Prayer and meditation. Higher Power in groups.
- Working the Steps and Traditions.
- It's very important to keep the doors open for meetings. The worst scenario is for members to turn up and no one is there.
- To have monthly Group Conscience meetings.
- Meetings starting and finishing on time. Sharing in meetings is timed.
- If members have problems, take them up in Group Conscience meetings. One lesson I learned is that when problems crop up in the group to use the twelve Traditions to deal with them.
- Don't debate the principles. Members who do not agree with the Sobriety Definition are told there are other "S" Fellowships.
- Encouraging newcomers to do service.
- Another lesson I learned is not to lecture members or tell them what to do. I did this with a member who became angry and left the fellowship. Our program is meant to be suggestive only.

To conclude, I am learning the importance of a personal relationship with my Higher Power who keeps me sober. My sponsor is not always available nor can he be. Neither can members be always there but my Higher Power is always there with me and for me. The Big Book tells me I will never get sober if I put reliance on people before reliance on God: "Job or no job—wife or no wife—we simply do not stop drinking so long

as we place dependence upon other people ahead of dependence on God." (AA 98)

Humility is the main key to sobriety. I can't get sober or stay sober on my own. I need to ask God for help. I need to ask members for help. I need to help others and work with them and give up my time which is really God's time.

ROBERT L, Galway, Ireland



The Emphasis of My Recovery Is On My Spiritual Condition

Being an old-timer in Iran for over 17 years, he still has to go back at times and practice the previous Steps in order to grow deeper in his Eleventh Step.

I am a member of SA Iran and have been sober for 17 years and 11 months. I want to share with you my experience of Step Eleven. Conscious contact with my Higher Power has helped me so much to stabilize and deepen my recovery.

My journey to achieve a mature relationship with my Higher Power began at Step Two. The initial work took me back to the God of my childhood. When I was about seven or eight years old, I dreamed of a Higher Power while I was asleep. It was a very vivid dream, this dream of a Higher Power, of God. In that dream I saw what must have been a holy man; he was dressed in the style of a traditional Persian holy man—such people are revered in Iran; anyone who would kill or injure such a person would be cursed by society. In this dream I saw the holy man walking hand-in-hand in heaven with the man who had murdered him. And I asked myself, “How could that possibly be?” It occurred to me then that, of course, the holy man had forgiven his murderer.

When I first talked about this dream to my mother, she cut me short, telling me to “Shut up,” that it was impossible for anyone to claim to have God appear in his dreams. But after a time she grew curious and asked what the dream was about. When I told her, she started crying. Seeing this, I realized the awesome power of forgiveness.

In Step Two I was suggested to try to visualize the Higher Power of my understanding. I tried to recapture the picture that I had had in my dream. I felt there was something very profound in it.

The inventory in the chapter on Step Two in *Step into Action* asks us to list the people who held authority in our lives over the years. For me, it was my parents, but there were also

I was not going to deepen my relationship with my Higher Power by books or internet research but by removing the blockages—my defects—which stood between us.

teachers on the list, politicians, clerics, etc. I listed the behaviors of all these authority figures and I found that the behavior of these people consistently fell short of their own standards, not to mention anyone else’s.

There was no Higher Power of my liking or understanding anywhere on that list. So, I went back to that dream I had as a kid to sharpen my impression

of a Higher Power I could relate to. Then I went on the internet, searching for pictures of God. I entered the word “God” in different languages and 1,200 images of “God” came up.

It was important for me to create in my mind a visual image of the Higher Power with whom I would build a trusting relationship. Around this time too I saw that I was not going to deepen my relationship with my Higher Power by books or internet research but by removing the blockages—my defects—which stood between us.

When I reached my seventh anniversary of sobriety, I celebrated - because I like the number seven—by sending an email to Roy K. In my email I said, “Roy, I am sober seven years today. It is seven years since I last acted out.” I expected a hearty congratulations, but his reply was short and caught me by surprise. He said, “Seven years sober, Masoud? That’s good. Welcome to SA.” He told me that, from now on, I should work as hard as I could to improve my conscious contact with my Higher Power so that I could practice Step Twelve and become a tool in God’s hands.

One of the best explanations of improving conscious contact with God came from my sponsor. He said that in Step Eleven I need to be so transparent, so clear, so free of wanting things for myself that my Higher Power can easily talk to me, telling me what He wants me to do for Him—to be so well prepared by the previous ten Steps that I am not praying for myself any more, only praying to do God’s will.

So, in the first ten Steps I ask for things for myself. Sure, they can be of a spiritual nature, my spiritual needs

and wants; but by the time I get to Step Eleven, I had better be in a place where I am not asking for things for myself. If, by Step Eleven, I am still full of fear, stressed and worried; if I am still falling back on my defects of character to get by; if I have not practiced the virtues counter to my defects—the assets—or if I haven’t yet trusted God

I can see my Higher Power smiling at me and saying, “Back you go and practice the previous Steps until you are ready for this one.”

enough to turn my life over to Him; if this is how I am by Step Eleven, I can see my Higher Power smiling at me and saying, “Back you go and practice the previous Steps until you are ready for this one.”

This has happened to me as a sponsor and sponsee. Sometimes when a sponsee comes to me and talks about a specific problem and asks me what to do, I might suggest—even if he is sober for many years—I might suggest that he go back through the Steps again. It’s no different for me. If I am blocked by the same problem again and again, then I need to go through the whole process again so I can learn from those challenges that keep coming up for me.

I believe that I achieve peak conscious contact with God in Steps Eleven and Twelve. At this stage, I should be so rid of self-will that when I kneel down, I can comfortably ask, “OK, God. What do you want me to do for you now?”

And so I move on to Step Twelve when I can be of service.

I see now that in my Step Two I attributed to my Higher Power many of the attributes that I had seen in the people on my “Authorities” list. In the case of my parents for example, I thought that because my father was strong and impressive, then so was God; and that because my mother was forgiving and compassionate, then God was too. But then, I attributed to God some of my parents’ defects, like for example when they were short-tempered and beat me.

I saw then that I needed to continue working my Step Two until I achieved an understanding of a Higher Power to whom I could relate and trust. The best way to do this was by working through the columns of the Step Two inventory, seeing what attributes I had given to my Higher Power from my parents and from the other people on my “Authorities” list.

I have a place in my home which is my own little chapel, my designated place for prayer. Just as every room in a house has a designated purpose—kitchen, toilet, etc., I installed this place for worship where I can feed my Soul and get rid of the things in my Soul that no longer serve me. The first thing I need to do every morning is connect with my Higher Power. Every morning, on my knees, I ask Him to reveal His will for me and I commit to doing His will until I go to bed.

Just to say in conclusion, it’s interesting to consider when we read in “The Problem,” that the problem is physical, emotional and spiritual; well, in Step One, we deal with the physical and the emotional parts. But from Step Two on to Step Twelve, the focus is on the spiritual part of the problem. This tells me that the

emphasis in my recovery needs to be on my spiritual condition.

I have seen so many times in this program people who struggle to stay sober and others who are sober many years but are not enjoying their sobriety; by digging into it I found that they hadn’t worked that much on the spiritual side of their recovery.

I don’t claim to have excellent conscious contact with my Higher Power. If I had, I wouldn’t make any mistakes in my day-to-day life, and

Every human being should have at least 20 minutes of meditation time per day, unless that person has a lot of things to do in which case he should meditate for an hour a day.

this is not the case. But just this little connection that I do have enables me to see the good in others.

For example, not so long ago my father was passing away. I was there, standing beside him, praying for him as he lay dying. And I experienced a deep sense of gratitude for my father because, when I did my Step Two inventory, I had realized that some of the good traits I attributed to my Higher Power, were traits that I recognized in the first instance in my father. One of these was his emphasis on the importance of doing good

deeds every day of his life.

Here’s an example from his life. My father used to go to work very early, opening his shop at five o’clock in the morning. I used to always ask him why he opened so early. One day I accompanied him, the two of us cycling to his shop and when we got there, I saw that a young man who was a spiritual seeker had come to the shop. The young man bought just one egg and left. My father said then, “Now you understand why I come to work at 5 o’clock in the morning.” I realized then that some acts might seem small, but good deeds, no matter how small, can have a huge impact.

I heard once, “Every human being should have at least 20 minutes of meditation time per day, unless that person has a lot of things to do in which case he should meditate for

an hour a day.” This holds true for me because my connection with my Higher Power gets broken when I have a lot of things to do, when I have a lot of mental obsessions. The busier I am, the more I need to have that prayer and meditation time—instead of giving less time to my Higher Power at those moments. The Big Book says it well: “He provided what we needed if we kept close to Him and performed His work well.” (AA 63)

Whenever I feel disconnected I try to go back to the idea and the image that I have of my Higher Power. If I still don’t have the connection after doing so, I call my sponsor and do whatever he tells me in order to establish that connection again.

MASOUD, Shiraz, Iran



DISCUSSION TOPIC

Is the emphasis of my recovery on my spiritual condition?

Iranian old-timer Masoud describes in great detail how he has been working his program since the beginning of his recovery to improve his conscious contact with the God of his understanding.

He told us about an early childhood dream which touched him a lot and how Step Two helped him to identify the influence of the authority figures in his childhood on his perception of God.

He goes on by sharing which actions he took to outgrow these old ideas

and come to a new and life-giving relationship with a loving HP.

Did I work a thorough Step Two? Do I have a concept of a loving HP of my own understanding today? Do I really trust Him? Have I really turned my will and my life over to His care?

Do I have a place in my home that is conducive to prayer and meditation?

Do I practice my Eleventh Step first thing in the morning, every single day?

