

ESSAY

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SEXAHOLICS ANONYMOUS

DECEMBER 2022 | SA.ORG

FUN

IN



RECOVER



READ THE STORY OF DAN K., ROY K.'S SON



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.

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*).

Sexaholics Anonymous STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLE

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

NEED HELP WITH YOUR SEXUAL THOUGHTS OR ACTIONS?

If you want to stop lusting and become sexually sober and need to find SA near you or wish to learn more about Sexaholics Anonymous, visit: www.sa.org

Editors' Corner

"Fun in Recovery" – it sounded most unrealistic at first.

But we kept coming back and over time, we developed a liking for meetings and for connection with other members. By working our program we came to see the positives in every situation and even started to enjoy life's rainy days. We, who used to be habitual moaners, now actively looked about us for reasons to be cheerful and grateful.

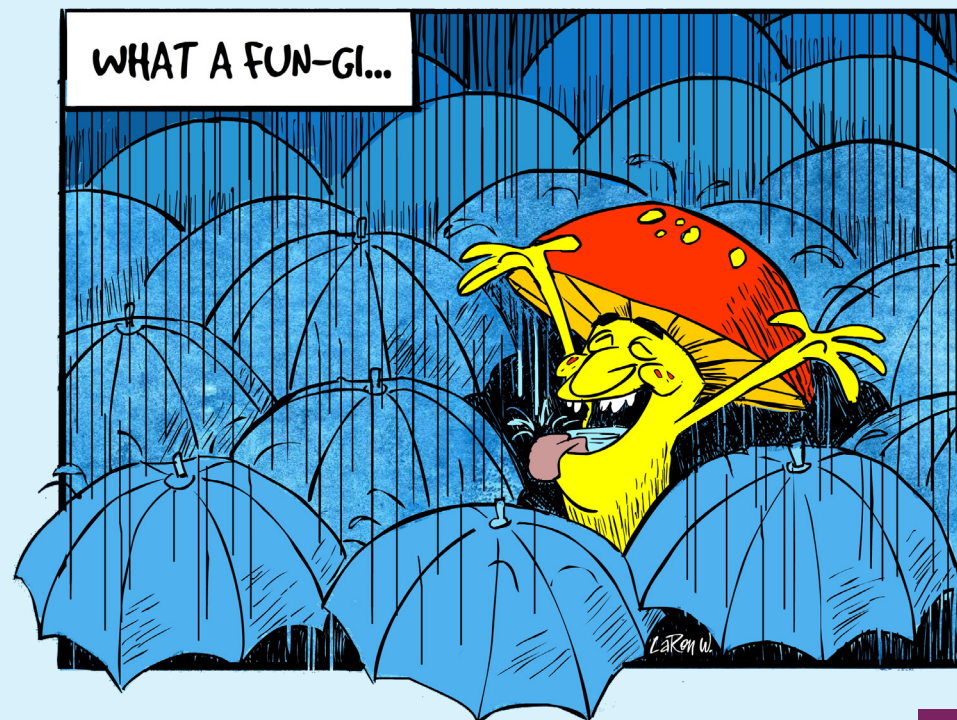
In this edition, we invite you to read testimony from around the world to the joy of recovery. Read how one member in Israel found love and joy in a new home group; how a member from the UK learned to have fun with his own story when he performed a mime act at a talent show; how a recovering female member in Kenya realized a childhood dream when she became a motor-biker; also, fun by the shores of Lake Galilee where members set up a tent-camp after the Regional Convention in Jerusalem; and then, the member from Brisbane who discovered a deep and fulfilling joy through serving the fellowship at a variety of levels.

We are proud to present too in this issue a transcript and recording of the historical talk given by Roy K.'s son, Dan, at the Armenian convention in October.

And last, but not least, our special feature on page 34—our brand-new ESSAY website: essay.sa.org available in nine different languages and recordings!

We truly hope you have lots of joy and fun reading this edition!

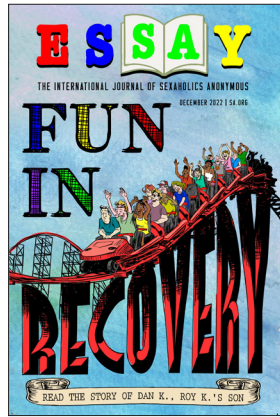
THE EDITORIAL TEAM
essay@sa.org



December 2022

But we aren't a glum lot. If newcomers could see no joy or fun in our existence, they wouldn't want it. We absolutely insist on enjoying life. ... We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous, and free.

AA 133-134



On the cover: Recovery and socializing add color and joy to the lives of thousands of fellows all over the world.

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"E" pages are online Essay only

What's Going On In SA



Fulfilling Our Goal To Be There

SA as an organization stays strong. We have face-to-face meetings in over 70 countries where newcomers can find recovery to change their lives. We also have hordes of online meetings, so that any of us can find a live meeting at any time of the day. We are indeed fulfilling our goal to “be there” whenever someone needs us.

Conventions. With COVID fears mostly behind us, we have face-to-face conventions again! Warsaw in July 2023 and Jerusalem in January 2024. The international conventions bring together SA friends from all over the world. There's nothing like introducing yourself and having fifty voices echo your name!

SIM. The SA Internet Marathon 2022 did not happen, to the disappointment of many—but it's not dead! We are restructuring the SIM committee to create a way for SIM to be sustainable over the years. It will be back in 2023.

Finances. The current inflationary economics are affecting us. For the first time in a few years, we have a deficit budget for 2024. The deficit is covered by our reserves, but we need the fellowship to step up contributions to cover the increased costs. You can increase your contributions at local levels, which will flow downward, or you can contribute directly to SA at sa.org/contribute. Remember: we accept no outside donations, so our finances depend completely on us.

Correction Facilities. This month wraps up the “Year of CFC Service,” in which our Correctional Facilities Committee has expanded its outreach to new countries and new facilities!

Web ESSAY. Our bimonthly magazine is now available in a web version directly from sa.org. This is a great new initiative to reach our members, particularly the younger ones who are online all the time. Paper magazines are so “twentieth century.” Read all about it on p. 34.

Census. We're actively registering meetings into our ten-year census. This registration will soon replace the “Meeting Finder,” so that meetings can change their contact information directly. If your meeting isn't registered, do so today! See p. 32.

Women in SA. We have several initiatives going on to make SA more welcoming to women—a problem that's been evident for years. I've been part of a home group that had a dozen women in its fifty members meeting weekly. We'd like all of our meetings to be as open.

Service Work for You. Finally, I encourage each of you to consider service work to take your recovery to the next level. Local groups need service. We also need people to serve at Intergroups, Regions, committee work, and even General Assembly Delegates. Talk with your sponsor about what you can do.

Eric H., Florida, USA
Trustee Chair



In-Person Meetings Meant Joining SA Instead of Being a Loner to Her



DEAR ESSAY, THANK

you for the ESSAY magazine which I enjoy a lot every two months. I joined SA in pandemic times, two years ago, which was a good thing in one way, as there were very many daily Zoom meetings available. This was crucial to safeguarding my physical sobriety, countless times. I got something of a reputation as a strange Brit, who showed up at all hours of the night in USA meetings, for this reason. I saw it as going to any lengths. However, I do find that attending my home group in-person has far more benefit for my recovery. I feel a real connection with my fellows at an in-person meeting, with the others' physical presence, non-verbal language, readily exchanged glances and smiles, which I just can't get

on Zoom. Let alone the informal fellowship after the meeting ends. In my case, this is not at all easy to get. I live a 70 minutes train journey from the only SA group meeting in-person I am aware of in my county. It is a late evening meeting, so attendance means a hotel room, and a train home the next day. It's an unsafe area here for me to get home very late at night. So it's a real commitment. And I am female, and all the other members are male. But it means so much to me to attend in-person, not just via a hybrid link, approximately every month or two, that I undertake the real financial and time sacrifice entailed. Once a month, the group has dinner in a local restaurant, before the meeting. We book a table, for the distant members like me to

spend time with the local group in fellowship. The first time I attended the meeting in-person, fairly newly sober, I stared at the floor the whole time. But it got more comfortable, steadily, and now I feel at home there. I have no issues at all with being the only woman in the group. They treat me like a blood sister, and there is no lust on any part, as far as I know. When I first attended the group's annual Recovery Day, in-person, with many members there all day—after 4 months of multiple daily Zoom meetings—I burst into tears, and said, "I have joined SA today: until now, I have just been floundering around in my own front room". That's what meeting in-person means to me.

KATHIE S., UK



SA Meetings Can Be Held Just About Anywhere ...



Monday meeting
Oberhausen, Germany



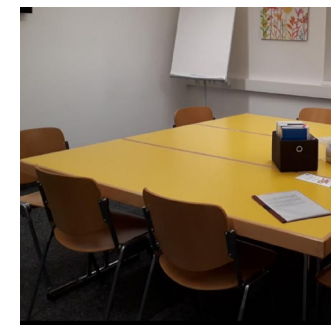
Wednesday meeting
Mechelen, Belgium



Three Legacies group
Jerusalem, Israel



Occasional coffee-shop meeting,
New Delhi, India



Friday group
Dornbirn, Austria



Share your photos

Send your meeting place to essay@sa.org. Remember to include your name, address, group name, and location of the meeting.

