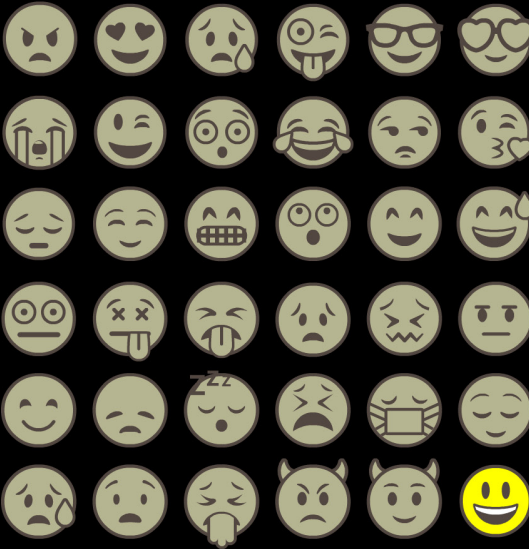


ES Y

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SEXAHOLICS ANONYMOUS



emotional sobriety

June 2022 | sa.org

SA Purpose

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

Adapted with permission from AA Grapevine Inc.

RESPONSIBILITY DECLARATION

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

Sexaholics Anonymous STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLE

We have a solution. We don't claim it's for everybody, but for us, it works. If you identify with us and think you may share our problem, we'd like to share our solution with you (*Sexaholics Anonymous 2*). In defining sobriety, we do not speak for those outside Sexaholics Anonymous. We can only speak for ourselves. Thus, for the married sexaholic, sexual sobriety means having no form of sex with self or with persons other than the spouse. In SA's sobriety definition, the term "spouse" refers to one's partner in a marriage

between a man and a woman. For the unmarried sexaholic, sexual sobriety means freedom from sex of any kind. And for all of us, single and married alike, sexual sobriety also includes progressive victory over lust (*Sexaholics Anonymous 191-192*). (*Adopted 2010 by the General Delegate Assembly.*)

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

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

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

Essay is a publication of Sexaholics Anonymous

essay@sa.org

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

Adopted by the Trustees and General Delegate Assembly in May 2016

Editors' Corner

What is emotional sobriety and how to attain it?

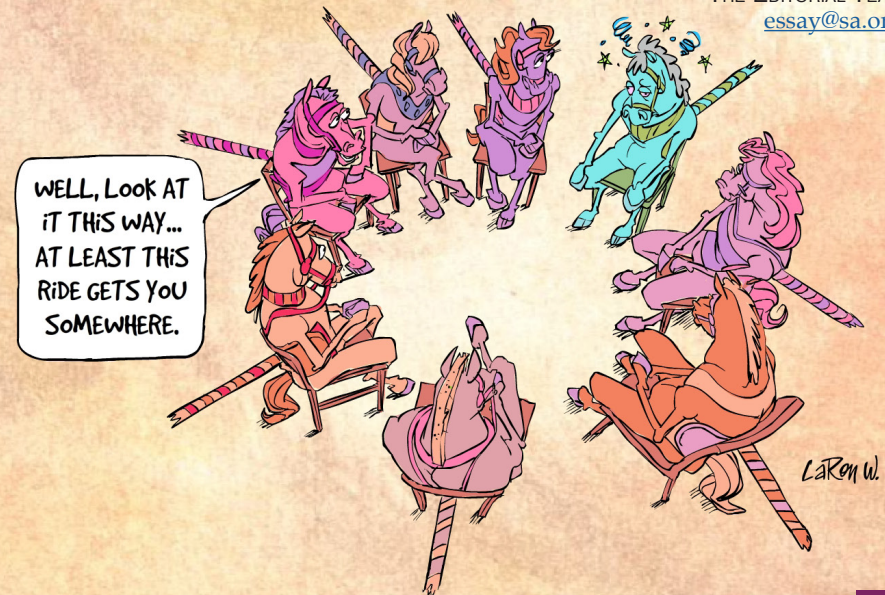
When we become sexually sober, life doesn't stop happening. The White Book comments on this: "... it is because and within these very problems that the program works! The program doesn't work in a vacuum; it only works in the day-to-day ebb and flow of our lives. Trial, tribulation, and pain are the soil in which the steps can germinate, take root, and find fruition in our lives." (SA 74)

This edition features stories of how SAs use the tools of the program and embrace the Fellowship to get through these tough times. The author of "Obstacles to Emotional Sobriety" describes how he, although sexually sober since 1984, cannot always call himself emotionally sober. A member from Ukraine tells us how his inner peace is his most important treasure in times of external war. Priscilla began living in the answer when she stopped living in the problem. An Iranian fellow discovered that by changing his attitude he found a truly spiritual way of life. And although her disease led her to somatic disorders and almost to suicide, an Egyptian member found new hobbies and skills to relieve her stress.

They all testify they're on a ride that really gets them somewhere, or as the Big Book says it "A new life has been given us or, if you prefer, "a design for living" that really works." (AA 28)

Send us your stories, meeting photos, and art work. We'd love to bring SA news from all over the world. Wishing you emotionally sober months ahead!

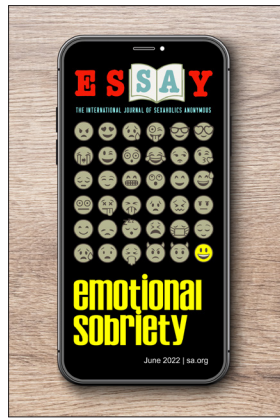
In fellowship,
THE EDITORIAL TEAM
essay@sa.org



June 2022

"If we examine every disturbance we have, great or small, we find at the root of it some unhealthy dependency and its consequent unhealthy demand. Let us, with God's help, continually surrender these hobbling demands. Then we can be set free to live and to love; we may then be able to Twelfth Step ourselves and others into emotional sobriety."

The Next Frontier: Emotional Sobriety, by Bill W.



On the cover: "I need to concentrate not so much on what needs to be changed in the world as on what needs to be changed in me and in my attitudes." AA 417

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Dear Essay



Giving God Thanks

DEAR ESSAY, I RECENTLY listened to a recording where Mike C. talked about the gift of recovery and what it looks like now. It was powerful to hear him share some of the things he had been able to do since getting sober that he would never have been able to do before. It was beautiful.

While listening to the recording, I was creating a really neat scavenger hunt for my daughter's Girl Scout troop that involved a locked, wooden box that they had to open. It took weeks to make, working diligently on my days off to finish on time. While Mike gave his examples, I realized I was living my own, and

ended up in my workshop crying tears of joy and gratitude. In my disease, I never would have found time to do that. A previous sponsor used to tell me that recovery lets us gain back what lust had hijacked.

This morning, I spilled my ENTIRE cup of coffee on my work clothes during the stress of getting kids ready for school. After a long breath, and a little pain, I think my first words to my kids were "Well, that was unfortunate." Only afterwards did it occur to me that might be some progress in emotional sobriety. That's not the way I would have handled it without God working on my life through others in recovery. I wasn't taught or shown this growing up.

I am no saint. I certainly have a long way to go, both in my personal recovery and being of service to other sexaholics and to my family. I'm still sick and in need of "medicine" daily. But I want to give God thanks for these and other examples of how my life is better sober (physically and emotionally) and in recovery. I would do well not to overlook even the little things. I'm glad to be on this road with you all today.


DANIEL B., TN, USA 

The Boxer and the Recovering Sexaholic

DEAR ESSAY, THANK YOU for your service; I enjoy reading the magazine every time. I would love to share with you this little parable I recently thought of:

The boxer trains by hitting the heavy bag, the speed bag, jumping rope and running miles. He is not a boxer officially until he gets into the ring and fights an opponent. He is now a boxer; not just in training.

And so it is with the sexaholic. He trains by reading the literature, working the Steps, attending meetings, and so on. He is not a recovering sexaholic until he steps into the ring of temptation to lust and successfully gets progressive victory over lust.


Diz B., Ohio, USA 



World Wide Walls Of SA

SA meetings can be held just about anywhere ...




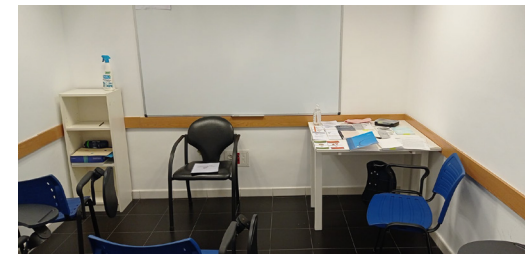
Wednesday meeting
Vienna, Austria 



Monday meeting
Hamburg, Germany 



Sunday group
McLean, Virginia, USA 



Group "Gratitude"
Rivas, Madrid 

Share your photos

Send your meeting place to essay@sa.org

Remember:

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

With God, All Things Are Possible!

Through him working the tool of sponsoring so well, God took care of him through ... one of his sponsees

I'm driving. My son is beside me in the passenger seat. 80% of his body is covered in rash. He's having trouble breathing. He is going into anaphylactic shock and may stop breathing within the hour, unless he gets medical attention. I'm speeding down the road on the way to the hospital with my caution lights flashing. I get a phone call that I ignore. I don't even look to see who's calling. No time.