When I catch myself

being self-centered again, full of fear, stress and worry, do I go through the whole Step process again so I can learn from the challenges that I am confronted with?

Do I take *extra* time for prayer and meditation when I am extra busy?

Do I still ask for and take Good Orderly Direction from my sponsor and other trustworthy fellows?

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

The Best Word to Describe My Recovery Is "Attitude"

I came to SA at the beginning of 2008. At that time SA in Poland was very small. There were only four meetings (three in Warsaw and one in Krakow) and about fifteen participants. We only had some excerpts of the White Book and Step into Action (70 pages in all). Nor did we use AA literature at that time.

The first sponsor in the Polish SA started his recovery in Narcotics Anonymous, so almost everyone (including me) was sponsored using the NA Steps Manual. We had a couple of sober members who showed the way.

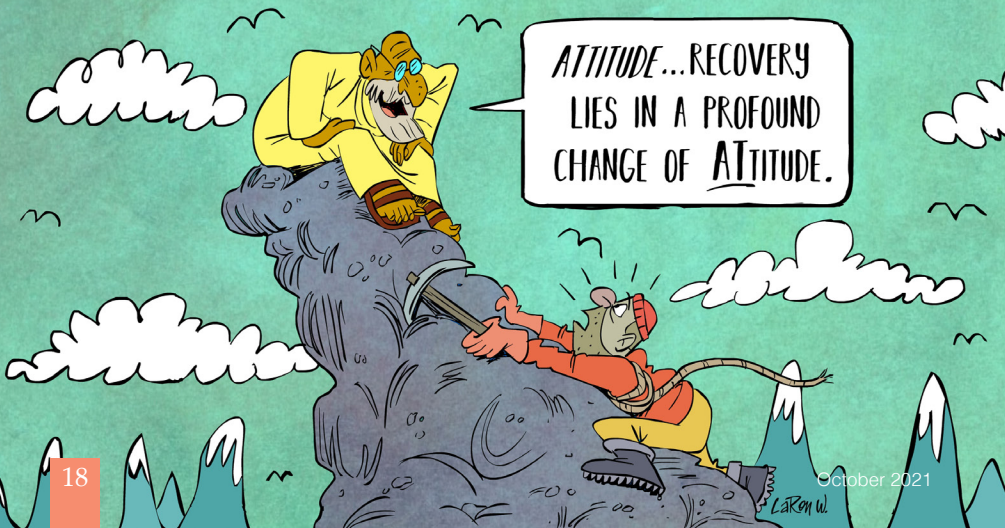
I remember that in those early years we had an argument about translating the word "lust." Some fellows wanted to translate "lust" as the strictly sexual term "lubieznosc" and some wanted to translate "lust" as a force, not only sexual, which stands behind the addiction ("zadza" in Polish). The second meaning prevailed, but I remember that I was afraid that SA would divide into two fellowships and everyone would

act out. This didn't happen, which assures me that our Higher Power takes care of SA.

I think that the best word to describe my recovery is "attitude." I remember the last time I acted out. It was Jan 5, 2008. I came home after a date with one of my acting-out partners and started masturbating to thoughts of her. Suddenly, after 16 years of active addiction, a different thought came to me: "You know that this girl is not enough. There will be another, and another, and another. It is a never-ending story. You can have one million women and they won't be enough. You are the problem, not them. You are finished, and if you don't stop, sooner or later you will go mad, do something horrible, or die. Hubert, you have to stop lusting."

I stopped then, and the idea that I am finished, that I can't lust anymore has been with me since this Jan 5, 2008. I'm not free from temptation; my recovery is not perfect, but I know that lust does not work for me and never will. Either I stop lusting or I die. There is no third way. That helps me stay sober.

HUBERT, Krakow, Poland



It's My Job to Stay, For Just Another Day

In January 2009 I went to my first SA meeting. On the literature table I found a copy of the *Essay* magazine. It contained a funny recovery joke. I truly had to laugh! It was the first time I found out recovery can be fun. Until then, my experience with trying to recover in another S-fellowship was mainly depressing and gave little hope.

That SA group fell apart quickly. Disappointed, I returned to my old group. But not without first registering for an SA Convention in the United Kingdom in September of that year. On arrival, a friendly man welcomed me. He was happy to see a fellow from abroad attending the convention. He asked me how long I was sober. "Five days," I said, and proudly added: "But I have been sober before for about six months!" When I asked him, he cheerfully said he was sober for eight years. I resented him immediately!

That night, after attending the first meeting of the convention weekend, I felt disturbed. I went to my room and wrote a mini-inventory. There were many people with multiple years of sobriety at the weekend event. I had never seen such a thing before. I thought that sobriety for sex addicts was only theoretical, and not possible long-term. Here I was proven wrong, and my reaction to it was anger!

While writing out the columns of my inventory, I could see how arrogant and proud I was. I had become a person I really didn't like to be. That hit me hard. It was painful. I returned to the meeting room, this time really wanting to be just one

of the guys. Now I knew there was something here. I didn't need to say it; I knew this was home for me. Back home I made one more attempt to stay sober in my old S-fellowship group, and had my last relapse in October 2009. Then I finally surrendered and embraced SA.

It is true that my role in the group changes over the years, due in part to being sober for a longer time. A slightly unfriendly word of mine causes more damage to the group than an out-of-place share of a drunken newcomer. My grumpy mood can

I am so grateful he handed me over to a bunch of sex drunks. They are the only ones who could help me.

actually kill the spirituality of the meeting. The road gets narrower. But the joy of living increases.

I'm a controller, trying to climb to the top of every heap I find. And with every climb I have to again face that I am not God. I am so grateful that He handed me over to a bunch of sex drunks. They are the only ones who could help me. The biggest mistakes in my life I have made in recovery, perhaps because I have not yet learned enough humility. But my home group is the heartbeat of my life, in good and bad times. In recovery, I have a Higher Power Who helps me with myself. An old-timer once said: "My job is to stay." And so will I, for just another day.

DAAN L., Den Hague, Netherlands



“Give Myself a Chance For Another Day”

This Polish old-timer learned to take advantage of the non-ideal fellowship that was already there and not wait for it to become perfect.



What was the fellowship like in my early days of recovery? According to what I remember and knew, it was: certainly not ideal! We had no published literature but used pdfs and printouts. We didn't have SA materials to work on the Steps but used materials from other fellowships. Multiple-year sobriety was something unusual. We were learning to use the Steps and didn't know much about those mysterious Traditions.

There were no women at the meetings. It took two years before other women came and stayed. There were five meetings around the city

and we all knew each other. After the Friday meeting we went for dumplings. Meeting people outside of the meetings, getting to know them as people and not just recovering sexaholics, was really valuable and helped me feel safer with them.

I learned to take advantage of the non-ideal fellowship that was already there and not wait for it to become perfect. If I had waited, I'm afraid I would still be waiting! And you know what? It didn't matter that much! SA was there, and it was perfect! I finally met people who had the same problem, went through the same suffering, and were sober and shared what helps them maintain that sobriety. They all talked about

working the Steps.

For the first time I believed that sexual sobriety was possible for me too. They gave me hope. I got much more from them: acceptance, support, literature, contact with a woman from another fellowship who was ready to support me. When I came to a meeting

The motto to give myself a chance once again is still valid in different stages of life and recovery, because sobriety doesn't solve all the problems in my life. Sobriety only gives me the space to solve them or live them.

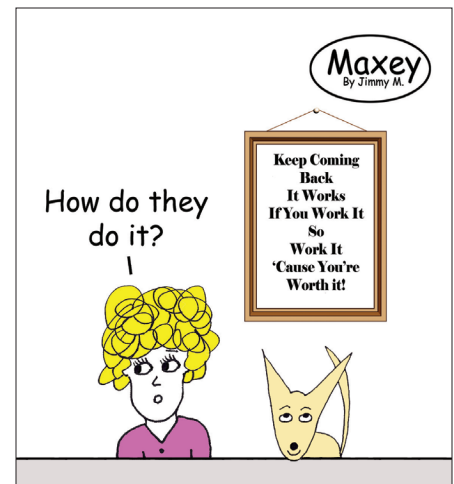
and told them how bad and difficult it was for me, someone usually shared a similar experience and I left the meeting with concrete tools.

If I had to pass on just one thing, just one bit of advice, it would be: to give yourself a chance once again, to give yourself a chance for another day. That's one of the most important things to me. In large part because of it, I am still sober. Maybe God and others believed in me, but I didn't believe in myself anymore. I believed the people in the fellowship who, despite my relapses, continued to take my calls, talk to me, and shake my hand. I decided to trust them and not myself.

When there was a time when my triggers took away my hope, when I had no idea what to do anymore and it seemed that the program was working for everyone but me, I remember the thought that came to me: “Give myself a chance for another day” ... just that. And then for another one. To try again: the Steps, the meeting, the literature, contact with my sponsor, ...

Not being able to believe in myself led to my darkest moments. And that's when my sobriety began. I never expected this to be the moment. My sobriety wasn't planned or studied; I just gave myself another day to try recovery one more time and “not trash SA” (which I really felt like more than once!!). Then, with time, something started to change and sobriety continues. Although I have been sober since June 1, 2010, the motto to give myself a chance once again is still valid in different stages of life and recovery, because sobriety doesn't solve all the problems in my life. Sobriety only gives me the space to solve them or live them.

JOANNA M., Warsaw, Poland





It's a Simple Program—You Just Need to Work on It

For him, Step work and subsequent sobriety is impossible without the experience and support of a sponsor.

My sponsor kept repeating “It’s a simple Program, you just need to work on it,” when I complained to him that I could not stay sober. I came to my first SA meeting on my birthday in 2009. Since November 14, 2011, I have remained sober thanks to my Higher Power and SA.