Participating In The Fellowship Of SA

We absolutely insist on enjoying life!



A crowd of members from the US, Slovakia, Ireland, and UK on the shores of the Galway Bay in Ireland



Finnish fellows in Helsinki at the end of a Step workshop expressing the real Connection on the liferaft of SA



Kayaking on the Donau in Slovakia



Fellows practicing "Inner child work" at a shopping mall in Segovia, Spain



Belgian fellows hiking for three days towards the coast last spring



Ukrainian members eating out at a fellowship day



Who doesn't love seeing old-timers making fun of themselves? Here a UK veteran playing the Master of the Universe at a Spanish convention



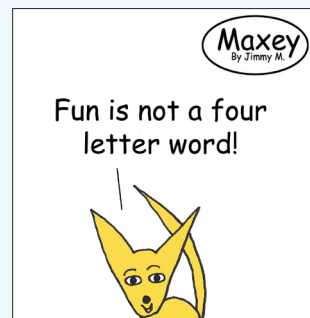
American sponsor Priscilla, German spousee Elaine, and Polish grand-spousee Zofia together on top of Munich TV tower with the Alps in the back



You haven't really enjoyed food yet if you've never participated at an Iranian meal—here fellows and their wives in Tehran, Iran



Coffee, chit-chat and laughter among fellows at the famous Rambla Catalonia in Barcelona, Spain



Snow fun with child and spouse on a cold winter day in the Netherlands





Feasting after the first post-Covid face-to-face meeting in the Philippines



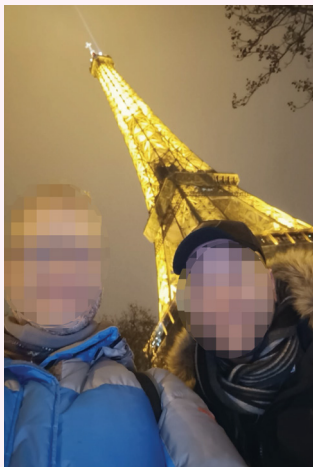
BBQ at gorgeous Lake Conzanz, bordering Germany, Austria and Switzerland



Rina in New Jersey has fun in creative cooking—here is her struesel pumpkin bread that competes with her husband's regular pumpkin bread



Visiting the majestic Eiiif Tower after the very first French recovery day with 20 members and a successful Intergruop meeting in beautiful Paris



A Spanish fellow dancing with the inexhaustible Jewish fellows at an Israeli convention



Charity from Russia and her lovely adopted daughter Basilise who has autism; both of them are fun anywhere they go



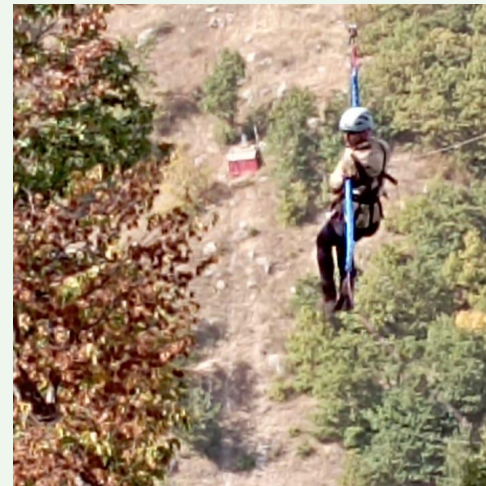
David on his motorbike enjoying the Scottish scenery near Edinburgh, UK



Slovakian members playing music in the garden of one of them



The unique joy of attending the wedding of an SA fellow (to the left) in McLean, Virginia, USA



Waclaw from Poland attached to a zip-line in the wild mountains of Tsaghkadzor, Armenia





Rachana traveling for 10 days with her very good US friends around her region in India



"The most beautiful thing of the SA fellowship is to recover one's family," says Juan from Murcia, Spain



Kathie S. from the UK testified she had "the best fun in years" with two other SA ladies at her first ever convention in Exeter, 2021



Polish Hubert in an indie art gallery of the underground art scene in Yerevan, Armenia



Experiencing the Real Connection at the 12th Annual Northeast Florida SA Marathon Day, USA



Old-timer Nancy S. from Ohio dressing up for celebrating Halloween with her family and friends



Father and son building a snowman in the suburbs of Jerusalem, Israel



Serving lunch at a local recovery day in the vibrant desert city of Ahwaz, Iran



French fellows indulging themselves in a jumping castle at the wedding of a member's stepdaughter



Brothers and sisters enjoying a bowling outing in Jerusalem, Israel

Recovery brings out the child again while playing on a slide at a playground in Sydney, Australia



Share your fun pics

Send your socializing or fun-in-recovery photos to essay@sa.org. We will make the faces anonymous.

Remember

Include your name, address, group name, location and description of the fun activity

Keep It Simple, Stupid!

Working a simple program and taking little steps is what has worked for this old-timer since he got sober on Nov 11, 1996.

I have always worked a simple program because that is the only way I'm able to do it. I wasn't able to write my inventory like the AA Big Book recommends with the columns system. But on page 109 in the SA White Book the directions were simple which allowed me to do my inventories.

I think in pictures so when I read in the White Book, "Work the Steps, work the Steps, work the Steps," I pictured myself at a desk doing inventories and I got overwhelmed. I'm much more comfortable with the term "applying the Steps" than working them.

Most of my recovery has come from pain, not intellect. When the pain of holding on becomes greater than

the fear of letting go, is when I surrender to God's will. God has always had the solution before I even knew what the problem was. When I got to SA my sponsor told me to turn my program over to God and I will be doing exactly the right thing at the right time.

When I was in my 60s I was killing myself trying to avoid going bankrupt. I realized I couldn't do it, so I prayed to God for the willingness and courage to go bankrupt if that was his will for me, and in one second he lifted the whole obsession. Then a deep voice said, "You mean to tell me you don't believe

God knows exactly what He's doing with your life?"

And then He laughed. One week later a buyer called and I sold the restaurant. That experience changed my life forever.

I had a survival technique that allowed me

to function in life under all conditions, it made me fearless. I could drive my truck through blizzards, go into dangerous parts of cities at night and sleep in my truck so I could be first in line

The amazing thing about recovery is the longer I practice doing it, the bigger it gets until it becomes a way of life, just like my addiction did.

to load in the morning. My wife called that character defect "Mule Head," I'm sure it was hard to live with. I had no clue it was a character defect, I couldn't imagine not having it, I thought it was great. God knew what it was and when the time was right He started to remove it. I had purchased a new truck, and there was a CD on safety in it and I played it.

It listed all the reasons I should wear a seat belt. I became so angry that I threw the CD out the window. About twenty minutes later I reached up and put the seat belt on. I had nothing to do with the decision. I didn't put it on every time I got into the truck, but every time I thought about it I put it on. This was the beginning of a major attitude change that I didn't even know I needed. This is the 7th step prayer in action!

The same attitude reared its ugly head years later when I had a relative try to extort money from me. My response was, over your dead body. It

got to the point that they were going to call the cops if I didn't leave their property. When I got home I told God I didn't know what to do. I'm willing to do whatever you want me to do, just make it clear.

That night I had a dream that I was holding that relative in my arms and the feeling of love was the strongest I've ever felt. The message was to make amends to him and not say why I resented him, but just clean up my side of the street. My part was I had gotten carried away telling his girlfriend why I didn't owe him anything. The next day I went to make the amends and God had gone before me and prepared them to accept it. The battle was over.

The amazing thing for me was that there was no ego involved. I didn't feel like they won or like I gave in. There was a good feeling in me like I did

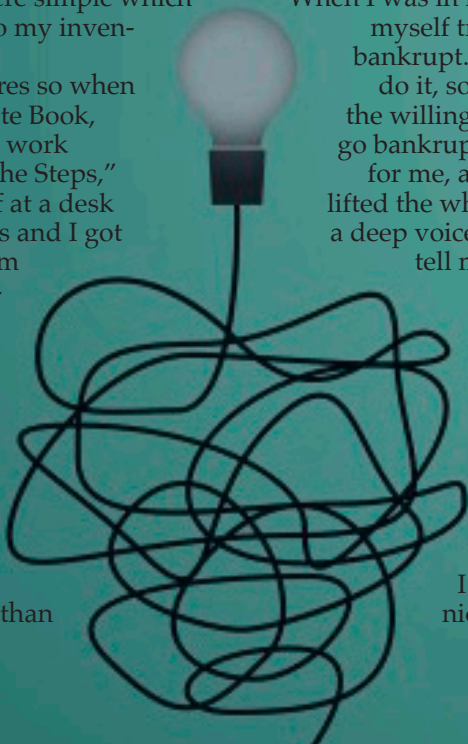
the right thing, I took the high road for a change. They haven't really changed, but I have. Every time I think of them I pray for them.

