

ESSAY

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SEXAHOLICS ANONYMOUS



April 2022 sa.org

SPONSORSHIP

BENEFITS & CHALLENGES

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.

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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

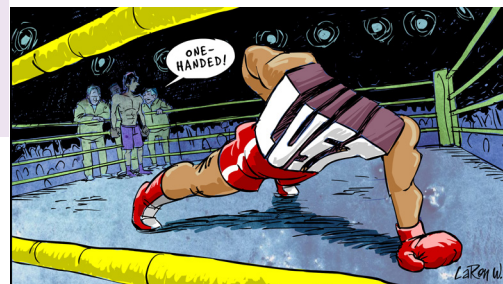
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RESOLUTION: "Since each issue of *Essay* cannot go through the SA Literature approval process, the Trustees and General Delegate Assembly recognize *Essay* as the International Journal of Sexaholics Anonymous and support the use of *Essay* materials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

Adopted by the Trustees and General Delegate Assembly in May 2016

Editors' Corner



The road of our recovery started when a more experienced member accepted entry into a very special relationship with us: the relationship of one recovering sexaholic helping another recovering sexaholic. We can't make it on our own. We need someone to "step into the ring with us" to provide guidance, support and encouragement. Our journey was consolidated and deepened when we in turn started to pass on to others what had been freely given to us.

In this April edition, we feature inspiring stories about the sponsor-ponsee relationship. "A Fiery Sermon" illustrates how sponsors sometimes show the way without words. An Australian old-timer explains why working on his character defects is as vital as stopping acting-out. Olga from Ukraine recognizes herself in the mirrors of her sponsees which help her see in herself what she would never have spotted without sponsorship. A fellow from Taiwan has come to learn that sponsoring is about letting God give of His abundance. An old-timer from Nashville shows in great detail how he works with sponsees, while his Israeli sponsee discovered that sponsorship is about giving, for free and for fun. A lady from Ohio shares how Step One set her free.

Also, get current on "2022, The Year of CFC." Read about the progress of the CFC's worldwide efforts in these first months of the year. Consider subscribing to the print version of *Essay* for your home group or yourself or giving a gift subscription to a sponsee or other sexaholic who needs it.

In fellowship,
THE EDITORIAL TEAM
essay@sa.org

“This the sponsor promptly proves by talking freely and easily, and without exhibitionism, about his own defects, past and present.”

Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions 46



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“E” pages are online Essay only

Dear Essay



made specifically for women may not get past their sometimes more strict filters, for example, even if that woman has written to SAICO asking for help. More work needs to be done, in this area, to be sure—so if you are a female SA member who has interest in helping out, please reach out! You may contact me at essayessay1@protonmail.com.

STEPHANIE F., California, USA 

Sharing a Little Poem

Reaching Out to Our Sisters in Prison

DEAR ESSAY, THANK YOU for the Feb edition on the work of the CFC. I've read the letters of many imprisoned women seeking help for our addiction. I have had the privilege of sponsoring someone in prison, and it has been a gift and a blessing to my recovery. I have been able to watch awareness of the disease grow as this member works through the Steps and becomes increasingly willing to surrender.

Unfortunately, it is often difficult to establish a connection with women in prison. Letters to facilities

DEAR ESSAY, THANK YOU for your great work. Here's a tiny gift back in the form of a little poem that came to me after a lot of conversations with newcomers:

*Gaining Fast
Your Trust,
With My Past
Full of Lust.*

In fellowship,
JOSEF Z., Vienna, Austria



In Gratitude to my HP

I RECENTLY TOOK A journey into my future with my uncle who is a life coach. We did an exercise thinking about my priorities. He asked me what I would do if I had 7 years to live. I wrote down my thoughts and ideas. Then, he asked what I would do if I had just 7 weeks to live. I wrote down some more ideas. Then 7 days. And lastly, 7 hours.

For that last one, I thought about spending time with my wife, taking spiritual actions ... and then the thought popped up, I might just take in some pornography: my last 7 hours on earth.


Even with 2+ years of sobriety, these are the thoughts that come to me, a "self-certified sexaholic". All I can say is, "Thank you, HP, for keeping me sober."

YAAKOV K., New York, USA 

Worldwide Walls of SA

SA meetings can be held just about anywhere ...



Wednesday meeting
Kazan, Russia 




Monday evening meeting
Tyler, Texas, USA 



Thursday evening meeting
Cardiff, Wales, UK 



Meeting in car
Dayton, Ohio, USA 



Clark Valley meeting,
Lewiston,
Idaho, USA 

Share your photos

Send your meeting place to Essay@sa.org

Remember:

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

THE JOURNEY OF A THOUSAND MILES BEGINS WITH A SINGLE STEP



THIS FELLOW STARTED PRACTICING THE TOOLS OF PATIENCE AND CELEBRATING EACH LITTLE STEP OF THE WAY.

The saying goes that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step, and so does a journey of a single step, by the way. The problem for me however, was that all my life, I just wanted the thousand miles. I dreamed of those thousand miles. I had no patience for a single step because, no matter how hard I tried to string steps together, they never added up to anything near a thousand miles.

And so I stopped taking the single step. What use is there in a single step, I thought, when I know I will never make it to a thousand miles. The way I was, I could not even make three or four steps in a row, let alone one single mile—a thousand miles? Forget it!

Bottom line: the way I saw things, a single step without at least gaining a second step from it, and from that a third, and then a fourth step and so on

in succession, is wasted effort; a waste of even that single first step. That was then. Now, the way I see things, I see that this is not the case at all. Before telling you how I came to that realization, I would first like to share with you a little of my own journey towards this change in attitude.

Having read how my attitude used to be, you won't be surprised to learn

What use is there in a single step, I thought, when I know I will never make it to a thousand miles.

that I became very good at getting nowhere in this program. I excelled at making no progress for a very long

time. I was well known for it. I was the person in the group your sponsor would point to as "Exhibit A"—the person you least wanted to become.

It's important for me to say here that my failures were not because I did not go to meetings. I went to a lot of meetings. My failures were not because I did not make program calls. I made a lot of phone calls. But there

I was beginning to appreciate the value of a single step in its own right, whether or not there was a second or a third or a fourth to follow, it no longer mattered.

was one prevailing attitude—an old idea, that I needed to let go of if I was to have any chance of getting well. I was going to have to be patient, and appreciate, and celebrate each little step of the way: each little victory, each day at a time, each step of the way—no matter how insignificant it seemed—I was going to have to embrace it and celebrate it.

No more obsessing about the journey's end, looking back from a thousand miles' distance. I consciously embraced every step, every little victory that recovery was bringing me. I was beginning to appreciate the value of a single step in its own right, whether or not there was a second step or a third or a fourth to follow; it no longer mattered. No, I was not tricking myself into traveling a journey of a thousand miles. I was genuinely

learning to appreciate every moment, every victory, and every step for the accomplishment it was (and still is).

Do I need to tell you the end of the story? Or do you already know it? I began having multiple journeys that led from single steps, one after another. I progressed to where I could travel five journeys of a single step ... in a row! Then 10. Then 30. Then 180. And along with 180 journeys of a single step, came a 180 degree change in my life. After 180 journeys of a single step, something new woke up within me, and for the very first time, I realized that if I chose to keep taking and embracing the journeys of a single step, I, Mr. Hopeless, could (potentially) travel by single steps forever. I let go of my lifelong dream of gaining a thousand miles and I traded it for the length of a single step.

And guess what? One day, not too long later, I looked behind me (for just a moment!) and I saw that I had long since passed the thousand mile marker. Long since passed. And I never even realized. Go figure.

SHIM F., *New Jersey, USA*



“When ALL of Them Leave, You Can Too!”


Outplaying the tricks of the mind by a simple but most efficient tool.

My addiction has cost me a great deal over the years. I have been arrested, lost three jobs, thrown out of a religious community and have been divorced. Despite experiencing these consequences, as well as extended periods of sobriety in SA, my addict will still tell me that acting out is a good idea! “Remember the ‘good times’ that you had?” “There’s so much new to explore!” “You can still get something out of it!” There’s a part of me that wants to

continue believing all the lies that I tell myself. Sometimes, when my addict tries to play this kind of mind game with me, I’ll play another one. As I attend my meetings, day after day, I choose two or three special friends. I’ll put these people on a list. When the list is done, I’ll say to myself, “OK, when ALL of these people leave the program, you can leave too!” Of course, as I go to more meetings over time, the list (including sponsees) keeps growing and the probability of my leaving them keeps

decreasing!

This also gives me the opportunity to pray for these friends. In addition, it allows me to express gratitude to my Higher Power for bringing them into my life and having them contribute to my ongoing recovery. This is the kind of thinking that helps me find the serenity that my mind is really looking for; not the illusions of the old way of thinking. No more games—the real deal!