My sobriety began in that year with the first Russian-speaking SA Convention in Russia. I came to SA with a completely broken life: my wife did not want to live with me anymore, I lost everything I could, lust broke my whole life.

Yet, in June 2021 we celebrated 22 years of living together. We have two children and my second daughter was born after I got sober. I did not think that this was possible! But it helped me to believe in sobriety and happiness.

When I look back on these years, I wonder how anyone managed to stay sober at all, but SA in Russia has come a long way since. I started attending meetings where we only had the strength to tell how hard it was for us to stay sober. I did not hear the message of the joy of a sober life, it seemed to me that sobriety was hard and a constant struggle with lust.

When I come to SA meetings in Moscow today, I am surprised at how we have changed during this time. There are sponsors at the meetings to whom we can turn for help. There are sober brothers and sisters who share their experience of recovery, and we hold conventions and workshops every year.

When I started, everything was much more complicated. There were only two SA groups in Moscow and it was very difficult to find a sponsor who could speak Russian. At the Convention I heard that sobriety is a joy and recovery should bring joy. I

Our meetings are what we are at them; the message of the meetings depends on what we bring to them.

was so tired of fighting with my lust that I desperately wanted a real life in sobriety, positive and joyful. I started looking for a sponsor who would help me follow the Steps and at first I found him in another country. For me, Step work and subsequent sobriety is impossible without the experience and support of a sponsor. I began to work Step by Step and later I became a sponsor for other guys.

I remember once complaining to my sponsor about how hard it was for me at a meeting, how hard it was for me to recover, what toxic shares from others I had heard and how indignant I was. “And you?” my sponsor asked me. “What about me?” I asked. My sponsor said “What did you share at

the meeting? What good news have you brought to your suffering brothers and sisters?” “What could I give them if I feel bad myself?” I answered. “Are you sober?” my sponsor asked. “Yes,” I replied. “Isn’t that enough?” he said. “Share this with others, start with your sobriety and only then move on to what bothers you. I assure you, you will see how the meeting will begin to change.” And he was right! Our meetings are what we are at them, the message of the meetings depends on what we bring to them.

Gradually, messages of sobriety began to sound at SA groups in Russia, we began to share our experience, strength and hope. One reason I strive to attend SA meetings today is because I feel love and support there and I can share this with others. Does the SA Program work? Yes, indeed! Our meetings are proof of this!

From the very beginning in SA, I was worried about my hypersensitivity. I am very sensitive to stress. Resentments and fears would plunge me into such despair that it was almost impossible to stay sober. At one of the conventions, I heard someone speak on Step 10. For me, this is a unique tool of the Program. I had a quarrel with my brother. How angry I was with him! How stubborn and drunk he is! He’s just a sick man! I sat down and began practicing what the Step suggests. To my surprise, I realized that by the middle of the work, I was no longer angry with my friend, and after finishing the work, I felt love for him. It always works! Step 10 has never let me down.

After all, it’s a simple program—you just need to work on it. It’s about doing, about taking the action.

Igor P., Moscow, Russia





I Have a Notebook for Writing with God

Sober since 2009, this Iranian woman has gone to any length to encounter her true and living Higher Power.

I am a female member in Iran. When I came to SA in 2010, there were no other female members in my city, no meeting space, no Intergroup and no White Book or Step Into Action book. Apart from the AA Big Book and 12&12, we had only a few SA pamphlets translated into Persian.

I had to learn English to get a sponsor from America, and to share with her every day even though I couldn't speak the language well.

I have been holding a meeting alone with God every week for up to eight years in the park, although my city is the hottest in our country. But I did everything I could to maintain my recovery and sobriety.

Of course, that was not my job as later, when I met the true and living God in SA, I realized that it was His job, not mine. Because it is God in this program who is able to show His strength in my weakness, and He uses a weak person like me to be His hand on the ground to help another sexaholic. He showed me that, despite a lack of facilities, I can be sober, if I want!

A tool I want to share with you is that I have a notebook for writing to God. I take every day time to write to God all my feelings, thoughts, intense worries, fears, resentments and temptations—every lustful thought and fantasy that goes through my mind. I do so really clearly and without any hidden thoughts, and I don't stop writing until God calms me and removes my temptations.

By doing this writing, I am actually using the program tools of prayer and journaling. God talks to my heart and calms me down and informs me what is going on inside. And, according to these feelings, I can decide what inventory needs to be written and what to bring into the light to my sponsor or other sober SA friends.

This has been my daily experience which has helped me to stay sober for eleven years and four months and taught me a lot every day! If you use this, I believe you too will experience a deeply spiritual conscious contact with a merciful, kind, and loving God of your own understanding.

ATEFEH, Ahwaz, Iran



With a Grateful Heart

Gratitude Helps Me to Want What I Have

Sobriety began for me in Nashville in May 1986. We were a small band of six or seven persons meeting once per week trying to avoid the terrible consequences of our acting out.

At that time recovery was mostly focused on technical sobriety. However, as my recovery deepened, my experience grew beyond freedom from sexual lust, beyond technical sobriety, to freedom from desire in the broad sense.

This is what the recovery journey aims for, to achieve more and more release from the power of lust. It has led to a more peaceful life with more gratitude than desire. It is the result of living the 12-Step principles and striving to unselfishly share them with others.

One of the best lessons I have learned is that gratitude is the best tool to combat lust's constant desire for more, better, different. Gratitude helps me to want what I have and know that what I have is enough.

Exercises such as gratitude lists are helpful intellectual exercises. However, my goal is to cultivate a grateful heart. Today, I seek to be in a "thank you" state of mind. I say thank you throughout the day at every opportunity to family members, friends, shopkeepers, my higher power, etc.

As long as I weave "thank you" into the fabric of my life, a grateful heart will always come as a result, and when my heart is grateful it cannot lust.

LEE T., Tennessee, USA





Relapse Will Always Cost More Than Making Phone Calls

The longest sober member in South-America testifies how God is doing for him what he cannot do for himself—a miracle, a day at a time.

Once I was in the parking lot of a shopping center, when I was approached by a pretty young woman who had worked as a waitress in a restaurant that I used to go to. Nothing unusual about that. Any time I was in the restaurant she simply took my order. But now, she told me she had lost her job and, stuck for money, said she would supply “whatever I wanted.” She gave me a card with her phone number and with a gesture that left me in no doubt what she meant.

I went into the mall and when I had some privacy, I called an SA friend, told him what had happened and said, “Please hang on there, listening to me tear up this card, making sure I throw it in the bin.” And my SA buddy stayed on the line, listening to me tear up the card, telling him that the pieces were now in the trash can. Before saying goodbye, we each committed to staying sober for the day. The pull of temptation was enormous in that moment, but the call in the moment saved me.

Calling in the midst of temptation

has saved me many times during these past fifteen years of sobriety. Sometimes I have made up to ten or more calls, one after another, until the temptation passed. I don’t care how much time or money I spend on these calls; relapse will always cost more.

Calling in the midst of temptations has saved me many times during these past fifteen years of sobriety. Sometimes I have made up to ten or more calls, one after another, until the temptation passed.

I understand too that I need to take the actions of sobriety each and every day: what saved me yesterday will

not save me today. It helps if I plan my day—but not too rigidly; if I keep myself busy—but not too busy!—avoiding rushing and indecision, remembering too that it is all “Just For Today.”

To paraphrase the Big Book, “There is nothing that ensures sobriety as much as intensive work with other

When I started out on this path, long-term sobriety seemed impossible. But by letting go the reins and leaving my will and my life in God’s hands, progressive freedom from lust has been possible.

addicts.” Sponsoring other sex addicts has helped me a lot. I like to attend meetings; that’s where the magic is, sharing whatever is happening with me with my fellows. I find it helpful too to read program literature and share about it. I need all these tools and I enjoy them. What a great treasure we have in our White Book and in the book *Recovery Continues*.

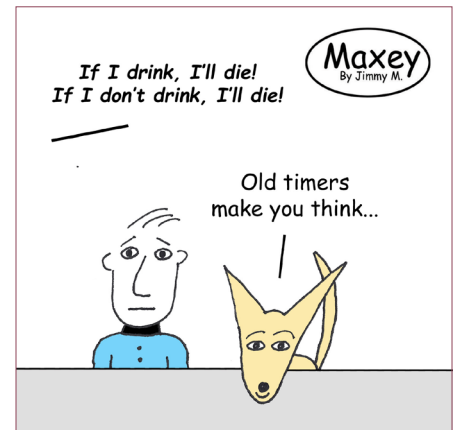
I firmly believe that living in the solution is possible, that sexual sobriety can be maintained, if I work the tools of the program. Prayer has also helped me a lot because, if this disease is spiritual, then the solution must be spiritual too. That is why it is important for me to have time in the day for prayer. When I wake up, the first thing I do is offer the day to

my Higher Power. I lift my heart and soul to God in gratitude and then ask him to enlighten my restless mind and to help me surrender my many shortcomings to Him, so that I can be light and joyful and of use to Him and others.

Sometimes I imagine myself raising a shield or, like in science fiction movies, being protected in a force field, or wrapped in a capsule, a protective mantle sent by my Higher Power. And I repeat to myself, “I am not alone in my trials. God will take care of me. With His protection about me, I will remain sober this day.”