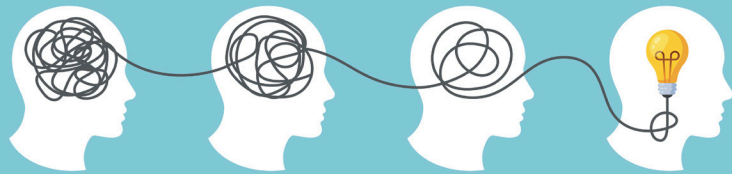
Every time I pray, I change a little bit. Every time I pray, I believe a little bit more. Every time I pray, God

becomes a little bit bigger in my life. Every time I call my sponsor, I hear the message. And it's never what I want to hear. I've had four sponsors and every time I called them, it was either about work or my wife and I have never had one of them support me on my complaining.

The amazing thing about recovery for me is the longer I practice doing it, the bigger it gets until it becomes a way of life, just like my addiction did. This program will ruin a perfectly good addiction! Lol.

MIKE K., Oregon, USA





What If?

Loneliness, rejection, and fear have acted as a soundtrack in my head for as long as I can remember. They form rhythm and melodies filled with dissonance. Each track is made complete with a verse, chorus, and bridge:

- Loneliness acts as the verse, with its imagery of ways people have made me feel alone or left out.
- Rejection comes next, with that repetitive and familiar chorus of “never being good enough” and “certainly not capable of being loved, valued or seen.”
- Fear arrives in the bridge, as loneliness and rejection meet in the crescendo of every broken dream or promise.

Is it possible, in recovery, to change the familiarity of the rhythm and melodies that I’ve come to walk and dance to?

- What if, instead of loneliness, I feel gratitude—the verses instead painted in the bright colors of the people who show up for me?
- What if, rather than rejection, I seek acceptance? The chorus repeating the truth that “I am enough because He (my Higher Power) is enough”?
- What if, instead of fear, I feel contentment in its place—gratitude and acceptance now acting as the apex of the song, arriving exactly where I am in this moment?

What if?

JENNIFER J., *California, USA*



Before getting sober in SA in 2010, I was afraid that I would die before having a chance to delete my browsing history.

Everyone would know my shameful secret. I laughed so hard when I saw this picture of a medical alert bracelet that reads: “Delete My Browser History.”

In a medical emergency, medical bracelets speak on your behalf if you’re unable to communicate details of your unique medical condition. Sexaholism is a unique medical condition too. In the event of an emergency, the biggest favor someone can do for an untreated sexaholic would be to “Delete My Browser History!”

SHIM F., *New Jersey, USA*



Not Taking Myself Too Seriously

A few days ago one of my friends came up to me with good news. “I have a boyfriend!” she said. I was so happy for her. Then it struck me that now I was (and still I am) the only single girl amongst my various groups of friends.

So, into action—3,2,1 go, beginning with self-pity: “Nobody wants me. I’m too fat, too ugly, too stupid. I will be forever alone,” and so on. Next, to resentment; and so, “Why can’t I have what I want or what I think I need? I’m praying, I’m surrendering, attending meetings, doing my stepwork! Why me?” I actually began to cry on my way home. And then it hit me that these were crocodile tears. In my own silly, selfish, ego-maniacal way, I was enjoying these pitiful emotions. And the Oscar goes to ... ME, King Baby!

The next morning, I sent a message to my sponsor sharing all that had happened and how I was feeling about it. I was worried about a relapse because those kinds of emotions can lead to fantasizing, at the very least. And I thought, “Gosh, if I feel that low, magnifying in my head the consequences of my friend’s good news, that would I be like if a real tragedy occurred like, say, if my grandmother died?” I love my grandmother so much. I was deeply upset just at the thought. “Well, push her down the stairs and let’s start the process of getting over it today,” my sponsor said.

I laughed all morning. It’s exactly what I needed to hear. I love the irony and sarcasm of recovery humor and I especially admire those who can laugh at themselves. Having a laugh at my skewed thinking really helps me.

Another example: One of the people on my Fourth Step list is a boy

from kindergarten; he used to spit his cherry-pits onto my plate because I was always the last one eating and so the only one still with a plate! I was mad at his behavior! Even now, twenty-five years later, I still get mad whenever I think of it. My sponsor said to me, “Right. Next time you see him, I want you to run him over with your car and yell at him, ‘You shouldn’t spit cherry-pits onto other people’s plates!’ Then drive away leaving it all behind. Or you can let it go and forgive him. Whichever.”

Irony, humor, laughing at it, not taking myself too seriously is a great tool to disarm the tension, the negativity, the dis-ease. It always cheers me up to read in the AA Big Book, “But we aren’t a glum lot [...] So we think cheerfulness and laughter make for usefulness [...] But why shouldn’t we laugh?” (AA 132)

CHIARA D., *Bassano del Grappa, Italy*





Recovery Can Also Provide a Community

A new home group taught him that if you ain't having fun, you're doing it wrong.

When I first started my recovery journey I was plagued with the usual incessant buzz inside my head that only addicts and compulsive neurotics can identify with:

- ✓ I gotta get better QUICKLY before I lose my mind.
- ✓ When do I get outa here? I'm feeling fine and don't need this.
- ✓ Who is that guy and why is he looking at me funny?
- ✓ Can they notice me when I'm looking at them funny?
- ✓ I'm so happy!
- ✓ I'm so sad ...
- ✓ Once I get sober I am going to help everyone I can find, it's my mission!
- ✓ Why me, God? Why me?

Now don't get me wrong, I think

that some of these, or indeed all of them are outright outrageously funny and crazy (especially my virtuosic ability to harbor two thoughts that are complete opposites at the same time, and believe them!); However, I also know for a fact that I had to walk through these types of mental "Blank Spots" and "Twists" (see chapter three of the Big Book) in order to recover.

That being said, it is not a coincidence to me that the instances when I had this type of compulsive craziness inside of me was also the time when I used to attend meetings in which recovery was hard to find and most of the members were only focusing on "hanging on" or "surviving" without our drug, lust.

I thought that was all there was—I can't live with my acting out and I can't live without it so I drag myself across town three times a week and sit in a room with people suffering the

same fate and together we pass the time until we recover or die, whichever comes first.

One day a member came up to me after a meeting and asked me where I lived which was strange since no one had ever done that before and I thought we didn't ask those types of questions since we are called Sexaholics ANONYMOUS (obviously I had no idea what that actually meant). I told him the name of my neighborhood and he mentioned that he was from the same area and that together with another member they were planning on starting a new group that would cater to that area of the city. He asked if I wanted to join and help start the group and, thinking that I'd be better off with a group closer to home either way, I gladly joined in the endeavor.

I don't know if this experience saved my life but it is no doubt one of those pinnacle moments in my journey.

We started the group and called ourselves "The Three Legacies." We met in a tiny little room that was an acupuncture clinic by day. We focused on the Steps and Traditions. We didn't treat recovery as a duty or our fate as a sorry one. We laughed and had fun. I took one of the two other members as my sponsor and hit the ground running. More members joined and the room was getting small so we started renting a bigger place in the neighborhood even though by this point most of them came from all over the city (and even some from outside the city!).

I noticed something curious started happening to me: I came to the meeting early and left almost 2 hours after it ended—and I wasn't the only one. During the meeting I was smiling and cracking jokes. People had a different look in their eyes and for the first time I saw what Jess L. coined as the "SA

Shine" all around me. The place we rented had a football and ping pong table where we played before and after meetings, while other members sat and talked with each other for

I thought that was all there was—to drag myself across town three times a week and sit in a room with people suffering the same fate and together we pass the time until we recover or die, whichever comes first.

hours. We even got complaints from the neighbors that the banter was too loud!

As "The Three Legacies" was established to cater to a specific area in our city, and many members were living very close to each other, something much bigger was happening around us—a community was forming with the group at its center; fellows were having meals together and going bowling, the students of the group studying for finals together while the married members had playdates for their children together, going to the movies or out on the town, trips to the desert camping under the stars or going to music concerts—you name it.

The opportunity to be a part of this community truly saved my life because if all this program had to offer

me was being a “dry drunk”—not acting out but also not enjoying a second of life without the drug—I would have been out that door long ago. I need much more than that, I need to be happy, joyous, free, and experience abundant feelings of love

and fun all around me. My home group has provided me with all of that and taught me that “if you ain’t having fun, you’re doing it wrong.”

MATAN C., Jerusalem, Israel 

When I attended my first SA meeting in Manchester, UK, back in the winter of 2003, SA was still very new here, and there were very few members, hardly any of them sober. There was no welcome, no joy, no message of a positive and joyful sobriety. “And this is what SA is all about?”, I thought. So I went back to my old ways, until my disease almost killed me.