BOB J., Virginia, USA 



Read The Pamphlet on SA Sponsorship

Excerpt from pages 1-2: *Relying on the guidance of a sponsor relieves us of the burden of trying to figure things out alone. Sponsorship is spiritual fellowship in action. In working with a sponsor, we find relief from loneliness, doubt and indecision; in sponsoring others, we share the joy of seeing others recover. In addition, the practical experience we gain in taking direction from another member helps us to find the courage, when the time comes, to carry out the will of our Higher Power when our Step Eleven prayers give us that knowledge.*

Find this inspiring and insightful tool to help you and your local group in your service with sponsees on the SA Store: https://www.sexaholics.org/store/product_info.php?cPath=26&products_id=65

THE FIERY SERMON

A newer member of SA decided he didn’t need to go to any more meetings. After a few weeks, his sponsor decided to visit him. It was a chill evening and the sponsor found the sponsee at home alone, sitting before a blazing fire.

Guessing the reason for his sponsor’s visit, the sponsee welcomed him, led him to a big chair near the fireplace and waited.

His sponsor made himself comfortable, but said nothing. In the grave silence, he contemplated the play of the flames around the burning logs. After some minutes, the sponsor took the fire tongs, carefully picked up a brightly burning ember and placed it to one side of the hearth all alone. Then he sat back in his chair, still silent.

The sponsee watched all this in quiet fascination. As the one lone ember’s flame diminished, there was a momentary glow and then its fire was no more. So, it was cold and “dead as a doornail.” Not a word had been spoken since the initial greeting.

Just before the sponsor was ready to leave, he picked up the cold, dead ember and placed it back in the middle of the fire. Immediately it began to glow once more with the light and warmth of the burning coals around it.

As the sponsor reached the door to leave, the sponsee said, “Thank you so much for your visit and especially for the fiery sermon. I’ll see you at the meeting in the morning.”

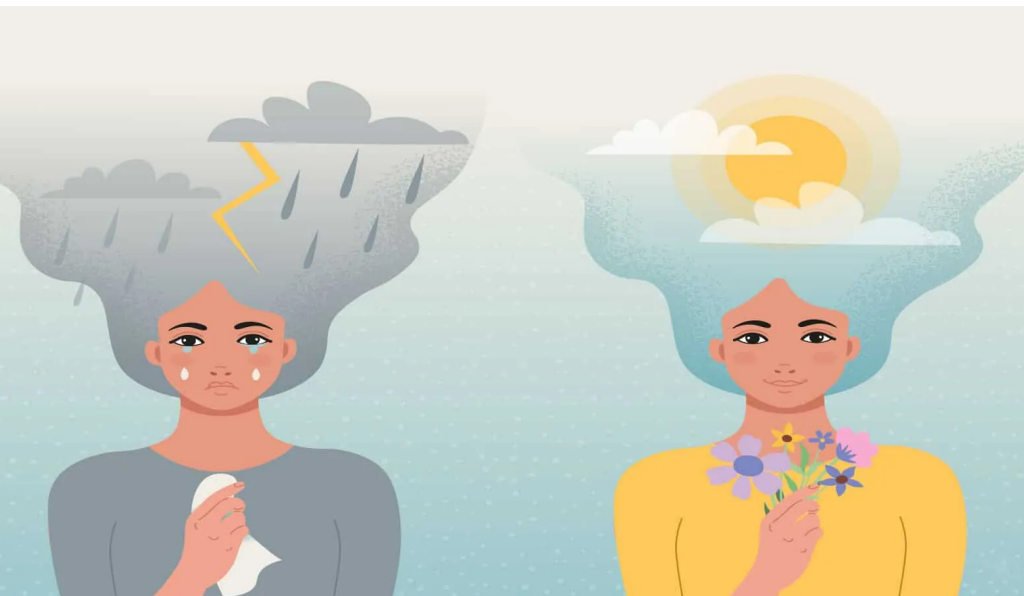
ANONYMOUS



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

Some Personal Reflections on Negative-to-Positive Changes

Starting out as the first female member in Egypt, she had to go through some rough patches, and by God's grace reached the Solution.



In recovery, I have experienced several negative-to-positive changes. Here are some of them.

First Experience: From the very first day when I joined SA and attended my first face-to-face meeting, I was surprised that I was surrounded by 25 men. There was no woman fellow, neither in the group, nor in all of Egypt. I was afraid, yet I decided to continue regardless of my hard addiction pattern, alongside these men.

Second experience: As there were no females, my first sponsor was a man. And instead of him becoming a sex object for me, he became God's message to me to teach me how to surrender.

Third experience: After my first sponsor left me, I had to face a decision: either to leave the fellowship or to stay in it. I made the decision to stay.

Instead of him becoming a sex object for me, he became God's message to me to teach me how to surrender.

Fourth Experience: After celebrating being sober for 18 months, I came to realize that I was abstaining only

(negative sobriety). I fearlessly reset my sobriety date and announced that to everyone. I started to learn what sobriety is.

Fifth experience: My strongest experience was to return to the program and redo the Steps with my sponsor, who I consider as a brother and a friend. He was very patient with me, and he was trying to carry the message for me through working the Steps from the AA Big Book.

Sixth experience: For me, the most important step was to renounce lust completely, and let go of everything I lust after. I raised the white flag in front of my addiction and I have started real positive sobriety.

Seventh Experience: When I openly shared how far down the scale I went and put it out into the light, I have learned to let go of my personal defects, and I have started to confess and surrender.

I let go of everything I lust after. I raised the white flag in front of my addiction and I have started real positive sobriety.

Eighth experience: Direct amends was a big leap. I took a decision to go to any length and make direct amends to anyone I harmed, and I did not stop there. I have worked on forgiving anyone who harmed me.

Ninth experience: I have begun to take service roles in my home group so I have a role in the Fellowship of the Spirit. Now, instead of objectifying men and turning them into lust and

pleasure objects, I in turn have become a message from my Higher Power to them so I can help them to recover.

I am happy and I now have self-esteem in this tough world of sexaholism. Now I know and understand that I am the problem.

Tenth experience: I have begun learning how to practice the most important Step, which is carrying the message to other sexaholics. Now, I am sponsoring other women to work the Steps, and I show them how to do service in the meetings too. I am carrying the message to other men as well, and help them to recover through sharing my experience, strength, and hope with them.

I have become free and I am now relieved from self-pity. I live one day at a time through surrendering and freely letting go. I am happy and I now have self-esteem in this tough world of sexaholism. Now I know and understand that I am the problem. And by God's grace I have reached the Solution. I have learned how to work the Steps, how to surrender, and why I have to do amends. In the end, the Twelve Promises have become a reality as a result of taking these Steps.

I am now able to say with all confidence: I am a grateful recovering sexaholic by the grace of God, and with the help of my best friend and brother, my sponsor, and all my trust circle of men and women fellows.

MERVAT A., *Cairo, Egypt*

Saved From Drowning By SA's Spiritual Toolkit

Each sponsee has to find his Higher Power through working and practicing the spiritual principles and then becoming a rescue swimmer in turn.

After more than 40 years of drowning in a vast ocean of sexaholism that has a bottomless abyss, I was relieved to finally have a rescue swimmer (my sponsor) swim to my aid. I had the desperation of a drowning man and listened and followed his suggestions without question. The spiritual toolkit he was laying at my feet had immediate results. Though they were subtle results, I could feel the support, like a life-ring, building one day at a time.

Now years later my sponsor and this program have taught me to be a rescue swimmer in turn. In fact, if I do not perform this life saving service, I will find myself back in the depths of the abyss. Providing the spiritual toolkit for others, strengthens my own spiritual tools and keeps them honed so that the needed Power is there.

The Big Book warns us "To spend too much time on any situation is to deny some other sexaholic an opportunity to be rescued." (AA 96) Sponsoring is exactly like that for me. When I look out over the vast ocean of sexaholism, there are many drowning people. Some do not wish to be rescued, and some want the suffering to stop but are not quite ready to

do the work. Then there are those that have the Gift Of Desperation (GOD acronym). They are easy to spot and from the moment I reach them they have the look of desperation and the willingness to follow instructions. They grasp at the tools with the desperation of a drowning man, they listen intently and start applying the principles of those tools and with that, they begin to feel buoyancy instead of the powerful pull of the bottomless dark abyss.

So, as they practice the spiritual tools, I swim from one prospect to another giving them new life saving tools. Each sponsee then practices the principle of that new tool and they begin to discover the Power in each passing day. I can only work with only so many dying sexaholics and have to watch the horrible suffering of those still needing help. Every now and then I see one of my prospects slow down or stop practicing the principles of the tools and watch as they start to go under.