And God is doing for me what I cannot do for myself—a miracle, a day at a time. On October 20 this year, by the Grace of God and the fellowship of this program, a day at a time, I will celebrate 15 years of sobriety. When I started out on this path, long-term sobriety seemed impossible. But by letting go the reins and leaving my will and my life in God’s hands, progressive freedom from lust has been possible. I am so grateful for this program. It has saved my marriage and my life

NELSON D., CARACAS, Venezuela





Coming From AA, He Worked the Steps All Over Again in SA

I came to my first SA meeting in Karlsruhe, Germany, on Sunday, May 26, 1985. I was one of three newcomers at a meeting of 20 men and women. As newcomers we were required to give a brief First Step in the form of answering set questions. Before I came to the meeting, I threw out my pornography. I also threw out phone numbers and addresses of women I knew from other 12-Step fellowships. I stopped acting out sexually. I date my sexual sobriety to two years after I stopped acting out because of lust in dreams.

I was three years sober in Alcoholics Anonymous and actively participating in every aspect of the sober life, like working the Steps and sponsoring others. I had never addressed the issues of lust, sex, and dependency. My pursuit of pornography was secretive, obsessive, and progressive. A fellow-recovering alcoholic who

Twelfth-Stepped me into SA, was a great help in keeping me focused on lust as the real problem. “SA is a whole new surrender,” he made clear.

I informed my partner I was a sexaholic and would have to pursue sex and lust recovery. It turned out that she was ready to work the S-Anon program. We traveled to Karlsruhe every Sunday together, she for her S-Anon meeting and me for SA.

The Karlsruhe group became my home group. At the time of joining I was an eleven-year resident of Germany and fluent in German. A small group of us started an English-speaking SA meeting, however, attendance was sporadic and those who wanted recovery wound up attending the Karlsruhe meetings.

What brought us together was the SA literature. SA members translated the SA Manual into German as well as loose literature that would later be published as *Recovery Continues*. In my Home Group we took seriously the caution in Step Two of the SA Manual that success in quitting other addictions seduced many of us into believing we had a head start on lust recovery, or were authorities on how the Program worked. I learned early that I have to work the first three Steps on a daily basis.

The immediate payoff was the SA meeting quality itself. Progress was slow, both in my personal recovery and in the growth of the fellowship, but I experienced patches of peace and serenity such as I had not experienced in other 12-Step rooms or thought possible for me. I worked the Steps again in SA, starting at the beginning.

SA was restoring me to sanity. My progress could be measured more by letting go of old ideas and

attitudes than by gaining insight into the addiction, which I tried before I discovered surrender. After three months of sexual sobriety, I experienced another unexpected benefit—I quit smoking.

Members who filled service positions were those who would become long-time sober members. “I didn’t know this was part of working the Twelfth Step; I was doing it because I had to and wanted to.” (SA 163).

We held “Information Meetings” at venues where other 12-Step meetings

Progress was slow, both in my personal recovery and in the growth of the fellowship, but I experienced patches of peace and serenity such as I had not experienced in other 12-Step rooms or thought possible for me.

were held. We put Hotline numbers on bulletin boards at community centers and other appropriate venues. We held regular business meetings and built service committees in accordance with the Twelve Traditions.

At the Karlsruhe Sunday night meeting we usually had twenty members attending every week. S-Anon also held a meeting on Sunday, at the same time and location as the SA

meeting. After our meetings we had fellowship at a local restaurant.

I asked a sober SA member working the Steps to be my sponsor. We called each other. We shared Step work; we prayed together. I participated in check meetings, for myself and for others. Through the SA program, other 12-Step meetings became safe places to carry the SA message to those who might want it, much as the message had been carried to me.

I wrote a Step One and shared it with a group of sexaholics. I reworked my Step Eight and made additional amends. I shared the White Book with my mother and with siblings.

Two “onlies” in the SA Manual written in 1984 were unchanged in the White Book in 1989; they’re in the section *Overcoming Lust and Temptation*. In essence, they say the same thing:

- “Lust only yields to the slow, patient working of the program in the context of others who are doing the same.” (SA 157)
- “Only by admitting lust’s power over me to others in the fellowship could I receive power over my lust.” (SA 159)

To this lustaholic, these statements were—and still are—more promises that the program works. They tell me that I can literally change my mind. They tell me to put into practice the program I’ve been given and to stop practicing what doesn’t work. They could only have found their way into the pages having been practiced and found to work by lustaholics who carried the message to me. They tell me that the search is over and I am at a new start.

LAWRENCE M., *Virginia, USA*



The Greatest Amends You Can Make Is a Changed Life

This Australian old-timer describes the events and his parallel inner evolution throughout the three consecutive stages of his sober life.

I came into SA on February 26, 1999 and by the grace of God and numerous miracles have stayed physically sexually sober since that day. SA did not emerge in Australia until about 1988 in Wentworthville, Sydney and a group in Melbourne that initially met on a park bench. All of the original founding members had ties to AA but have now passed away or left the program. I was part of the second wave of members or second generation, joining in the late 90's.

- *First Stage of My Sober Life*

In the first seven years of sobriety a lot of things changed and had to change. I came into SA with my addictive nature and remember thinking if one meeting was good then I would go to every meeting. At that time there were only three groups in Melbourne.

I did go to a few AA meetings as well, but did not identify as a sexaholic nor did I share at all: I simply listened and was quite in awe of some of the old-timers who were 30 or 40 years without a drink—they were superhuman, in my eyes. Everyone in the group told me to work the Steps but no-one really

wanted me as a sponsee, probably because I questioned everything and started discussions which turned into arguments.

I would arrive early direct from work and set up the room, banners, coffee, topics, agendas, chairs, and signs, and wait for others to arrive. I did listen intently at meetings to the sober members and the unsober members because someone said to me that there would be one gem in every share and I should look for it, and this proved to be true.

I found an SA buddy who was six months ahead of me and we became firm friends—going to dinner before the meeting at the pizza restaurant or coffee afterwards and driving to conferences together. We co-sponsored each other for many of the first years, as we discussed and worked the steps together.

In the early days in the 1990's there was not much in the way of supporting literature and in a moment of inspiration I telephoned SAICO who gave me a contact of an American citizen in SA who was stationed in Japan. Within four weeks a parcel arrived in the form of a very large

envelope containing all the things he had spoken about. I started using the worksheets and adapted some additional ones and am still using them successfully to this very day in guiding sponsees through the Steps.

I continued therapy as well as meetings and I wanted to know if there had been a significant change in me at my one-year anniversary of my sobriety—to which my therapist replied that addicts do not show a change until about seven years sober. I was so proud when I came home on my first anniversary, having received

I asked my wife if she noticed any change in me after a year or so of going to SA and she simply replied “No.” I was gutted!

a chip, I was so excited! I asked my wife if she noticed any change in me after a year of going to SA and she simply replied “No.” I was gutted!

I felt as if I had tried so hard and achieved so little and felt like throwing in the towel and leaving. I managed to keep going because I did not want to be a quitter. I saw that there was no cure for addiction and that it was my lot for life, but if I took my “medicine” daily, I could have a sober and “normal” life.

Things were coming to a head in all areas of my life and when I was approximately one year sober in SA I went to work and snapped—I threw my computer through the wall and

went home using every four-letter word I could think of. I was diagnosed with extreme stress and burnout and was sent on medical leave.

- *Second Stage of My Sober Life*

Things started to change in about the eighth year of sobriety in a way I could actually see and also my long-suffering wife started to notice a few glimpses of recovery. The saying “The greatest amends you can make is a changed life” has been of great meaning to me as my time in SA has placed me in contact with many sick, unreliable and fragmented people who make outlandish promises which were heartfelt and true at the time, but never carried out.

I waited until I had been sober for over 10 years and met with each of my children individually for a coffee and brought up the subject of addiction and sobriety and amends. I spoke about having an “addictive nature” and if an alcoholic picked up a drink they could not stop and I was the same with lust and “playboy” magazines that I should not pick one up because I was addicted.

By the time I was approximately 12 years sober I did suffer another breakdown due to several factors mainly physical. I ran out of prescription medicine prescribed by my doctor and psychologist right back from the start when I suffered a huge burnout initially. My best thinking told me that I was okay and I could just stop taking drugs because I was sober, well, and fully healed. I looked at an R Rated website—no physical touching but just as my wife walked into the room and the guilt and remorse and embarrassment flooded back just like it was yesterday!

That night I packed a small bag and a toothbrush and went to bed normally.

In the small hours of the night, I rolled my work van down the drive so as to make no noise and left. I had some money and continued my external life however my wife and adult children had no idea of my whereabouts. I slept in my van, went to SA meetings, spoke to my sponsor in the USA, all the while in denial, I showered at a church, and no-one knew that anything was wrong.

After a week my family reported me to Missing Persons and to the police who were looking for me. About a week later I received a text message from our eldest daughter which I answered and decided to go and stay with her and sleep on the floor in the lounge room and we talked.

I knew I had to go home but was so full of guilt, pain, remorse and most of all brainpower and sanity. I returned and took up medicine again, confessed to my wife what was in my head and she was kind and accepting and said that she noticed me going downhill in decision making for quite a while but did not intervene (what can you tell an addict?). The major lesson I had learned was that healing has to come about in all three areas and I had disregarded the physical and had not continued to take my medicine—with disastrous ramifications.

- *Third Stage of My Sober Life*

In this later stage of recovery there has been quite a growth in spiritual standing and position. In the early part of the program, I had a good head knowledge of religion and God via my church program but really, I did not know God. I knew a lot about God but I had not had a spiritual experience or a spiritual awakening in the areas of lust, pornography or related areas.

I can remember early in the proceedings being in a SA meeting

on the topic of forgiveness where I had carried a deep-seated hatred and distrust in my mother-in-law because of the hurts caused to us when we got married.

