

ESSAY

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SEXAHOLICS ANONYMOUS



AUGUST 2023
SA.ORG

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT
THE ISRAELI FELLOWSHIP INVITES YOU TO THE
JANUARY JERUSALEM INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

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

Editor's Corner

Isn't it ironic: in our disease, we had no choice but to

act out; we simply had to; but in recovery, our hearts change and we have no choice but to reach out—we simply have to. Everyone who gets sober, who begins to experience the fruits of recovery wants, as a natural consequence, to help others get sober, especially newcomers.

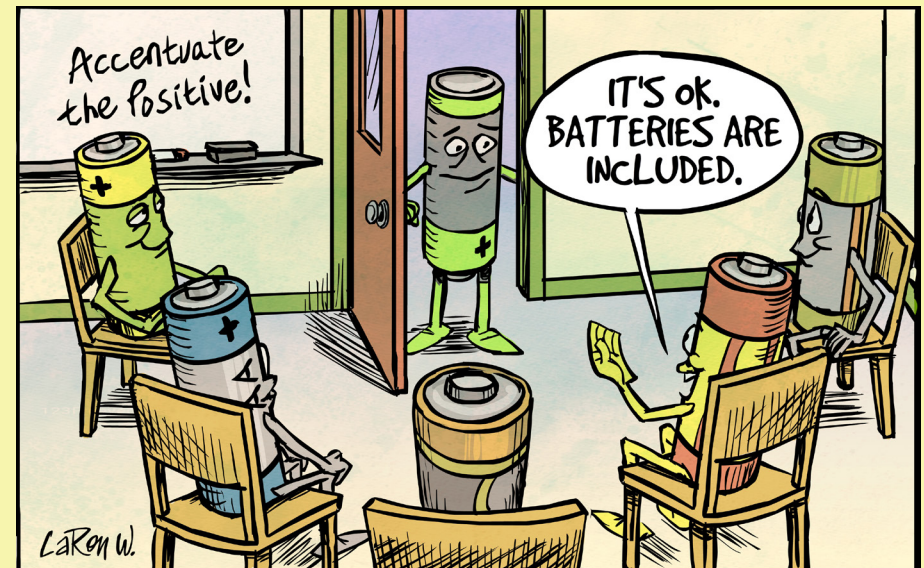
In this month's ESSAY, we focus on how to welcome newcomers, and how to keep them. Different groups around the world have their own way of doing it, but however each group does it, the object is the same—to welcome the new guy or gal, nervous, despairing, just in the door, and pass on the good news: there is a solution; life without lust is possible, and joyful—imagine!

Our program comes with batteries included—all the tools, nuts and bolts necessary for overhaul of the heart are included.

A submission of the Munich group in this issue gives an interesting perspective on how they adapted their old system of welcome to make it a warmer experience. Read also how the Philadelphia group developed their newcomer orientation format. Also covered in this issue is an inspiring story from a member who traveled all the way from San Diego to the International Convention in Cracow. We include the latest news relating to the Jan 2024 International Convention in Jerusalem.

Finally, we hope you enjoy the quotes, related to newcomers and adapted from the AA literature and slogans, at the bottom of each left page.

In fellowship,
THE EDITORIAL TEAM
essay@sa.org



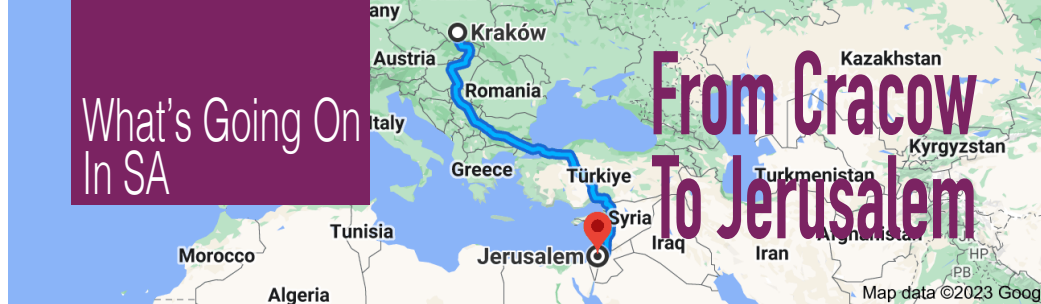
Augustus 2023

The ability of each A.A. to identify himself with and bring recovery to the newcomer is a gift from God... passing on this gift to others is our one aim. Sobriety can't be kept unless it is given away.

AA 150-151



On the cover: Our talented in-house illustrator LaRon depicted well the joyful and personal welcome healthy groups give to their newcomers.



Here are the highlights from the SA Today section of the July 13-14 GDA report: July has been an eventful month for our Trustees and GDA. Three Trustees rotated off the Board after having served the Fellowship for their full four-year terms; one other was not reaffirmed by the GDA. In the meantime, our Nominations Committee has been busy recruiting and interviewing new Trustee candidates. One new Trustee was approved by the GDA at the Polish Convention in July. The GDA thanked Eric H. for his service as Trustee Chair, and Rich P. for his service as GDA Chair. The new GDA Chair is AJ R.; the new Vice Chair Brad S.

