

ESSAY

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SEXAHOLICS ANONYMOUS



APRIL 2023

SA.ORG

**CELEBRATING
THE MIRACLE OF
SA SOBRIETY**

**AND THE MIRACLE OF
BECOMING AN SA REGION!**

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

Copyright © 2023 All rights reserved.

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

Dear *ESSAY* reader,

In this month's issue, members share the miracles of their recovery, enjoying freedom from the toxic power of lust by the humble working of this program. A Ukrainian lady shares how sobriety helped her to overcome crippling defects of character. A Belgian member is living happy, joyous and free; especially free of feeling he must conform to binding societal labels. A fellow from the UK tells us how our "crazy, impossible sobriety definition" attracted him rather than put him off, and that by aligning his life to the definition, things for him are no longer crazy and impossible. Eric shares how boundaries help against the chaos and impulsivity of his own "best thinking."

The miracle growth of SA continues and we include in this issue articles from our brothers and sisters in the brand new "Australia – New Zealand Region." Jason, the first ever Australian Trustee, recounts the miracle of the birth of this new region. Petrice from Australia tells how connection with SA fellows keeps her from being overwhelmed when she loses her emotional balance. An old-timer from Sydney shares how recovery changed him into a new person. Pat from New Zealand starts off his days by falling to his knees, praying to God that He do in his life what he can't do for himself. Each story offers wonderful hope, testimony to the miracle of recovery from our disease. Also in this issue, the Trustee Chair tells us of the latest developments in SA; learn about SA's Legal Committee; and get yourself ready for the International Summer Convention in Poland, and for the Winter Convention in Israel.

Enjoy.

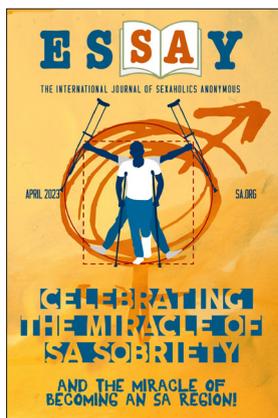
In fellowship,
THE EDITORIAL TEAM
essay@sa.org



April 2023

That is the miracle of it. We are not fighting it, neither are we avoiding temptation. We feel as though we had been placed in a position of neutrality — safe and protected.

AA 85



On the cover: Our in-house illustrator LaRon designed a brilliant variation of Da Vinci's "The Vitruvian Man", depicting the miracle of SA sobriety.

Practical Tools

Changing into a Precious Child of God.....	8
Getting Out of Our Head.....	10
Poem "Clarity, Miracle of SA Sobriety".....	11

On The Cover: The Joy of Service

Using the SA Sobriety Definition as a Mirror.....	12
The Incredible Gift of Being a Different Person.14	
Attracted by that Impossible, Crazy Definition..17	
Boundaries Outside My Own "Best Thinking"..18	
Rowing Towards Her Authentic Self.....	20
What Made the SA Program Credible for Me...E20	
Healing in the Family.....	E21

SA Stories

Changing Into a New Me.....	22
A Reason to Live.....	24

"E" pages are online Essay only

Steps & Traditions

In the Beginner's Class.....	26
The Way to the Fourth Dimension.....	28

SA CFC

True Joy Is in Sharing with Others.....	30
---	----

WORLD WIDE NEWS

Summer IC in Poland	13
Winter IC in Israel.....	29
The Miracle of Becoming a New SA Region.....	32
Presenting The SA Legal Committee.....	34

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

SA Purpose.....	2
Responsibility Declaration.....	2
Statement of Principle.....	2
Editor's Corner.....	3
What's Going On in SA.....	5
Dear ESSAY.....	6
Worldwide Walls of SA.....	7
Discussion Topic.....	16
SA Events Calendar.....	33
New Meetings.....	34
Coming In June.....	35

We Have an Effective International Organization

What a wonderful fellowship we have! Whenever someone reaches out, SA is there. Through a dedication to service by members like you, we have an effective international organization to keep us available to the next newcomer—and to all of you.

Meeting Registration. Our ten-year census registration ends on April 10th. If your meeting isn't registered, do so today, because the same database of meetings will soon become the only source for the Meeting Finder on sa.org. Doing this puts the power of the web in your hands to keep your meeting information up to date for newcomers to find you.

New Literature in work. The Literature Committee works constantly to provide materials that are useful to us all. They are working on books and pamphlets through a slow and careful process to make sure each piece truly reflects the voice of our fellowship. Two new pieces will soon go to general readers for comments. If you would like to participate as a reader, contact SAICO. You can find all of our literature on sa.org.

Conventions. We are officially post-COVID now, with international conventions lined up twice a year. They are marvelous opportunities to meet with hundreds of people like you, gaining experience, strength, and hope you can get no other way. You can register now for Krakow in July 2023 and Jerusalem in January 2024. Watch for Los Angeles in July 2024 and Dallas in 2025.

Finances. Please keep contributing through your local meetings, intergroups, and regions—and make any extra contributions directly to sa.org. Remember: we accept no outside donations, so our finances depend completely on us. This

is a difficult year for us, with inflation raising the prices on everything we do. It's up to all of us to make sure we can continue to provide the services we do.

Chat with the Trustees. We continue to hold quarterly Zoom sessions to chat informally with the Trustees. You can meet your trusted servants and find out how they think. Watch for announcements through your regional delegates and intergroups.

Service Work. In July, three of our seven Trustees end their service. If you've got over five years of sobriety, consider volunteering for this essential service to keep SA available and active for all. If you're not yet there, then take your recovery to the next level with other service, at your local group, Intergroup, or Region. You can also contact SAICO about international work on committees. Talk with your sponsor about what you can do.

Web Application Developer Needed. SA is looking for a web application developer to build and maintain our new Meeting Finder. We have a copy of the NA meeting finder, and the task is to modify it for SA. The system uses PHP, HTML, CSS, basic SQL, and the Google mapping & geocoding APIs. Talk with your sponsor about what you can do. If you are interested, contact SAICO to be connected to the IT Committee.

ERIC H., *Florida, USA*
Trustee Chair



Dear ESSAY

Insisting on Joy

DEAR ESSAY, ONE OF

my most important recovery guidelines is from Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 132: “We absolutely insist on enjoying life.” Roy’s version of this is his notion that if we don’t find in recovery what we were looking for in lust, recovery wouldn’t work (SA 164). Joy that comes from self-acceptance and group-acceptance is one thing my lust was looking for.

Most of my lessons in recovery start in my recovery groups. From there I can apply them to family and work. My Big Book study home-group is full of mirth. A representative example: our service positions are informally called, “sobriety sheriff, chip monk, (table &) chair, and czoom czar.” We laugh at many things,

but mostly at our addict brain, which is a way of dissociating from it, of de-selecting it. I think the nature of reality is joy, and if I get out of the way, joy happens.

While working in Spain in 2021, I noticed that my copy of the Spanish Big Book did not have this sentence about insisting on joy cited above. I asked some old-timers in SA, and they did not know that this sentence was in the original-language Big Book. In fact, one member even said that “insisting on enjoyment” sounded willful and unhealthy.

But we have good reason to be joyful! Our sordid past is now redeemed as we press it into the service of helping others. Our addiction has a good purpose and a happy ending, a happy “ongoing.”

The latest edition of the Spanish Big Book does have this sentence: “Insistimos absolutamente en disfrutar la vida” (3a edición, 189), but the following section still qualifies “laughter” — in “cheerfulness and laughter make for usefulness” (AA 132) — as “healthy laughter” (“sano reír”). The Chinese translation from Taiwan has “always smiling” (180: “笑口常開”), and the German has unqualified “laughter” (155: “Lachen”). It seems that laughter might have different cultural connotations, but I have noticed that my brothers and sisters in recovery in Spain, Taiwan, Germany, Egypt, the Philippines, and other places, whose surrender is deep and long-lasting, whose commitment to recovery is absolute, all seem to find joy and mirth in meetings and in life, no matter how their native language expresses it.

MIKE M., Taipei, Taiwan



Worldwide Walls Of SA

SA Meetings Can Be Held Just About Anywhere ...



*Al-Tahrir Meeting
Cairo, Egypt*



*Kamppi Meeting
Helsinki, Finland*



*New Wednesday meeting room
Vienna, Austria*



*Clean Soul group,
After-meeting snowball fight
Tehran, Iran*



*Tuesday Meeting
Mortsel City, Belgium*



Share your photos

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

The Tools That Changed a Depressed and Suicidal Woman into a Precious Child of God

Fastening her seatbelt on the roller coaster ride of recovery and practicing surrender turned her into a grateful recovering sexaholic.

I did not quit, I surrendered. I began my journey in this program when a friend from Al-Anon told me I was a sexaholic. To prove her wrong, I agreed to go to six SA meetings. During those six meetings I slowly came to admit that I was a sexaholic. At the beginning I made no eye contact with other members, and I did not share. There were six other SA women at my first home-group meeting. We went to two meetings a week as a group, which helped me to connect with the program and then I started to share. When I qualified, I had to surrender my fear and shame. I felt I was worse than male members because of the double standards relating to women in the USA. Men can “sow their wild oats” whereas women are either virgins or prostitutes. These myths were planted in my mind. Time in the program has helped me overcome these concepts.