When I was a new sponsor, I swam over in a valiant effort to save the sponsee, encouraging them to keep



fighting, keep practicing. Some regained the process, but there were those that only continued with half measures, resting on their laurels. In some cases I swam over and held them above the water, but soon realized the more I did that, the more the drowning sponsee let up doing the work. He was being held up and the desperation had been relieved to an extent he was no longer feeling the danger of the abyss.

After many exhaustive attempts to save the drowning SA, I realized that I was working harder than the sponsee. That my other sponsees that were willing to do the work, were not getting the next necessary spiritual tool, and that there were still many desperate drowning sexaholics all around me that were willing to practice the spiritual principles so that they could be set free, but had no one to help them.

I had to be willing to let the unwilling

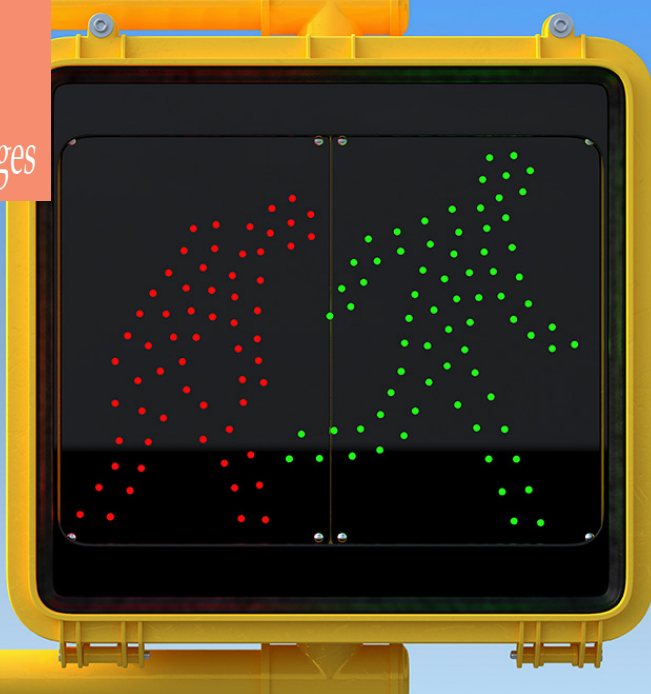
sexaholic go under and gulp a couple of deep incapacitating suffocating drinks of the ocean. Sometimes such a person would surface with a new desperation to continue the process, but sometimes he did not resurface and sank to deeper depths of the abyss or perished.

I had to learn, heartbreakingly so, that I have no Power and that I am no one's solution. That each sponsee has to find a Power greater than himself through working and practicing the spiritual principles and then helping others by being of service. In the end, I realized that the work I am doing is really about keeping me connected to the Power. In many instances as I swim out to another sexaholic in the ocean, I myself am hearing from that SA in the fellowship, exactly what it is I am needing just for that day.

DENNIS T., Anchorage, Alaska



**Am I
Willing
to Do the
Things
I Don't
want to
Do?**



PUTTING A STRONG EMPHASIS ON CHARACTER DEFECTS IS AS VITAL AS STOPPING ACTING-OUT BECAUSE THEY FEED THE ADDICTION AND VICE-VERSA, WHICH TURNS INTO A VICIOUS CYCLE.

I began sponsoring when I was almost 18 months sober and working on Step Six. I was hesitant because there was, and there remains, no formal guidance on how to sponsor, but my mentor told me it was time for me to step up to the plate.

I owe that sponsor an incalculable debt because guiding others has played a huge role in my continuing recovery. I'm sure I wouldn't be almost 11 years sober had I not accepted the challenge to do some heavy lifting. And sometimes it is heavy lifting, but the rewards far outweigh the effort.

I am a strict sponsor and I will only work with someone who is committed. More generous sponsors seem to be prepared to work with anyone who asks them. I admire their generosity.

I place a strong emphasis on character defects because that was how I became sober. It is of course vital that we stop acting-out but it is equally vital that we don't become dry drunks and it was my experience over more than 50 years of acting-out that my character defects were feeding my addiction and vice-versa. In other words, it was a vicious cycle.

It has been my experience as a sponsor that perhaps the greatest stumbling block to ongoing recovery is a failure or unwillingness to address pride. When I came into the program I was not even aware that pride was an issue for me but my sponsor very soon alerted me to that fact. I was not offended. I wanted recovery more than anything else and I was willing to do whatever it takes.

I have chosen to let some sponsees

go because they were unwilling to address their pride which consequently was preventing them from any solid sobriety. And it must be said that some of my sponsees have chosen to discontinue working with me as is their right.

I do not expect perfection but I do require absolute honesty and absolute commitment. My two most successful sponsees have five-and-a-half years and six years of sobriety. Their recovery has had a hugely positive impact on their marriages and family relationships. If I had had the courage to come into SA a few years sooner, my own marriage may have been saved. I am not divorced and pray daily that my wife and I may be reconciled.

I am a better person now because sponsorship has reinforced for me the importance of putting others first. When I give of myself I get far more back. There is a great joy in seeing a fellow sexaholic in solid recovery.

For the most part, when I am working with someone who is serious about recovery, willing to follow my mantra "DO THE THINGS YOU DON'T WANT TO DO", and who works the Steps, I do not encounter any serious challenges. On the contrary, I experience joy and gratitude for the opportunity I have been given to help a fellow addict. To then witness those sponsees become capable sponsors themselves is even more rewarding.

The challenges of sponsorship are largely confined to those members who want to do things "their way." My fuse for that sort of behavior is very short. I will, and do, still listen and talk to them, still take their phone calls and make calls to them, because I understand their struggles and I want to see them recover but I will not

sponsor anyone who does not exhibit that commitment that I believe is vital to lasting recovery.

My strong preference for sponsoring is to do so in person. Covid has forced us all to make changes but in an ideal world I need to sit in a room with someone and take note of their body

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language as well as listen to them. I also have a severe hearing loss which, especially on the phone or on Zoom, presents its own challenges, hence my preference for sitting face to face.

Nowadays I commit in the first instance to a temporary sponsorship to see how we fit with one another and also to suss out just how serious my brother addict is.

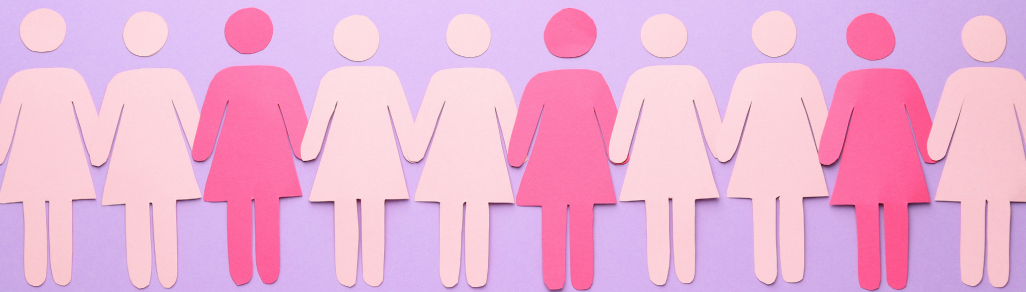
Do I ever get tired? Exhausted even? Yes of course. Do I ever want to run away from SA and all that it entails? Of course I do. Would I do it? A better question is this: Do I want to go back to a life of misery, shame, and guilt, a life of self-pity, envy, and resentment—and at least another dozen character defects?

No need for me to answer that. And being a sponsor will always be a huge part of my ongoing recovery.

Thank you, my Higher Power, thank you SA, thank you, my fellow travelers.

Bill F., Sydney, Australia





Helping Other Women Is the Foundation of My Recovery

It is difficult to describe in words the feeling of gratitude to God for me to be a sponsor. It is a great honor, responsibility, and joy. I want this process of transmitting the message of recovery from one woman to another to never stop. I believe that sponsorship is the most effective recovery tool in the SA Program. The AA literature says, "Helping others is the foundation stone of your recovery. A kindly act once in a while isn't enough. You have to act the Good Samaritan every day, if need be." (AA 97)

The women I've led through the Steps live in different cities and countries, with different religious views and cultures, and have different ages and marital status. But we are united by God's love in the Fellowship and a great desire for purity, sobriety, and happiness.

My sponsees become mirrors of a magnifying glass that help me to see and recognize in myself what I would never have known and seen without sponsorship. These can be not only my deeply hidden deadly defects, codependency, or forms of lust, but also qualities like long-suffering, compassion, mercy, sacrifice, wisdom, maturity, and humility.