I'm not allowed to enter the hospital with my son. Only one person can accompany the patient in the emergency room waiting area. That person will be his mother. I go back to my truck, say a prayer, and look through my son's belongings for anything out of the ordinary. Any types of food I can find, insects, anything. I'm scared but I'm confident that he is in the best place he can be.

But I'm not in there with him and that bothers me a lot. I say another prayer and take up my phone to reach out to my siblings and to my fellows in recovery... maybe another prayer would calm me down right now.

I check to see who called earlier. It is a sponsee who happens to be a medical professional, an expert in medical emergencies! He's been in the profession for years and knows the hospital and the doctors and nurses tending to my son. No one in any of my circles—family, work, recovery, friends—knows anything about medical care, much less about hospitals in my area, but this guy does. My sponsor lives 2,460 miles and another sponsee 670 miles away, but this guy happens to live here and work in that very hospital.

I call him back and we talk about the situation. He tells me I'm lucky

that my son is being treated in that hospital; the other hospital across town was overcrowded the night before. He explains how my son will be cared for and how the response process will escalate if required. Straightaway, I'm feeling much better.

He actually gives me something to work on to keep me busy. This is what really good caregivers do. They make you feel like you're helping them. It reduces the humiliating experience of being powerless, needing the kindness of strangers. I don't like needing anything. I've sponsored a good many down the years as I've been sober in SA since 2013—but I don't like needing attention.

So, this sponsee gets me talking on the phone, asking me questions like he has a clipboard out and is taking really important details. Shortly into this, my wife texts me and I need to shift my attention back to her. "Call her," he says and invites me to call him back again if I need to. She tells me I can enter the hospital and see my son who is now recovering. Boy, what a relief. My wife and I are pretty frazzled, but junior is feeling and looking much better. He's going to be OK.

Can God just drop the right person, with the right information, at the right time into my life like that? If He can, why would He? He doesn't know me. I mean ... He's not watching me every moment of every day, is He? Is He that concerned about me? Really? Me?

The answer is yes and yes and yes. He can and He does. I've experienced it so often—leaning into our program of Spiritual Recovery and finding God in unaccountable ways. I couldn't do anything for my son once I'd left him at the hospital doors. God, my wife, the doctors and nurses were doing that already. I was out in the parking

lot, on my own, going crazy, desperate for someone to talk to.

But I didn't have to go scrolling through names for people who would listen through my anxiety. The solution was right there on my phone screen, a missed call from a medical expert who happens to work in the very hospital into which my son was admitted; a

My experience is that God does watch me every moment of every day. He does know me and He does care. He cares a whole bunch.

guy who would actively engage with me in my despair to calm me down in the very language I needed to hear—medical authority and assurance.

So my experience is that God does watch me every moment of every day. He does know me and He does care. He cares a whole bunch. He is that attentive. He is that gracious. He is that merciful in my moment of neediness.

Thank you God for having a medical expert ask me six years ago to sponsor his recovery from sex addiction!

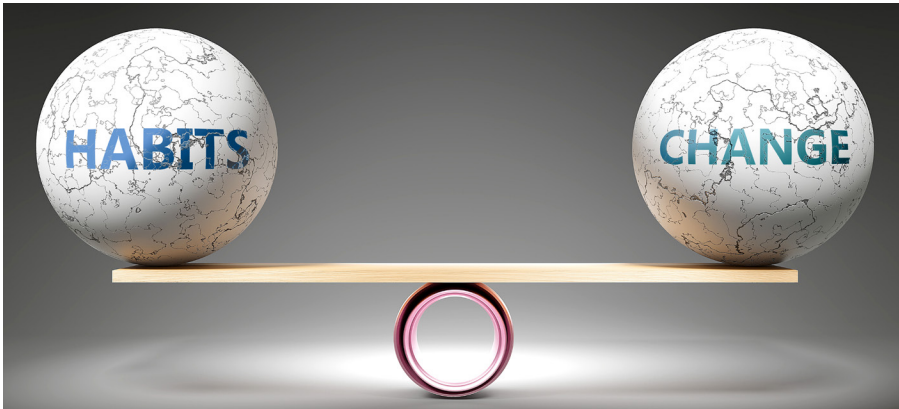
Thank you God for knowing that one day, six years later, that same sponsee would be my ears and my eyes inside a hospital where my son was, when I was outside, desperate for reassurance.

Thank you God for this illustration of Your power. I am forever grateful.

Thank You God for SA.

JESSE S., Alabama, USA 

“Nothing Changes If Nothing Changes”



One day, on my birthday, I thought, “Instead of looking for lust online, why not look for help online?” Right away I found resources to start recovery. Why had I waited so long? That day I put a porn filter on my computer, and soon after I started to go to SA meetings.

From my first meeting I had an SA sponsor, who I called every day. Soon I went to two meetings a week. I found physical sobriety with the help of my sponsor, the meetings, and my Higher Power. I thought I was all set, but some things were still not right. I occasionally looked at pornography. I still thought about women and stared at them. I was not yet well.

I started to learn helpful habits, like making gratitude lists, praying for the people I lusted after, letting go of resentments, and making sobriety and my relationship with my Higher Power my highest priority. Then I started to get better emotionally, thus needing less lust-medication. I kept learning and letting go.

I learned that there is such a thing as emotional sobriety, and became emotionally sober when I let go of

resentments and acknowledged my feelings, especially anger. I realized that I wasn’t the center of my world. I didn’t need to get my way in everything. If my wife was tired, I didn’t need to demand sexual relations with her. Sex was optional. There was a greater value, and that was love.

I learned to serve the fellowship. I started to sponsor and exhibit a health that sponsees wanted for themselves. I became more tolerant and patient with people and myself, more accepting of my own weaknesses. I no longer acted as though I was the God of my life. I became humbler. I started noticing other character defects. It was like peeling an onion. I couldn’t see the layer below until I addressed the covering layer. My Higher Power was removing character defects as I became willing to surrender them. My program is now so much more than physical sobriety, but I had to become physically sober and stay sober before I could make progress on the great journey of inner sobriety and peace.

ANONYMOUS, *Missouri, USA* 

The Man in the Glass

When you get what you want in your struggle for self
And the world makes you king for a day,
Just go to the mirror and look at yourself
And see what that man has to say.

For it isn’t your father or mother or wife
Whose judgment upon you must pass,
The fellow whose verdict counts the most in your life
Is the one staring back from the glass.

Some people may think you are a straight shooting chum
And call you a wonderful guy,
But the man in the glass says you’re only a bum
If you can’t look him straight in the eye.

He’s the fellow to please, never mind all the rest
For he’s with you clear up to the end,
And you’ve passed your most dangerous, difficult test
If the man in the glass is your friend.

You may fool the whole world down the pathway of years
And get pats on the back as you pass,
But your final reward will be heartaches and tears
If you’ve cheated the man in the glass.

ANONYMOUS



What Do I Focus My Magic Magnifying Mind On?

A story taught her to focus on the good in her life and count her blessings



A few weeks ago, I heard a story that really resonated with me, and that I have thought about every day since. I shared it at a meeting and it appeared to touch others as well. Therefore, I am very happy to share it with you.

The story is about two neighboring countries that lived side by side in peace, but there was one very clear rule: it was strictly forbidden to transport goods across the border. To make sure of this, there were border guards who strictly controlled everything.

One day a man arrived at the border by bicycle. He was carrying a very large bag, which was on the back of his bicycle. The border guards told him that it was not allowed to let this bag cross the border. "But there is only sand in it," the man said. "Sand?" the

border guards asked. They looked at each other. "If there is only sand in it, then it can go to our neighboring country. But you understand that we have to check that bag?" The man certainly understood this.

So the border guards took the bag off the bicycle, threw it out and looked it over completely, but indeed, it turned out to contain only sand. Nothing more and nothing less. The border guards were a little uncertain, but allowed the man to cross the border with his bag of sand, because after all, it really couldn't hurt.

The next day the man was there again, on his bicycle with his bag of sand on top. The border guards checked the bag again from top to bottom, but again could find no hidden objects. The citizen was allowed to cross the border with his bag of sand.

This happened every day, not for

weeks, but for months, even up to a year. The border guards did everything they could to find out what the man was hiding: they called in colleagues, they used special radiation equipment, but they could find nothing but plain old sand.

This went on for quite a while, and after about a year the man said to the border guards, "Men, I have good news. Tomorrow will be the last time I cross the border, so you won't have to check on me anymore." The border guards were satisfied, but the next morning when this man wanted to cross the border again the border guards decided to ask the man anyway. "Why did you bring a bag of sand to our neighboring country every day? Was there something hidden in it that we could not find, despite our ingenious equipment?"

The man replied, "No, those were just bags of sand. But in this way I was able to smuggle a new bicycle across the border every day for a year! You were focusing on the wrong thing all the time."

When I heard the story I became very aware of the fact that I very often make the same mistake as these border guards. I am so focused in my daily life on what is going wrong or bad every day, and not at all on what is going right in my life. I don't see the beautiful things that are happening right under my nose because I often complain about what is going badly.

A very specific example is what happened yesterday. I had been working from 9am to 6pm, then it

was coming home, cooking, eating, washing up, getting my stuff ready for the next working day, a brief contact with my sponsor and attending an online meeting. When this was all over, it was 10pm and I had barely had any relaxation. About that, until a few weeks ago, I would have been mostly complaining, "poor me, I can't relax, my day is so hard."