I am also a survivor of sexual abuse. When the awareness dawned that I was a victim of sexual abuse, my acting-out began. It really took off in college where the use of alcohol lowered my inhibitions. In my last year of college, I told a counselor about my sexual abuse. The main perpetrator was my adoptive father. I had never told my mother about any of this. She died when I was 21.

Fast forward to my 30s, and I was addicted to romance novels with lots of sex scenes. I masturbated to fanta-

sies from those books; I only interacted with people at work. I struggled with anxiety and depression. I finally signed myself into a mental hospital because I was suicidal. After my hospitalization I was led to SA and the miracles began by practicing the following recovery tools:

Meetings. I did 90 meetings in 90 days in 1992. Some were open AA meetings because there weren't enough SA meetings to go to in person in the Cleveland area.

Step Work. My sponsor helped me work the Steps. I did my first Fourth and Fifth Steps in 1994. I argued a lot with her about sex being optional. My eventual acceptance of that concept was my first miracle in recovery.

Conventions. I went to my first SA convention in 1995 in Baltimore. I was scared to leave my hotel room on the first day, but I surrendered my fear to my Higher Power and went on to greatly enjoy the convention. I have some wonderful memories from conventions over the years, including co-chairing the 1999 convention in Cleveland. As co-chair, I really had to work on humility before my Higher Power and surrender my desire to control others.

Service. I was very slow to accept the concept of service in working my program. I now believe the saying that “Service Keeps You Sober.” And today, I accept that I won't always get my way when doing service; I accept

that what is best for the group will prevail because Higher Power is in charge. I am currently secretary at my home-group and a chairperson of the Northeast Ohio Intergroup. I was a Mid-Atlantic delegate from 1999-2001. The best part of service is learning to accept people as they are. I have met people from all over the world. It is amazing that SA exists in so many countries. What a miracle!

Sponsorship. I had to accept direction from a sponsor long before I was

When I have a hard time writing a gratitude list, I know I am in a dark place. I pray and keep writing until the positive words come out on the page.

ready to be a sponsor. It took me some time to accept direction. My character defects of stubbornness and rebellion got in the way, as well as my mistrust of authority figures. Over time, my Higher Power gave me the humility to accept direction. I have learned from all three of my sponsors. I've learned about surrender, acceptance and gratitude. I've learned that I am not God—a truth for which I am immensely grateful. I have also learned a lot by being a sponsor. Preaching does not work. I have to be vulnerable and lead by example, which is risky at times. For example, when my sponsee has a resentment, I tell her to pray for the person. Am I doing the same when

I have a resentment? Most of the time I do, but sometimes I do want to hold on to anger. More prayer is needed at that point. My Higher Power is always available, and that fact gives me peace.

Trust. Being a woman and single in SA has been a challenge, requiring a lot of prayer and trust in my Higher Power. When I came into SA there were five other women in my area. They gradually dropped out, and I had to trust the male SAs like brothers and friends. We are all recovering sexaholics and need to be treated equally. After years of only two SA women, we are now up to six. Lust is cunning, baffling and powerful, no matter which gender it affects. Trusting my brothers in SA came slowly, but it did come with my Higher Power's help. Trusting men was very hard for me as a survivor of sexual abuse where the perpetrators were both men. Neither of them made amends to me while they were on earth, but with my Higher Power's help I have forgiven them. That process has brought me great healing.

Surrender. A wise SA member told me to fasten my seatbelt because recovery would be a roller coaster ride. I agree with that statement. When I first entered the program, I mocked the concept of surrender, but slowly I began to use surrender in all areas of my life. I love when Roy writes that "surrender is the watchword of our program" (SA 81). I surrender my resentments when they happen and pray for the person I am resenting. I began to surrender little things, like my frustration at red lights when I'm in a hurry. At my sponsor's direction I started to get down on my knees in the morning and surrender my lust to my Higher Power. At night I kneel and thank Him for keeping me sober that day. I also surrender my lust at

bedtime because lust likes to creep into my thoughts when I get ready to sleep. I am not cured from lust; I have a daily reprieve. I am in remission, not cured. That is why I say I am “Sober, Not Well.” No one is immune to a slip.

Acceptance. I accept that I am a sexaholic. I have met many wonderful people in the program since coming into acceptance of my truth. I had read “Acceptance Was the Answer” in the AA Big Book. Powerful words. I read them every day before work when I had a tough boss.

Gratitude. I am a grateful recovering sexaholic—this program has saved my life. I have a gratitude journal which helps me to connect with the positives for the day. When I have a hard time writing a gratitude list, I know I am in a dark place. I pray and keep writing until the positive words come out on

the page. I am grateful when I can share at or lead a meeting because I hope I can help someone else who may be hurt or struggling. The newcomer is the most important person at his or her first meeting. The rest of the group needs to provide encouragement and hope. The newcomer usually has some fear or anxiety. In Cleveland we use a Newcomer’s Format that is meant to help orient the newcomer: we read the 20 Questions and the Sobriety Definition in the White Book. I believe the newcomer needs to feel they are in a safe place.

This program changed a depressed and suicidal woman into a precious child of God. Yet another miracle.

PEG V., *Ohio, USA* 

Getting Out of Our Head

One way addicts avoid their legitimate suffering is by staying in their heads. This involves obsessing about things, analyzing, discussing, reading, and spending lots of energy in trying to figure things out. There is a story about a room with two doors. Each door has a sign on it. One says “HEAVEN”; the other says “LECTURE ON HEAVEN.” All addicts are lined up in front of the door that says “LECTURE ON HEAVEN”!



CLARITY,
MIRACLE
OF SA S



BRIETY

Clarity ... clarity is something that I need and wish to have and never lose.
Clarity is something that I get when I pause, listen and think.
Clarity is a God-given present when I take care of myself and others.
Clarity is what I get when I don't let life challenges take over my brain.
Clarity is what happens when I try to become a channel of Thy peace.
Clarity is when my brain is clear and I can think in a healthy fashion.
Clarity is when I clean house from character defects which stand in the way of my being useful to You, God, and my dear fellows that are suffering, too.
Clarity is when I take responsibility for my actions and make sure I am a clear, clean channel where fear, resentment, anger, revenge, self-pity, or jealousy don't get in the way and take away my serenity.
Clarity is an automatic outcome of being a Watchman—not letting the business and noise of life, places, people, situations take over my thinking process.
Clarity is the most wonderful gift I can ever imagine having.
Clarity is when I can see and view people as people, not objects.
Clarity is when I can have an emergency and not get overwhelmed and lost in the now.
Clarity is what draws people to want to be close to me.
Clarity is what helps me get through the day without thinking and rethinking that maybe I didn't do enough or do things good enough.
Clarity is all I need to be a loveable, calm husband, father, friend, and member of society.
Clarity is when I can be sure that what I think, say or do is right without a doubt.
Clarity is when I feel You, God, working in me and listening to me.
Clarity feels like walking hand in hand with You my Creator of the universe, and everything feels taken care of and will be OK.

Shea K., *New York, USA*



Using the SA Sobriety Definition As a Mirror

Sobriety has changed her complete outlook on life, of which the God of her understanding is the center.

My life in recovery is full of miracles today—the biggest of them is that I am recovering from this disease, this enslavement to lust, for which there is no cure. Another huge miracle is that I am grateful today; I used to be never grateful.

My recovery in SA began with acceptance of the SA sobriety definition. For me, the definition is clear and unambiguous. It is like a mirror by which I see and gauge my spiritual progress. The work I needed to do to stay sober—Steps, meetings, service—has helped me figure out solutions in other problematic areas of my life, where medicine and religion have been powerless.

I have experienced many miracles in my life, but until recovery, I was blind to them all; blinded by lust, by shame, by anger towards God, by all sorts of negativity. The more I shared of my darkest past, the more the bondage of shame fell away, and my heart began to fill with happiness, joy and freedom, and a strong sense of gratitude for everything that has happened

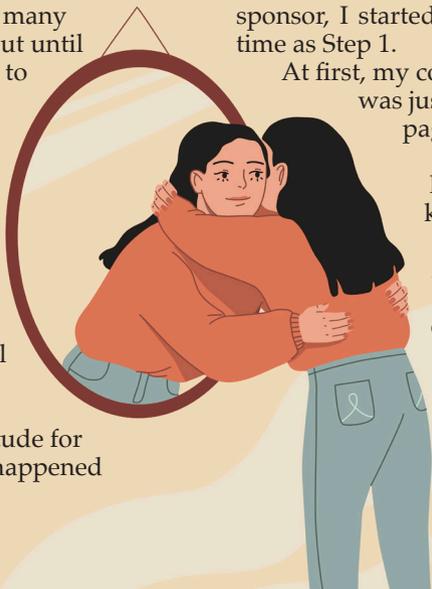
to me; gratitude for every single thing that contributed to my entering the door to my first SA meeting.

One often hears that the first three Steps are the most important; the arch through which we pass on our way to

The program helps me to see His blessings in all things, no matter what is going on in the outside world.

the rest of the Steps. But for me, Step 11 was, and still is, the most important. On the recommendation of my first sponsor, I started Step 11 at the same time as Step 1.