Our wrong attitudes and actions are revealed in the Step work. In the Fourth Step resentment inventory, I added two more columns which were for writing a negative attitude and a positive attitude. In describing traumatic events and people from my past, it was very important for me not to remain in negative feelings and attitudes, but to write out positive attitudes for each event. Such detailed work turned out to be effective for me

on the path of recovery. It led to accepting events with humility and long-awaited peace of mind. I offer my sponsees these two additional columns as a strategy from my personal experience to getting out of negative memories. I was pleased to hear from my sponsees that such an addition in dealing with grievances helps them not to plunge into self-pity and self-flagellation.

I often remind my SA sisters and myself that recovery does not depend on people, it depends only on the relationship with God. Pay attention to the positive. Sobriety based on the negative has not given us anything. It was "uncomfortable, dangerous and short-lived." (SA 145) Positive sobriety and recovery is comfortable, safe, and long-term!

OLGA S., *Alchevsk, Ukraine*



Simply Let God Give of His Abundance

I just learned a lesson about surrender in a place where I least expected it—sponsorship. I thought that, working on principle, under the guidance of the Twelve Steps and Traditions, I was safe from my character defects. I had been saying in meetings for months that my relationship with sponsors and sponsees is the template for all my relationships now. I still think that's true, but not in the way I expected.

In the past month, I lost four sponsees. Two found other sponsors, and I fired two. I had previously decided not to fire sponsees because my SA sponsor doesn't. However, my Higher Power is leading me places I didn't expect, to become the man I cannot be on my own.

The two sponsees who left me

wanted more of my time; we were meeting once a week, and I was responding to five-minute-long voice note "surrenders" several times per day per sponsee. It was overwhelming at times, but I gutted through and answered each point of each long voice note. They were slow to take suggestions, and had lots of suggestions of their own. In both cases, after I had listened patiently to their Fourth Step, they refused to do Steps Six and Seven. One sponsee couldn't accept the "spiritual axiom" which says "that every time we are disturbed, no matter what the cause, there is something wrong with us." (12&12 90) He insisted it was OK to be angry and fearful of his stepmother and wanted to go back and erase parts of his Fourth Step. Worse, he directly refused to work the Sixth.

The other sponsee, whose non-Big Book formatted Fourth Step I inherited, took 20 hours of listening. There were times I was tired, and stayed late at work to give us a private place to do the Fifth Step. He also insisted on setting our pace. With each resentment and fear, I had to ask him to refrain from telling long stories. It was a struggle, and we had to pray over each one as the sponsee justified his behavior and seemed to want to hold onto resentment and fear rather than search for his faults. I soldiered through. Then, having finally arrived at the Sixth Step, he refused to make a list of character defects or read Step Six in the 12&12 because “that’s not in the Big Book.” I ended the relationship because I don’t know how to sponsor if basic suggestions are ignored.

With the end of these four sponsorship relations, I found myself feeling dejected and inadequate. Though knowing better, I took it personally, so I had to work Steps Four–Nine on the issue. I kept feeling that I had done something wrong, but I couldn’t figure out what, since I had been so “generous.” *It turned out I was giving of myself instead of giving of God’s abundance.* When I was too tired, I should have drawn a boundary. When sponsees didn’t take suggestions, such as find a DSR partner, or go to 90 meetings in 90 days, I should have reconsidered working with them. When sponsees wanted to dump every doubt on me, I should have taught them to be more God-reliant instead of Mike-reliant. My sponsor taught me that my job as a sponsor is to help the sponsee find their solutions in a Higher Power, not me. Bill W. writes about this very clearly, “The minute we put our work on a service plane, the alcoholic commences to rely upon our assistance rather than upon

God.” (AA 98) In the same paragraph, Bill writes that it is right to give, but that we have to know “when and how.”

What attracted me to my sponsorship lineage is that my sponsor and their sponsors give: they are open-handed, generous, quick to serve. I thought I was doing the same thing, but there was too much of my own effort involved. For my sponsees’ Step One-meetings, I called all the old-timers I

I have come to learn to not give of my personal store but simply let God give of His abundance.

knew and asked them to be present so that my sponsees would have a good experience, only to have them drift away before starting the Fourth Step. I feel that I spent some human capital in asking favors of experienced members.

When asking my DSR partner if he found me judgmental, he reminded me that sometimes I give “helpful” advice where it’s not welcome. So my sponsees, even though no longer mine, helped *me* recover.

Through prayer and Step work, I have come to learn to not give of my personal store but simply let God give of his abundance. Nor am I to fantasize about how great it is that my sponsees and I are part of the same grand sponsorship lineage. I surrender my right to try to be the best sponsor. I will simply show up and serve as I am directed in meditation.

MIKE M., Taipei, Taiwan



Accepting to Make a Real U-turn

Sexaholism is a really serious disease that requires big changes.

For the last four years I have been serving more than 30 women who have decided to change their lives with the help of the Twelve Steps. As of today, none of them have completed all Twelve Steps. But there are several whose hard work and growth in recovery make me believe that the Steps work for them the same way as for me. The Steps create a new free personality, instead of the slavishly dependent old one. And that’s what I want to share with you and with my sponsored ones—the Steps change lives!

Before joining SA, I had lost all hope of improving my situation. There was chaos in all areas of my life. I thought about death as a way out of problems and no new ideas of mine could hide the truth from me—I had lost and the party was over. Icy despair was what drove me to my first SA meeting. Now I can clearly see that that despair was the key that opened the door to change. Without it, I would never have accepted to make a U-turn and the radical lifestyle changes that were offered to me in SA: giving up sex and masturbation, breaking up relationships that were dear to me (but killing me), changing my social circle, adopting a new day schedule, being accountable to some women (and I never trusted women!), and of course, daily Step work! Someone who is not desperate, but just wants to patch up his or her sexual sphere, will say “Why do all this?”

Like my sponsor, starting to work with a newcomer, I do not hide that

this is not a half-measures program. Sexaholism is a really serious disease and requires strong and regular treatment and big changes in life. All this I necessarily indicate in my “Sponsorship Agreement” (the conditions under which I work with sponsees). Tough? Yes, but such uncompromising honesty at the very beginning frees me from obsequiousness and flirting with the disease in an attempt to return a sponsee back to SA when her disease raises its head and demands indulgences for itself.

Every time a sponsee leaves or chooses half-measures instead of recovery, I consider myself a bad sponsor and a bad recovering person, since my message did not inspire her. But for these moments I have my sponsor—she says that I am going in the right direction, that I am sober, I am in the SA program and I carry the message that a life without bondage to lust is possible! This path looks more thorny than the road of half-measures, but in reality it is a path of true Happiness. And I believe her, because she led me along the same path that another woman is leading her, who also went through a difficult but direct path of recovery from lust!

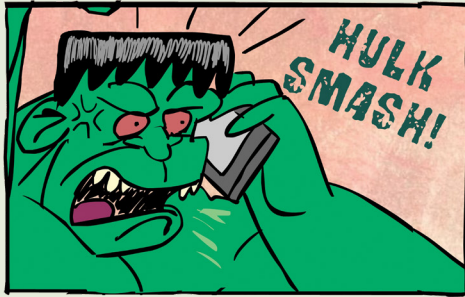
Today I thank the Higher Power for all the women who helped me not to look for half measures. I feel very grateful for the new life that was given to me by those who walked ahead of me along the sometimes thorny, but safe and true pathway!

ALINA M., Saint Petersburg, Russia



Helping the Person Start Walking the Right Path in the Right Direction

Offering sponsorship by reaching out to the man who still suffers is a wonderful spiritual adventure.



Our White Book says, “I got a sponsor (a friend in the program to help me work the Steps) and began working on me.” (SA 23) As a sexaholic, I need to find right relations with others and God, and where best to start but with my sponsor, who can mirror back recovery and help me with the Twelve Step program.

The section *Getting an SA Sponsor* (SA 72-75) is one of my favorite passages. I need an SA sponsor! I need to share exactly what is going on with me—with someone who fully understands lust addiction and sexual sobriety as defined by SA—in order to let go of my old destructive behaviors and patterns, and break through into recovery, connection, and healing.

I need to call someone BEFORE I decide to do something stupid ... not after. Without SA sponsorship, I would not be able to stay sober or work the SA program.

Coming from another Twelve Step program, I found it difficult to surrender: “Many of us had to begin all over again as though we had never heard of the Steps.” (SA 81) When I asked for sponsorship, I stayed sober. I changed sponsors a few times and am grateful for the lessons learned. I was advised that sponsorship and working the Steps was not enough: I had to make calls, commit to my group, be part of and attend meetings

regularly and on time and, when ready, be willing to serve. I was asked to develop a relationship with a Higher Power, a God of my own understanding. I was learning to relax being with my fellow sexaholics.