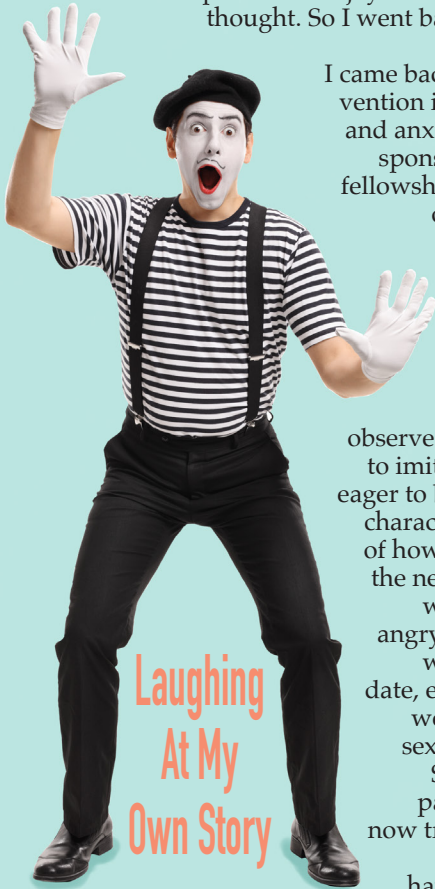
I came back in 2007 and that summer there was a convention in Ammerdown, Somerset. Full of insecurity and anxiety, I decided to attend—more to please my sponsor than to please myself. There was joy and fellowship all around the house, but still the feelings of “inadequate, unworthy, alone and afraid” kept lingering in my life. So I was rather withdrawn and not very eager to connect. Then came Saturday evening, traditionally the “talent evening” at our conventions and, don’t ask me how, I put my name down.

I am an amateur mime artist and, as such, I observe peoples’ gestures and personalities in order to imitate them in mime. Still full of insecurity but eager to be “part of”, I did a presentation of different characters in our SA meetings. I did an impression of how the long-time sober member walks in, how the newcomer walks in, and some other clowning ways of behaving in a meeting. I imitated the angry member, the shy one, the very old member walking in and not remembering his sobriety date, etc. To my surprise, people in the convention were roaring with laughter. I didn’t know that sexaholics could actually be people who laugh.

Since then, I have been asked to do the same parody at every convention I have attended. I now try to see the funny side of my old acting-out days—the strange, the silly, the ridiculous. I have been very inspired by two AA nuns, who

share their stories of drinking in a really hilarious way. It is perhaps easier to tell funny stories about drinking than about acting-out sexually. But my story, tragic as it is, has many ridiculous moments that a clown like me can magnify in order to make a point or to simply just laugh. Why not?

RUBEN S., Manchester, UK 



Laughing
At My
Own Story

RIs for Recovery and Riding

Before joining SA, I did activities with a hidden agenda—to spot or be spotted by a “potential husband.” I cringe when I think about these crazy motives. As I was doing Step Four, my sponsor asked me if I would accept life if I never got married. It was a very tough question as I felt justified in my dream of getting married some day; however, she opened my eyes to see that I could still live and enjoy life as a single woman. I learned to pursue fun activities with no hidden lust motives.

At the beginning of this year, I enrolled for a motorcycle class, a step towards fulfilling a childhood dream. After a week of intensive learning, I began window shopping for a motorcycle. I didn’t know what I wanted so I


used my budget to guide me. After two weeks, I bought a sports bike with a 150cc engine. I named the bike “Julliard” after a ballerina school because, in order to reach the ground from the saddle, I have to tip down my toes. The first two months with Julliard were scary. I fell on the first day and almost swore never to ride again. Two days later I tried again and was discouraged by the weight of the bike. I felt it was too heavy to move and at one time it fell on me. However I was determined not to give up and for the next few weeks I would struggle to ride for at least 20 minutes a day. I fell and dropped the bike so many times that I developed anxiety.

After two months of trying and failing, I decided to give up. But one day shortly afterwards, I went to cycle my old bicycle and realized that the same

technique I used to cycle could be used to ride the motorcycle. It was God encouraging me because that day, I had my first successful ride.

It’s now been over six months since that day and I am glad I did not give up. I have joined a wonderful biking community that I would otherwise never have met. I have gotten the chance to explore different parts of Kenya and meet amazing people from different backgrounds. I even had the chance to carry the SA message to a biker who might be one of us.

Being a female biker has given me an identity that my twelve-year-old self would still be dreaming about. I am so grateful, and look on this enjoyable activity as a wonderful gift of sobriety.

KAWY, Nairobi, Kenya 



This picture of Kawy’s sports bike with a backdrop of green Kenyan countryside is a strong testimony of how SA recovery helped her to fulfill this long-standing childhood dream.

The Fellowship Is Where the Party Is

When I first came to SA I did not know how fast to leave after the meeting. I did not want to be there. I did not believe it to be fun at all! That was more than four years ago. Since then a lot has changed. I frequently crack up before, after or even during a meeting. There are some real jokesters here in SA Amsterdam. Especially jokes about recovery or the struggles we are going through make me laugh. But it doesn't stop there.

We go out to dinner every Monday with a bunch of fellows before the meeting. They know us at the restaurant by now and look less bewildered if we all—sometimes six or seven of us—go Dutch, i.e. pay our own way. We are regulars. We also go out for coffee, visits to museums and just a few weeks ago we went to see an action movie. Great fun! There are the occasional walks in nature, architecture walks with a group of us or a canoeing or sailing trip.

Dutch fellows taking an evening stroll along the beautiful town of Hindelopen in Friesland, a northern province of the Netherlands.

Two of my favorites: (1) A concert in a very old and prominent synagogue in Amsterdam I would otherwise probably never have seen from the inside. (2) Renting a bike with a fellow in New York prior to the 2019 Nashville convention and feeling on top of the world cruising down New York City in traffic. SA is great fun.

I heard someone say at a convention: "SA is where the party is." That is true. I need SA. I am a sexaholic. I will be a sexaholic all my life. I might as well have some fun. I can choose to be happy. The alternative is that I am sad and don't want to be in SA. In Dutch we have a saying: "Life is a party, you just have to hang the garlands yourself." And I can ask my Higher Power to help me with that.

RIKKERT V., *the Netherlands* 

CAMPING AND FELLOWSHIP BY LAKE GALILEE



After tidying up the site, SA members from different countries set up their tent camp on the shores of the peaceful, pale blue lake.

When autumn arrives and the weather in Northern Europe turns damp and windy, it's nice to think back on pleasant times in recovery. After the regional convention in Israel in May 2015, there was an SA tent camp by Lake Galilee afterwards, organized by a UK old-timer and Israeli members.

We traveled in a small private coach from Jerusalem to Tiberius and the lake. I remember coming over the top of the hill a mile or so from Tiberius and seeing the pale blue waters of the lake set among the sandy hills. We had to clear the camp site first, tidy it up and remove cigarette butts and litter from the ground before setting the tents

up. Then we cordoned off the area to create a kind of "eruv"—a fence inside which Orthodox Jews can carry on certain activities during Shabbat.

Evening was setting in so we got the food prepared. It was a pleasant evening, and I ended up going for a walk with a Jewish member. We wandered around and found the tomb of a rabbi. There was some kind of festival going on, so we went up to have a look. They were playing loud trance music from speakers placed on top of brightly-colored VW vans. My friend did some dancing but I was carrying an injury so unfortunately, I was unable to. We entered the shrine and I touched the tomb. I felt a bit out of place, but no one said anything. Everyone was in good

humor and celebrating.

It was great to be with other members, to be eating nice food, having everything catered for, you know, doing your own stuff. At one point, I swam in the Sea of Galilee which was a lovely experience. From what I remember, I think there were about 30 members. It's great to have that memory.

On conventions generally, I go for the weekend and maybe spend a couple of days on either side. It's nice to go to all of these places, particularly for us in Western and Northern Europe to go to conventions in warm places and enjoy the fine weather in an atmosphere of friendliness and fellowship.

PATRICK O., *Ireland* 

Feeling Part of By Involvement

In SA, he came to experience a deep sense of joy and belonging, after many years of feeling empty and lifeless in the active addiction.

Fun in recovery was the last thing on my mind when I first stepped into the rooms. I was at rock bottom and thought my life would never see joy again, much less fun again. I had been found out and subsequently destroyed my marriage and the relationships with my teenage children. I never thought that fast forward six years I would rediscover joy in my life and have fun in my recovery. By applying the principles of this program in all my affairs, I have been able to reestablish joy and fun in all aspects of my life including with my wife, my family, and the fellowship of Sexaholics Anonymous.

When I first started my recovery journey, I was a member of another 'S' fellowship. It was a very small group; meetings and sponsorship were taken very seriously and there was very little opportunity for connection outside of meetings. My then sponsor helped me to identify that my social life was enabling my addiction.

My early boundaries in recovery were to remove myself from social media and to remove myself from the social scenes and friendships that also enabled my addiction. I was, and still am, very grateful to him for helping me to set these early boundaries that I still follow today.

Although these boundaries were in place, and I had commenced my

new way of life, I felt as though I was lacking connection within the group. I started to feel apart from instead of a part of, as the group offered very little in the way of fellowship. I had trouble connecting with other members which created a disconnect, and eventually I left the fellowship.