Because of that story I can now think differently: I am tired, but I am very happy that I have a job that I love, I have the luxury of cooking

I don't see the beautiful things that are happening right under my nose because I often complain about what is going badly.

a healthy and balanced meal with fresh ingredients, I no longer have to act out but I now have tools: I have a sponsor I can call, I can follow online meetings anywhere in the world and at any time.

I am grateful that people share such stories with me, and I can share them again at meetings and now also through this way with all of you.

NATHALIE V., *Antwerp, Belgium* 

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



OBSTACLES TO EMOTIONAL SOBRIETY

When asked to write an article on Emotional Sobriety, my first reaction was to say “No”, because most people in SA have difficulty reaching Emotional Sobriety since they can barely reach “lust sobriety.” Then I realized that instead of saying No, I could share my experience, strength, and hope in a different way, by writing about the barriers to Emotional Sobriety that I have witnessed in our fellowship for the past 38 years.

My sexual sobriety date is March 8, 1984. If you noticed I did not say my Emotional Sobriety date because that date is ever evolving. As our SA founder, Roy K., would say, “through the crucible of our experience.” Emotional Sobriety can be seen quite clearly in Step Ten as written about in AA’s *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. Bill W. tends to write about Emotional Sobriety also by describing what happens if you don’t have it. He uses terms such as “emotional hangover” and “emotional jags.”

Here are some of the blocks so many people in our program have, in my opinion, from reaching that “emotional balance”, or “equanimity” as some people call it:

1. How can someone truly utilize all the Steps which can bring them to inner peace when they cannot truly take Step One? So often in our program people seem to deny the word LUST that is in Step One. They seem to substitute words related to acting out rather than what leads to acting out—LUST.
2. Refusal to see our illness as a physical allergy and continuing to use, “I am bad getting good” rather than, “I am sick getting well.”
3. Refusal to surrender to sponsors’ suggestions.
4. Continuing to blame others and themselves for their addiction instead of seeing that it was/is the illness which caused/causes the difficulties.
5. When they see their character traits, they go into shame rather than seeing them as more spiritual discoveries.

6. Thinking when they stop acting out they are cured rather than realizing it is a chronic allergy that needs daily care.

7. Thinking that God will do it all for them rather than their need to participate in a partnership with the God of their understanding. This partnership includes using the Steps and sponsors as well as attending meetings.

When one gets freedom from LUST and diligently uses the Steps, Emotional Sobriety is usually awaiting them. Emotional Sobriety can also exist on a group level. How can we see Emotional Sobriety in our meetings when many meetings stay in the problem rather than the solution? So often, at the Zoom meetings that I attend, people with just a few days’ sobriety will talk first and set the tone of the meeting onto the problem rather than the solution.

In Nashville, our meetings for the first many years were based on the following text: “All participants in the first part of this meeting will be members of SA who have been sexually sober for 30 days or more. We do this to help set the tone on recovery and program. After that, any member can share.” (SA 198)

How do we see an Emotionally Sober meeting when the relapsing members are being told that “it is OK.” Many of us know, down deep within us, there is a great chance that relapsing can lead to being Locked Up or Covered up. I’ve watched many relapsing members die from suicide or end up going to jail.

For me, Emotional Sobriety has taken many years for my “top plates” to be removed. The removal process began firstly with sexual sobriety from acting out, then with lust sobriety; after that, fear sobriety, then anger sobriety, and then financial sobriety. Acting out sobriety, for me, came rather quickly; lust sobriety followed soon after. Anger and fear sobriety have come to me, but “its ugly head” still will pop up periodically. I still experience jealousy and envy at times but this is a journey, not a destination. As my sponsor would say “I’m better than I used to be, but not as well as I’m going to get.”

Let us join together to emphasize the importance of freedom from LUST and sexually acting out so that at individual and group levels, Emotional Sobriety can progressively improve.

HARVEY A., Florida, USA



DISCUSSION TOPIC


How can I and my home group attain Emotional Sobriety?

How am I doing with LUST sobriety? Do I see my illness as a physical allergy instead of a moral failure? Am I following my sponsors’ suggestions, really? Am I still blaming others and myself instead of the disease? Do I still

go into shame instead of enjoying the spiritual journey I am on? Do I tend time and again to rest on my laurels instead of treating my disease on a daily basis? Do I still think God will do it for me, without me doing the footwork?

Do I have a home group that supports me and its members in their lust and emotional sobriety?

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



The War Is Not A Reason To Lose My Sobriety

THE PROBLEM FOR ME IS NOT THAT THERE IS A WAR IN MY COUNTRY, BUT HOW TO LIVE DURING IT AND KEEP PEACE WITH MYSELF.

A sexaholic's life can be very difficult and stressful, especially when a full scale war is going on in my country. It's so hard to keep sexually and emotionally sober. But it's possible. So I created a few simple rules for myself, based on 12 Step program spiritual principles.

1. First things first. The best thing I can do to help my country in these hard days is to stay sober. After all, when I'm in a relapse, I am the main and sometimes the only real enemy to my friends and family. War, pandemic, even the end of the world, are not an excuse to quit doing the program and act out. Even if I die today, I want to be sober. Actually, every addict passes through his or her own Pearl Harbor, and loses their own war, turning life into a disaster. Now I have to put my purity as a priority to survive. This clarity is the result of my relations

with my Higher Power, who helps me on to victory. War will end someday. Can I get back to sobriety, if I decide to relapse?—that's a big question.

2. Let go of everything that is not under my control. I set boundaries for any news about war or hatred, because they are triggering for me. I'm not always successful. My disease makes me look for enemies to fight, and the war in my country is just such a rationalization for finding "enemies." Being aware of the events of the war is often a manifestation of my unhealthy control and desire to escape from my real life, which sometimes seems boring. My sickness wants me to play a big and dramatic role in the war. So for me to know and think less means to be more active and useful for others. Yet sometimes it seems to me disrespectful to my folk and country not to be interested in their fate. Then I recall Point #1 and

remember that I'm just an ordinary spiritually sick person, who is sober only because of God's grace.

3. Constantly remember who I am and what I'm capable of. When I hear information about murders and war crimes, I want to go into resentment and righteous judgment, but comparing myself with others is nothing other than alienation from the truth about myself and the desire to appear good in my eyes. The actions and atrocities of others actually only show what I myself am capable of without God and His guidance. And if this is interesting to me, even from the point of view of condemnation and denial, it means that somewhere deep in my soul I want to try these things myself and observe the reaction of others. I am a sexaholic, and if lust and sex are involved there, I will not be able to stop at any boundaries and prohibitions if God does not stop me. And if today I do not act like a lustful beast, this is not my merit at all, but God's mercy and His hand in my life. He guides me, because I want it myself and let Him change my life for the better.

4. Call my feelings by their names. As an addict, I constantly wanted to absorb a lot of emotions, both positive and negative, in order to get a release of dopamine in my brain, and as a result feel pleasure and get high. But as a codependent, I was ashamed of my feelings and tried to suppress them. Therefore, my disease recently has found a way out in the fact that, consciously or not, I imagine myself in the place of the victims of air strikes. I imagine the feelings of refugees who have lost their loved ones and their home, the feelings of the soldiers who are fighting on the front line now. But all this is a fiction, and has

no connection with compassion. After all, the emotions and pain of war are theirs, not mine. Therefore, if before recovery I avoided feelings because of the fear of relapse, now I accept them and call by name everything that is currently happening inside me. I do this because I can surrender all my emotions, both bad and good, to my loving God and let them go. I think that denial, as well as endless contemplation of my emotions, is nothing but a struggle with them in order to constantly be in tension and feed my ego.

5. To live in the present day. The war is a very good teacher for me to appreciate just today, because tomorrow may not come. And the program shows how to do it in practice. Honestly, I do not know what God's will is for my country and whether there will be peace tomorrow or if the war will continue for a long time. But I know that thinking about what I cannot control is definitely not the will of a Higher Power regarding me. After all, I am not the president of this country and my words don't solve anything in the world of big politics. But God definitely wants me to be useful here and now. The more I live according to spiritual principles, the more emotionally sober I become, and sanity returns to me. The problem for me is not that there is a war in my country, but how to live on during it and keep peace in myself. Disasters and wars have raged in all times and in all corners of the world. As my sponsor says: spiritual people were above all this, because they tried to see not external events and human tragedies, but miracles and deeds of God, who is present in every moment of His children's lives.

ALEXANDER B., *Ukraine*



When She Stopped Living in the Problem, She Began Living In the Answer

ACCEPTANCE

When I walked into a room full of men 27 years ago, I thought I would see people that looked dirty and secretive. Thankfully my expectations were completely wrong. I saw a room full of ordinary men just like at work or out with friends.

I was desperate—full of fear, guilt and shame. My life had become unmanageable. *The Problem* (SA 203) was read and I immediately heard my story. “Inadequate, unworthy, alone and afraid” ... all my life, I never fit in. “Our insides never matched what we saw on the outsides of others.” Disconnected—not many friends, I took refuge in books and music, so I didn’t have to be intimate with anyone because I didn’t think I measured up.