The advice in this same section—that getting a sponsor with the same particular forms of acting out does not seem to matter as much as the sponsor who is incorporating the principles—is helpful to me. And when I saw a member who had what I wanted, a man who wanted to help the next sex-drunk, who loved sexaholics, I was attracted to that and asked for help with the steps.

This is my favorite section in the White Book—so here it is in its entirety:

“Wise sponsors know they can’t carry the sexaholic; they can only carry the message of their own recovery. Thus they do not get involved in giving advice and bearing responsibility for the other person. Likewise, we do not become dependent on the sponsor in the way we were with parents, spouses, lovers, or even professionals. **The goal of a good sponsor is the eventual independence and spiritual and emotional maturity of the individual—to help the person start walking the right path in the right direction.** The wise sponsor will also let the person know that their relationship alone is not enough. The person is going to have to make his or her connection with the group and become *part of*.” (SA 74, bold print added)

The line in bold is a guiding light for me. For some time in SA I struggled with misplaced dependency, was over-enthusiastic, overbearing, and controlling. Imagine that! Fear was controlling me. These were big issues for me. I recall once, a member gently

calling me to one side saying, “Oh, can’t you leave a bit for God to do?” I listened, thank God.

Working the Steps and studying the Traditions with my sponsor prepared me to carry the SA message through service. Service for me, although challenging at times, is a learning process, rewarding and very beneficial for my recovery. “It is everyone’s business ... as inheritor in it all, to give his portion to the rest; for we are one family, with God at the head and heart of it ...” (George MacDonald, *The Fellowship of Sobriety* SA 171) Here too I am not alone, I seek help and support from my sponsor and others.

Offering sponsorship by reaching out to the man who still suffers is something that I would not like to have missed. “We were learning how to give; and the measure we gave was the measure we got back.” (SA 62) I don’t have to know all the answers and again; I can reach out to my sponsor and others to help me with sponsoring. When listening to a member’s Fifth Step we read this section together, “praying for a listening ear and an understanding heart.” (SA 113) This is a special time.

Perhaps most importantly, sponsorship encourages me to seek connection with the One who keeps me sober. “... letting God in through every temptation, emotion, difficulty, success, failure, sadness and joy. True union with the Source of our lives.” (SA 141)

One day at a time, what a wonderful spiritual adventure! Thank God for SA, and thanks to all of you for being a special part of it.

ANONYMOUS, sober since July 2012

Sober from 1993, this old-timer shows us the key he has gotten from his sponsor and explains in great detail the manual he uses with his sponsees, with whom he loves to form intimate friendships.

Stepping into Freedom From the Obsession

When I first arrived in SA, I asked a man who had several years of sobriety to be my sponsor. A few months later, when I was ready to start Step Four, I discovered that he had never worked the Steps. I asked another man who I had heard speaking about his experience writing and sharing inventories, making difficult amends, and practicing the principles with others who had no spiritual program. I learned that before asking someone to be your sponsor, it is important to

I learned that before asking someone to be your sponsor, it is important to ask the person, “Have you worked the Steps with your sponsor?”

ask the person, “Have you worked the Steps with your sponsor?” If the answer is “No”, find someone who has worked the Steps with their sponsor and ask them.

When starting with a newcomer,

I ask him to read from the title page of the SA White Book through the chapter “To the Newcomer” and the section titled “Lust” on page 40 and call me to discuss what he read. I ask if he identifies with “The Problem” on page 203 and the description of the sexaholic on page 202. Does the description of lust on pages 40 and 41 resonate with his experience?

I want him to decide if the problem that brought him to SA matches our Fellowship’s shared experience, described in the White Book. If he does not identify with our problem, he is unlikely to accept our solution. If he agrees that he is a real sexaholic, as we define this, then I ask him to read “The Sobriety Definition” on pages 191-3. I emphasize that this is the solution that has worked for thousands of sexaholics and that SA does not have experience with any other solution. If he does not want to accept and pursue our solution, I tell him that there are other “S” fellowships, with different definitions of sobriety, and encourage him to investigate them to see if they are a better fit for him. I emphasize



that this is what works *for us*, and that we do not speak for anyone outside of SA.

If he accepts that he is a real sexaholic of the hopeless variety, whose only hope is the growth and maintenance of a spiritual experience, I ask him

Whenever he is triggered, he is to begin praying until the temptation passes. I want him to get into the habit of turning to God first.

to read “Overcoming Lust and Temptation” on pages 157-168 and underline or highlight every prayer he

finds. Then, we meet to discuss each point and the Summary. I have him write the prayers that he finds most powerful on an index card, laminate the card, and begin carrying the card everywhere he goes. Whenever he is tempted or triggered, he is to pull the card from his pocket, and begin praying until the temptation passes. *After praying*, he may want to make a phone call, but I want him to get in the habit of turning to God *first*. That way, when he is unable to make a call, he can still connect with his Higher Power.

We then begin working the Steps as suggested in Step Into Action. While he is writing his Step 1, we read “The Doctor’s Opinion” in the AA Big Book. I want to ensure he understands the *physical* nature of the allergy which manifests as craving, and the need for an entire psychic change, if he is to become free of the obsession. He must understand that the allergy will

be present for the rest of his life, and that there is no medical cure that will remove it.

We then read Chapters Two and Three of the Big Book, which describe the mental obsession which leads to the first drink. Again, I want him to look for the similarities between his experience and what we are reading. We review the examples of powerlessness and unmanageability he has written and prepare for him to share this with the group. We ensure that it is factual and convincing without being overly dramatic or triggering.

We study Chapter Four, “We Agnostics”, as he begins writing the Step Two exercise suggested in *Step Into Action*. When this is completed, we meet to discuss a conception of a Higher Power that he thinks may help him just as it has already helped other members of our group. This is *not* a lengthy theological exercise; simply a brief description of the Power he has seen at work in our group. I ask him if he is willing to take the necessary actions to gain access to and develop a relationship with this Power—a Power that restores sexaholics like him to sanity and gives them a rich, full life. If he says “Yes”, we are ready for Step Three. If he balks, we look for the blocks that may be holding him back.

When he is ready, we read from the bottom of page 60 to page 64, which addresses Step Three, and usually say the Step Three prayer together. I emphasize that this is a decision to pursue a relationship with a Power greater than himself by working the remaining Steps. I have him start writing Step Four immediately, following the instructions in the Big Book. We discuss his progress regularly, and I answer any questions

that may arise.

To prepare for Step Five, we read pages 72-75 in the Big Book and pages 113-114 in the White Book. Then we have a long talk. I may ask, “Is there anything that you have decided you don’t want to share with me?” Once we dispose of that, we begin reviewing his inventory. I listen and sometimes share experiences of mine that are similar to what he shares. When he is finished, I show him the instructions at the bottom of page 75, and encourage him to spend an hour or so reviewing his work. He is then ready for Steps Six and Seven, as described on page 76. Within a few hours of finishing our talk, he has finished these Steps and is ready to begin Step Eight.

As the Big Book suggests, he reviews his Step Four inventory to start a list of all persons he has harmed and to whom he is now willing to make amends. I have him read Steps Eight and Nine in the White Book and pages 80–81 in *Twelve Steps and*

We consider the remaining chapters of the Big Book for suggestions on practicing the principles in all our affairs.

Twelve Traditions for some excellent examples of how we harm others. I encourage him to write the amends in the format suggested in *Step Into Action*. We review the amends *before* he approaches anyone.

Page 84 of the Big Book says we

begin Step Ten as we work on Steps Eight & Nine. So, I have him start reading pages 84–88 each morning as soon as he starts Step Eight. We discuss the morning prayers and evening review (Step Eleven), and how to apply this Step throughout the day. I suggest that this is what allows us to live free of the obsession, and that these actions will protect and support us for the rest of our lives.

Once he has made some of his more difficult amends, we read “Working With Others” in the Big Book, and I encourage him to start raising his hand in meetings to offer to sponsor others, and approach newcomers to offer the process that he and I have pursued. Then we consider the remaining chapters, “To Wives”, “The Family Afterward”, and “To Employers” for suggestions on practicing the principles in *all* our affairs. We also read and discuss Step Twelve in the White Book to consider how we can continue to grow in our relationships with those we love.

Rick has been my temporary sponsor since February 1994. At first, I followed his directions because I was convinced I would die if the Program did not work for me. He confronted my fear, uniqueness, and resistance directly, and this often angered me. Gradually, my begrudging respect grew into admiration, affection, and love. I hear some people say they cannot be friends with their sponsees. This is not my experience. I form intimate relationships with the men who allow me to sponsor them. I love them, and feel a real loss when they move away, leave the Fellowship, or die. On the other hand, those who have remained in my life over the years have blessed me in ways I could never have imagined when I took my first sponsee through the Steps.