I found myself in the rooms of a Sexaholics Anonymous meeting in September 2019. My first SA meeting

The convention came to be one of my most memorable and joyous experiences in my time with SA.

in Brisbane was on a Thursday night; there was a lot of excitement in the meeting around an SA Queensland three-day convention that was scheduled for that coming weekend. I immediately noticed the element of connection in the meeting that I felt I was lacking. By the end of the meeting everyone asked for my phone number and wanted to connect with me, which was an alien concept to me as in my previous fellowship the only number I had in my phone was my sponsor's. Another important thing happened

by the end of the meeting when the Secretary invited me to attend the convention on the Sunshine Coast. I had never been to a conference and was a little nervous, but I committed to attend on the Saturday. This came to be one of my most memorable and joyous experiences in my time with SA. The focus of fun, laughter and connection was amazing, I made many new friends that I still have to this day.

The SA White Book encourages members to attend get-togethers and conventions by stating, *These have proven to be unforgettable experiences. Here we meet and enjoy friends old and new. We rediscover laughter and have fun together. Our recovery is validated and enhanced in new and stronger ways (SA 182)*. Over the past three years I have attended four in-person SA conventions in Australia and many online conferences around the world. Each of these experiences has provided connection and joy and always an element of laughter and fun. They

have encouraged me to embrace many different service roles in the fellowship including convention-organising committees.

One of the greatest joys I have experienced over the past two years was having the opportunity and privilege of serving on the SA Queensland Convention Committee. We have enjoyed high quality in-person conventions in Queensland that have focused on the elements of recovery, connection, fun and laughter.

I encourage other members to embrace the opportunity of serving on convention committees and attending fellowship get-togethers and conventions as a great way to connect with other members, to validate and strengthen our own recovery and the recovery of others. The SA White Book states it perfectly, *Involvement made us feel we were a part of, quite a difference from that empty, lifeless feeling of being apart from (SA 65)*.

MAT T., Brisbane, Australia



DISCUSSION TOPIC

Do I help others to experience fun in recovery?

Fun in recovery was the last thing on Mat's mind when he first stepped into the rooms. But in SA he became part of the excitement around conventions; was pleasantly surprised by members wanting to connect with him; and came to experience the priceless joy of serving.

Do I experience fun in my recovery? What can I do to increase it?

Do I ask newcomers for their phone number in order to connect with them? Do I call them? Or do I only have my sponsor's number?

Do I go out of my way to help newer members feel at home in SA?

Do I attend SA conventions and other get-togethers? How do I contribute to the laughter and fun at meetings of my home group and bigger SA events?

Do I experience the party that is going on in the middle of the SA life raft—the party which can only be obtained by doing service?

Do I encourage others to embrace the opportunity of serving on committees and attending SA events?

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

Using Our Talents For the Common Good

This Russian fellow has come to understand that something insignificant to him can be useful to others.

This morning I was praying. During my prayer ritual I received a message from a fellow. He asked me to write an article for ESSAY on the topic of “Fun in Recovery.” It felt like God was winking at me, because at that very moment I was thanking Him for my friends in our Saint Petersburg fellowship and for the fun we have when we spend time together.

From early childhood I got used to comparing myself with others and often felt flawed. That feeling went with me through my whole life. Moreover, that feeling made me run away into lust and other addictions. My illness kept saying, “You

don’t have any talents. Look around: everyone but you has gained something significant, important and necessary. You are useless.”

While being influenced by my defects such as pride and ambition, I thought that becoming needed and significant to others was the same as being a great person. I found out that my illness wanted to make me feel “great” rather than be just myself. Now, as the fog of my defects has dissipated, I realize that my talent is something simple, something given to me, and consists of creating joy, fun, and comfort for other people.

I have a natural ability to create jokes that amuse others, and even myself too. I try to use this ability



Fellows cycling near the famous Saint Petersburg football stadium.



The talented Saint Petersburg fellows making music on Saturday evening at a workshop weekend in the suburbs of the city.

to create joy and fun wherever I am, whether a meeting, a cafe, or a picnic trip. I know perfectly well how easy it is to fall into discontent and self-pity in recovery. So, for me, it is very important that there is a joyful atmosphere in the places where I am.

Once at my home group, one of the newly-arrived SA members said that he was very scared to go to a meeting, and even more so to open up, but when he heard laughter and fun in our room, he felt comfortable and wanted to stay. He became willing to open up and I felt a surge of gratitude and tenderness. At that moment I realized that something that was insignificant to me could be useful to others.

Another time, when we needed to hold a convention, I remembered that I had long ago wanted to make

a movie or a short video. Here my ability to amuse others under God’s guidance served our local fellowship. Together, we made a movie that moved people at the convention to laughter. In the course of preparing for the convention, we found out that our group had a large number of talented people. Some of them were not even aware of their talents, including me, until we started filming. Since then we have shot such videos for every convention held in our city.

I believe that each of us has talents that serve the common good. I would like to encourage everyone reading this to look into yourself to find your talent. Even if you consider it insignificant, as I did, try to use that talent to create joy and unity.

ALEKSEY A., Saint Petersburg, Russia



I AM THE ONLY PERSON I CAN CHANGE

I NEED

TO BE

~~SMARTER~~

~~THINNER~~

~~PRETTIER~~

~~BETTER~~

MYSELF

Hi, I am Dan K., sexaholic. Son of Roy K, also a sexaholic, and author of the SA White Book. I will try to share my experience, strength and hope as it relates to my father's influence in my life.

Our relationship was antagonistic, mostly due to our obsession with each other's character defects. It took me years of suffering to realize that I can't change anybody else. I'm the only person I can change, and that's hard enough. I'm glad to say that, shortly before he died, we were fully reconciled. I thank God for that miracle because it would have been very sad if he had passed away without forgiving each other.

The roots of my addiction lie in the pain and trauma that I experienced in early childhood. Lust came along later, offering itself as the great medicator. Back then, my dad was deep in his sexaholism. He was either emotionally absent or raging. It was horrible. I numbed-out when he turned on me screaming, his face contorted with rage.

I retreated from reality into fantasy. I read science-fiction books, always escaping to other worlds. I took to compulsive eating too to soothe the pain. At a pre-pubescent age I discovered masturbation and was immediately addicted. It was better than food and fantasy, but I kept those addictions going as well.

At around puberty age, I became conscious of girls and my fantasies took on a romantic turn. I was too shy to talk to girls, but I sure could fantasize about them. Paralyzed by fear, I lived inside my head. On the back of my emotionally abusive upbringing, I believed the worst about myself, that I was ugly, defective, inadequate. I

was terrified of rejection. The need to medicate went deep. When I was fifteen, I added drugs to the mix.

Looking back, I can see now that my Dad was not a bad man. He was not mean. He was not physically abusive. He was tender-hearted; but sickness from this disease made him irrational and reactive. He could not control his outbursts, no matter how much he wanted to. Once, he went into such a rage over a small infraction on my part that he wept with sorrow afterwards and tried to comfort me.

But I was an addict by now too, and my addiction was progressing to stealing girlie magazines, then to pornographic videos, and then to marriage, the "moral" outlet for my disease. My marriage became diseased; my wife repeatedly discovering the evidence of my sickness. She thought she had married a different person, not a person who loved secrecy and intrigue, the tease and the forbidden. It hurts today when I think how I hurt her.

I tried to stop many times but could not. I tried religion, therapy, self-help books. For me, the cure was always out there; someone or something going to fix me. Magical thinking! I did not yet realize that to gain a new life, I would have to die to the old one.

By now, Dad was in recovery. He had joined AA in the absence of a sex addiction program in town at the time. It was through AA that he learned the principles of 12 Step recovery which were to become the foundation of Sexaholics Anonymous. He tried to Twelfth-Step me but I wasn't ready. At the time, I just didn't want what he had. I argued with him about his sobriety definition. After all, there's nothing wrong with masturbation, I said. I just needed to control it.

I thought that his sobriety definition

came from his Christian beliefs. I later learned that Christian morals have nothing to do with it. Morality, the sense of right and wrong, is not the issue when addiction is in the driving seat. As my disease progressed, I became more open to Dad's efforts to reach me. I took his advice and joined

**When I began
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so to speak.**

AA, but relapsed after five years of sexual abstinence. I had still been lusting. I didn't understand that lust is the first drink. Probably, I didn't want to understand. It was only years later, when I began surrendering lust on a daily basis, I found that I didn't have the urge to look at porn, masturbate or act out sexually anymore; when there's no first drink, I'm not triggered to drink, so to speak.

I achieved three stretches of five years' abstinence and three relapses. I had still to learn the difference between abstinence and sobriety. I was still crazy, reactive, full of fear, rage and resentment. Even when I moved from AA to a sex addiction fellowship, I still relapsed because I was permitted my own definition of sexual sobriety.

It was March 25, 2014—five years after my father's passing—that I finally admitted that I was powerless over lust and joined Sexaholics

Anonymous. Since then I have been free of the urge to act out. I wish my dad had lived to see me in Sexaholics Anonymous. It would blow his mind to see me here today, speaking at an SA convention in Armenia.