At first, my commitment to Step 11 was just to read the relevant pages in the Big Book of AA every day. Then I learned to practice taking a daily inventory before going to bed. At the time, I was not very enlightened and could not understand why I should ask God for forgiveness. Around this time, I could not find a rabbi anywhere



to help me with answers to the many questions I had about all of this; and then I asked myself if I needed a rabbi at all because, after all, I knew so much about everything.

It took me two years to work the Twelve Steps, going through them using the *Step Into Action* book. It was only after sharing my Step 12 with my sponsor that I experienced a heart-felt connection with the Step 3 prayer, and see today how necessary that prayer is in my life. By the Grace of God, I am not motivated today by self-will; rather, I am motivated by a desire to know God's will for me and for the power to carry it out. I pray each day for the graces of humility and gratitude, too.

Today, I feel I am part of a big family where I am at home, loved, appreciated

and supported; where I find solace and harmony.

The 12-Step program has helped me to find God and to talk to Him and hear Him. Importantly, the program helps me to keep out of God's way as He helps me to be happy; as He helps me to see His blessings in all things, no matter what is going on in the outside world.

Today I see all the people in my life, past and present, as colors on God's palette; and they make a beautiful rainbow in His divine hands.

Dear brothers and sisters of the SA community—each of you is an integral part of my change for the better. Thank you.

OLGA S., *Alchevsk, Ukraine*



SA & S-Anon International
Cracow, Poland



Summer Convention

JULY
14-16

Int'l SA Convention
with S-Anon participation
In God We Trust

14-16.07.2023
CRACOW POLAND

Metropolo by Golden Tulip
ul. Orzechowa 11
30-422 Krakow, Poland

More Information on: sa.convention.2023@gmail.com
www.sa.org.pl/sa-convention-2023

One of the unofficial slogans often heard is: "Join SA and See the World." Come over to Poland in July for the biggest SA event of the year in the 4-star Hotel Metropolo (by Golden Tulip) in the picturesque and historical city of Cracow.

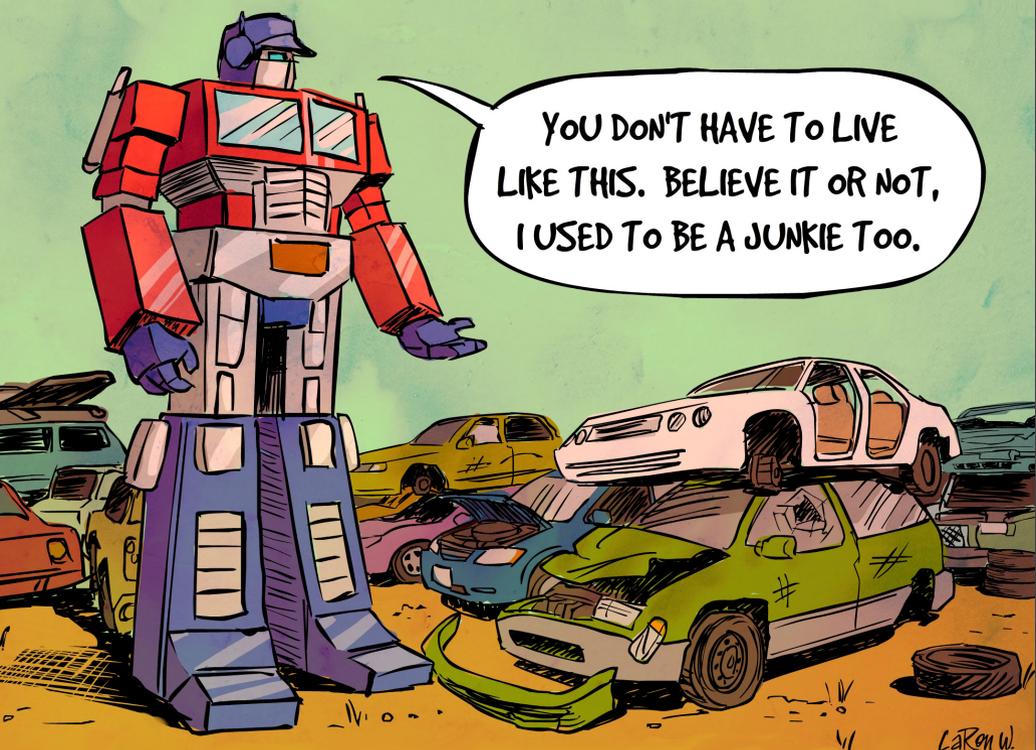
The organizers expect between 500 and 800 live participants from more countries than ever. Many members who have extended their stay before or after International Conventions in the past testify that such days have been absolute highlights in their recovery.

There is easy and cheap access from the airport to the hotel by taxi, train or bus. The hotel has a gym and sauna. Kosher meals will be organized by a Kosher Committee.

Meetings throughout the whole weekend will be translated in English and other languages. The Saturday night Talent Show is traditionally a time to sit back, relax, and laugh while being entertained by members of both Fellowships. Conference-approved literature will be for purchase at the Literature Table.

Early-bird registration is only 65 €! Go to: <https://sa.org.pl/sa-convention-2023/>

The Incredible Gift of Being a Different Person



Today, he is free from the labels the society he lives in would like him to conform to, and can be himself as he is.

came to SA in 2008. Up until that point, my life had been a succession of compulsive masturbation, pornography, voyeurism, exhibitionism, and countless stealthy contacts or one-night-stands with other men. The only experience of connection was a 20+ year abusive relationship with an alcoholic man.

When I first read SA's sobriety definition, I was disappointed, because I felt different. I was still defining myself as gay, though there was nothing cheerful about my condition. Even if I couldn't identify with what it was suggesting, two little words drew my attention:

1. The first word was "freedom"—the promise is "freedom from sex of any kind". That was a challenging idea, because the pursuit of compulsive sex had always been my main drive and given me the illusion of freedom. I was unable to imagine life without it and I was certainly not aware of the enslaved condition I'd put myself in.

2. The second word was the concept of "lust"—that was the missing piece of the puzzle. I had vainly tried to stop my sexual acting-out and its consequences, but it never dawned on me that "drinking" lust preceded and resulted in the acting-out binges. Scanning real or virtual people only

led to more scanning, but it never satisfied my need to connect with them.

I clearly wasn't thrilled by the SA solution, but I decided to give it a go because the problem—dying from acting-out—seemed worse. I took a UK sponsor, worked the Steps and began sponsoring others. Things started to change slowly, but a few roadblocks crossed my path. One of them was the concept of a Higher Power and another was my homosexuality. With the help of an American SA member, there was a breakthrough in both at the same time, and I had a spiritual experience. I asked God to be relieved of my obsession to find a relationship, and the next morning I was freed of it. Unfortunately, I would need a few more years to accept letting go of lust. This attitude left me feeling lonely, useless and afraid.

In 2014 I was asked to write my story for the ESSAY Magazine. Looking back, I can see how self-centered and problem-directed that attempt was. I was in denial and preparing for a relapse, which started in December 2013 and culminated in April 2014. I was depressed and suicidal. I couldn't live with or without lust anymore. The game was over, yet I had no idea how to crawl back to recovery.

A friend suggested I see a therapist and ask for an antidepressant, which I did. Coming to rest mentally, I happened to read again the beginning of Chapter 5 in the AA Big Book. This time the word "honesty" hit me with the force of a lightning bolt. That was exactly what I was lacking! Never in my life had I been rigorously honest. I had been lying to my family, friends and colleagues, but also to my sponsor, my fellows, myself, and God. Until then, lying was more natural to me than breathing. Now I chose to become honest and the results were

immediate; serenity, emotional stability and connection with my SA fellows.

In sobriety, I decided to take a new look at the sobriety definition. It provides me with a safe haven, in which I can be myself as I am and not as the outside world seems to identify me. Accepting it and living according to it, has turned my life completely upside down in the following ways:

1. Looking at it from the outside, the most spectacular change is obviously what I like to call my "coming in." At the end of my adolescence, I "came out" and embraced the gay

"Freedom from sex of any kind" was a challenging idea, because the pursuit of compulsive sex had always given me the illusion of freedom.

lifestyle. I went for it all the way, but it never seemed to match with who I really am. I was often disgusted by my sexual activities, but lust kept me going back anyway. The moment I withdrew entirely from the gay world, another door opened as if unlocked. I became available for women, and on a pilgrimage of my faith tradition I met the one who would become my wife. Through her, I am now a grandfather for three wonderful little girls. I am still triggered by men, but now I understand this same-sex attraction as a manifestation of my sexaholic disease.

2. For me personally, the most breathtaking change is my spiritual growth. I had always been an agnostic.

I accepted the idea that some intelligent design created the universe, but it didn't have any other interest in its creation. Today, I believe in a loving God who cares for me and grants me the grace of recovery one day at the time. I have come back to the religion of my childhood, which happens to have the same opinion on sexuality as our sobriety definition.

3. I used to blame my parents for everything that went wrong in my life. My father was an absent alcoholic and my mother suffered from rage, depression and a nervous condition. Looking honestly at my own part and making amends to them, I cleared the way to mutual forgiveness. When I resumed contact, their financial situation had collapsed, and I was able to help them get through this difficult time.

4. I have always been rather rigid, physically and socially. Nowadays I'm able to enjoy life and have fun with things like hiking, biking, camping or dancing.