As Chuck C. (Roy K.’s grand-sponsor) once said, “This is the best life I have ever had; the only easy life I have ever known.”

BILL S., Nashville, USA



DISCUSSION TOPIC

Is everyone in your group being sponsored and sponsoring others?

The author of this article often says he “sponsors sponsors.” In other words, sponsoring is not an option but an *absolutely indispensable* part of our Solution.

Are you being sponsored by a fellow who has worked the Steps with a sponsor himself? Are you in turn sponsoring others?

Is everyone in your group being sponsored and sponsoring others?

Or is sponsoring in your group considered to be something optional?

Is your sponsoring literature-based? Is it based on our Sobriety Definition (WB 191-193)?

Are you stimulating your sponsees from the very beginning to reach out to their HP and pray when tempted in order to get them in the habit of turning to God *first*? Or do you keep them, maybe unconsciously, dependent on you?

Do you keep your sponsoring well separated from your opinions, outside issues, religious views, etc.?

Do you dare to open up, be vulnerable and intimate with your sponsees—or do you hide behind the *seemingly* safe role of “teaching” them?

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

Giving for Free and for Fun



By asking the old-timer from the previous story to sponsor him, he has become a long-term sober member himself who in turn has been giving to others what has been freely given to him.

When I came into the program, it was suggested I find a sponsor. I was told a sponsor would help me one-on-one to go through the Steps, and I should either take someone who meets “I want what he has” or simply look around at the end of the meeting for the first person who raises his hand when asked “Who is available to sponsor?”

When I joined SA, I was pretty broken inside. When I grew up my father abused me, both physically and emotionally. After my parents got divorced at age 10, my mother divorced two more times before I turned 18, and I was sexually abused by both my religious spiritual mentor (rabbi) and my therapist. I found myself in SA at age 24. Needless to say that I did not trust humans. I did

not want a one-on-one help. But I was desperate and broken enough to take any suggestion you had to offer, I wanted a way out of my addiction.

Looking back, the first few sentences my first sponsor told me (I couldn’t really choose so I took the first one who raised his hand) were the only few things that would keep me in SA; anything else would have probably made me turn my back and leave SA. He said: “I can’t help you my friend, I am a sexaholic just like you. But I can show you how I worked the Steps and have found a Higher Power. He will be able to help you, like He helped me.”

I was not willing to trust anyone. But I was willing to follow suggestions and seek a Higher Power that might help. And I did. *And He did.* And my life today is literally beyond my

wildest dreams.

So for me, sponsorship is simply about giving, *for free and for fun*, what I have been freely given in SA.

Of course, it starts with being sponsored. Because “you can’t give what you don’t have.” And since we are “a fellowship of men and women

Without working with others I could easily forget what a living walking miracle I am.

who share,” that’s all we have. We share our experience, strength, and hope with one another, so we can both stay sober, one day at a time.

There are challenges in being a sponsor, but in my experience the benefits are much greater. I’ll try to share some of the Challenges and Benefits I’ve experienced, and hope they will be useful to some of you.

Time:

The longer I’m in SA, the less “time” I have. When I stopped acting out, I probably got back 10-25 hours a week in which I used to act out (!) and I was willing to spend even longer in fellowship, meetings, and phone calls, because I wanted what you have. The longer I stayed, the better my life got, and I began filling my life with healthy things. Work, Family, Wife, Kids, and I got less and less time to spend in the disease.

Sponsoring others saves my life. Without the responsibility of working with others, without re-experiencing the Steps every time I work them with another person,

without the excitement of sharing an embarrassing past story, or a huge fear or shame I had, and how SA helped me walk through it, I could easily forget what a living walking miracle I am. My life today is a miracle, any aspect of it is a direct result of the gifts I got in my SA journey, and I can easily lose any of it if I go back out again.

There is one thing you can never take from me: the time I spent sharing my message with others. I’ve had the most precious privilege of watching people transform, like me, from a broken, lost, and fearful child, to a beautiful, responsible, and sensitive grownup. And I even get to stay in touch with some of them today.

Connection & Intimacy:

Relationships are hard. If I wasn’t a love cripple, I probably wouldn’t be here. I am terrified of intimacy which is why lust was so attractive. Lust bypassed intimacy and true union. In sponsorship, I get to know people. They share everything, they call me

They ask me to sponsor them so I would help them work the Steps and reflect the truth as I see it from outside their heads.

daily, they share their resentments, their fears, their miracles. I get to be close to a real human being, for real, with no secrets and walls. And I grow.

I make so many mistakes. My

sponsor helps me place boundaries and avoid rescuing addicts. I share honestly about my struggles and fears. I learn how to be a friend. I also learn how to be honest and reflect the truth when it's required. Even at the risk of losing the relationship, because this is why they asked me to sponsor them: so I would help them work the Steps and reflect the truth as I see it

Taking others through the Steps is what has been keeping me in fit spiritual condition. I find myself sharing things with a sponsee, then realizing I haven't been doing it myself.

from outside their heads. I learn to do it gently and respectfully. I learn a lot. Some of the closest relationships I have in my life today are with my sponsor and my sponsees.

The 12 Steps:

"How do I work with others? How would I know what's the right thing to say? I'm not as smart as my sponsor!" were some of the fears I had when I started sponsoring. I started listening to recordings of old-timers. I listened to 12-Step workshops and Big Book studies (like the famous AA Joe & Charlie workshops) and began to see the patterns. The principles. The 12 Steps. I've come to realize that the 12 Steps are *really* "a group

of principles, spiritual in their nature, which, if practiced as a way of life, can expel the obsession to drink (lust) and enable the sufferer to become happily and usefully whole."(12&12, 15)

Taking others through the Steps is what has been keeping me in fit spiritual condition. It's hard! I find myself sharing things with a sponsee, then realizing I haven't been doing it myself—haven't been letting go of that fear; haven't been surrendering that lust thought as soon as it arrives; haven't been asking for help; haven't been opening up about similar issues to my sponsor; etc.

I've seen many ways to work the Steps and come to see it's not a one-size-fits-all. A single man in his 20s, a married woman in her 40s, or a retired grandfather in his 60s might not work the Steps in the same pace or even in the same way. But the principles are simple. And God can work with anyone, if that person is willing to surrender and ask for help.

I've found that I keep learning new things as my sponsees struggle and we pray, ask others, and try out solutions, until something works and then what had been missing becomes apparent—the step or principle that had been lacking, the old idea I had been holding on to.

Working with others is what made my journey what it is. Working the 12 Steps alone wouldn't have been the same.

Thanks to all of those who shared their message with me, I have been able to be a channel of my Higher Power, and pass it on to you. It's yours now. If it works, pass it on!

AVIAD S., *Yavne, Israel*



Steps & Traditions

SA'S FIRST STEP SET HER FREE



She tried innumerable methods to get free from her obsessive thoughts and behaviors, but it was only by following the example of those that had found the way out before her that she found lasting freedom.



As a very young child, I learned to use my imagination to escape from reality. I then began to be fascinated by and create narratives around corporal punishment.

These imaginary scenarios were always accompanied by masturbation, which was my pacifier, my comfort, my go-to for self-soothing. As a kid I would do it anywhere and was never found out. I became skilled at deception and hiding. I was completely intolerant of uncomfortable situations, especially ones where I was in the wrong. If I was ever caught doing something wrong, I became a stone wall and refused to confess.

All the while, I became ever more addicted to my imaginary scenarios, which all involved someone else (never me) owning up to wrongdoing and facing consequences. If anything remotely related to my fantasies came up in books, movies, conversations, or any public sphere, my physical and mental discomfort was unbearable.

Some time around late middle or early high school, two things happened. I became consciously aware of my problem, and I discovered an erotic novel that shattered my assumption that my brain was unique. By this point I had also been pursued by the grace of God and He had made me alive to His beauty, forgiveness and power. So every subsequent choice carried with it the maddening shame that I knew better.

The next 14 years were a desperate clawing for control over the monster called Lust which I now know cannot be controlled. I told my Mom; I outed myself to friends; I joined a group at my Christian college specifically

designed to create a safe space for women to combat lust. I forced myself to be more vulnerable in each new accountability relationship or small group, always thinking that if I could just be honest enough, my problem would be fixed. I could never stay sober for more than a few weeks, with one longer stretch closer to a year.

After college, I read an article written by a pastor about his humiliating fall due to his pornography and masturbation habit, who encouraged readers who were struggling to find someone who could have a pulse on where you were at with sexual conduct. I immediately reached out to a friend to ask her to mentor me and be that person who I would consistently confess to. I was convinced that having to talk to the same person over and over would cure me. I was wrong.