The meeting really hit a nerve and I felt that I needed to forgive her but did not know how to go about it. The speaker said that when we resent it is

SA has become a way of life and become part of my DNA and progressively over the years has changed my thinking and attitudes to be more in line with those of my Higher Power.

like drinking the poison and expecting the other person to die! I knew I was sick and did not wish to die just then so I said a prayer “God, I *cannot* forgive her, but would you be able to forgive her for me”—and a miracle happened. I felt a huge burden lift off my shoulders literally. I walked away from the meeting floating on air and felt free and happy and released—such is the power of the program and my Higher Power.

Service work has been a high priority since joining and I was involved in setting up the first Intergroup in Melbourne and currently hold the position of Chairman and have served in all roles. Intergroup has involvement in organizing State Conferences and also connects to the Australian National Board where I also served as Vice Chairman up to

this year and now as a Group Service Representative (GSR).

Sponsorship has been ongoing since inception into SA and I have lost count of the 100’s of people I have sponsored since I started but currently have the role of guiding seven sponsees through the Steps. Sponsees come from many places including interstate and overseas and I speak with them weekly and have daily contact via email. Attending conventions has been a great part of my growth and I loved attending my last convention in Chicago where I met some great people and witnessed members with

long sobriety and recovery. Attending meetings has been important and I currently attend my home group each Wednesday and also 2-3 other meetings per week which I enjoy.

Summing up, I say that SA is a way of life for me and not just a quick-fix course where I get my Degree or Certificate of Completion and then leave. It has become a way of life and become part of my DNA and progressively over the years has changed my life, my thinking and attitudes to be more in line with those of my Higher Power.

STEVE P., Melbourne, Australia



OLD TIMER'S PRAYER

LORD, KEEP ME FROM THE HABIT OF THINKING I MUST SAY SOMETHING ON EVERY SUBJECT AND ON EVERY OCCASION,

RELEASE ME FROM THE CRAVING TO STRAIGHTEN OUT EVERYBODY'S AFFAIRS,

KEEP MY MIND FREE FROM THE RECITAL OF ENDLESS DETAILS - GIVE ME WINGS TO GET TO THE POINT,

I ASK FOR THE GRACE TO LISTEN TO THE TALES OF OTHERS' PAINS. HELP ME TO ENDURE THEM IN PATIENCE,

BUT SEAL MY LIPS ON MY OWN ACHES AND PAINS - THEY ARE INCREASING, AND MY LOVE OF REHEARSING THEM IS BECOMING SWEETER AS THE YEARS GO BY,

TEACH ME THE GLORIOUS LESSON THAT OCCASIONALLY IT IS POSSIBLE THAT I MAY BE MISTAKEN,

KEEP ME REASONABLY SWEET, I DO NOT WANT TO BE A SAINT - SOME OF THEM ARE SO HARD TO LIVE WITH - BUT BECOMING A BITTER OLD TIMER WOULD BE ONE OF THE CROWNING WORKS OF MY ALCOHOLISM,

GIVE ME THE ABILITY TO SEE GOOD THINGS IN UNEXPECTED PLACES AND TALENTS IN UNEXPECTED PEOPLE,

AND GIVE ME, O LORD, THE GRACE TO TELL THEM SO,

MAKE ME THOUGHTFUL, BUT NOT MOODY; HELPFUL, BUT NOT BOSSY,

WITH MY VAST STORE OF WISDOM, IT SEEMS A PITY NOT TO USE IT ALL - BUT YOU KNOW, LORD, THAT I WANT A FEW FRIENDS IN THE END,

AMEN!

In SA, He Has Found a Loving God

Sober since 1984, he has been doing the same things he did when he first came into the program.



I am Harvey A. My sobriety date is March 8, 1984. I can hardly believe that I am now 81 years old and have been sexually sober for more than 37 years.

My disease started early. By age five, I was already masturbating and began playing “Doctor and Nurse” with a neighborhood girl. By age 10, I began fantasizing about my Sunday school teacher and his wife having sex together when I did not even know

what “sex” was. At that same age, I attended a day camp, and I remember being mesmerized by naked men I saw in the locker room.

When I was 11 my parents decided to move to another state where I went to school in a neighborhood that was quite hostile to people of my religion. Some boys befriended me and offered me protection but in return I had to be sexual with them. This lasted for about three months and led me to

believe that male friendship must include sexual contact.

During my teenage years, I became obsessed with being as sexual as I could with the girls I dated. I also had some sexual experimentation with boys my age, especially those who befriended me.

In college, I met my future wife. From the onset, I became sexually obsessed with her. We married when I was 21. I continued to have frequent sex with her to the point that she took

Everyone thought masturbation was a “normal” activity. As I told myself that, I suddenly realized it wasn’t normal for me. It had become an addiction.

me to her gynecologist for medical advice. He told me that I was acting like “a sex maniac.”

I thought both of them were crazy to say I was having too frequent sex with my wife. Masturbation in secret continued. I was able to stop masturbating for a few weeks after marriage, but soon after, the secret behavior started again.

Over the next many years, my sexual behavior gradually got out of control. I had sex with hundreds of partners, buying sex from both men and women, having multiple “lovers”, practicing group sex, exhibitionism, and voyeurism. I would spend money on my sex partners instead of spending it on my family.

This led to financial problems. I was unable to pay for college tuition for my two youngest of four children. This led to tension between my children and myself. Time and again, I would cry to my wife, “Never again!” only to succumb once more within hours. I would make oaths to God to stop but soon, I would be acting out again. My addiction took me to the gates of hell, but I could not turn back.

Seven months prior to attending my first SA meeting, I discovered the wonders of 12-Step recovery by attending Alcoholics Anonymous. But, after the AA meeting I would jog down to the pornography shop for anonymous sex. I stopped drinking, but I could not stop acting out.

Then one day, after leaving a pornography shop in utter hopelessness, I met, by chance, the same person who had previously informed me about SA and he invited me to my first SA meeting. Out of my mouth suddenly came the words “I am ready.” It was just the two of us at that meeting, but I got the message. What has happened since that day is the miracle of sobriety. I really wanted to stop, but stopping the use of my sexual drug was a day-by-day drudgery.

We had only one SA meeting a week in Nashville back then. That one night was sacred to me. One day at a time I learned about sobriety. The White Book had not been published yet but we had the cherished SA brochure with “The Solution” and “The Problem”—that said it all to me.

When I read the brochure, I saw myself in it; but I was certain that the stipulation of “no sex with self” could not be accurate. Everyone thought masturbation was a “normal” activity. As I told myself that, I suddenly

realized it wasn't normal *for me*. It had become an addiction. This was my moment of clarity. I have remained sexually sober since that moment.

How did I stay sober back then with no White Book and only one meeting a week? One day at a time, that is how. I would make a contract each day with God. I promised just for the day that I would stay sexually sober. I told God that I could not guarantee tomorrow. I would then ask him to keep me sober for the next 24 hours.

But, in my first year, something was still missing. After 11 months of sobriety I began suspecting what it was. Lust was still there, camouflaged as sex in marriage. I realized I needed a period of sexual abstinence from my spouse. I thought about that idea, but finally I asked my wife. She agreed. After six weeks of abstinence, I told her I was ready to resume a sexual relationship. With anger in her eyes and voice she said, "I'm not".

Why was this a shock to me? This was a woman I had sexually disrespected for 24 years. In response to my anger over her resisting the end of our abstinence, my sponsor said "You're an addict. You cannot be the one to know when to stop your abstinence. Let God talk through your wife." God did, almost two years later. Thus, for me, it took 21 months of total sexual abstinence for that part of my illness to subside.

Over time, I have continued to have imperfect victories over my character defects. These include greed, envy, and control, to mention only a few. The miracle today is that I am more aware of them when they appear which permits me to utilize the Steps on them. My sponsor would say that I'm better than I used to be, but not as well as I'm going to get.

Miracles have happened. I no longer have preconceptions about my gender orientation. I came to realize it was not an issue with being gay, straight, or bisexual. It was an issue of addiction. Once I put my drug away, those issues seemed to vanish, one day at a time.

Miracles are also happening in my family. My wife and I are more comfortable with each other than we have ever been. We try not to work

It is very easy, in my opinion, for people to fool themselves about what is sex with self. In my own program, I would consider even watching pornography as a form of sex with self.

each other's programs. We have traveled a lot together, sharing the message of our recovery with SA groups all over the world. We look forward to these times together and enjoy each other's company.

Our travels have taken us to people and their families hurting from sex addiction in countries such as Poland, Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, Denmark, Israel, England, Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and all over the United States. Who would have ever thought that God's will for me, a low bottom drunk, would be to carry the SA message throughout the world?

This is how I stay sober today. It's simple. I do the same things today I did when I first came into the program. I get on my knees each morning and evening to give my day to my higher power. I pray for His will for me. I speak on the phone with people from the fellowship throughout the day. I do a great deal of sponsorship, and whatever the results are for them, I still get help for my program by giving away what has been so freely given to me. I try to attend a recovery meeting at least five days a week. Over the past few years I have meditated approximately an hour a day. I also try to read at least one page of recovery material a day.

I had to learn to let go of shame. To me it is the enemy of the first Step. If I truly believe I have a disease, which I wholeheartedly do believe, then shame has no part in my life. I might have done "bad" things but it does not make me bad in my essence. I have had to learn that I am a sick man getting well, not a bad man getting good.

When I lived in the Sin model I could not recover. When I accepted the disease model of addiction I began to have significant recovery. I also had to learn about forgiveness and not let my disease blame people, places and things for my behavior.

Last but not least is the miracle of finding the God of my understanding. This God, who watched me indulge in all those low-life sex activities, and loved me so much that he brought me to this wonderful fellowship of SA. I now know that there is nothing I can do to keep God from loving me.

What is the true test of my sobriety? For me it is not acting out on lust even when people could never find out. Sexual fantasies are a "no, no"

in my program. It is very easy, in my opinion, for people to fool themselves about what is sex with self. In my own program, I would even consider watching pornography a form of sex with self.