At college, I realized I could be myself. My fantasy was that I would find someone who thought I was the best and my life would be perfect. My first boyfriend made me feel like I was the most special person in the world. After a year and a half, he broke up with me because he said the only thing I wanted in the relationship was sex. What a shock.

My addict took off and looking back I began manipulating men, teasing and giving away my self-respect. “Addicted to the tease, the forbidden, the only way we knew to be free of it was to do it.” I gave away my power to others ... began crossing boundaries ... again believing I had to feed my addiction because it was never enough. EXPECTING OTHERS TO MAKE ME FEEL WHOLE ... never worked, only produced guilt and shame. I wanted to be accepted but couldn’t accept myself.

I married someone I had only dated three times. After a few years my emotional needs weren’t being met and the expectations that marriage would be perfect were crashing around me. I started flirting with his colleagues and found myself in emotional affairs. That didn’t seem wrong but soon that wasn’t enough and I started crossing boundaries.

Over the next several years those emotional affairs became more numerous and unhealthy. I wasn’t going to connect with co-workers but that didn’t last long. Next, I decided it could only be someone who lived in a different state. What finally

brought me to SA was a relationship with a married man who lived out of state. After two and a half years he ended the relationship. I was crushed and cried all the way back home. It was the best thing that could have happened because it sent me to therapy and eventually to SA.

I thought once I did the 12 Steps my life would be perfect and I wouldn’t have any problems. Those expectations were absolutely wrong. Life is hard yet ever so much better than it was in my addiction.

Step One—Admitting I was powerless. I didn’t have a problem with that because I was definitely out of control and had no power to stop it. The only problem was that, in making the admission, I felt I was losing control, becoming more powerless, a victim. It was surprising to learn that in reality I was actually gaining the ability to make decisions thus gaining power.

Step Two—I kept asking God to take my addiction away expecting Him to pry it out of my hands. But I had to be willing to let go of my lust and give it to God. All I had to do was open the door and God was right there welcoming me with open arms. The only thing I had to do was take the actions of letting go.

Step Three—I was the “actor” who thought that, if only people would do as she wished, the show would be perfect. Initially I might be kind, considerate, patient, generous, self-sacrificing; but that could turn into being mean, egotistical, selfish and dishonest. It was self-will, expecting things to go just as I wanted. I would see flaws in other people that I wanted to point out. Any time I focused on their defects, they were magnified. This led me into resentment and

anger-building until I would lose my serenity.

I had been sober about 15 years when my Social Security number got stolen. My expectations were that I would go to their office and be given a new number. Wrong. I was told that it could be changed only if my life had been threatened. I was hysterical and thought my life had ended. As I was driving home it occurred to me that I had hands that could hold the steering wheel; I had a car; I could see. I realized I had good things in my life, and realized while something horrible had happened I could make a plan. Knowing that I could have more than one feeling at a time was OK. At that point, I moved from ignorance into Acceptance. I didn’t have to live in the wreckage of the future. I began to realize it was important for me to quit playing God and ask for help.

I had to discard my right to believe I’m the only one with the answers. I realized that I could either be right no matter what or I could have serenity. Now when I disagree strongly with another person my response is to say, “I believe we’re going to have to agree to disagree.” My expectation that I’m going to convince another person who is diametrically opposed is a resentment waiting to happen. I prefer to have calmness over insanity.

It’s important to live in the answer, not the problem. Acceptance is the answer to all my problems and learning to live life on life’s terms. As it says in the Big Book, “Serenity is inversely proportional to my expectations.” Today I choose gratitude for the good in my life. When I do that, life is ever so much better.

PRISCILLA C., Tennessee, USA





A BLESSING IN DISGUISE

In order to find a truly spiritual way of life, he saw he needed to change his attitude toward his past, his life, and his disease as well

Remembering my life in the lust world, I still feel terror and despair—the feelings which I had been living with everyday—before coming to the program. For many years, being addicted to compulsive sexual behaviors and thoughts was the biggest and worst problem in my life. A fact that made my life a real disaster.

Some nights I had dreams that I would have a happy life without this problem, but in the morning when I realized that it was only a dream, I felt huge grief. It was a sad fact of my life for which there seemed to be

no remedy. If I tried to accept this, the emotions became more severe than what I could tolerate, and I had to numb them by getting back to my addiction. I couldn't imagine anything worse than the hell I was living in.

In the beginning of recovery, a big progress in my attitude happened—I realized there is a solution for my life-long unsolved problem. If I was able to use this solution to get rid of the fatal disease of addiction, then I thought everything would be ok.

But this attitude to the program wasn't as effective as it could be. While I was sober and working the program, at the same time I'd be sad

and discontent with having to sacrifice so much time, energy, and too many other things for recovery. It feels as if I went to school not because I loved to be educated but because I had to go otherwise I would be punished by my parents and society.

As long as I had the attitude to the program as something I had to follow to remove something bad from my life, I couldn't surrender as deeply as I needed to. Then somewhere in Steps Four and Five when I was complaining to my sponsor about what had happened to me, he said I needed to change my attitude toward my past, my life, and my disease as well. He said to try to think of it as a blessing! To open myself to the possibility of it being my Higher Power's will.

He suggested that what I had experienced in my past could be part of His inconceivable plan to make me ready to help people like me. He hinted that the fact that I was defenseless and too scared in my past might have been God's protection, as otherwise I would have gone into a fight with those who bullied me and would have killed myself or others.

He added that the family, neighborhood, culture, and society that I was born into might have been all His plan to put me in a place that I can be of most use to my Higher Power and others.

I was bewildered and furious. It was an outlandish idea. But this idea started little by little ruining whatever my disease had provided in self-pity, negativity and dissatisfaction; the fuel of my disease. The first reaction was "If I don't tell these things to myself what can I say?" Then I told myself "Yes, we fool ourselves in this way".

But something inside me became

aware and a portion of hope lit my heart. Let's look at the facts. I grew up in a harsh and inappropriate situation, I've been sexually, physically, and emotionally abused for many years. I became resentful, fearful, and isolated. Then, for dealing with my problems, I chose the wrong way, and got hooked on lust. However, eventually by God's guidance I got into SA and found a truly spiritual way of life.

Then I found a loving Higher Power and a positive, beautiful, and useful new way of life. Lots of nice fellows,

He suggested that what I had experienced in my past could be part of His inconceivable plan to make me ready to help people like me.

hope, purpose, meaning, wisdom, opportunities to serve, opportunities to gain lots of skills, and so many other things that I could never find anywhere else.

Through my new attitude and recovery, I am stepping into a new dimension of life, a sublime purpose of life, with a firm reason to be here. I realize that my recovery is the most important objective of my life, that every other thing depends on it. Now I think my disease is just a blessing in disguise and by this attitude the problem turned into the solution!

HAMED T., *Isfahan, Iran*





Connecting with His Higher Power Gives Him the Balance He Needs

When I joined my first SA meeting more than eight years ago, my sole motive was breaking free from the prison of lust. Over time, I discovered that by following the Twelve Steps, I gradually received more valuable gifts of recovery, which were to some extent incomprehensible from my former perspective. One of these gifts has to do with emotional sobriety.

During the time of my active addiction, emotions were the most important value, or the source of which every other value was derived from. I

treated emotions as the guide to what should be. If I felt something was causing me pleasure, I would engage in it and vice versa, without minding other aspects such as negative influence on other people (even myself). This is how I decided who to make friends with, how to treat people or even what career path to pursue.

Since emotions had such a big role in my life, the way I experienced them was extreme, both physically and mentally. The outcome of an apparent minor event such as getting a lower-than-expected grade on some college exam, or even the fear of such a

situation to come—could throw me into a magic cycle of desperation, which I had no choice but to sink deeper into.

Emotions were the most important value, or the source of which every other value was derived from.

Sometimes, when the feeling (positive or negative) was too intense, lust served as the preset mechanism for soothing.

In recovery, I found out a different path.

The uppermost value or consideration in my life now is my connection with my Higher Power. “Connection with my Higher Power” for me is synonymous with “spirituality” and is manifested in the attitude I choose and the actions I take.

In the early days of my sobriety, it wasn’t rare for me to be struck by prolonged waves of lust obsession accompanied by strong emotions. However, I don’t think that I was less “spiritual” or connected to my Higher Power as long as I took the right actions in order to stay sober and be useful and loving to the people around me.

Therefore, I try not to treat emotions as necessarily being an indication of reality (the what) or the ends I should pursue (the why). Sometimes doing the right thing can feel wrong or alternatively, doing the wrong thing can feel right.

When I started making amends at the Ninth Step I found out I often feel guilty without previously doing any harm or mistaking. This understanding came after I called a former colleague, and through his feedback understood that I didn’t harm him as I felt I did. I’ve learned that feelings can sometimes even have no patterns and be random, just like the weather, as one member

described it to me.

Even though feelings are not facts, I try to accept their existence and not ignore or fight them. I learned that being judgmental—treating a certain feeling as something that I shouldn’t have felt at all or felt differently—is a big

In recovery, I found out a different path. The uppermost value or consideration in my life now is my connection with my Higher Power.

barrier for self-love and compassion. And if I can’t show them to myself, I can’t show it to other people as well.