Looking back at those periods of abstinence I can see that my motivation was fear of acting out, fear of the consequences. Also, I had been selective in how I worked my program, like getting a sponsor but not using him, not working the Steps beyond Step Four, etc. I had been trying to get away with half measures. It was a Dan-directed program, not a Higher Power-directed program.

Today, I am teachable. That's because I know I hit bottom and remember the feeling. Today I'll do whatever it takes to stay sober. So long as I maintain a healthy spiritual condition one day at a time, I can face whatever life throws at me, no matter how difficult. I am willing to use all program tools—calls, meetings, texting, service—whatever it takes. No half measures.

My second marriage is unbelievably wonderful as it's not polluted with lust. There is trust and real intimacy; lust is out of the marriage bed. This is from practicing the principles of recovery that my Dad wrote about in the White Book. I no longer resist those ideas.

I believe that fear and ego have been at the root of my historical unwillingness and resistance. It took a lot of suffering to get me where I am today. When the desperation got bad enough, I went on my knees and gave God full permission to do whatever it takes to get me sober. Then I waited like a scared kid, expecting God to administer some real harsh punishment, like a punitive parent. But that's not how He did it. He just gave me a full, clear-eyed understanding of where

I was headed unless I changed my ways. I saw the abyss with absolute clarity, the full horror of it. At the time I had been trying to control and enjoy lust and was about to lose my second marriage. I had stopped going to meetings and working my program. But, arising out of what I saw of my future, I swallowed my pride and joined the SA program. My wife supported me fully.

Surrender, for me, is action. If there's no action, there's no surrender. I don't just wish myself sober; I do whatever it takes to stay sober.

Some of us do experience horrific consequences, but I don't believe that they're the same as punishment from a punitive parent. I believe it's God's way of motivating us, borne out of His intense love for us and desire to save us. The gift of despair is worth the price. The freedoms and joys of recovery are simply not available any other way.

So, what does surrender to the program look like for me? Surrender, for me, is action. If there's no action, there's no surrender. So, I make surrender phone calls to other members. I pray for the person that I find triggering. I don't just wish myself sober; I do whatever it takes to stay sober. It's instinctive with me today.

Fighting lust is a losing battle, like stepping into the ring with a heavy-weight boxer. I've given up trying to

fight lust. Today, my Big Brother does that for me. But He expects me to do certain things before He'll consent to fight for me. So long as I do His will and take the actions of love towards others, He'll step in there and whack that fiend every time.

Sobriety is one thing. Recovery is another. Recovery means dealing with life on life's terms. It means working the Steps on those character defects that cause emotional intoxication—conflict, fear, guilt, resentment etc. As I surrender my defects, I slowly gain

It's said that resentment is the number one killer of addicts. I have observed in myself and others that trauma is also a killer of addicts.

peace of mind and then my disease has less to offer. However, as my Dad used to say, "I'm not free from lust, but I'm free not to lust."

My nightly Step Ten inventory is critical to my recovery and growing peace of mind. It shows me the shortcomings that are active in me. Step Six is where I become willing to have God remove them. Step Seven is where I ask God to remove them. I used to think Step Six meant becoming willing to stop the defects. I used to think that Step Seven meant asking God to help me stop them. Those interpretations were through a filter of self-will. I can't control the defects in my inventory; I'm as powerless over them as I am over lust.

Nowadays, I ask for the willingness to have God remove them. Then I ask God to go ahead and remove them, and do for me what I cannot do for myself. The same with lust. If He doesn't remove it, He's telling me that there's something there for me to learn and grow from. I now view seemingly unanswered prayers as opportunities for growth. Like others before me I can honestly say I am grateful to be a recovering sexaholic.

Finally, I think I should mention that I've had to get outside help in order to stay on track in recovery. Being bipolar, I've needed to undergo therapy. The pain and insanity of mental illness have been huge drivers of my addictions. They've kept me from gaining traction in the program. It's said that resentment is the number one killer of addicts. I have observed in myself and in others that trauma is also a killer of addicts. My wife is in Twelve Step recovery; she is also on the staff at one of the premier trauma treatment clinics in the US, and her training and experience supports this observation.

Thank you for inviting me to be of service and for helping me remain sober. May your Higher Power ultimately bless you beyond expectation. May you keep coming back no matter what.


DAN K., *California, USA*



✓ This article is a summarized and edited transcript of a talk Dan gave over Zoom on the Armenian Convention on Sept 9.

✓ You can read the unabridged transcript on sa.org/essay/articles.

✓ You can also listen to the recording: <https://on.soundcloud.com/kJsMF>



The Key To a Happy and Joyous Freedom

Coming from a sad childhood full of traumas, he is grateful today that his pain and horrible experiences help him support other lust addicts.

There was a time when I wondered why God brought me into this world. I always felt that my life was meaningless. I had such difficulty, fitting in, belonging anywhere. My childhood was very difficult, full of traumas. I could never understand why I had to go through it all, what purpose all that pain served. Lust entered my life at age six when a family member sexually abused me. It was not a single incident; the abuse continued many times by that same person. The experience was very strange. I find it hard to describe; it was full of mixed feelings but one of the most difficult to understand was the feeling of enjoyment I remember during the abuse. Soon, one of my relatives began to sexually abuse me too, many times. I think that it was about this time that

I started confusing love with abuse. Around this same age I came across foreign nude magazines and began watching pornography.

The hardest trauma of all was from my mother. It happened around the age of six. I have no doubt that this particular trauma shaped my life.

I lived life apologizing to the world for my presence in it, always hating myself.

She told me to my face that she had not wanted to have me; that I was an unwanted child because she had had enough problems between my father and the two children she had already.

She said she didn't have the time to take care of me, and she acted accordingly. Hearing those words from the closest person to me filled me with shame and made me feel inadequate and unworthy of love. I lived life afterwards apologizing to the world for my presence in it, always hating myself. My father was a commercial marine officer and was absent most of the time; during those short periods when he was home, the house was filled with domestic violence and shouting and screaming.

In the years that followed, I sexually abused other boys and girls of around my own age. When I reached puberty I started masturbating and watching porn took on a huge portion of my life. By age twelve I was sexually abused by one of my older brother's friends. A year later I had taken my first drug and so began a journey into new darkness. The way my body reacted to drugs felt like what I had been looking for all my life. Three or four years later, I had tried any drugs that were available at the time, including alcohol. I ended up a heroin addict for five years.

In my early twenties God introduced me to a Twelve Step fellowship for drug addiction which saved my life. I had been lusting too during these years, but the drug addiction was the more obvious, the more chaotic. Soon after I became clean, lust emerged more obviously in my life as pornography and masturbation really took hold. It took another ten years for me to realize that I cannot control my sexual behavior and that I had to find a solution.

A friend of mine from my drug recovery fellowship suggested I give SA a try. I remember those first SA meetings, how I related so much to the shares; they were so much deeper

than the shares in my other fellowship, especially when they talked about their relationship with their families.

Of course, my disease began attacking, telling me that I didn't qualify; began isolating me, telling me that I was different from the other members who were mostly younger and sounded smarter and more educated. I relapsed a lot in those first three months and I crossed many boundar-

The key for me, coming from another fellowship, was Step Two. I had to leave my knowledge and pride outside of the doors of SA.

ies in those relapses. The key for me, coming from another fellowship, was Step Two. I had to leave my knowledge and pride outside of the doors of SA.

I cannot be sufficiently grateful to SA. I am more than nine months sober today. That is truly a miracle for me, a lust and sex addict for more than twenty-eight years. Slowly, I am beginning to appreciate myself better and to understand my purpose in life. I am so grateful for this. I am grateful also that all my pain and the horrible experiences are not wasted as they help me support other recovering lust addicts.

Thank you SA for returning my soul to me.

AYMAN M, Alexandria, Egypt



Steps & Traditions

I'm very grateful to SA for its limited membership requirements. I meet ALL the requirements: I have a desire not to lust, and I want to be sober (Tradition 3). I've been gratefully sober since 6/9/2013.

In the early days of AA, it is explained that nothing was as fragile as an AA group, and that for those individual members "we were like flickering candles in a windstorm."

After nine years of continuous sobriety and ten years of actively working the program, sponsoring many, starting groups, staying sober, watching many come and go, I think the analogy of a flickering candle is pretty accurate for both individuals and groups.

"On anvils of experience, the structure of our Society was hammered out" (*Twelve & Twelve* 131). The AA experience was the proving ground for the Traditions. So long as I follow the path laid out "at my feet," I'll be part of the solution to the lust problem, a problem that's been with mankind since the beginning of early civiliza-

tion. I'm so fortunate that the Traditions have held SA together long enough for my arrival. Now I feel a responsibility to take an active role in supporting and sustaining our Traditions and sharing my experience with new members.

How did you hear about SA? Who was it that told you there were others like you? Was it a therapist, a friend, a religious authority? What was your first meeting like? Can you remember how you got to the meeting? Were you afraid walking into the room? How did you feel the first time others said out loud the general nature of their disease? How did you feel when they told you their sobriety dates? Did any one have over a year of technical sobriety? Were you shocked?