5. For over 40 years I have been suffering from a sour stomach and a chaotic bowel movement, which led to an undereating disorder. In SA, I found the force to face the way I was self-medicating. With the help of a dietitian, I put on 15 kg (33 lbs) of weight and changed my eating habits.

6. Doing service proved to be a perfect antidote for my self-centeredness and codependency, and helped me grow socially and spiritually.

These would have been impossible without the clarity and simplicity of our sobriety definition. As long as I

The sobriety definition provides me with a safe haven, in which I can be myself as I am and not as the outside world seems to identify me.

abstain from lust and remain faithful to my wedding vows, I don't have to go back to the shame and suffering from the past, one day at the time. I'm free from the labels the society I live in would like me to conform to. I'm definitely different from the person I used to be, and what an incredible gift that is.

JEAN V., *Belgium*



DISCUSSION TOPIC

What have been the miracles of SA sobriety for you so far?

Are you experiencing freedom from the slavery of "having to have sex"? Have you found progressive victory over lust and an ongoing spiritual recovery? Have you become rigorously honest?

Have you learned to look for the similarities instead of the differences? Or do you still suffer from "terminal uniqueness"? Have you fired your own "best thinking" as your higher power, and invited God to take His rightful place? Have

you been seeking "Thy Way of Life" (AA 63), thereby giving up your own way of life entirely?

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



Attracted By That Impossible, Crazy Sobriety Definition

When I was still in the addiction and looking for a way to stop, I came across SA. I had approached SA before, a year earlier, but had done so only half-willingly, and at that time I never made it to a meeting. Needless to say, things got worse. But the second time I contacted SA, I paid attention to the information on the SA UK website, and one thing that really attracted me was that impossible, crazy sobriety definition.

That was because by then, I had come to see that whenever I let myself masturbate, I didn't know how or when things would end. It could be hours, a day, a week, months—and I had no idea what I would end up doing, what new lows I would achieve. At the same time, I knew that stopping masturbation was,

for me, impossible (at that time, I had no idea how my fantasy life was also a problem).

I also liked that it reminded me about the AA definition. I had met an old-timer in that program, and seen and heard how recovery had changed his life and given him serenity. Sobriety had worked for him, and there was a tiny glimmer of understanding (I was not ready to hope yet) that sobriety would work for me, too.

In AA, it's pretty simple. To call myself sober, I need to not drink alcohol. In SA, it's also simple: sobriety is no sex with self or anyone other than my spouse, and progressive victory over lust. That second part is key, because it lets me know that any sex with myself or anyone who is not my spouse is, for me, a lust drink.

I firmly believe, as it says in our White Book, that sobriety

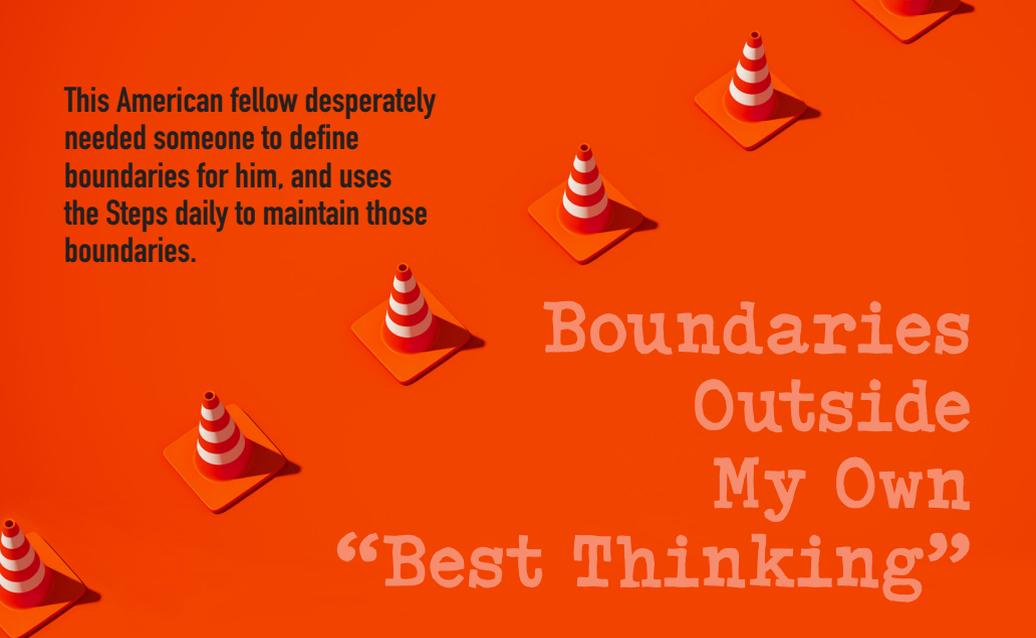
and recovery are not about stopping external behaviors (although that plays a part), but about surrendering that inner desire to lust. Without surrendering lust, any self-imposed restrictions on external sexual behaviors will eventually crumble. And I cannot surrender lust without letting my Higher Power in—that One who is bigger and more powerful than my lust.

In the intervening years, I have become more and more convinced that the SA sobriety definition is the most precious thing we have in the fellowship. For me, without it there is no SA. For a sexaholic like me, without it there is no sobriety or recovery. I am eternally grateful for the SA fellows who have gone before me and upheld the SA sobriety definition, which is the heart of our fellowship.

ANONYMOUS, UK



This American fellow desperately needed someone to define boundaries for him, and uses the Steps daily to maintain those boundaries.



Boundaries Outside My Own “Best Thinking”

Four years before I came to SA, I sought help with a professional therapist. I was out of control and knew it, acting out in ways that put me in immediate danger of death. There was a titillating news story of a man who accidentally hung himself in a sexual escapade. That could have been me. The therapist calmed me down, gave me some behavioral control methods, and then helped me to explore my obsession with submissive sexual games. He gave me what was the best wisdom in his toolset: that the world of psychology had little success in changing sexual orientation. Therefore, I should work on becoming comfortable with my desires and “use them appropriately.” He had given me license to spend the next four years continuing to put my life at risk.

I thank God for SA, because I desperately needed someone to define boundaries for me. I could keep no

boundaries at all. No matter what promises I made to myself, I always rationalized them away when it came to the crunch. I didn’t consciously choose SA over any other 12-Step program; it just happened to be the one available to me when I hit bottom. Today, I consider that to be God’s hand in my life. Our sobriety definition gave me the boundaries I had always needed, a definition outside my own “best thinking” that was clear enough and rigid enough to stand.

And yet my rationalizations were still ingenious. What did I mean by “sex with self,” anyway? In that world of dominance and submission, much of my acting out wasn’t sexual at all—at least, by most people’s standards. Whipping and bondage are inserted into movies as comedy, they certainly aren’t “sex.” Are they?

The answer for me was clearly “yes.” Regardless of how others saw them, I sought those behaviors because my mind translated them into sex. I had to admit that, for me, many activities—even more normal ones like drinking

from a glass—could actually be sexual. I could transgress “sex with self” just by handling ordinary objects, if my mind was in the wrong place.

I spent quite some time in early

Our sobriety definition gave me the boundaries I had always needed, a definition outside myself that was clear enough and rigid enough to stand.

sobriety pondering the phrase “sex with self” and coming to terms with what it meant for me. I had known for years that, in Freud’s psychology, everything humans do has a sexual component. That was certainly true for me. I solved the conundrum by making a list. (I’m a great list-maker but terrible at following them.) I itemized the activities that I would consider “sex with self” for me, things I had done and treated sexually. That worked for a while, and it helped me stay sober through the initial Step work.

Later, though, I had to get deeper. As I got longer sobriety, and then “accidentally” dabbled in wrong thinking, I realized that I could actually feel lust when it happened. Temptations put themselves into my awareness, but they had no power over me until I took them in. When I focus on a temptation and start enjoying it—someone jogging, an advertising image, a euphoric memory—I feel a physical

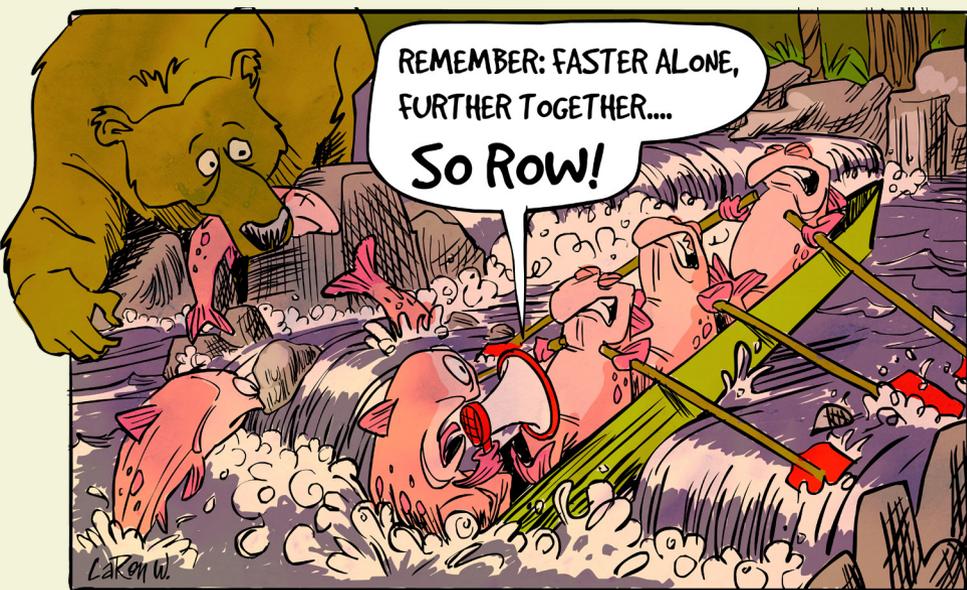
rush of internal drugs in my body. My heart speeds up, my breathing becomes fast and shallow, a flush rises from my chest into my neck and face, my eyes dilate. Whoa! I learned that THAT was lust: my body’s reaction to my wayward thinking. I also learned it was important for me never to let that happen. After all, I am powerless over lust. When I trigger that whole-body reaction, I have no idea how far I will go. For me, that’s the same as an alcoholic downing that first drink.