Acceptance of my feelings can sometimes have an active implication. Just as having a rainy day outside requires me to put a coat on before I leave home, feeling stressed for me could require a pause for a short prayer and meditation routine.

The path for emotional sobriety is rooted in the Twelve Steps in my experience. The Steps allow me to reduce my self-centeredness which is over-focused on my emotions and feeling good all the time, which

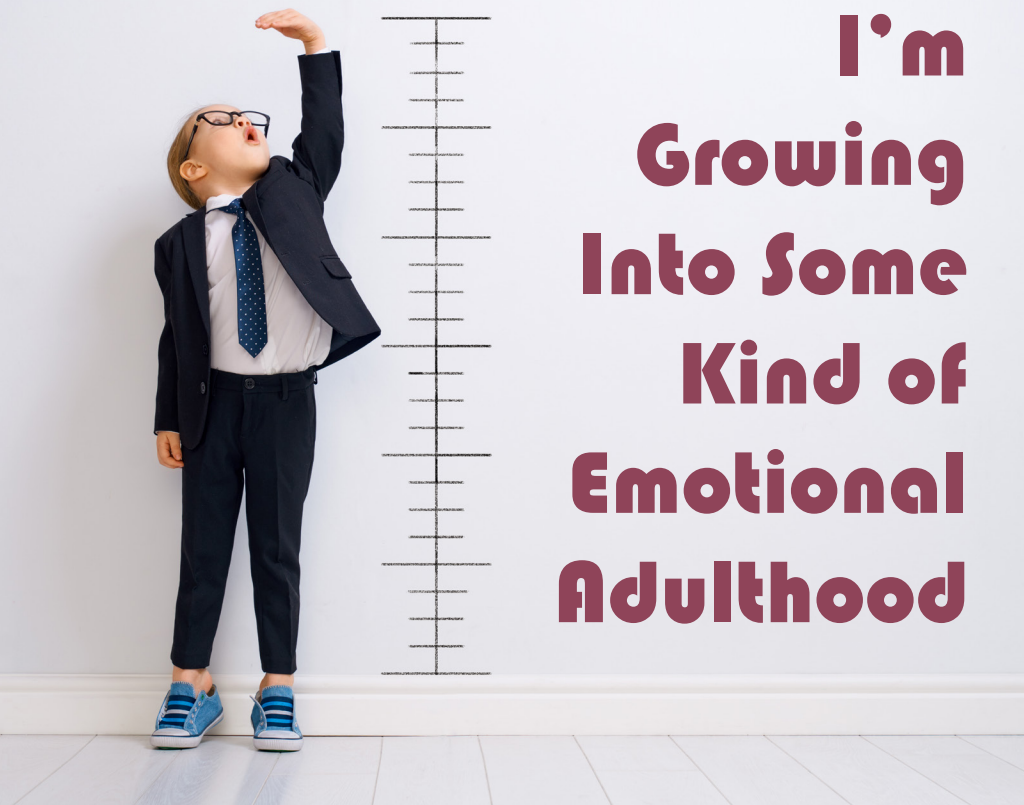
thereby amplifies them to extremes. Surrender and acceptance, getting rid of resentments, analyzing my mistakes and wrong attitudes, outgrowing fears and making amends are spiritual and practical principles internalized in the Steps. They allow me to be free of the past and the future, and be present in the now—aware of my feelings, but not identical with them.

When I’m present, I feel every emotion in its purest form. I can feel pain, but that isn’t an equivalent of ‘suffering’, because I don’t inflict the latter by fighting the feeling of pain, which is totally natural. In this way, I can also utilize the energy contained in my emotions towards life, my Higher Power, and the people around me. This happens by saying a plain “thank you” when I’m enjoying or appreciating something, or praying for someone when I hear that something unfortunate has happened to him which causes me pain and sadness. I’m really grateful for this journey my Higher Power has been taking me through.

ELAD T., Haifa, Israel



Sober since 1995, he went from sexual sobriety into second-stage recovery and started the difficult process of healing his feelings which had been stuffed down for so long.



I'm Growing Into Some Kind of Emotional Adulthood

I came into recovery on Dec 10, 1990. I was 12-stepped by someone in another "S" fellowship. One of the things she said to me was "You've been out of your body for a long time." I was literally not inhabiting the feeling part of my body. I was in my head and all I could feel below my neck was numb, or lust. Maybe rage sometimes—rage, numbness, and lust. There was not anything like the kind of spectrum of feelings, the rainbow of

feelings, which I can experience today.

My earliest memory of the age of two was being hit because I'd hurt myself and I was crying. My earliest sexual memories were at the age of five. I've got a number of other memories from my childhood which indicate that I was suffering from post-traumatic stress about several things that had happened. I had a lot of feelings, a lot of stuff going on inside me which wasn't directly connected to anything that was happening right now but

with stuff that happened back in my childhood. And so once I had come into recovery and put the lust and the alcohol and the food down, I started the difficult process of healing the feelings—the so-called second-stage recovery.

I spent most of my childhood dodging my feelings in various different ways. Feinting, dissociating, vacating the current reality. Going off into fantasy, or thinking about something. Particularly helpful to numb out my feelings would be food, sex, and later on alcohol as well.

Rage was a particular favorite of mine. I was bullied and beaten in my home, and when I discovered rage, my father and mother knew that I was going to kill them if they touched me. I had tapped a source of power which I could then use in a very offensive way to protect myself. People would stay away from me at school because it was like the rage was pouring out of me. When I came into recovery and started to uncover my history of childhood sexual abuse, this rage suddenly came up—huge gushers of rage. I spent six weeks in a Treatment Center's trauma resolution unit. At the first group therapy session I sat down in a circle with the group members and started to shake. Before I knew what, I was down on the floor and they were all piled on top of me and I was actually reliving an experience from my childhood, which I'd had no idea had happened.

It's very likely that as a young child I was shaken by an adult, probably more than once, and that was what was happening at that moment. I was reliving a memory. I remember the group therapist saying to me that I went into a trauma bubble and that there were probably lots more of those

down there. It began to make sense to me why I would have these strange reactions to things.

The woman who had 12-stepped me into recovery said, if anything ever comes up about your childhood that's upsetting, please call me. I called her when the memory of sex abuse came up, and she saved my life in that moment, because I could feel the shame from the sexual abuse coming over me like a tidal wave and pushing me down and I could feel myself going down and down. There was a deep bottomless depression and suicidal thoughts. It was like I could feel that pressure, and she told me to get angry, really angry. And so I did. I got angry and somehow that helped

I was literally not inhabiting the feeling part of my body. I was in my head and all I could feel below my neck was numb, or lust.

me to break through this particular difficult time.

In early recovery, especially the first year in recovery, I cried most days. I hadn't really cried at all. I had been an army officer, and it wasn't the done thing to cry, so I stuffed it all down and that's what I'd been doing, stuffing it down, numbing it, stuffing it with food, with sex, or whatever in order to keep it down. This painful phase didn't last forever, thanks to the process of working the Steps.

The process of doing Steps 4-10 is like emptying out the dustbin,

cleaning it up, sorting through the rubbish and picking out one or two good bits to put back in. Then you've got a clean can for when you're going to need a clean can. When am I going to need one? When something hits me hard emotionally!

The key tool for rage which I found very helpful is like this. Rage is a combination of high-level fear and high-level shame and these two things are supporting each other and I go from there into rage. And once there, I don't think there's any blue sky. The way to break this is to ask myself, "What's the shame?" And when I do that, the whole rage thing collapses.

I also had to learn the difference between a thought and a feeling. I used to say things like "I feel that it's a nice day today", "I feel that you're being unkind to me", "I feel abandoned", "You made me feel sad." All of these are lies—they are thoughts, not feelings.

My feelings are things that happen in my body, not between my ears. Pain is something I feel in my body. Anger, sadness, fear, shame, and guilt are things I feel in my body and I had to learn to identify them and to have a fairly short list of feeling words. The other things that I thought I was feeling, like self pity, loneliness, fear of angry women, and lust, are actually going on in between my ears.

I tell my sponsees they are not allowed to say "I feel that", "I feel like", "I feel anything" with 'ed' at the end. I help them sort out, what's going on in the head, and what's going on down below. So, a simple list of feelings and getting used to identifying them, and to ban from our vocabulary certain phrases. To say "I feel that you're a nice person" is actually a lie. "I imagine you're a

nice person", "I think you're a nice person", but it's not a feeling.

Another aspect of emotional sobriety for me is to understand the difference between a feeling and something like love, which is a choice. Love is a decision. It's not a feeling once I choose to love somebody, once I choose to give, to take the actions of love towards them.

But if I choose to resent, to be unforgiving, to take the actions of hatred, then the feelings follow as well. And I feel hatred and I feel miserable. So, understanding that some things that I've been calling feelings, like love, are actually acts of the will, and therefore, they're really centered in the heart.

So I have thoughts and defects that are centered in acts of the will and I have these emotions that go on elsewhere in my body. And just being able to differentiate between them is very helpful. I've been through this change of emotional childhood and now I'm growing into a sort of emotional adulthood and this is perfect.

NICHOLAS S., *Cumbria, UK* 



Developing New Skills and Hobbies To Relieve Stress

Her disease led to chronic somatic disorders and almost to suicide, but through good therapy, SA, photography, and other artwork she now walks the road of recovery.