I remember all the above. I was told about SA by an AA old-timer. He pointed me to the man who became my sponsor. I was told to attend AA and SA meetings, get *Sexaholics Anonymous*, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, and the *Twelve and Twelve*.

I drove myself to my first meeting. It was the "Friday Knight Vancouver, Washington Cross Talkers" (named after a member who passed away). I was nervous entering the building. I wasn't sure what I would find. Would

it be like everywhere else, good loving people who didn't know from experience, or would these folks actually know from personal experience? That question was resolved quickly! When the meeting started they went around the room, each told his sobriety date first, then in a brief and general way where lust took them. It was the first time in my life I knew I belonged. When it was my turn I said exactly what everybody else said, because

I meet ALL the requirements for membership: I have a desire not to lust, and I want to be sober.

I was listening to them closely, and knew that I had every bit of what they had, for real! I knew I was a sexaholic! I was so grateful to belong! They all told me: "Glad you're here, Jesse. Welcome. Keep coming back!"

I became a sexaholic during the meeting. I didn't know I was a sexaholic because of a book, a therapist, a religious person, or a corrections program. I had to be in the meeting first! Only then could I identify.

Looking back, that first meeting (a closed meeting by the way) was a transformative moment not just in my recovery, but in my life! Certain things had to happen for that experience to be positive. I absolutely resembled a flickering candle! I was a non-member. I was worried, and generally confused. But they didn't try to keep me out, or suggest I go someplace else. For me there was no place else. I was done. SA / AA literally was my

last and final attempt to recover. There was no "Plan B."

I point to the sentiment found on page 141 in the *Twelve and Twelve* as my own: "At last experience taught us that to take away any alcoholic's full chance was sometimes to pronounce his death sentence."

Looking back, I can see how any discouragement in that process would have kept me out. I was willing to do, and try, but before my first positive experience just about anything could have ended my recovery forever. And for me, that would have cost my life. It would have cost each and every individual I've attempted to help or sponsor since that day. "How could 'they' know that 'I', a sometimes frightening person, would make an astonishing recovery, and become a worker and friend in the fellowship?" (*Twelve and Twelve* 131).

Again, I'm grateful for our Traditions of anonymity; no opinion on outside issues; that we remain self supporting; that we carry the message; and allow others to decide for themselves if they belong to our fellowship.

I'm so very grateful for those who took the time to walk me through the Steps. To those who let me attend the meetings when I didn't know if I belonged. I'm also grateful to be in a position to carry the message of hope for a brighter and more fulfilling future. I'm grateful that SA continues to insist that sexual sobriety is possible! I'm grateful for many things, especially that we have a specific requirement for SA membership and that there are no dues or fees. No other person's opinion about me can prevent my membership. I'm a member because I say I want to be free from lust and maintain sexual sobriety.

JESSE S., *Alabama, USA*



Like
A
Flickering
Candle





Thoughts and Thanks from Prison

Over four years sexually sober, this friend in prison shares his insights on the connection between doing the Steps in the right spirit and his emotional sobriety.

Your thoughts and prayers are greatly appreciated. I am grateful to have had 18 months between being “busted” and being arrested in which time I was able to become sexually sober, attend SA meetings, work the Steps with a sponsor, reunite with old friends in AA, and receive professional therapy. I was even able to make some critical Ninth Step amends before going to prison. By the grace of God and the fellowships of AA and SA, I marked four years of sexual sobriety this past June, and twenty-four years sobriety from alcohol.

Staying sexually sober and free from lust has not been as difficult as maintaining emotional sobriety. I go through periods of fear, anger, self-pity, guilt, blame and other negative mental-emotional states, each varying

in intensity and duration. They pass, in time. The thing that really keeps them going is the time and energy I give them by analyzing them and ruminating over them and fighting them. I have traditionally been one of those “students” of the Twelve Steps who believed I should be inventorying and scrutinizing every single emotional disturbance and negative thought that comes up. The end result was usually frustration and anger with myself and with my sponsor. It’s taken me this long to appreciate the difference between perfection-driven Step work and doing the Steps in the right spirit. Sometimes it’s enough just to acknowledge the presence of a negative mind-set and not resist it, or feed it with more negative thinking.

This prison has been in “modified lockdown” because of Covid since I arrived in January, 2020; we only get

a couple of hours’ recreation and education/library every day. There are no chapel services or programs where AA or SA meetings would normally be held. I attempted to organize an SA meeting among five other interested individuals in my housing unit earlier this summer. Unfortunately it’s fiz-

I tend to believe this is a male disease and that all women look upon us as despicable creatures. It’s good to hear our fellow sisters’ perspective on this disease.

zling out. Two guys were transferred to another housing unit and one other stopped attending because he didn’t like the “whole God thing.”

The biggest challenge that the remaining two of us face is finding a regular space to meet that provides the minimum level of privacy for reading and sharing. We’ve been able to find a free park table sometimes outside during recreation, depending upon the weather of course. The other guy doesn’t agree with SA’s definition of sobriety, so the last few times we’ve met we had read out of the “Green Book” of SAA. We each took turns reading a page or two out loud. I’ve been able to share a good deal of my story with him. He asks a lot of questions about my sobriety. I don’t know if I’m helping him at all, but being able to review my story helps me maintain my commitment to the SA program.

I’ve lost a lot through this experience ... a home, career, and some friends and family. Through coming to prison I’ve had no other choice but to rely on a Higher Power. Throughout my time in recovery, I’ve never had to surrender at the level I’ve had to recently. When I get out, I will be starting all over. By going to and participating in AA and SA meetings and working the program, the process should be more bearable.

I was on pre-trial house arrest at my parents’ home when Covid spread to the US. As in-person AA and SA meetings shut down, I attended the SA noon telephone meeting every day. What I especially loved about that meeting was to hear quite a few women’s stories. I tend to believe this is a male disease and that all women look upon us as despicable creatures. It’s good to hear our fellow sisters’ perspective on this disease. I commend their courage and openness.

I appreciate you sharing about your Tenth Step amends. I was fortunate enough to make some very important Ninth Step amends before coming to prison. Along with AA and SA literature and other spiritual books, I’ve been reading a lot of business and technology related books. I’m also taking a paralegal certificate correspondence course. All of this is in preparation for my re-entry into the world. I will probably end up doing a number of different jobs to make a living, one of which will be freelance web and graphic design and managing creative projects, which is what I used to do before I was arrested. We’ll see. Anything’s possible one day at a time, right?

J.H., an incarcerated member, in a letter to a fellow member of his home group in Centreville, VA, USA



I Had Felt I Was Home

When I heard the 2022 EMER Regional Convention was going to be held in Armenia, I immediately asked at work to have two weeks off in October. I knew from the past how refreshing and

Armenia turned out to be a very safe and friendly country. I visited the highlights of the city with other “pre-convention birds” and was amazed at its millenia-old history. We had a meeting at the patio of a five-star hotel where some members were staying;



A group string exercise illustrating how our fellowship is greater than the sum of its parts.

relished a concert in the Opera House; went to a children’s art museum; drank freshly pressed pomegranate juice; and enjoyed excellent buffet restaurants.

On Wednesday many of us shared cabs to go to the mountain resort Tsaghkadzor, where the convention hotel was situated, as the next day the EMER Regional Assembly was going to be held. Early birds were holding meetings and having walks in the surrounding area.



This group dynamic exercise showed how the disease cannot hurt us when we are interconnected.

The convention attracted participants from many parts of the world: Germany, UK, Ireland, Belgium, the Netherlands, USA, Poland, Italy, Spain, Singapore, UAE, Austria, Russia, Ukraine, Slovakia, Lithuania, Hungary, as well as 48 members

from Iran who had traveled 12 hours by car followed by 22 hours by bus! It was such a joy to see them as I had the good fortune



When the Iranian members started to dance at the end of the talent show, many started joining them.

in 2016 to visit the local fellowship in three Iranian cities. The energy, enthusiasm, and joy of the Iranian fellows was contagious: they would be the first ones in the morning to go out for jogging or fitness exercises, dance at every opportunity through the day, and hug us all to pieces. I felt deeply touched to see Iranians and Americans hugging, and to see fellows from warring countries sitting at the same dining table. We really are a spiritual fellowship where



Armenia is the home of several amazing early fourth-century monasteries.

politics or religious convictions are not only not discussed, but even transcended!

The theme of the convention was “We Were Home,” inspired by the booklet *Beginnings* about the formative years of SA, and by the fact that our founder Roy K. was of Armenian descent. On Saturday at 7pm a hybrid meeting was held with Dan

K., the son of Roy, who shared his memories about his childhood, his father, and his story of recovering from sexaholism. It was a historical and humbling experience which gave me goosebumps. An hour later, Joyce, Roy’s 92 y.o. sister, shared her perspective on her youth and brother. Both shares turned Roy even more into a human being like us, a person with



A Dutch and Slovakian member having fun while hiking after the convention in the arid mountains.

virtues and defects, and I became even more grateful for his setting up SA. I also saw more than ever the hand of a loving God at work through the life of this broken and imperfect man, who had surrendered himself to working the Twelve Steps.