One day I asked our founder Roy K., why he kept the definition so vague concerning the definition of sex with self. I was very surprised with the answer he gave me. He looked me straight in the eye and said "This is not a religion." How I interpreted this was the same way a sponsor said to me—"To thine own self be true." Each of us has to learn to be honest with ourselves.

One day at a time, I want to continue to stay sober. How else can I get to keep all I have found in the fellowship? I have found recovery in SA. I have found friendship. I have found a loving God. I have truly found my home. Each morning I make a decision to accept the gift of sobriety, and each day I receive it again. And as my sponsor would say, "It only gets better."

HARVEY A., Florida, USA



HOW DO YOU GET TO BE AN SA OLD-TIMER? DON'T LUST, WORK THE STEPS, AND DON'T DIE

Grief Forced Her to Practice SA As a Lifestyle

Recovery gave her the tools to help her through the tough journey of the loss of her father.

Grief was foreign to me. I had not experienced it as close as I did until my Dad passed away in June 2021. We were planning for a Father's Day lunch just two days before he had an accident that caused some head injuries. Three days later, we were planning for his funeral.

At the time of his death, I had just finished my Steps Four and Five and was working on Steps Six and Seven with my sponsor. My experience throughout the time of his death is engulfed by gratitude. Grief made me grateful to be an addict because I had tools to help me through the tough journey. I was grateful that I was able to feel and acknowledge the pain, sadness and anger brought by death. I did not block it.

I come from a culture where funerals are more like events. They involve planning, not just by the family, but relatives you didn't even know existed—colleagues, clergy, friends. It's a community affair. This can be very overwhelming especially since most funeral arrangements can take a week or two.

For almost two weeks my family and I attended evening meetings and had to fake a smile whenever well-meaning people came to pay their respect. In these evening meetings, discussions varied from religious topics to what would be worn on the day of the funeral. This was always a trigger. I could not understand why it was taking so long to bury my Dad

I found it very interesting that the Step I had initially wanted to get over and done with was the same Step I was using to stay sane and help me with my recovery.

and why certain people had a say on the funeral program. So I found myself doing my Step Four inventory on resentment constantly.

SA helped me to be very aware whenever triggers like anger came up. I prayed the Fourth Step resentment prayer in addition to other SA prayers. In the heat of anger, some members of my family featured in my inventory. I found it interesting that the Step I

I have serenity, I am not running away from foreign feelings. For that, and how my life is now, I am a very grateful, sober and recovering sex and lust addict.

had initially wanted to get over and done with was the same Step I was using to stay sane and help me with my recovery.

More so, I was also able to communicate better as opposed to stuffing my feelings on things I did not want. Having identified poor communication as a defect in Step Four, I was armed with a proper tool (asset) especially in that period of my life. For example, I did not feel comfortable viewing the body at the morgue even though it is considered a sign of respect. By God's strength I was able to express this discomfort and to my surprise my family did not object.

If it wasn't for SA, I would have had very many angry bouts with my family. I would have said things that I would not have been able to take back and then later I would have had to do amends. So I took it as truth what

other fellows have always shared—it works if you work it.

I put in work because I needed to face this foreign feeling without burning bridges. Plus I was aware that if I slacked, I could easily default to my drug.

There were days I did not feel like talking to anyone but I made the effort to attend a Zoom meeting at least every two days and just listen. Sometimes I did service. I reached out to my sponsor (who is seven hours behind my time zone) constantly. I did my DSR (daily sobriety renewal) as honestly as possible every day. I reached out to other women and read SA material together with my faith-based literature. I prayed daily without fail and surrendered every time something triggering came up. I recited the Third and Seventh Step prayers like my life depended on them. Whenever I felt like crying, I cried, even though there were days I felt my emotions were being a burden.

Eventually, the feeling of grief did not feel foreign. I have not befriended it but I am sort of okay with how it shows up. Sometimes it is ten seconds of holding my breath as the memories flood in, other times it is a sad smile when I see/smell/hear something that has my Dad written on it. I have learned to surrender every single disturbance including memories that can be triggering.

Grief forced me to practice SA as a lifestyle. In some ways, I am glad I experienced it while being in the program. I have serenity, I am not running away from foreign feelings. For that, and how my life is now, I am a very grateful, sober and recovering sex and lust addict.

KAWY, Nairobi, Kenya





Learning to Observe Emotions Coming and Going

Recovery has helped him to feel his emotions instead of numbing and trying to escape from them.

My sponsor defined “insight” as having an understanding of my behaviors. So, to me, having an understanding of why I am addicted to lust and sex has been a huge eye-opener.

For many years, I compared myself to other addicts, and convinced myself those people who were addicted to alcohol and drugs were different than me—I did not have a problem at all. However, the truth is I have an addiction to something as well: lust and lust-driven sex.

What sex did for me in the past was to allow me to not feel weak, worthless, unlovable, ugly, or damaged. Because, during sex, the person I was with was providing me with a sense of false “love” and “worth.” Sex became one of the manipulative tools that I utilized to feed my need to be loved, accepted, and validated. I would utilize sex to find someone who would engage in a relationship with me.

Similar to being addicted to alcohol, meth, cocaine, or heroin, whenever I was in any relationship, I needed more and more and I would cheat on my partner. This was because I am an addict. And whenever my partner was available to have sex, I would get my “fix” from him. And whenever he was not available or around me, I would find someone else to get my “fix,” and I wanted my “fix” all the time.

It did not matter how long the “high” lasted, and I wanted to feel the same high over and over again. Sex made me feel alive and I forgot that I felt sad, alone, frustrated, worthless, weak, and unlovable.

These deep buried emotions are the result of me going through many negative experiences in my life—mainly shame for believing that I was weak and not good enough. I believed my father when he would tell me, that for the rest of my life “I would need someone to be there for me.”

I experienced frustration whenever my father would physically abuse me

and I was trying hard to figure out what I did wrong and how to change. Confusion, whenever he would tell me that he loved me, but then would put me down and call me names. Guilt, that I could not do anything to keep my mother safe from the monster

I will never stop gaining insight into life’s many experiences because Life is constant. It’s how I see things in life that changes.

that was beating her up. Shame, that we were poor and only allowed to use the back part of my grandmother’s house.

Hurt, because I could not be good enough for my father so he could be happy and stop beating us up. Anger, because it did not matter what I did; it was not going to be enough for my father.

Anger and fear of being rejected and left behind, because I was weak and unlovable, and my father would tell me that he would send us away. Anger and fear of being rejected and left behind because the people who molested me as a child would threaten that they would expose my homosexuality to my parents if I did not cooperate with their demands.

I knew how these emotions felt and I avoided feeling them by putting up a wall. I utilized sex to escape from these paralyzing emotions. By being exposed to sex early on in my childhood, I discovered and believed

that sex was the solution to my many problems. However, what became a temporary solution to my many problems turned into a poison.

Today, however, I have learned that these same emotions will come up again. But instead of acting out, I can manage my emotions in positive ways. Being a participant in the Integrated Substance Use Disorder Treatment Program, I have learned to feel my emotions, whether they are positive or negative. Emotions will come and go and I don’t have to negatively react to them because I am aware that they don’t last.

In therapy, my therapist challenged me to use other ways such as exercising, journaling, and talking to my therapist, my sponsor, and other people in my support network. My sponsor Kevin tells me to go outside and look around, to enjoy my surroundings. In doing this, I can observe my emotions coming and going.

Finally, I can appreciate that, today, I am feeling my emotions instead of numbing and trying to escape from them. This only makes me stronger so whenever the next life experience comes around, and one of these emotions comes up, I will be grateful to know exactly how to feel them and live with them.

Every day, life allows me to go through different experiences, and how and what I learn from them is how I would deal with similar experiences in the future in non-violent ways. I will never stop gaining insight into life’s many experiences because Life is constant. It is how I see things in life that changes.

ARVIN C., California, USA



The Convention Was an Injection of Sobriety and Serenity

Almost 60 members gathered in Scotland for in-person fellowship after 1.5 years of meeting online

The last weekend of August was one of the most unforgettable events in my life, when 48 SA and 9 S-Anon members gathered in Stirling for the Scottish SA Convention. Fellows from the UK, Italy, Spain, Germany, Ireland and Netherlands joined us in doing together what we cannot do alone.

When thinking about the convention, covid-19 restrictions worried us a lot but didn't stop us from organizing it. The news which came later gave hope to us all and the number of bookings increased rapidly, despite the risk of canceling the event still hanging over us.

During these intensive days we had an opportunity to attend face-to-face and online meetings (that attracted about another 100 participants), a 12-Step workshop which was run alongside, and listen to well-known international speakers who shared their experience, strength, and hope.

Going to the meetings, chairing them

and reading meant leaving my comfort zone which wasn't easy. When talking with others I understood that this was a challenging time for most of us.

The majority of the SA participants were male. They were talking openly about their achievements and their struggles. Invited to their world, I could see them not only as machos

Strangers at the beginning, we became brothers and sisters for each other; we became a family.

but also as powerless, vulnerable human beings.

Strangers at the beginning, we became brothers and sisters for each other; we became a family. New friendships enriched us and gave us

hope, courage and strength. Each of us came to the convention with a different life story but here, while remaining unique, we were equal.

For most of us this convention was like an injection of sobriety and serenity, important especially for those who still suffer. It was a lesson of healthy self-love and encouragement to forgive myself, without which I'm useless to God and my fellows.

The event was incredibly important to me. Firstly, being the only SA woman there was scary, but, as it turned out, unnecessarily. I felt like if I was in a bubble—safe and well protected by my Higher Power; I felt peace.