She loves to make pictures of landscapes that touch her deeply, as nature heals her soul and invites her to meditate.

My active addiction has a long history. I tried so many things in my life. My suffering started when I was young. I was abused by one of my relatives. I was in third or fourth grade. I had no idea what he was doing. I felt that there was something wrong. I tried to escape from him. I was

afraid to tell anyone about it, so I kept it down in my heart. This man was sneaky. I tried to avoid him as much as I could. That was how my addiction started. I knew nothing about sex or anything, but I started to masturbate early on when I was a kid. My mum caught me once, she started screaming at me and told my dad. They said that I have something which

I shouldn't lose. They meant my virginity. My mum refused to answer my private questions telling me that it is shameful to talk about those things. I started to have my own resources to know, I started to know information from a friend of mine at first. I kept masturbating for many years without having good knowledge about anything. I masturbated because of the fake feelings of joy I had.

As days and years passed by I went deeper and deeper towards my black hole of addiction. I got abused by some other people in middle and high school. I became a true addict to masturbation. I spent most of my days masturbating.

After college my addiction to pornography started. I became a true addict of images and fantasy. I started to have some sexual affairs with guys. After graduation, I spent most of my life with guys, masturbation, and pornography. I canceled lots of my work to have high new doses of my addiction. I got attracted to guys so much. I liked to attract them too. I liked to be lusted after. I liked to be the center of the universe for guys.

As I went deeper towards my addiction, I got more depressed. I suffered a lot. I had a huge feeling of shame. I tried a lot to pray to God, to have a good relationship with him but I felt that he didn't like me, and that I was a failure.

I started to have depression. I struggle a lot with it. I had some characteristics of borderline personality disorder. I suffered not only from suicidal thoughts and attempts but many harmful self-destructive behaviors like cutting. I

went through very hard break ups with boys whom I loved and had sexual affairs with. I used to get my value from sex. I felt that I have no self-esteem, I hated myself a lot. I was empty inside. I was rolling down in the deep. I suffer from somatization. My body is highly sensitive to my psychological state. I got many diseases like fibromyalgia, migraine, thyroid gland problems etc.

I started therapy many years ago to deal with depression and borderline. I learnt a lot from therapy. It truly saved my life. Afterwards I joined the SA fellowship. It is the most amazing place and community. I got an amazing awesome sponsor. She is still helping and inspiring me. I started to share with people about my feelings, I started to have a good healthy connection with my Higher Power, I admitted for the first time



Art journaling helps her to express her feelings and thoughts. Here she expresses her gratitude for the SA Plainview group.

in my life that I am a sexaholic and I have no control over lust. I started to love myself and to take care of myself.

I did Step One, Two and Three very well. When I started to do Step Four, I stumbled over my traumas. I didn't

share or talk about this heavy dark side before, so I had to look for a new therapist to deal with my PTSD. I am doing deeper work right now. I still go through depression episodes, but



Still life photography is her passion. Both of these photos took about four hours to choose the composition, set up the studio and the light.

I have an awesome place to go and share which is the SA fellowship. I can go to meetings online at any time of the day in order to listen to other people's experiences. I can share and ask for feedback if needed. I can stick to recovery tools and processes. I can find people who are the same as me. I can have my healthy connection with my Higher Power without feeling that He hates me or the concept that He is punishing me. He is a loving kind God. I am not here to be tortured by him.

Before coming to SA, I had never learnt anything from my relapses. I was filled with shame, self-hatred, and pain. Now I can learn a lot of lessons from my relapses. I guess that I had five or six relapses since I joined

SA. I used to attend meetings after my relapses to share about my pain and I was brave enough to ask for feedback.

I learnt not to focus on counting my days of sobriety as it was stressful for me. I felt that it was like a competition so I relapsed. I learnt to write my qualities and my skills in a paper to read them whenever I feel shame. I learnt not to play with fire so I had to set up my boundaries and respect my weaknesses very well even if this was against my desire. I learnt to be open-minded by sharing a lot with my friends in SA and accepting them. I have to surrender to my Higher Power; my day, my life and my resentments.

I have been sober since Aug 19, 2021 which is a real miracle. I know that I must go through difficult stages and dark times as the recovery path is not



covered with roses. It is ok not to be ok, it is ok to be out of my mind. It is only one day at a time.

SAMAR G., Cairo, Egypt



The Stairway to Spirituality in Recovery

Although Lee practices no organized religion, he describes the “four spiritual minimums” that have been working for him since 1986.

I practice no organized religion, but I may refer to specific religious traditions here because of their being examples related to my journey. In November 1985 I stopped acting out by means of chemical castration. This was because of life-threatening behaviors that were occurring as a part of my acting out. There was no emotional or spiritual treatment combined with it.

In May 1986 I found SA and was introduced to the concept of lust. In the English language lust frequently refers to sexual lust. However, lust is also often used in a general sense to describe intense desire or craving for

many things. The sexual meaning of lust in SA recovery led me to pursuing sobriety as progressive victory over lust. I later learned that I lusted after many other things including alcohol, drugs, food, and achievement. True recovery did not mean just stopping acting out with these things, but attaining a spiritual release from the lust that drove my acting out. Spiritual release from the craving and insatiability that characterizes lust is I think not a new spiritual concept, but one that I see has been taught over many centuries and cultures.

In 1986 I had no belief in God, no spiritual beliefs, and no spiritual practices. Recovery seemed to be

impossible for me until a recovering priest introduced me to what he called “four spiritual minimums.” He said that these were practices none of which mention God. However, they could be a pathway to developing a practical and user-friendly spirituality for recovery. He added that this spirituality would be entirely personal and may or may not include a traditional concept of a supreme being.

I was told that one definition of spirituality is based on the Latin word “spiritus.” This is a word that can be translated as breath. The ancient world seemed to recognize that when a person stopped breathing they had died. They made the assumption that the seed of life was in the breath.

By reading scripture of various faith traditions, I saw there were descriptions of life being breathed into humans and also such statements as the spirit giving life. For me, spirituality simply means to be filled with breath and life. That is, to be alive.

My addictions were emotionally and physically deadly. Recovering from my addictions led me to a much more fulfilling experience of life which in the 12 Step literature is described as a spiritual awakening or spiritual experience.

For me, religion and spirituality are related but not the same. The English word religion is derived from the Latin word, “religio” meaning obligation or bond. I found that over the centuries the English word came to describe a set of rules, practices, and beliefs related to one’s spirituality. These seemed to be extremely meaningful to many people in celebrating their spirituality. I started to believe that religion is not the experience itself, but

a variety (depending on which religion is practiced) of pathways that I could use to connect with that experience.

These are the four simple practices (or spiritual minimums) from the 12

With a primary relationship to an addictive substance or behavior there is no room for the development of spirituality.

Step program of recovery that have led me to a spiritual awakening or spiritual experience:

1. Don’t use. As long as I had a primary relationship to addictive substances or behaviors there was no room for the development of spirituality, because the addictions served as the all consuming solution to every problem and the means for every celebration. In other words they were the Higher Powers around which I lived my life. I had to stop acting out the addictions one day at a time. Then there came space for a spiritual experience. In other words the single most spiritual thing I am able to do for myself each day is not to use.

2. Meetings. For me, it seems that all of today’s major world religions utilize fellowships. A fellowship is for me a pathway to experiencing power greater than my individual own power. I learnt that in religious traditions that power is associated with the divine.

However, I saw that in 12 Step recovery, the divine may or may not

be where it leads. I learnt early on that to get the most out of meetings it was best to take actions to connect with the people involved. That meant participation. It was important for me to share in meetings. It was also useful to arrive early and stay afterwards to connect informally. Finally, it became very important for me to do service.

Having a sponsor is only effective when I connect to that person and receive his experience, strength, and hope.

I did all kinds of service like setting up chairs, making coffee, bringing up a topic, greeting people (especially newcomers), or leading a meeting. For me, meetings are most powerful when I experience connection.

3. Sponsorship. For me, it means to get a sponsor, to use a sponsor, and then to be a sponsor. Reading about the history of AA taught me that before there were meetings and before there was literature, there was sponsorship. When AA co-founders, Bill W. and Dr. Bob met, there was something in the magic of their one-on-one sharing that connected them both to stay in recovery for the rest of their lives. Using Bill and Dr. Bob as examples, I came to experience that having a sponsor is only effective when I connect with that person and receive his experience, strength, and hope.

So I had to start using a sponsor. It was also essential to begin sponsoring

and sharing my own experience, strength, and hope. This is exactly what happened to AA which ultimately covered the globe. Bill and Dr. Bob's meeting allowed the experience of that power to emerge and then their sharing it with others allowed the experience to grow in power.

4. Time. The priest told me that time is a powerful spiritual quantity that grows in power as time passes. Practicing the first three spiritual minimums and giving it time allowed for the growth of my belief in a power that has made possible something that I, an addict, could not do by myself. First, I have had to "take time." I have had to "take time" to practice the first three spiritual minimums. As time passed without using addictions, but instead using meetings and using a sponsor, I've worked through the Steps and the promises have come true. I have had to "give it time", in other words, to practice patience.