We had an amazing talent show with piano playing, jokes, Spanish karaoke, an evening song to God, a stunning English/Farsi poetry recital, and lots of Iranian dancing.

After the convention several of us set out to explore the country. So did we, with five of us in a rental car. I experienced good will, camaraderie, love, and tenderness. We visited early fourth-century monasteries; descended into the pit in which an early-church saint had been imprisoned for 12 years; enjoyed beef kebab and grilled vegetables in a restaurant while looking out on a Greek temple which had been built in 77 AD; swam in the swimming pool of a wonderful local guesthouse; picked grapes from local vines and almonds from almond trees.

I was sad to leave the country as I had truly experienced the theme of the convention—I had felt I was home.

Luc D., Ghent, Belgium



EMER Regional Assembly with IGRs from 15 intergroups in Europe and the Middle East.

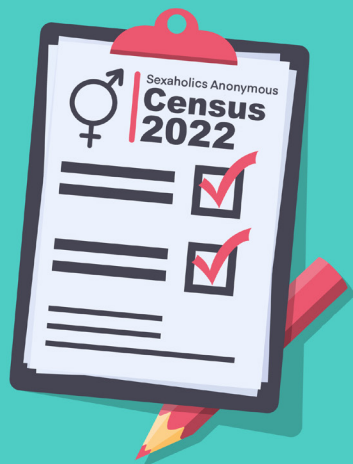
strengthening conventions and after-convention fellowshiping are and didn’t want



One of the breakout rooms where continuous translation in English, Farsi and Russian was provided.

to miss out on the fun. It really exceeded my highest expectations!

THE REGIONAL ALIGNMENT COMMITTEE



UPDATE

The ongoing, ten-year Census of Sexaholics Anonymous is progressing. Regional Representatives are disseminating information on how to access and complete the Meeting Registration Form. Completed Meeting Registrations are being shared with members of the GDA (General Delegate Assembly) and other trusted servants every fifteen days. This feedback process assists all trusted servants in reaching out to areas that have not participated in the Census.

As of the end of October 2022, approximately 30% of previously-known meetings have registered. Over 50% of registered meetings have an online component, whether by Zoom, Skype, phone, or in a hybrid format. Most meetings are planning to retain their online components as the pandemic fades. Latin American countries have been receiving translated instructions from their Regional Representatives.

A note about how information from the Census form is used: only SAICO receives personal contact information, whereas the Regional Alignment Committee (RAC) only receives the regional designation and meeting attendance numbers from the Online Registration Form.

The trusted servants of the RAC want to thank all those who have recently registered their meeting.

FARLEY H., RAC Chair 



Progressive Victory in Colombia

We express special thanks to SA's International Committee for their financial support that made it possible for Antonio S., the Latin American Region's Delegate, to visit us on the occasion of our 10th National Convention in Cali on Oct 14-17, 2022. Antonio visited the groups in Medellín, Armenia, Bogotá, and Cali, which enriched our

meetings with his experience, strength and hope in recovery work. Fellows attending emphasized the importance of receiving this type of testimonies which strengthens their recovery.

The convention broke the Colombian record number, as it attracted 51 participants—fellows from Mexico, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Ecuador, the US, and many people from different regions of Colombia, as well as a Brazilian female member attending via internet. The Saturday night talent show displayed many fellows' performance talents. Everyone expressed their feelings about what this great event meant for their personal recovery process. Conventions and visits of old-timers are fundamental to continue rescuing those who suffer from this overwhelming disease.

INTERGROUP, SA Colombia 

WHEN IN ROME ... STAY SOBER



I had the pleasure of travelling to Rome for the Italian-speaking fellowship's Nov convention. It was held in a beautiful spot in the center of Rome, just behind the Colosseum, as you can see from the picture (taken from the gardens of the convention site). About 40 Italian-speaking fellows gathered, mostly from Italy but also from Switzerland, Germany, Poland and the UK.

It was a joy to be able to hear deep shares, have honest conversations, eat the good food (when in Rome ...), and see how far the fellowship has progressed since a few fellows started on the journey to SA sobriety and recovery in 2017. At the first workshop held in Italy, in Verona in Nov 2017—only fifteen fellows attended. I had a wonderful conversation with a fellow from Rome where we realized (surprise!) that SA Italia is now well underway, and that it is the Higher Power (not any old-timer, or any personality) who is in charge. And that this means that we are taken care of, as long as we remain in the SA life raft.

The SA life raft was more than a passing theme at the convention—nautical metaphors were at the center of fellowship all weekend. The talent show was organized so that fellows were split into teams, or 'ships', engaging in a naval battle through scoring points via talent challenges such as singing, dubbing silent cartoons, and other fun activities. It all helped with that Step which is so crucial—Step Zero, participating in the fellowship of recovery, establishing that connection with other fellows without which it seems so difficult to feel the Real Connection.

One of my most joyous moments was seeing the lights go on for a fellow who had never been to a face-to-face SA event, and seeing (and hearing) his amazement at how comfortable, connected, and serene he felt when spending time with a bunch of SAs from all walks of life, all trying to live in the Solution. This is an experience that has repeated itself again and again for me as I have attended conventions and recovery days since early 2011. When I was on the outside of SA looking in, I did not understand why fellowship was so important; when I was in the depths of despair and finally agreed with my sponsor that attending a convention might just be helpful, the lights went on for me too.

I hope to be back soon for another Italian-language SA meet-up. It's not the food, historic cities and great weather....really! It's because I've found that the SA Solution is alive and well and speaks Italian.

A sexaholic from the UK 

SAICO Financial October 31, 2022

□ Revenue	\$276,450
□ Expenses	\$360,827
□ Revenue-Expenses	-\$84,377
□ Prudent Reserve	\$159,706
□ Total Reserves	\$304,906

New Groups December 2022

- **Sheffield**, England, UK
- **Tunbridge Wells**, England, UK
- **Tooele**, Utah, USA
- **Sharonville**, Ohio, USA
- **Saskatoon**, Saskatchewan, Canada

ESSAY Proudly Presents Its Innovative And Multilingual



Eager to improve carrying the message to sexaholics all over the world, the ESSAY team, supervised by the Board of Trustees, has built essay.sa.org, a website in responsive design, which means it can be read as a 21st-century digital magazine on your smartphone, tablet and computer.

- ✓ On the Home page, read the six main articles of each edition, and listen to their recordings—plus find their translations and recordings in eight different languages!
- ✓ On the Magazine page, read and listen to all 20+ articles of each magazine and their recordings in English.
- ✓ On the Archive page, search for articles of previous magazines and their recordings—in English and the other languages.
- ✓ In order to listen to all the recordings while driving, walking, cooking, etc., log in to your favorite podcast platform.
- ✓ Enjoy a large collection of recovery jokes, ESSAY cartoons, members' poems, meeting room pictures, and the "Aha!" Moments videos on the Getting Involved page.

While the Home and Getting Involved pages are for free, the Magazine, Archive, and Podcast pages are for paid subscribers in order to finance the costs of this project.

It is an ambitious project, which we hope to continue improving and enlarging with your help as we are looking for:

- Volunteers who want to help loading in the articles of past magazines, in order to build a complete ESSAY archive.
- Skilled translators and recorders of the articles into different languages.
- Members with webdesign skills, audio engineering, podcast promoting, graphic design skills.
- Cartoonists and illustrators; poets and photographers.

CHIP IN TO HELP CARRYING THE MESSAGE OF JOYFUL SA RECOVERY AROUND THE WORLD: EDITOR@SA.ORG

COMING IN FEBRUARY



NEXT EDITION

In the February issue, read how fellows from around the world experience the joy they had always been looking for in lust by serving others.

Why I Am Still in SA

An Iranian member explains that he came to SA because he had to be, but he stayed because working the Steps led him to the joy of service.

The Way to the Fourth Dimension

Ameer from Iraq describes how he got from the false multi-dimensional spiritual experience of the addiction to the true fourth dimension of serving others.

The Great Formula

This US lady shares the joy of making SA a good and safe place for women.

Phone Meetings Are Our Lifeline

Juan from Murcia in Spain set up daily meetings to connect Spanish loners.

SUBMIT YOUR STORY

February 2023 edition: The Joy of Service (Stories due Jan 1) The AA Big Book says it very clearly: "Your job now is to be at the place where you may be of maximum helpfulness to others." What is your experience?

April 2023 edition: Celebrating the SA Sobriety Definition (Stories due Mar 1) Tell us about the miracles that have happened in your life since you accepted our common Sobriety Definition.

June 2023 edition: Sober Travel (Stories due May 1) What tricks do you have to stay sober on the road and in the air during the holidays?

August 2023 edition: Newcomers—How to Welcome and Keep Them (Stories due July 1) What strategies does your home group have to help new members?

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.

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. THY WILL,
NOT MINE, BE DONE.