Laughing with each other during the entertainment evening had the power to heal many wounds.

The participation of S-Anon members has helped me to see their point of view and to understand the experience of living with an addict, which was a very touching and humbling moment.

Being a booking secretary for this convention was really rewarding. Challenging moments were forgotten easily when I saw the joy and happiness in people's eyes. I do believe that my sobriety and recovery supports others, especially since I've realized that my problems will never



The beautiful convention venue at Stirling University on the shore of lake Airthrey Loch.



Members walking on the mixed terrain trail up to the Spittal Hill Woods

disappear—I have to accept and learn to live with them. Someone said that “The good thing in recovery is that we have our feelings and emotions back, and the bad thing in recovery is ... that we have our feelings and emotions back.”

“You really feel you belong in SA, don't you?” a friend asked me after the convention. “Yes, I do.” SA is a safe haven to me today.

It made me upset when the convention ended but I realized soon that it was the beginning. With this new experience, which made me stronger, I am able to carry the message and to share with others what I have received. It makes me smile when I think of the fact that I'm not a bad person but sick, that recovery is possible if I really want it, and that I'm not alone, because sexaholics are all over the world today.

I hope to see you all next year!

AGA M., Edinburgh, UK



Highlighting Our Trustee Committees



1. SA Group

Elects and sends its GSR to the Intergroup



2. Intergroup

Elects and sends its IGR to the Regional Assembly



3. Regional Assembly

Elects and sends its Delegates to the General Delegate Assembly



4. General Delegate Assembly

Decides SA Policy and elects and instructs the Trustees



5. Board of Trustees

Oversees the SA International Central Office and the Essay, and appoints committees



6. Trustee Committees

Carry out the work entrusted to them by the Board of Trustees

IT (INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY) COMMITTEE

I'm Bruno J. and I've been serving on the SA IT Committee for the past 4 years. Communication technology is playing an increasing role in the basic function of our fellowship. Newcomers are attracted by visiting our websites; literature is purchased and, in many cases, distributed via the web; during the pandemic, many of our face-to-face meetings moved

to video, phone and/or other virtual platforms; chat groups helping members to stay instantly in touch; video/phone platforms are allowing our lower levels of service to more effectively meet as the fellowship spreads across the globe. The Committee plays an important role in enabling many of these functions through various projects. Some questions and projects of the past few years:

- ✓ How can the Buddy List and Sister List be re-structured to provide easy and non-technical access to loner members while still maintaining high security and protection of the personal data?
- ✓ How can SA offer Intergroups and groups the opportunity to update, online, their own meeting information to give SAICO the most up-to-date information possible when newcomers call for help? How can this information be connected to the SA website in a way that respects each meeting's unique desire for anonymity?
- ✓ Who can help maintain the SA website to make it responsive and easy to use, especially for younger members who have high expectations for how websites and tech platforms are supposed to work to provide relevant information in easy and familiar ways? Particularly important is the modernization of our online Store platform.

I'm impressed by the work accomplished by the techy members of the IT Committee. They have worked in Customer Relations Management (CRM) software (Buddy/Sister Lists); JotForm and Excel (online meeting update system, RAC); WordPress, Commerce (website, Store); PHP, MySQL, Google Maps API (fellowship-wide on-line meeting finder). Wow!

We need more help as the technology

needs of SA continue to rise. If you have been sober more than 2 years and have a few hours a month, please consider joining the fellowship's IT committee. Any level of IT experience, from qualified professional to casual user is valuable: we need people to both help with the work of IT projects and make sure the final products make sense to the end user. Contact SAICO for an application. We hope to see you at our next meeting!

TRANSLATIONS COMMITTEE

The main purpose of the SA fellowship is to carry the message to the sexaholic who still suffers, but to do that when the fellowship today ranges to the ends of the earth? Translations is one of the crucial channels to get in touch with SA worldwide. Although probably all of us want to have things done as simply and as easily as possible, some regulations are needed and some legal rules to be followed (e.g. copyrights). The members of the committee take care of the documents which need to be filed to launch and later finalize the translation process. Here is the personal experience of a member of the Translations Committee:

I'm Duane D. and my service on the Translations Committee of the SA Board of Trustees has been a learning experience from the beginning in 2018. I was excited about becoming part of the Committee largely because I spoke a non-English language. I was told that being proficient in a foreign language was not a requirement for serving on the committee. I was given the role as Committee Liaison to the Spanish Language Translations Committee, my second language of expertise, soon after coming on the Committee. My first task was to learn and administrate the multi-step process from Requesting Permission to Translate to Permission to Publish a particular SA literature publication.

Mastering and assimilating the Translation Process has been a prolonged process. However, it is essential to protect Copyright and to help ensure the integrity of Translations Projects. Today, I also serve as Committee Liaison for two other SA language committees. And I don't speak a word of either language. Don't

need to. I am now excited to be part of a team of fellow SA servants in facilitating the spread of SA Literature and videos as requests come to the Translations Committee from SA around the world.

Service in SA enhances my recovery. Specifically, serving on the Translations Committee has offered many opportunities to practice humility (I don't know it all, really not anything, I need help, I am part of a team and not indispensable). I have seen modeled by other members a simple desire to be helpful with no concern for personal gain. In short, I have seen a genuine spirit of service that I want for myself.

The Translations Committee work is a vital part of our 5th Tradition. The spread of AA literature has been a key component of its growth (AABB, p. xix). If you are considering growing in SA service, the Translations Committee is seeking more members who want to serve. Knowledge of a non-English language is not needed. I speak from experience. Contact SAICO for more information: saico@sa.org

Worldwide Fellowships

The Russian-speaking Fellowship Is Over 20 Years Old

The current membership of the Russian-speaking Intergroup comprises groups from Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. Until recently, SA members from Ukraine have been an active part of the RIG, but now they decided to become an independent Intergroup. There is an active community in Kazakhstan, with a face-to-face group in Almaty and several members in Astana. Also, there are “loners” in Tajikistan, Estonia, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan, and other regions.

In Russia there are about fifteen face-to-face meetings per week. Most of them are in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Kazan. In some cities face-to-face meetings appear from time to time, but due to the small number of participants they close after a while. Most newcomers come from other 12 step fellowships (AA, NA, ACA).

Our estimated membership is about 130-150 active members at the moment, of whom 30% female.

Online groups are very actively developing—today there are more than 30 meetings per week, at different times: morning, afternoon, evening and even night meetings! This is very convenient for those who live in time zones other than Moscow, as we have 11 time zones, which currently observe times ranging from UTX+02:00 to UTC+12:00.

There are regular online meetings for newcomers, in which sober members share their experience and answer questions. There are also speaker meetings, seminars, and H&I work (carrying the message to psychologists). Quite a large percentage of people have been sober for a year or more, and the number of sponsors is also growing.

But there are also painful issues, such as frequent relapses among newcomers, the rather slow development of groups in small towns, and the small number of people willing to serve the fellowship at the intergroup level. Therefore, the Russian-speaking community always needs experience and support from their worldwide fellowship.

Our fellowship is over 20 years old. Every year there we hold a convention. The 11th SA Convention will be held in St. Petersburg this autumn. Our beautiful website sa12.org provides information for potential newcomers as well as regular members. We also record talks and post them on YouTube. We collaborate with a popular online channel, which contains anonymous recorded interviews with SA members, which has already had over a 1,000,000 views! Many newcomers have come in through this way.

DIMA K., Kazan, Russia



In The Limelight

The Fellowship in New Zealand Is More Than Meets the Eye!

New Zealand has a relatively young fellowship with much to learn from the experience of other international groups. With five main centers and an intergroup that has been in existence for approximately three years, we have the structure in place to allow proliferation of the fellowship Down Under.

The fellowship has its beginnings in the Auckland Thursday fellowship in 2004. From here the fellowship has grown.

It came to Christchurch around 2011, just after the devastating earthquake. Now there are about 15 members coming regularly and up to 20 attendees some weeks. We've been greatly helped by connecting our group to the fellowship by organizing a Zoom link.

In 2013 a newcomer to the Auckland group was relocating to Tauranga. Putting him together with another member allowed the beginnings of a Tauranga Fellowship. They now have a regular attendance of around 10-12 members, some in person, and some when travel problems, on phone.

From this group, the Hamilton fellowship began in 2019, which has fluctuated between 2 and 6 members over the 2 years in existence with currently 6 members meeting weekly.

The Wellington Fellowship has had a more tentative start with low numbers and people committed to coming back but has gradually gained momentum and sober members. Currently it has 9 regular members.

In fact the fellowship is no doubt poised to increase in numbers thanks to the Covid lockdown. Being forced to work from home sets the conditions for many to revert to their computers and acting out. We had an increase in 2020 after lockdown, and we expect the same as we emerge from lockdown again. As Zoom and internet calling increases in familiarity, so too is there an increase in members calling overseas for support.

Where sponsors working the program locally are perhaps limited, there has been a growing awareness that the international body is strong, and it is not uncommon to hear of members with sponsors in the UK or America. The Melbourne Australia and Nashville Big Book study is gaining popularity; insights are shared at our corresponding meetings; and the learnings are invaluable.

We are pleased to belong to a fellowship that, like the Transformers' catch phrase, is more than meets the eye!

COLIN H., Tauranga, New Zealand



Being of Service by Connection Groups with Speakers

The US Southeast Region (SERSA) established a protocol for speakers that requires at least three years of sobriety, approval of their sponsor, and confirmation of support of the SA principals and sobriety definition. We maintain a list of potential speakers off the internet. When a request comes from a group for a speaker, we send a blind copy email to all potential speakers and ask them to contact the group making the request. The list itself is not shared.