These four spiritual minimums have led me to spiritual recovery, a journey from not believing to believing in the experiences of others and as sober time has gone on, a belief in my own experience has developed. Since stopping my addictions had been impossible utilizing my own efforts, then there had to be some power greater than myself and greater than the addictions involved in my recovery happening. This has been an experience for me and not an understanding. I found that here can be, but need not be, any intellectual concept or description of a supreme being associated with this experience. For me, these four simple spiritual practices have been the starting point for continued spiritual progress.

LEE T., *Tennessee, USA*



The Higher Power I Defined in Step Three Is Always with Me

I have a recovery buddy who recently adopted a dog. Having been without a dog for several months, he was so excited when he was finally able to bring "Leroy Brown" home with him. That excitement was quickly joined by frustration. The first time he clipped Leroy into his harness, attached the leash, laced up his tennis shoes, and started out the door for a walk, his new companion transformed from a beagle/basset hound mix—perfectly able to walk on its own—to a 35-pound sack of dirt: he would not cross the threshold. After fervent and passionate coaxing—and a fair share of bribery with treats—the dead weight crossed the threshold.

That was only the beginning of the struggles for my recovery partner and his hairy companion. A half mile later, the transfiguration happened again—Leroy laid down in the middle of the street and would not move. This time, no amount of pleading would convince Leroy to cooperate. So, having expended most of his patience at the door frame, and since the scene was blocking the oncoming traffic, my friend was left with no choice but to carry Leroy. As you can imagine, carrying 35 pounds of dog-shaped dead weight for any distance is challenging ... half a mile is just impossible.

After about 50 yards, arms burning under the strain, my recovery partner put the dog down and tried to continue the walk. Leroy was not interested. He tried to push from

behind—this caused his pup to do a handstand. A peaceful walk—a time for exercise, prayer, and reflection—was now anything but.

Hearing this story reminded me of the poem "Footsteps." The Higher Power I defined in Step Three is always with me—He always has been. Sometimes, this is very apparent to me. I can see Him working in my life when I receive a phone call just at the very time when I'm beginning to feel resentment, or when I relate to another member's share, or when a prayer is answered. He and I are together, walking the road of recovery.

Sometimes, however, my addict brain looks around and doesn't see another set of footprints. I get scared, resentful, irritable, and discontented. Why has my Higher Power left me? Does He not love me? Recovery has taught me that the footprints aren't my own. My Higher Power is carrying me. Sometimes I even see long lines in the sand—those are caused by my addict digging his heels in and laying down in the road. My Higher Power is dragging me.

Recovery has shown me that when I see only one set of footprints, I shouldn't assume they're mine. I have a choice to walk side by side with my Higher Power, surrendering lust and character defects as we trudge the Road of Happy Destiny. I don't have to be a sack of dirt.

MATTHEW P., *Georgia, USA*



Getting caught turned out to be a miracle for this fellow, who is now spiritually free while serving a 50-month sentence

EXPERIENCING EMOTIONAL SOBRIETY IN PRISON

My name is Raphael S., and I'm a grateful, recovering sexaholic. I've been sober by the grace of God and the help of all of you in this program of SA since April 7th, 2019. My home group is Crystal City, Virginia, USA.

What it was like: I was indoctrinated into a world of lust at the age of four when I was raped by my neighbor, who was nine or ten years old at the time. I didn't understand what had happened to me, except that it was somehow my fault and I had to keep it a secret or else "bad things would happen."

From that moment until April 7, 2019, I lived a double-life. I quickly learned to cope with the shame associated with my secret life through masturbation (age five), and pornography (age six).

Even at that young age, I was "lost inside myself." I was locked into an addictive cycle that would remain unbroken for over 30 years. How my addiction manifested itself is less important than this fact: if I thought I could get away with it I'd do it.

What happened: A miracle! I got caught acting out in an illegal act of voyeurism. One may not believe in miracles, and certainly believing getting caught is a miracle might be a stretch. But I'm 100% certain that nothing less would have broken the cycle I was in, and anything that could get me to stop is a miracle.

I was brought to my knees, and I admitted defeat. I was ready to get help, and to get honest for the first time in decades. That night I did something the White Book cautions against: I made a disclosure to my

wife. It may not have been wise, but I had put my wife and our family in harm's way. I needed her to know the truth from me before she found out from a third party. I met with a new therapist, and upon her advice ("You need to go to SA meetings every day") I walked into my first SA meeting on April 14th, 2019. In the subsequent two and a half years, I would attend over 800 meetings, most of which were in SA.

What it's like now: For the first time in my life, I am spiritually free. I got a sponsor and I worked the Steps. And when I was done, I worked the Steps again. I got a sponsee and worked him through the Steps. When we were

done, I worked with another man through the Steps.

Today, although I am serving a 50-month sentence for my terrible and illegal actions, I am still working a sponsee through the Steps over the phone once a week. I still qualify for this program, and for that reason I keep coming back. But I have the tools to navigate the hard times, friends to keep me connected, and a loving God to restore me to emotional sobriety and sanity.

You can contact me by email: newcastlegroup@gmail.com. Thank you for letting me share!

RAPHAEL S., *Virginia, USA*



Dear Sexaholics Anonymous

I have a sexual addiction. I have been sexually active since I was eleven years old. In 1994, I have been molested by my uncle, my mom brother. I had questioned my sexuality all my life. I couldn't live without sex every day. I would buy escorts, street walkers every day. I would be sexually insecure when I be in relationships. It caused me to cheat and act outside my character. I didn't know who I am without sex. I look for comfort in the arms of stranger. I risk my life for simple pleasure. My thought process is always focused on sex. I get addicted to porn. I couldn't go a day without watching porn. It had become my disease and sickness.

I need a sponsor through mail, please and thanks for listening to my story. I am 34 years old and a federal inmate waiting for transfer.

D.O., Sacramento County main Jail. April 2022

To sponsor-by-mail D.O. or other friends in prison, please contact sacfc1@gmail.com or zantinger@gmail.com

What Makes Meetings Strong? Welcome to the Accessibility Committee



Reading “What makes meetings strong?” in *Essay* May 2021 got me thinking. For me strong meetings are welcoming places, offering full participation to all members; they provide opportunities for service and they encourage fellowship after meetings.

As I see it, strong meetings are not only about the shares, but also about group learning, promoting the actions of love, encouraging anyone who considers him/herself a member to full access to our program and fellowship. This contributes to the unity of the group.

I am a member of the Accessibility Committee. This is a very special committee that supports access to members with

physical disabilities. The committee warmly welcomed two members, Pat G. and Tom L., both of whom are helping us to reach out and support other members who have a disability. It has been an honor and a privilege to work with both members.

Pat and Tom have given permission for their shares and their names to be published in the *Essay*. These shares are so lovingly clear. I hope in this way that their shares help start to create an awareness/sensitivity for our fellow members in groups. This is certainly the case for me, and I have more to learn.

For more information or to get in contact with the Accessibility Committee, please contact SAICO: saico@sa.org

JACKIE H., *Den Hague, The Netherlands*



My name is Tom L., and I am a grateful member of SA, sober since Oct 3, 2005. I am also blind. I receive very natural support in my own home group, intergroup, and while attending International Conventions in the US and traveling internationally to European conventions. My needs are met very adequately. I hardly need to ask for them.

I use audio. Almost everything is available through audio today. The type of things that present difficulties for me is receiving links to meetings or business meetings. What works perfectly for me is receiving a text with the link that I click on. Having a “service guide” to assist me with attending committee meetings—someone who would read documents to me—would be helpful. Also helpful would be the designation at face-to-face conventions of volunteers who would guide me to meetings, to the dining hall, to my room etc.

I never met a person without a disability of some sort—extreme shyness, a speech stammer, the aches of aging, difficulty in mastering ever evolving technology. I think it can be helpful to look at disability in a broader sense than just physical disability; fear of technology, inability to keep pace with it, can exclude members especially as they get older.

TOM L., *Galway, Ireland*



I am Pat G., gratefully sober since Dec 21, 1996. For a very long time, I have been the only deaf person in my group—I know there are other deaf people that are not ready to be with us. I am very pleased with my home group. Having a professional ASL interpreter in a meeting helps tremendously. The English in the White Book is an older type of English—very difficult to sign exactly what they are hearing so having a professional interpreter in the meeting can spoil me because we have something in common: the understanding of the program language.

When the meeting is over and members are hanging out, I can’t have full accessibility—some will take time to write notes for me. But they have their own kind of language when writing, and oftentimes will say “we will save it for later”, or they may not give it to me, or might write something I need to do for SA instead of letting me participate in their conversation. I feel left out. For me, meeting after the meeting is difficult in so many ways, while it is often the place where we get to learn to know each other better.

I sponsor a deaf Irish member regularly via Skype. Members don’t ask me to become their sponsor in the meeting, hearing people don’t do that—I can’t have an interpreter all the time—how can that happen, financially.

During a face-to-face meeting, we sit in a circle so everyone can see each other—that is really nice. The interpreter sits opposite me and beside the Chair; sight lines are good. Someone gets up and walks to get a cup of coffee and stands in the way—they don’t realize that they cut off my accessibility—have cut off the communication in terms of my being able to see the interpreter. Those with hearing are visually impaired in the sense that they don’t understand that I am getting all my communication by vision.

There has been significant improvement over the years, increased awareness, people making greater efforts all the time, that is for sure—but I also suggest there are many things that need to be improved.