I have come to separate the temptation, which is “out there,” from my lust reaction, which is “inside me.” Temptations happen all the time, but I don’t have to take them in. So my definition of sobriety now exactly matches the SA definition. I don’t practice “sex with self” (anything on my list), and I seek progressive victory over that lust reaction. I use the Steps daily in order to maintain my boundaries. I listen to my sponsor, and I stay in fellowship with all of you and with God.

ERIC H., *Florida, USA*



Rowing towards Her Authentic Self



By hanging together with her friends in fellowship, she knows she won't drown when she loses her emotional balance.

At first I thought that the term, “sobriety,” didn't fit with what

I thought a sexaholic was because I had no experience with alcoholism. But when I came into these rooms eight years ago I learned that sobriety was difficult to obtain because it was about my state of mind and what I might do with it if I didn't get spiritually fit.

“You have to get your relationship right with God.” That's

what my determined sponsor always says. I don't want to hear that everyday, but the tide is pulling me in that direction. I'm making it to shore. Even when I capsize, I know I'm not going to drown. I'm not panicking when I lose my emotional sobriety because I have God and I get back on the wagon pretty quickly.

My first sponsor explained that—like the alcoholics—I needed to give up my stash in order to become sober. This included not acting out with sexual partners as well as avoiding trig-

gers such as watching pornography, lingerie models, and sex scenes. So I hung a towel over my TV in 2015 when I moved to the country and started working the program. But I still wasn't sober emotionally because I was living a lie. My acting out was the fantasy world I created inside my head that kept me safe and sick at the same time. My insides never matched my outsides. Now, I want reality at any cost—boring, depressing or dangerous, which is a first miracle. I had to leave my head.

My sobriety journey began when I started platonic friendships with my brothers in the SA program, but I was still frightened as I learned to trust others. SA worked for me when I found the acceptance and kindness

My acting out was the fantasy world I created inside my head that kept me safe and sick at the same time.

I needed but never had in my family. In fellowship, I was forgiven and understood after making a mistake.

Over the years I have developed honest and deep connections with my sisters and brothers, which is a second miracle. They stop me from slipping into disassociation by providing strong support and guidance. SA members get me out of denial at meetings and during outreach calls as they share their struggles.

Doing service gets

me into the solution which is reality. Honest feedback helps me to know the truth about myself and reprogram my dysfunctional mind.

Gratitude is a wonderful tool I have used with my sponsors both past and present which helps release me from my toxic environment. Both my sponsors sponsored me from the Big Book.

I didn't know then that this was the beginning of recovery until I saw the boundaries in action. I thought, "Wow, my sponsor is really tough. I'm never going to be able to do that!" She'd recovered alright and, for the first time in my adult life, there was someone who trusted me. Inside my mind, a fragile bridge was connecting my severed emotions which would allow me to cross over into healing.

I didn't have to be that salmon on the chopping board, flapping about trying to reconnect its entrails. I could get back in the water and swim to shore. That's how it's been ever since. I'm making the journey to me. I'm becoming my authentic Self.

I love talking to my sponsor now because I don't have to lie. I am not willfully engaging in lustful behavior and no longer have secrets. I experience more free-

dom and I can see that with persistent effort I'm making it. No, I haven't taken that master class yet where I have become "happy, joyous and free." My friends in fellowship refer to that slogan as we work together on our addiction because it's tough and we don't always like ourselves much, but we hang together anyways. We are like the salmon who swim upstream, fighting with the current. But when they stop to spawn, a new life is born, and a new reality is possible.

Honest feedback helps me to know the truth about myself and reprogram my dysfunctional mind.

Today I'm moral, more disciplined, and focused. Most of all, I have gratitude for all those program people who have shared their stories with me and who have heard mine and stuck around anyway.

PETRICE, *Australia*



What Made the SA Program Credible for Me

My story begins when I was first dabbling in accountability and monitoring from others—but not yet in SA. My main goal was to stop masturbating, but I wasn't yet ready to give up sex outside of marriage and certainly didn't have a desire to stop lusting.

I was first just meeting up with another person whom I had met at church once a week over breakfast to discuss our faith, talk, and hold each other accountable. I was half-heartedly wanting sobriety, even from masturbation at that point. There were even times where I'd say that I had a "good reason," because I "felt sick." We were both young and single, and a few times spoke of ambitious plans, such as breaking the generational curse, which would include restoring relationships with my family. I didn't think it would ever be possible, and that my only hope of breaking the generational curse would be to avoid my family as much as I could.

Soon after I moved away—thinking moving would solve my problems. An accountability group at a local church helped, though someone said that lusting over your wife "wouldn't be lust." This didn't make sense to me, as I had previously been in a relationship where I was lusting and acting out with and thinking about a girlfriend like crazy, and simply knew what I had done was, for me, not sober.

I proceeded to go back out there, and not only did I not stop masturbating, but I began regularly crossing the gender line during my sexual fantasies. Knowing I would cross more lines to risk my health and further degrade my dignity, I still thought I could manage the problem by finding a woman to act out with. Whenever that happened, I found them to be the most frightening and sleepless experiences of my life—not knowing if the woman I didn't know and sleeping right next to me would rob or hurt me

in my sleep, not to mention the risk to my health.

At a certain moment, after a woman I had tried to track down, connect with, and "date" didn't work out, I knew I needed recovery, because I wasn't able to get the same-sex lust out of my system by acting on it. Acting on it only seemed to make it worse. The desire to act out with a woman outside of marriage, for me, was clearly setting up my sexaholic addict mind to act out in ways I had never wanted.

When I first joined SA, the sobriety definition's addressing of lust over a spouse, as well as the phrase "between a man and a woman" added a lot of credibility to the SA program and literature for me. My sponsor has kept me focused on true SA sobriety, and I cannot imagine I would be sober without a firm and clear bottom line. My emotional sobriety hasn't been perfect, and I have had lingering issues with fear. However, it's been the best, most fulfilling period of my life since beginning this addiction. I have experienced living by God's power, and my relationships with others have improved dramatically due to a sexually sober, changed attitude on a daily basis. As a Ninth-Step amends, by miracle I delivered a face-to-face apology to my brother, and even family-of-origin relationships have seen what I had thought impossible.

The sobriety definition makes me feel safe in meetings sharing about my shameful past. It's what makes SA unique and intimate, even when compared with other recovery fellowships I've been in. The genuine SA message as carried by a fellowship is more valuable to me than the finest gold—it's worth any amount of service, leg work, hardship, and getting out of God's way to experience.

MIKE C., *New Hampshire, USA*





HEALING IN THE FAMILY—AN UNEXPECTED MIRACLE

When I arrived in SA in June 2017, I could not recognize a greater miracle than being able to stop acting out. As had happened to Bill W., something happened in my spirit that allowed me to see the world completely differently when I awoke the next day.

After enjoying a pink cloud for two months, there was a dramatic landing on the ground of reality. From my disclosure, my wife knew that I had been unfaithful through pornography and compulsive masturbation. It was a hard blow, which affected the values of our marriage and the trust that she had innocently placed in me for years. However, she accepted my surrender and my desire to get rid of that obsession which was a boost to my recovery.

On our wedding anniversary, we took a trip to another city where we met a fellow and his wife, who coincidentally had also revealed his sexual addiction and was going through tough times.

When we returned home, my wife angrily sat me down on the couch and asked: “How many women have you slept

with?” I hesitantly said that there had been no women at all.

The days went by, and by my unexpected calls, weekly meetings, and literature about addictions on shelves, she kept suspecting that the husband who slept next to her had led a double life. Anguish and mistrust began to undermine her physical and emotional health.

Despite my efforts on working the Steps, my relationships at home and with local fellows were stagnating. We attended a healing retreat for married couples, without any hope, feeling that our marriage had been destroyed. Yet the light of God’s mercy arose, and, in that retreat, we recognized that we both have a mission to help each other in our sanctification.

In a subsequent healing retreat, I dared to write her a letter of repentance in which I admitted that I had acted out with other people—and that those people had been men. The shock of this new revelation was too deep to heal. My wife went into an acute depression. Only the mercy and charity of a loving God could bring our two exploded person-

alities back together.

Since then, five years and eight months have passed in sobriety. Our marriage continues. We pray together daily and attend Mass in our parish. We volunteer and help people. I first served as a volunteer psychologist at the Red Cross, serving addicts. Now I volunteer to care for HIV patients and homeless people in a religious center. We participate in couple retreats, welcoming new couples. Our marital bond is more alive than ever, and despite the slight intimacy that we maintain, we progress in our new, mutual knowledge.