I like to say that those speaker meetings are good. If I listen, there is always something I need to hear. When a meeting focuses more on the solution and when we focus on our own experiences, I get more out of the meeting. I say, I have a PhD in the problem, but I am still in kindergarten on the solution. I want to hear others share more

about the solution in their journey. When I have spoken as a guest or at virtual meetings, I focus on the solution. I talk about how the steps have made me a better person who is willing to be of service to others.

In-person meetings have always been more effective for me, but now with limited social interaction, our virtual speakers can be an important and valuable tool to help carry the message. With tools like Zoom, WhatsApp, and other virtual video services we can get the next best thing to being in an actual room together. I have worked with sponsees overseas and when I only use audio I cannot see the agony in a person's eyes, or their head lowered in shame, or them holding their hands over their face. I need to see the emotion in a person's face. The virtual meeting with video technology can be a very powerful tool.

If your group would like to have a guest speaker, send a request to saspeakers@gmail.com. Provide the details of date, time of day, time zone, and if you have any specific requests for topics.

Any SA member who meets the requirements listed above can have their name and contact information added to our list. Send an email to saspeakers@gmail.com with your first name and last initial, years of sobriety, time zone where you reside, and if you have any special circumstances or parts of your story that might be more unique.

Please pass this information to fellows, groups, intergroups, and regions. We welcome group requests and speaker volunteers. We want as many speakers as possible so we have a better chance of helping groups in need of a speaker.

KEN J., *Georgia, USA* 

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New SA Groups October 2021

North, Central, & South America

- ◆ Columbus, Mississippi, USA 
- ◆ Elko, Nevada, USA 
- ◆ Jefferson City, Missouri, USA 
- ◆ Lilitz, Pennsylvania, USA 
- ◆ Lincoln, Nebraska, USA 
- ◆ Lebanon, Pennsylvania, USA 

SAICO Financial Position Quarter July - September 2021

◆ Revenue	\$289,939
◆ Expenses	\$188,005
◆ Net Income	\$101,934
◆ Prudent Reserve	\$132,676

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



SA Notice Board

saico presents



keep it **simple**
SA INTERNET MARATHON

Nov 18-19, 2021
simhp.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS?
This is YOUR notice board!
Send your SA-related announcements to:
essay@sa.org



Haven't played the Essay Game yet? Join every quarter more than hundred other fellows from all over the world for 28 days of practicing new Recovery Tools!

For more info or to register, contact:
theessaygame@gmail.com

One day at a time

Here are a few helpful links to help you trudge the road of happy destiny.

- SA White Book
- AA Big Book
- SA Anytime Meeting link
- SA Speaker Recordings
- SA Fireside Chat podcast
- SA Daily Reprieve podcast
- SAICO Book Store

Discover this wonderful new resource:
<https://linktr.ee/SArecovery>

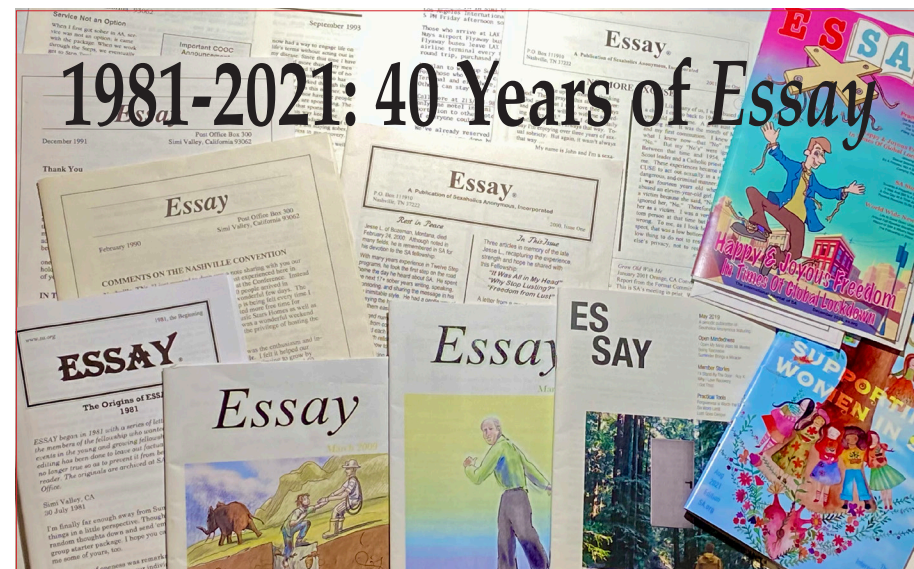
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Essay is looking for a Female Assistant-Editor

Are you a female native English speaker who loves editing short articles and proofreading, and wants to join our team?

Contact: essay@sa.org

COMING IN DECEMBER



1981-2021: 40 Years of Essay

NEXT EDITION In the December issue, read all about the history of the Essay magazine; how it has promoted the recovery of members worldwide.

When Did the Essay Get Started?
By whom, when and why? Get to know all the ins and outs, and enjoy many historical visuals and facts.

Serving on the Essay Team
Be inspired by amazing stories of previous editors.

Anecdotes From Our Readers
Fellow members share how the Essay magazine helped their recovery down through the years.

Committees & Fellowships
Be inspired by two Trustee Committees and by two local fellowships currently in the limelight.

SUBMIT YOUR STORY

February 2022 edition: 2022: Year of CFC (Stories due Jan 1) Send us your experience as a Correctional Facilities sponsee or sponsor.

May 2022 edition: Sponsorship—Benefits and Challenges (stories due April 1) Sponsees and sponsors alike, what is the tool of sponsorship doing for you? How is it helping your daily recovery?

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

October 2022 edition: The Slogans—How to Use Them in Our Daily Lives (stories due Sept 1) The Slogans are one of the best kept secrets in SA. How do you use them?

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

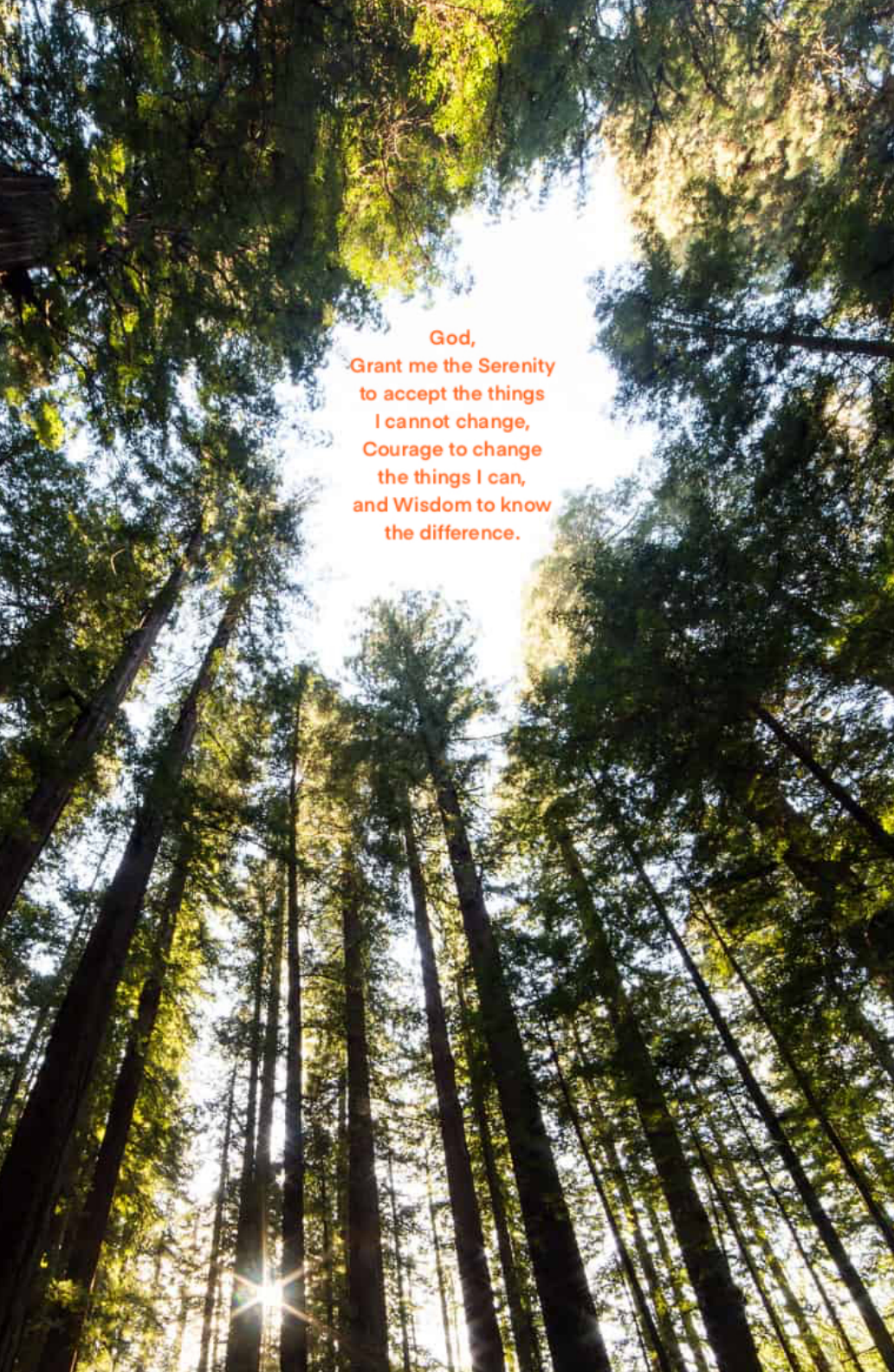
THE TWELVE STEPS OF SA

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

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

THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF SA

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



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