I could not keep from masturbating for more than a few weeks, usually no longer than a week. I would slide into isolation during relapse periods, increasingly obsessive and with my acting-out reaching more of binge quality. I confessed every time. I could not keep up the lie for more than a month or so before my misery, anxiety, apathy, stress and cognitive dissonance brought me crawling back to the light. But I could never stay there.

I blocked specific sites but went to them on my phone. I got rid of my smartphone in favor of a small flip phone that only called and texted. I used my parents' computer and old smartphones instead. I expanded my accountability software to their devices and my Mom and I smashed the old phones with a literal sledgehammer in the driveway. I moved to an apartment with my best friend and discovered that her computer had an unprotected

guest account, which I stole it over and over. My narrative and fantasy material darkened into violence, crossing lines I'd sworn never to approach. I masturbated compulsively while driving.

My attempts at getting help became more desperate. I talked to pastors. I went to Biblical counseling. I told a woman I'd recently met everything—in more specifics than I ever had. She thought she could help, and launched into an intense study. I combed through scripture, completing homework assignments she gave me and identifying lies and truths about the narratives that had me in their grasp. I felt like I was seeing amazing

Why did I know so much about God and still had not changed? Sure, my understanding had deepened, but had my behavior changed at all?

new connections; understanding myself at a deeper level and seeing the grace of God in new ways. I tried to dismiss the glaring fact that I was still masturbating. She finally called out the truth in what felt like a punch to the solar plexus of my deepest fears: Why did I know so much about God and still had not changed? Sure, my understanding had deepened, but had my behavior weaved back out to my biblical counselor. In a move of humility and wisdom

which I will forever be grateful for, she broke the hamster wheel of religious repetition I had been on for 14 years and asked me to see a clinical counselor instead. She could see that I had reached the end of my knowledge rope, and needed a different approach. I landed in the office of a 30-years-sober alcoholic who promptly diagnosed me as an addict and gave me a meeting to go to. Convinced she could not be right, I walked into my first 12 Step meeting and wept through the entire thing. I was committed, and started trying to work the Steps. A month later, I relapsed again and finally worked up the courage to research sexual addiction groups. I took one glance at the SA sobriety definition and knew I needed to be here. I had been trying unsuccessfully to hold that bottom line for 14 years.

When I walked into my first SA meeting, I will never forget that the chair asked if anyone had 24 hours. I did not, having masturbated that very morning. That cold, hard fact, combined with the overwhelming

She broke the hamster wheel of religious repetition and asked me to see a clinical counselor instead.

experience of feeling like my brain was coming out of everyone's mouths and was written on the White Book pages, was like being doused with ice water. Refreshing, stunning, uncomfortable, and such a relief. I have been sober since that evening.

I see now that I am utterly powerless over my lust. Any attempt to "fight" my attraction to the images, words, phrases, sights, and sounds of my fantasies will land me flat on my

The overwhelming experience of feeling like my brain was coming out of everyone's mouths and was written on the White Book pages, was like being doused with ice water.

back. If I fight, I will lose. I am also increasingly aware of my utter powerlessness over people-pleasing, my savior complex, my desire to be the exception to the rule, my need to control others' emotions, and to be needed. I am learning to surrender.

God has been overwhelmingly gracious to hold me from the cliff edge over the course of my active addiction. It was only and ever His goodness, patience, and relentless pursuit that prevented me from plunging headlong past every boundary. It was only a matter of time. In His grace, He has brought me into these rooms and checked my inevitable path down the cliff. It was only by following the example of those that had found the way out before me that I found lasting freedom. I will never be sufficiently grateful.

CATHERINE H., *Ohio, USA*



2022, THE YEAR OF CFC Come and Join Us!

This being the year of the CFC, we are highlighting the value of the SA program for members inside correctional institutions. We are doing this by speaking about it at local groups and intergroups, telling how members can contribute by sponsoring friends in prison. We encourage SA members to get involved and help those in need. It does not take a lot of time to sponsor a friend in prison, maybe one hour a month.

We show how members don't have to violate their anonymity because we set up private mailboxes. We ask local SA groups to run workshops throughout the year where we help

members find friends in prison and discuss how best to write to them and answer their letters.

At regional meetings and marathons, we set up information tables where we hand out literature and enlist members to sponsor friends in prison. We have a particular demand for SA members who can read and write Spanish. We encourage local SA meetings to invite CFC committee members to tell their story about corresponding with friends in prison.

Also, we communicate with members who are about to go to prison and give them advice on how to contact SA once they are incarcerated.

We will be running a worldwide webinar on June 18 and 19th, 2022, in six one-hour sessions, Saturday and Sunday morning. Here, we will discuss several topics, including: how to sponsor an inmate, how to start a meeting in prison, existing SA video presentations, interviews with paroled friends, working with the church and psychological professionals.

PAUL Z., CFC CHAIR, Georgia, USA
zantinger@gmail.com



World Wide News

The first SA Group in Italy

began five years ago when two people from different paths met. Motivated by a common desire to share their Twelve Step recovery experiences, they went about trying to help others recover from lust addiction. The first goal was to translate the White Book, available in many languages, but not in Italian, to allow those looking for a solution to benefit from one of the fundamental tools of the program. Later, the creation of a website allowed the Italians to find a remedy for their inner malaise.

Thanks to the internet, recovering sexaholics in Italy were able to meet, despite being in locations hundreds of kilometers apart. The first face-to-face groups followed, and today there are many such groups.

One weekend in late 2017, the first SA Italia workshop took place, which allowed this small group of people to gather and connect through working the steps. Since then, the message of hope has been carried to many people. The fellowship, which encompasses Italy and the Italian-speaking region of Switzerland, has met several times. The sponsor-ponsee relationship has been at the core of our work. We have found that language and culture are not barriers to SA's common solution, and so we benefited from working with SA members from other countries.

The pandemic, instead of destroying the cohesion of the group, has motivated us to explore new ways to grow together, including through online meetings. As the pandemic slows, our group meetings resume: during our August

SAMICIZIA
1 - 7 AGOSTO, NORCIA
P IN VACANZA CON I FRATELLI
PER UN' ESPERIENZA SPIRITUALE E DI AMICIZIA
O TREKKING, RAFTING, CAVALLO, MOUNTAIN BIKE
T
2022
COSTO STANZA INCLUSA PRIMA COLAZIONE (AGRITURISMO LE DUE QUERCE)
QUADRUPLA 20€, DOPPIA 30,5€, SINGOLA 15€
PRENOTAZIONE 50€
ATTIVITÀ SPORTIVE 100€
Per info contattare gruppo SA inverte di Roma, saitaliainfo@gmail.com

holiday, Norcia di SA will meet. There we will strengthen our fellowship in a safe environment and with a flexible attendance policy: participants can stay at one of several nearby farms, and can attend for the entire week or a part thereof.

For information contact the SA Integrità di Roma group, saitaliainfo@gmail.com.

A Summary of SA Italy

Eight physical groups in eight cities (including one in Switzerland).

Daily meetings (online and face-to-face).

Translated the White Book (il Libro Bianco) and Step in Action (Passa all'azione). AA literature in Italian.

ALEX M., Italy



New SA Groups April 2022

EUROPE & ASIA

◆ Dundee, Scotland, UK

NORTH, CENTRAL & SOUTH AMERICA

◆ Crivitz, Wisconsin, USA

◆ Kingsland, Georgia, USA

Love Essay?

CONTRIBUTIONS



www.sa.org/donate?src=essay

“Our Fellowship United”

She felt the unity of being part of a truly worldwide spiritual community of unconditional love.

The AA Big Book says, “If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are halfway through.” (AA 83) Of course I see how many promises came true during the online inter-regional convention hosted by the Europe and Middle East Region (EMER) and the Persian-Speaking Region (PSR) on April 8 and 9, 2022.

We had already been witnessing the expansion of online meetings in response to the pandemic that prevented us from meeting face to face. The miraculous part of this was that these new online meetings were bringing together members from different continents, time zones, and cultures whom we might otherwise never have met.

When I was still a newcomer, I had no idea about the huge size of our Fellowship and I could never have guessed how many individuals struggled with the same problem I did. They were finding a solution for it, now even throughout Asia and Africa—living one day at a time. Technology was uniting our fellowship like never before.

So when EMER and PSR agreed last fall to undertake hosting a joint inter-regional online convention, we both sensed that technology was again going to play a key role in uniting our fellowship like never before. Without traveling hundreds or miles and spending a good deal of money, we pursued the vision of seeing

the images and hearing the voices of one another, and sharing camaraderie and experience with our sisters and brothers in recovery.