I have discovered that the “God” who judged and criticized my behavior was the fruit of my deceit and of humanizing Him against His Divinity. Now I know that God is Love. Only Forgiveness, Mercy, and Affection come from Him. If I am His creature, I have His same traits imprinted on my spirit. Therefore, it is possible to get rid of my negative tendencies, to get rid of the defects that are useless to loving and being loved.

JUAN CARLOS, *Madrid, Spain*



the miracle of changing into a



On March 21, 2011, just 48 hours before I came into this fellowship, I was sober two weeks. On that particular day I was feeling supremely confident that I would never give in to my addiction again. Only problem was, I had had that supreme confidence a thousand times before over almost half a century.

Something then happened that I will never forget. I heard a voice, as clear as day, say to me: “You know you will fail again.” Doubtless that message had been sent to me countless times but I had been too stupid or too arrogant to listen. This time, I got on the net, found SA, went to a meeting the following night and I have remained in recovery ever since.

I want to share the head-start I had before I attended that first meeting. For most of my life I was resentful, envious, judgmental, arrogant, needy, anxious, afraid, dissatisfied. I was an unhappy child, teenager, young man, middle-aged man and—well, that’ll do. I disliked myself and I longed to change. I knew I was very flawed but in spite of counselors and psychologists and various courses, both spiritual and secular, and countless

books, I only ever made temporary improvements.

So, how did I cope? It was simple. I either resorted to my addiction (which had begun before I was 10 years old) or I blamed others—most especially and most sadly, my wife. In truth I resorted to both.

OK, fast-forward to 2008. My wife had had enough and, for the third time, she left me. This time, she said, there would be no coming back. We are not divorced, and I continue to pray that we will be reconciled.

My wife’s courage in telling me to go became an extraordinary motivator. I became totally committed to changing the way I thought and the way I behaved. I wrote down each of my character defects and I resolved to change the way I thought and the way I responded to my emotions.

I was lucky because I truly wanted to change, and I would say to any addict that that is the key. I needed to WANT to change my behavior and my thinking just as much as I wanted to stop acting out.

It is my experience that I won’t stay sober unless I rid myself, as far as humanly possible, of my ego—very, very important to let go of my ego—and of the defects I have been forever running from.

I began by having a conversation with some of my emotions. Sounds crazy, I know, because I was in effect, talking to myself but it was surprising how quickly the second voice took on a life of its own (the inner Bill? the wake-up-to-yourself Bill?).

I was trying to understand, was there anything positive to each of my character defects, if not, why did they plague me, making my life—but especially my wife’s life—such a misery?

Here are a few examples of the responses I received:

- **ENVY:** Rather than allow it to poison me, allow it to motivate me. So, if I envy another person who is more educated than I am, put my head down, study and improve myself. If I envy them because they have a better house/car/whatever, work harder, don’t spend foolishly, practice patience. Above all, focus on what I can do to improve MYSELF, not someone else.

- **RESENTMENT:** What possible good can resentment be in my life, I asked. The response astounded me. Suppose I was walking along the street and on the other side I saw someone being bullied. I can ignore it (and be disgusted with myself); I can be disgusted with the bully, and hope that someone else will intervene. Or, please God, I can allow the resentment that I feel towards the bully to motivate me towards courage and intervention myself. What is critical if I feel resentment is how I respond.

- **ROMANCE:** Most of my life I have been addicted to romance. What is the good of you, I asked Romance. Why have you addled my brain? But Romance had an answer. “You have wrung the life out of me, Bill. I am necessary to light the fire, and bring two people together, and help each to woo the other, and nourish the early

period of a marriage. But a mature adult understands that a relationship changes from pure Romance to Companionate Love. You never understood or tried to understand that this transition is essential to a happy and healthy marriage; an understanding that would help you withstand the inevitable challenges of any marriage, like the reality of two individuals with different dreams, different opinions

For the first time in my life, I truly like who I am. I do not, as I did for most of my life, want to be someone else.

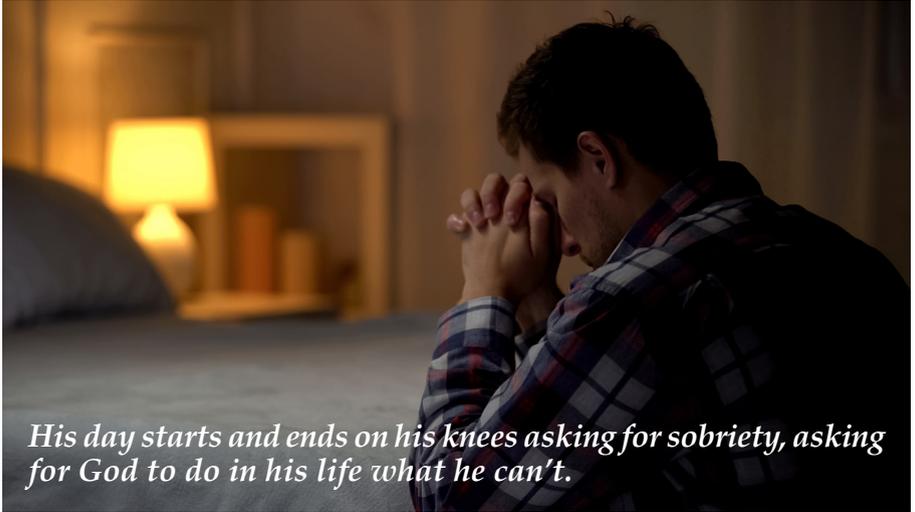
and different outlooks. BUT—and this is something you could or would not understand—a companionate relationship does not mean the END of romance. Romance should be a part-of, not the be-all and the end-all.”

The exercise was like a veil being lifted. I did not change overnight, but change began and the more I changed the less I felt drawn to my old escapes. For the first time in my life, I truly like who I am. I do not, as I did for most of my life, want to be someone else. It seems to me that emotional sobriety equals serenity and—the absence of my wife aside—my life today is mostly serene. I came into the program having embarked three years earlier on a serious journey of healing, but that recovery would never have continued had I not come into SA and passionately embraced the Twelve Steps.

BILL F., *Sydney, Australia*



A Reason to Live



His day starts and ends on his knees asking for sobriety, asking for God to do in his life what he can't.

I am very grateful today for my ongoing recovery from lust. It's been a long haul. I came into the program in a town in the mid-north island of New Zealand in November of 2016 after becoming increasingly aware that I was losing control and lust was taking over my life. During an all-night binge on a Saturday with alcohol fueling my lust, I got online and was chatting to women. I wanted to act out so badly but was so drunk I couldn't figure out how to get to meet someone. A blessing in disguise.

I got scammed of several hundred dollars that night from signing up to a bunch of sleazy porn and dating sites. At about 5.30 a.m. I finally was spent and tried to sleep. But I felt terrible and only dozed off. Being a person of faith, I got up still hungover and went to church later that morning. I was so hung over and nearly threw up in the bathroom at church. I ended up leaving and going home to bed feeling

such shame and dejection I wanted to end it all. I knew I needed help and thankfully found a local SA website and started attending SA meetings.

In my first year in SA I got a sponsor and worked the Steps, but I wasn't completely surrendered. I hated telling everyone I was a sexaholic and wanted to leave, thinking I could beat this on my own. By the end of 2017 I went back out there. I went on an online dating site and met a woman. Our exchanges quickly became sexualized. First talking, then pictures, then videos—more and more lines were crossed. She kept asking me if I loved her and I kept trying to convince myself I did. The truth was I was just lusting after her. The shame and guilt I felt about this was devastating. I eventually broke it off when I felt like I had to make a choice between her and God.

Everything got exposed in May of 2018. The poor woman was so distressed she admitted herself into a

mental health unit but also contacted my wife, a work colleague, and my daughter. Within two weeks of that event my wife divorced me. I was devastated. My plan was to take my life but before I did I had to ring my daughter and apologize. The response from her totally undid me. She said, "Dad, I love you, how can I help you?" I knew at that moment I couldn't take my life, I had to get back to SA. This time I came back ready to acknowledge I was completely powerless over lust.

I wish I could say I was sober from that day, but that wasn't the case. There were still many layers of my will that still wanted to control and enjoy things. I kept resetting my sobriety date. "Half measures availed us nothing" (AA59). I was resentful to God and others in the group who were getting sobriety. Some had no faith in God and found a way to stay sober! That just wasn't fair. I couldn't see that my relationship with God was faulty. There were so many things I had to learn but surrender, honesty and willingness to change were the main ones.

But I kept coming back. I was not going out there again. I knew the answer was in the program, I just had to keep going. I had a couple more sponsors over this time, they all gave me something different and very precious—love and acceptance.

Then something changed. It's hard to pinpoint exactly what changed, but the miracle happened; the obsession was gone. I had a spiritual awakening of the "educational variety" from working the Steps with a sponsor. Today, my day starts on my knees asking for another day's sobriety, asking for God to do in my life what I can't. My day ends on my knees too—with an imperfect reflection on

what the Twelve and Twelve identifies as "both sides of the ledger"—Step 10. I am learning to live in Steps 10, 11 and 12. I get to carry the message and now sponsor others. The promises are being fulfilled in my life; the greatest is the connection with God and family.