PAT G., *New York, USA*



SAICO Financial June 2022

□ Revenue	\$150,264
□ Expenses	\$175,603
□ Revenue-Expenses	-\$25,339
□ Prudent Reserve	\$159,706

Men and Women Together in SA



The GREATER DETROIT AREA is hosting a workshop on empowering men & women together in SA. Exclusive content will be released weekly in our new WhatsApp Group. Content will include new audio from old timers, new mixed media resources for meetings, a new website, and a new google drive full of EPICNESS!



- WATCH THE WONDERFUL TRAILER: <http://tinyurl.com/powtrailer>
- EXPLORE THE NEW WEBSITE: www.empowertogether.info
- LISTEN TO THE PARTICIPATION STATEMENT: <http://tinyurl.com/powstatement>

I'M NOT A LONER ANYMORE! SA in Iraq

These past few months, we've been able to welcome two new members from Iraq. Although I wasn't involved in carrying the message to them, I'm part of their solution.

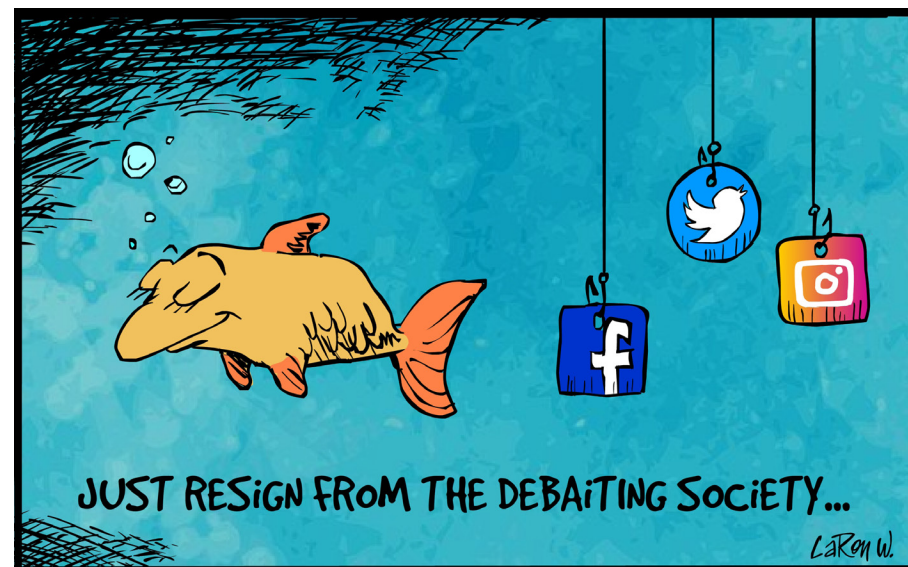
SA in Iraq is still in its infancy as we don't have our own meetings. However, this doesn't stop us from recovering. We're part of the growing online recovery as we do meetings on Zoom. We all attend the same meetings that are widely available in the Middle East (Egypt and Arabic Gulf meetings).

I'm grateful to see these fellows coming regularly to the meetings as well as growing in the Fellowship through attending group conscience meetings and taking service positions. It's really amazing to see them grow in this life-saving program!

I've witnessed how the Promises are being fulfilled in the program. I've witnessed people around me recovering and their loneliness vanishing. I've new friends that are from my country. I'm not a loner anymore!

I'm certain that SA will continue growing in Iraq. God will do for me and other fellows, what we're not able to do for ourselves.

AMEER M., Iraq



Sharing New Ways To Carry the Message

Imagine driving to a remote field for an outdoor 12-Step recovery fair and seeing an enormous SA tent. That happened in Poland. Or turning on a radio channel where the White Book is read aloud 24 hours a day throughout the year. This happens in Russia. Or distributing SA cards with QR codes filled with information needed by newcomers in Ireland.

These are examples of the experience, strength and hope that European intergroups shared on Saturday, May 28 at their three-hour “PI Talk Show”, which was held via Zoom and interpreted into Arabic, French, German, Italian, Persian, Polish, Russian, Slovak, and Spanish.

The intergroups from Ireland, the Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Slovakia, and Spain, as well as the Region’s Subcommittee on Outreach to the Catholic Church told their stories about what has been most effective in reaching the still-suffering sexaholic.

Some intergroups have cooperated with AA, ACA and other 12-Step fellowships and been invited to hold open SA meetings at the anniversary and jubilee events of those fellowships, where scores of people came to learn about SA for the first time. Masked and voice-camouflaged first-step testimonies of SA members have been videoed and are now available for download on internet addiction sites. The Irish, Slovak and Spanish and Intergroups have been particularly active in outreach to the clergy, and

EMER SA Public Information Talkshow Saturday May 28th 2022 2 pm - 5 pm CET time

ON ZOOM

For sexaholics who want to know more about carry-the-message activity throughout the region.

REGISTER NOW

EMER intergroups will present their experience, strength and hope on their most successful PI work.

Interpretation into multiple languages will be provided to the audience.

[REGISTRATION LINK](#)

have provided materials and SA information cards to hundreds of clergy who meet sexaholics in parishes, especially in the confessional booth.

EMER’s Subcommittee on Outreach to the Catholic Church has been organizing joint meetings with bishops and archbishops through collaboration with a high-ranking bishop in Rome, and published an Italian translation of a condensed version of Member Stories 2007.

Given the proliferation of sexual addiction, we feel we are still just scratching the surface. But these novel approaches to carrying the message are starting to be replicated around the region and to reach entirely new profiles of sexaholics. Anyone interested in joining PI efforts could contact EMER at emeregion@gmail.com and we will be glad to help you get plugged into your intergroup’s activities!



Regional Convention in Armenia!!!

The Europe and Middle East Region will hold its face-to-face Regional Convention in Armenia from October 7-9, 2022, with S-Anon participation. It will be its first live convention in three years, and also the first time it will be held in the easternmost part of the region. Members from nearly every country can come without a visa or by getting one easily at the border. There are flights from over 30 international cities to Armenia. The official languages of the Convention will be English, Russian and Persian.

The main hotel and convention center will be [Hotel Ripa in the beautiful mountain resort town of Tsakhkadzor](#) (pronounced Zak-ka-zor). The hotel is fully wheelchair accessible. Meals will be affordable rich buffets serving nearly every food need. Sleeping rooms will also be quite affordable and come in various combinations.

Our founder Roy K.’s parents were from historic Armenia, so in a sense, Armenia is where SA began. Armenia borders Turkey, Iran, Azerbaijan and Georgia. It has a rich and ancient culture, with its height in 95 BC as the second largest empire in the world after Rome. Armenia was the first nation to accept Christianity as the state religion in 301 AD. Its language is Indo-European and it has its own alphabet. There are many places to explore if you want to take a longer vacation in the beautiful October weather.

Watch the EMER website www.sexaholicsanonymous.eu in early June for registration information or write to emeregion@gmail.com if you have questions.

We’re waiting for you in Armenia!



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: scott_dc@yahoo.com



save the date

Colorado SA/S-Anon
Unity Conference

Suffering Transmuted
"Under Grace, Into Spiritual Progress"

August 12-14, 2022

Mother Cabrini Shrine
20189 Cabrini Blvd • Golden, CO 80401

Registration Info to Follow

For questions, email coloradounityconference@gmail.com or call Julie K. 720-327-4463



Scottish SA Convention
With S-Anon Participation

The booking is open; places are still available

Where? Stirling, Scotland
When? Aug 26-28, 2022

<https://sascottishconvention.weebly.com/>



X CONVENCIÓN NACIONAL SA COLOMBIA

La Victoria Progresiva

Fechas del evento:
OCTUBRE / 2022

14 **15** **16** **17**

BIENVENIDA DESPUÉS DEL DESAYUNO | APERTURA Y PROGRAMACIÓN | DESPEDIDA Y SALIDA DESPUÉS DEL DESAYUNO

NOTA IMPORTANTE: ENTRADA SOLO PARA PERSONAS INSCRITAS.

Contacto:
Para recibir información sobre la convención y tema de consignación, comuníquese a los siguientes WhatsApp
+ (57) 314 771 3951 - 310 839 2022
Intergruposacolombia@gmail.com
CTA DE AHORRIS: BANCO DAVIVIENDA No. 016870382732
GUILLERMO P. Y FRANCISCO R.
CALI - COLOMBIA

Nota: La dirección será enviada solo a los participantes inscritos.

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/

COMING IN AUGUST



NEXT EDITION In the August issue, read how members use the Slogans in their daily lives to strengthen their recovery.

Sober Is Not well
An Iraqi member shares that sexual abstinence is not an end in itself, but the beginning of working on the underlying disease.

One day At a Time
Sober since 1993, she can't say that every day is perfect but she continues to choose sobriety, one day at a time.

First Things First
This slogan inspires Calvin from Australia to have healthy priorities.

We Are As Sick As Our Secrets
It was not until he took this slogan seriously, that he gained long-term sobriety.

SUBMIT YOUR STORY

August 2022 edition: The Slogans—How to Use Them in Our Daily Lives (stories due July 1) The Slogans are one of the best kept secrets in SA. How do 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) Outside help can be used to enhance our 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.

11:51



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.



Enter message