Close to 400 people came together over two days to listen to 16 speakers—8 from PSR and 8 from EMER—talk about how our fellowship stays united by working the steps together, upholding the Sobriety Definition, placing principles before personalities, and standing together in pursuing recovery. And because of the Zoom platform, we were able to interpret the Farsi and English speakers through separate additional channels into Arabic, French, German, Italian, Polish, Russian, Slovak, and Spanish.

We felt the unity of being part of a spiritual community, no longer isolated and apart from the human race. All of the over 60 trusted servants who served on this convention had their own daily affairs to keep up with. I admire their hard work that was the expression of unconditional love coming from their compassionate hearts. I saw that the measure of the commitment of our fellow members reflected the measure of their recovery. Newcomers were greeted in breakout rooms between sessions and they were able to receive the contact numbers of others. Members



who spoke no English were able to connect with each other from all over Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, North and South America, and beyond. This was a real achievement in carrying the message to many unreached corners of the earth.

Many of us learned for the first time about the work of the Corrections Facilities Committee and the “Year of CFC” in 2022. How amazing it is that we can connect with prisoners via letters or email and help them with sponsorship and working the steps. It’s by God’s grace only that so many of us were spared being imprisoned as a consequence of lusting.

One attendee shared her excitement that she found that the method of working the Steps is the same in other countries. Using similar books and taking Inventories for all members encouraged her to seriously apply universal principles of the SA program in her life. It made her happy to see that men and women speakers were chosen equally for the event from both EMER and PSR, alongside one another.

We learned that nothing can separate us in our recovery, and our common language is surrender in the face of cunning baffling lust.

The overall result of this event was finding similarities among us more than ever before. We can be united and be comfortable with our friends in SA and place principles before personalities. Foreigners are no longer aliens. We identify and have true Union with others on the basis of our revealed weaknesses.

The honest shares of the speakers gave us the ability to connect with the vulnerability inside of others who are like us. We can see the “I” in each of us become the “we” among all of us.

I’m delighted to feel the nearness of our Fellows. SA really is a proper substitute for lust and my destructive behaviors. To organize such an event without a spirit of cooperation and God’s grace and protection would have been impossible. I pray for His guidance to continue walking in His way. His will not ours be done.

MONA M., *Khuzestan, Iran*



HELP US BUILD AN INNOVATIVE AND MULTILINGUAL



The *Essay* magazine is in the process of building its own website, which we hope to have ready for you by mid August. It was approved by the Board of Trustees some months ago and since then we have been preparing it bit by bit and started working on it a couple of weeks ago.

It is a big undertaking but also very thrilling. We are finding out what to do next as we go.

The inspiration for using technology in carrying the message comes from the AA Big Book which says on p. xxiv (adapted to sexaholism): *While our literature has preserved the integrity of the SA message, sweeping changes in society as a whole are reflected in new customs and practices within the Fellowship. Taking advantage of technological advances, for example, SA members with computers can participate in meetings online, sharing with fellow sexaholics across the country or around the world. In any meeting, anywhere, SA's share experience, strength, and hope with each other, in order to stay sober and help other sexaholics. Modern-to-modern or face-to-face, SA's speak the language of the heart in all its power and simplicity.*


Read here a few of the wonderful features the new website will bring to your *Essay* experience:

- The website will be in responsive design, meaning that you will be able to enjoy it on your desktop, laptop, tablet, and smartphone.
- Every article will have a link to its correlating recordings in order for you to listen to your *Meeting in Print* while driving, cooking, walking, or just resting on your couch.
- The six main articles of every issue will be translated in different languages in order to carry the message to our brothers and sisters who don't speak English.
- Be ready for our bimonthly entertaining, informative, hilarious Half-Hour Variety Podcast.
- You will be able to listen to the experience, strength, and hope on the theme of every issue in the form of 7-minute recordings, sent to us by members from all over the world.
- It will contain the archives of the PDFs of all the *Essay* magazines that the Fellowship has in its possession.

We are doing this with volunteering members from different countries and we are still in need of:

- Male and female fellows with a US accent and good voice who want to record the original articles in English.
- Enthusiastic translators from English to their own language.
- Fellows with a good and clear voice who want to record the translated articles in their own language.
- Members with graphic design skills, webdesign skills, audio engineering.
- Cartoonists and illustrators.
- As always: anyone who wants to share good personal experience, strength, and hope with us in the form of written articles.

If you want to help us out in this thrilling and innovative project to carry the message of joyful SA recovery around the SA world, please contact the *Essay* editor: essay@sa.org.



HOPE

Friends' Stories From the Inside

A Zoom event by SA Capital Area
August 13, 2022

INTERESTED IN SPONSORING FRIENDS IN PRISON?

Come hear the stories of fellows both past and present; those who have served time and those who have sponsored friends on the inside.

For more information and to register, contact: scotth_dc@yahoo.com



Spiritual Awakening
A 12 Step YouTube channel for recovery from lust and sexual addiction

Listen now to SA Speaker recordings on this amazing YouTube channel:
<https://tinyurl.com/saawakening>

For more info, contact Shim F.:
saawakening@gmail.com

SAVE THE DATE
June 18-19, 2022



2022 Yr of CFC Zoom Event

We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness

WALK TO FREEDOM

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Want to attend an SA event or have an event you would like to share?

Visit our international website to see what's coming up around the world:
sa.org/events/

ANNOUNCEMENTS?

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

WELCOME PACKET For Women

PUBLIC INFORMATION

The Public Information Committee is producing a Welcome Packet for Women to present to the General Delegate Assembly for approval to allow access from SA's homepage.

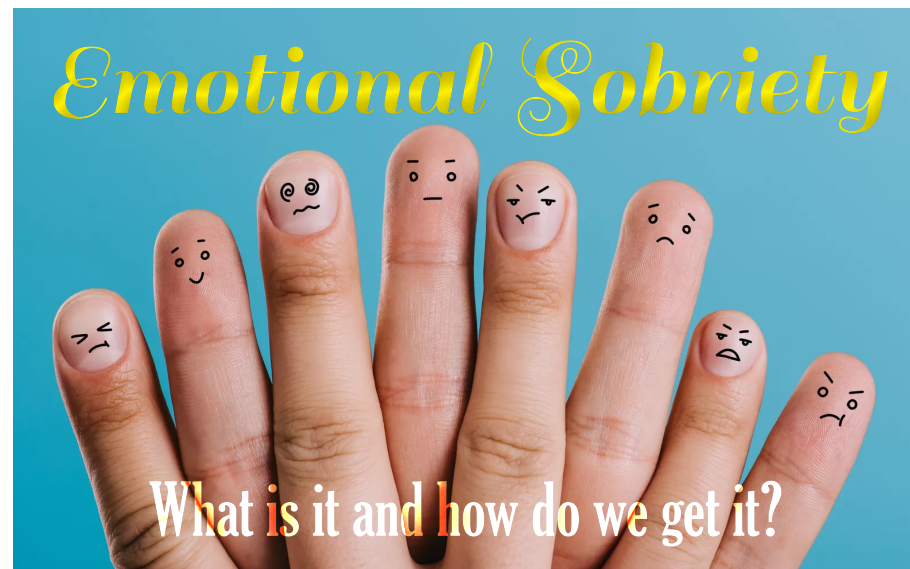
Look for the link to our WhatsApp Group where we will post more information on the packet as well as updates.

WELCOME PACKET FOR WOMEN

To promote awareness in the development of resources for a "Welcome Packet for Women" proposal, share what resources we are developing and the purpose they will serve.

<https://tinyurl.com/WPFWomen>

COMING IN JUNE



NEXT EDITION In the June issue, read how SA members use the tools our program offers to find serenity, contentment, and an increased joy for living.

Expectations vs. Acceptance
The life of this female old-timer is so much better when she focuses on gratitude for the good in her life.

God Is Looking Out for Him
When his son went into anaphylactic shock and had to be taken to the hospital, he experienced God's love for him.

Obstacles to Emotional Sobriety
Sober since 1984, he is "better than he used to be, but not as well as he's going to get."

CFC Sponsorship-by-Mail
More and more incarcerated fellows are looking to get sponsored by mail or email.

SUBMIT YOUR STORY

August 2022 edition: The Slogans—How to Use Them in Our Daily Lives (stories due July 1) The Slogans seem to be one of the best kept secrets in our fellowship. Mail us how you use them.

October 2022 edition: Cooperation With Professionals (Stories due Sept 1) Send us your experience in working with therapists, doctors, medical students, and other kinds of professionals.

December 2022 edition: Humor—How to Use It for Recovery (Stories due Nov 1) How do you use humor in a constructive way? How do "cheerfulness and laughter make for usefulness" (AA 132) in your home group?

February 2023 edition: Accepting Outside Help (stories due Jan 1) Which outside help are you using to support your physical, emotional, and spiritual healing?

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*.

Remember... "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."