I am incredibly grateful for my family, for a new vision of the God of my

The obsession was gone. I had a spiritual awakening of the "educational variety" from working the Steps with a sponsor.

understanding, my sponsors—present and past, my SA family, the Steps and so much more.

PAT W., *New Zealand*



in the beginner's class



This old-timer testifies he cannot rest on his laurels. Although he has over 38 years of sobriety, his adventure in the Eleventh Step gets deeper and deeper.

I was sitting in the sun, trying to recuperate from an upper respiratory infection. The sun was shining so brightly as I was comfortably sitting in a lounge chair by the pool at the retirement center where we live. All of a sudden it turned dark. I looked up at the sky. It was but a small cloud that had floated by to a place between my view and the sun. That small cloud made the whole area dark. Where did the sun go? It was still there, but hidden by the cloud. Then the realization came that this is how my ego works.

The cloud is my ego. Everything could be bright and wonderful with the sunlight of the Spirit shining brightly. Then my voice in my head begins. What is that voice? We call it a thought. My sponsor would always warn me about thinking. No matter what I said when complaining to him, he would have the same response. He would say, "Harvey, you are thinking again." He would go on to say that no matter how good the thought begins, it will always end in a negative.

Over the past 39 years in recovery, I have

seen that he was entirely right. I have seen how my thinking will distort the most beautiful day into something dark and cloudy. My thoughts have another name—my ego. It uses many tricks. One of the tricks is the

I need to rely on my intuitive self rather than on my thinking, which is coming from the same brain that caused the problem in the first place.

word "shame." When this ego trick puts me in shame, it's actually telling me not to believe the First Step. It's telling me that I don't have an illness. That if only I had worked harder at it, I could have stopped my behavior. What I

have learned over the years is that our Steps are there to help us deflate this ego.

The ego is merely my thinking. I have had to learn to rely on my intuitive self rather than on my thinking. My thinking is coming from the same brain that caused the problem in the first place.

Through my Eleventh Step, I can also use meditation to become mindful of my thoughts. I am now able to say, "wow, there is that thought again" and let it just flow by. Just like the clouds with the sun shining brightly.

What a relief to have finally discovered, after many years in recovery, the second aspect of the Eleventh Step. It says, "Sought through prayer and meditation." My mind blocked the word "meditation." Now, through years of being willing to take time out most days to actually sit quietly with a guided meditation, I can choose to observe my thoughts rather than participate in them. The miracle of SA sobriety is that it never stops.

It is a wonderful freedom not to be directed by my ego. Today, I can be directed by my intuitive thoughts. The power comes when I do not listen to my ego. How true that statement is—EGO, "Easing God Out." When I am into my selfish, self-centered, self-seeking thoughts, I am easing out my spiritual connection.

Today, I cannot rest on my laurels. Although I have over 39 years of sobriety in SA, my adventure into the Eleventh Step gets deeper and deeper. With 23 years of sobriety, Bill W. wrote concerning his involvement with the Eleventh Step: "I'm sure I am still very much in the beginner's class; I'm almost a case of arrested development" (Language of the Heart 239). I certainly can identify with Bill W.'s statement.

HARVEY A., Florida, USA



He celebrates 39 years sober and I only have one week!



Practicing These Principles in All Our Affairs

A man comes home from an SA meeting. He is happy and his face is glowing. His wife notes his changed outgoing attitude and asks what is happening. The man says that he had a wondrous spiritual awakening at the meeting. A speaker shared his story and he suddenly understood for the first time the meaning of the phrase, "We have to embrace our mistakes."

His wife walks over to him and gives him a big hug!



The Way to the Fourth Dimension

By continuing to practice
The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions
he enjoys an ongoing spiritual flight.

I am eternally grateful for this program of recovery. It has become one of the most profound changes in my life as it literally has saved my life (and it continues to save it one day at a time) from being sucked into a black hole with no hope of escape!

The black hole, sexaholism, is nothing but an endless maze full of sorrow and confusion. Actually, my life in this addiction was not a joyful ride at all. One of the most important things that has opened up to me lately is my reflections on the word "addiction." I now find that it has become a word that does not describe the reality of the dimensions of my spiritual illness. Rather, it puts it in a very narrow corner that cannot describe the depth of the problem I was in. And when I contemplated the White Book, I found descriptions that put me right on the same page with the drunk person. The search extended further to the meanings of the word "alcoholic," to find it describing a complete loss of control

towards drinking. Compulsive sex was nothing but a reflection of the continuous state of craving that deserves to be described as addiction. Addiction, for me, does not have one face only. Actually, I believe that addiction is like a cube (so to speak) in its many faces.

Today, I find that I am a sex drunk. Random sex, driven by lust, turned into a pattern that kills the soul, it

**I am but a little
bird flying in the
Lord's paradise
enjoying the light
of the sun of the
soul, drinking from
the water of life.**

became a whole life. There was no longer any ability to distinguish between right and wrong and this made me objectify people and it ruined my ability to accept love

without sex! Another example, I found myself discussing with my wife that it is OK for us to try other partners, if we wish to! I totally overlooked the fact that I am a father, and how this will destroy my family! Even more, I remember that for me it was OK to seduce friends for sex! It was OK to snoop around, it was OK to cross any line under the name of love! It was OK to spend hours watching porn, because I was bored.

It was not just a behavior. It was a multi-dimensional spiritual experience. It was silencing many voices within me and creating fake communication in a failed attempt that lasted for years to fill the lonely void in my soul. I created my addiction by overdosing. Deliberately, I chose sex and I did not know why, but back then it was the most thrilling thing for me. The experience was like that of an alcoholic who seeks ecstasy in glass after glass and the world is lost in the liquid in the bottle. The glass of

sex, usually mixed with fantasizing masturbation, was one of the strongest drugs I've been drinking. On a daily basis, I got drunk, and as soon as the drug did its work, I lost my mind and broke one limit after another. The compulsive impulse was replacing the mind, pushing my choices towards "the more and better and wilder" (in the eye of my lust).

Today I am sober and alert. My body has no traces of drunkenness, but my mind still thinks that intoxication is the way to the fourth dimension. I know better, as this is a false fourth dimension! The true fourth dimension, which guarantees spiritual flight, comes by practicing the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions. I am but a little bird flying in the Lord's paradise enjoying the light of the sun of the soul, drinking from the water of life. I am truly alive.

AMEER M., Iraq



SA & S-Anon International Jerusalem, Israel Winter Convention

JANUARY
22-24

Go to <https://steppingintothelight.org> for more information about the convention and to register for the convention, meals and sleeping arrangements!

For any questions, please email:
registration@steppingintothelight.org

Please also email if you are interested in being a local representative for your Intergroup to spread the message of the convention.

Discounted price still available until April 30th!

Our global recovery village of connection and recovery will bring the world of SA and S-Anon together for 3 days of fellowship, fun and shared experience.



We can't wait to see you in Jerusalem! Go to: <https://steppingintothelight.org>

TRUE JOY IS IN SHARING WITH OTHERS

Lust brought this member into prison, for which—in his better moments—he is grateful as it helps him stay aware of the seriousness of his disease.

What was I like before I came into SA? For most of my life, I was two completely different people, separated by a thin veil. To the outside world, I was kind, outgoing, generous, funny, and always ready to help. In short, I made every attempt to appear as close to the person I thought you wanted me to be. But, if I was by myself, or, more importantly, if I thought I was unseen, I was greedy, selfish, insecure, and without any sense of personal boundaries.

Privacy was irrelevant. I lacked any shred of integrity. I stole, snooped, peeped, coveted, invaded, and violated. If I suspected there was something hidden that I wanted, I would go to any lengths, legal or otherwise, to get it. I was utterly consumed by lust. And that lust knew no bounds. I read diaries. Unlocked doors. Rifled through underwear drawers. Stole intimate photos. Looked through keyholes and cracks in walls. "The only way to be free of it was to do it" (SA 203). I had become utterly convinced that I didn't matter, and by extension, my choices didn't matter either.

At a few different junctures, I was

caught by innocent and unsuspecting people. Their hurt, shock, and disappointment had an effect on me, but it never lasted long. I always managed to convince myself that my biggest problem wasn't the behaviors, or the unaddressed feelings and diseased attitudes that drove those behaviors. It was that I got caught, and next time I wouldn't get caught.

Well, as one might imagine with that attitude, I got caught again. This time by someone who went

I realized somehow, in that moment, that I had to stop at any cost. I don't mean to stop the behaviors. But to stop the entire direction of my life.

to the police. And what happened next changed everything. I realized somehow, in that moment, that I had to stop at any cost. I don't mean just to stop the behaviors. But to stop the entire direction of my life. In essence,

without knowing about the Steps, I admitted I was powerless and my life had become unmanageable. I know now that God had opened my eyes in such a way that I could no longer deny, evade, escape, or otherwise wiggle off the hook of my own actions. It was “admit that I had a problem or die.” And in that moment of awakening, I didn’t want to die.

At the earliest opportunity, I sought help. I went to a therapist who by the grace of God referred me to SA. She told me I had to go to a meeting a day for the foreseeable future. And instead of recoiling at the prospect of attending a meeting for people addicted to sex, I felt relief and curiosity. I attended my first meeting of SA on April 16th, 2019.

I didn’t get a sponsor right away. I was too afraid. I worried that things I might divulge would get me in more trouble. I now realize that my fears were misplaced. I was still trying to hold on to some of my old ideas. I wouldn’t say the “results were nil,” but I didn’t get to experience the full benefits of this program “until I let go absolutely” (AA 58).

And that’s closer to what I’m like now. After getting a sponsor and working the Steps, I started raising my hand at meetings and volunteering to sponsor others and work them through the Steps. It hasn’t always kept my sponsees sober, but it’s certainly kept me sober. And if I’m not sober, I’m no good to the sexaholics who still suffer.

I have a completely changed outlook on life. I have discovered that true vulnerability and intimacy are where true joy and connection reside. I had been pretending, play-acting, at those things for my entire life. But there’s no substitute for the real connection. And once I actually experienced it, I knew

I had to do whatever it took to keep it in my life.

I am still very much a sexaholic. I am utterly powerless over lust, and without God’s help, my life is just as unmanageable as it ever was. But the difference is that I know that now and I know there’s a solution. I don’t have to suffer. What used to appear to me

I have a completely changed outlook on life. I have discovered true vulnerability and intimacy are where true joy and connection reside.

as an all-consuming obsession is now just another choice I have. But there are so many other choices today, and all of them are better.

Today, I am incarcerated. I am a convicted felon and registered sex offender. Upon my release in January of 2025 I will have to live under very strict guidelines or face the rest of my life in prison. And I accept all of that. And in my better moments, I am grateful for those guardrails. They stand to help me stay aware of how serious my disease is if left under my own power and control.

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. Today, I know that true joy is in sharing with others. Sharing with you. Thank you for letting me share.

RAPHAEL, *Virginia, USA*



The Miracle Of Becoming An SA Region



Aussies and Kiwis are very committed to recovery. Over a decade ago, in a place called Mount Tambourine in Queensland, an English fellow ran a 12-Step workshop where a dream was born. The English man, an Irish man, and a bunch of Aussies and Kiwis got together with the vision of forming a region.

The greatest show on earth is what happens when a bunch of sexaholics get together. It began with a sponsor's suggestion to his sponsee to help start a new region. Eventually the English man left for England as the Irish fellow continued to help the vision of the region come to life.

There were a lot of business meetings. I was encouraged by an old-timer from the US who came over to do workshops to apply to become a Trustee, so I did. I was nominated by the Nominations Committee and got approved by the GDA to become the first Aussie SA Trustee ever.

I brought the regional idea up at the Trustee meeting. There were a lot of correct procedures to follow. We tried for years to create the Asia Pacific Region, but the membership in the area was so small that the idea didn't float. Lots of Aussies helped along the way, not to mention the help from members in New Zealand. It was a long process, but Aussies and Kiwis don't give up easy. We also had a lot of assistance from different members in the US and Europe.

God had a plan and we all waited for Him to do his wonderful work. We finally formed a new SA region. It's been an amazing experience for all involved. The importance of a region in our area cannot be understated. The life blood of the fellowship circulates through its service structure and we've wanted to be part of our beloved SA for a long time. We could not give up on the dream of the region. It's a very exciting time for us. We now qualify for a General Assembly Delegate and an Alternate Delegate, which is a privilege. We have been supported by many SA members and are truly thankful for their help.

JASON C., *Newcastle, Australia*



Some Facts & Numbers About the Brand-New ANZ Region

- ✧ The region counts approximately 120 members.
- ✧ SA Australia is just over 30 years old. The main meetings are found in Newcastle, Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth, and Canberra. There are intergroups in New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, and Western Australia. Australia's website is saoz.net.
- ✧ SA New Zealand has meetings in Wellington, Auckland, Christchurch. New Zealand's website is www.sa-nz.org

SA EVENTS CALENDAR

International Conventions and Events

JULY 14-16 2023	Cracow, Poland <i>In God we Trust</i>	SA & S-Anon International Summer Convention https://sa.org.pl/sa-convention-2023/
JANUARY 22-24 2024	Jerusalem, Israel <i>Stepping Into the Light</i>	SA & S-Anon International Winter Convention https://steppingintothelight.org
JULY 12-14 2024	Los Angeles, CA, USA	SA & S-Anon International Summer Convention
JULY 11-13 2025	Dallas, TX, USA	SA & S-Anon International Summer Convention

Regional and Local Events

APRIL 22 2023	Grove City, PA, USA <i>Fearless Moral Inventory</i>	SA & S-Anon Northwest PA Intergroup Marathon https://square.link/u/C7w17Gkb
APRIL 29 2023	Glen Ellyn, IL, USA	Chicago SA, S-Anon & S-Ateen Spring Marathon https://chicagosaa.org
MAY 6 2023	Rochester, NY, USA	Rochester SA Marathon oakridge730@gmail.com
MAY 19-21 2023	Big Bear, California, USA <i>We Are No Longer Running the Show</i>	Find God XXIX SA Men's Retreat https://sasocal.org/unity-conference/
AUGUST 4-6 2023	Blairstown, NJ, United States	Third Annual Women's Retreat monseywomensmeeting@gmail.com
AUGUST 25-27 2023	Stirling, Scotland, UK	SA UK Stirling Convention with S-Anon Participation https://www.sascottishconvention.weebly.com/



SA's Legal Committee Gives Legal Advice to the Trustees

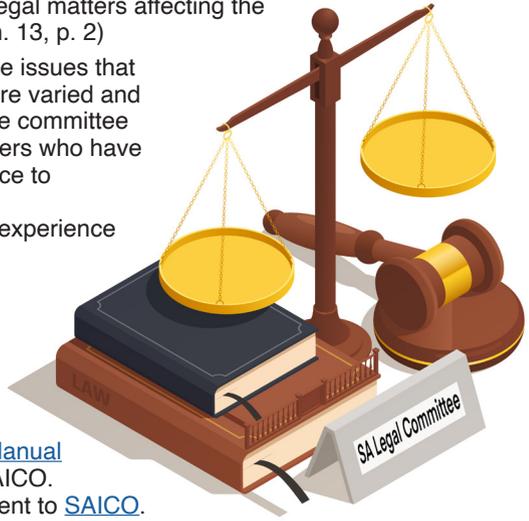
Can you help? SA's Board of Trustees is served by a number of committees who assist it in administering the policies and decisions of the General Delegate Assembly. One of these is the Legal Committee whose mission is "To advise the Trustees on legal matters affecting the Fellowship." (SA Service Manual, ch. 13, p. 2)

SA is a worldwide Fellowship and the issues that come before the Legal Committee are varied and sometimes unique. As the task of the committee is rather specialized, it seeks members who have the necessary training and experience to undertake the work assigned by the Trustees. In addition to relevant life experience related to resolution of legal issues, the requirement for membership is three years of sobriety and adherence to the SA Statement of Principle (see p. 2 of this issue).

The application form for service on Trustee committees is found at chapter 12, p. 6 of the [SA Service Manual](#) or can be obtained by contacting SAICO.

Completed applications should be sent to [SAICO](#). Inquiries may be addressed to Gary L. at gary-iowa@juno.com.

Thank you very much for passing it on to members you know that could match this service description.



Gary L., Iowa, USA



New SA Groups April 2023

North America

- ↪ Moscow, Idaho, USA
- ↪ Sarasota, Florida, USA
- ↪ San Jose, California, USA
- ↪ Mystic, Connecticut, USA
- ↪ Bonita Springs, Florida, USA
- ↪ Idaho Falls, Idaho, USA
- ↪ Vernal, Utah, USA
- ↪ Gainesville, Florida, USA
- ↪ Colton, Florida; USA (Zoom meetings)
- ↪ Fort Myers, Florida, USA (women-only)

Europe, South America, ANZ

- ↪ Cerro, La Habana, Cuba
- ↪ Cambridge, UK
- ↪ Christchurch, New Zealand



COMING IN JUNE

Drive Sober
Arrive Alive

Sober Travel in SA Recovery

NEXT EDITION

In the June issue, read about the tools and tricks fellows from around the world practice while traveling during the holidays.

The Fellowship Is the Substitute

This American old-timer traveled all over the world to carry the message and found out that relying on God and his fellows has never let him down.

Using the Tools Shifted Her Vision

She had to do multiple trips to the doctor to treat a health problem. On the way, she spotted a tiny creature which helped her to shift from living in the problem to living in the solution.

An Untitled Poem

Jim wrote an untitled poem filled with puns while being on the road some time ago.

SUBMIT YOUR STORY

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

August 2023 edition: Newcomers—How to Welcome and Keep Them (Stories due July 1) Share the strategies your home group has to welcome and keep new members.

October 2023 edition: Relapse Prevention (Stories due Sept 1) What can we learn from those having long-term sobriety today in order to safeguard our sobriety?

December 2023 edition: Holistic Recovery—Healing Had to Come About in All Three (Stories due Nov 1) “Sober Is Not Well,” we’ve come to see in recovery. How to develop a recovery for the whole person?

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.

While we provide the full version of each magazine on PDF, as well as six selected articles in 10 different languages on our website at no charge, it is not free to produce. To support the ESSAY magazine in carrying the SA message worldwide, please make a contribution on essay.sa.org.



**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.**