International Convention in Poland: Our first post-COVID International Convention was a great success. We were very proud of how SA Poland stepped up to host the July 2023 SA International Convention. There were some bumps working with the ICC, but as always happens HP showed up and showed off.

Next Year in Jerusalem! "Stepping into the Light": Our next IC will be in Jerusalem on January 22-24. The Jerusalem fellowship has been working hard to make this convention a great success. Register now at sa.org or steppingintothelight.org.

Other Upcoming International Conventions: July 2024 in Los Angeles, California, USA. July 2025 in Dallas, Texas, USA.

New Pamphlet: The GDA approved and updated the "The SA Home Group" pamphlet, which includes a new section entitled "How to Manage Group Finances."

Coming Soon: The Public Information Committee has produced a great new set of videos to help the newcomer entitled the "Newcomer Orientation Video Series." They are fun and informative. The Trustees have reviewed and approved the videos, which will be reviewed by the GDA at the October GDA meeting.

Meeting Census: As of July 01, 2023, through the Meeting Registration system, RAC has recorded 1,878 meetings. 33 of these meetings indicate that they do not adhere to the SA Statement of Principle. 59 meetings have indicated no region or intergroup. The Persian-Speaking Region has not used the Meeting Registration System but has stated that they have 163 meetings in their country. Please keep your meeting registration current, because the IT Committee is working to convert the sa.org Meeting Finder to use the same

database. This new app puts the power of the web in your hands for newcomers to find you.

GDA Adhoc Committee. The GDA created an adhoc committee with a report due at the Oct 2023 GDA to study the motion, "Count all meetings registered that adhere to the SA Statement of Principle, for the purposes of delegate count."

Pamphlets. All of the SAICO pamphlets are now available as a free download from the [SA website](http://sa.org).

ESSAY Online Magazine. The ESSAY online magazine is up and running: essay.sa.org

White Book Translation. The Lithuanian translation of the White Book has been printed.

CFC News: The SA Correctional Facilities Committee needs more sponsors for our friends in prison.

Web Application Developer Needed. SA is still looking for volunteer web application developers to build and maintain new functions on our sa.org website. Example functions are the Meeting Finder, Event Registration, SA Store, etc. Needs experience in web design and development with knowledge in PHP, HTML, CSS, and basic SQL. If you are interested, contact SAICO to get in touch with the IT Committee.

Finances. Although total reserves are enough to fund eight months of expenses, this continues to be a difficult year for us, with inflation raising the prices on everything we do. Please keep contributing through your local meetings, intergroups, and regions—and make any extra contributions directly to sa.org.

JERRY E., Virginia, USA
New Trustee Chair



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ESSAY presents the experience, strength, and hope of SA members. ESSAY is aware that every SA member has an individual way of working the program. 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.

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Dear ESSAY

Beauty From Ashes

DEAR ESSAY, GOD HAS kept me sober since 12/17/17, and all I have is today. My sponsor suggested I write this letter, and it's a great opportunity to reflect on my recovery and God's work in my life. I am convinced that any success I've enjoyed is due to God. My hope and prayer is that the letter bears witness to God and His ability to bring beauty from ashes.

I started attending meetings in 2012, and my life was a wreck. I was going through a divorce, and my character defects had taken a huge toll on my life. I was recovering from a suicide attempt and knew I needed help. A friend invited me to SA, and I went to a meeting. Thankfully, I've been attending meetings ever since.

Fast forward to today, I'm remarried with a blended family. Life isn't perfect, and there's plenty of opportunities to work my program. However, life is wonderful. One thing I love about recovery is the little miracles I see in my life. The other night I was feeling resentful towards my ex-wife and saw that I needed to make a call to work my 10th Step. Less than a minute later,

a program friend who is also divorced and can relate to my situation called, and I got to share my resentment with him and work my 10th Step. Practically, the program gives me tools to use on a daily basis. My day starts by sliding out of bed and saying the 3rd Step Prayer along with prayers from the "On awakening" section in AA 86-88. I read *The Real Connection* daily. Also, my sponsor suggested saying 100 affirmations and reading "Acceptance is the answer" in AA 416-420. I get to say these affirmations and the AA 417 reading daily in front of a mirror standing on one leg. This has been a wonderful addition to my program.

Other tools I use include Step work six days a week, meditation, prayer,

attending meetings, having a sponsor and sponsees, regular exercise, and service work in and out of the Program. Service work around my home, including cleaning bathrooms and toilets, has been very helpful. When my attitude towards my wife is unhealthy and resentful, cleaning her bathroom helps me improve my attitude towards her. My day ends by kneeling by my bed, thanking God for the day and asking Him for willingness, honesty, and open-mindedness among other things.

My program is not perfect and doesn't need to be. I get to surrender, depend on God and take the next right action.

Daniel C., Alaska, USA



Worldwide Walls of SA

SA Meetings Can Be Held Just About Anywhere ...



Monday and
Friday
Meeting
Bochum,
Germany



Three Legacies Group
Katamon, Jerusalem, Israel



Share your photos

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



Psicosis Group
Alicante & Murcia, Spain



Tuesday Meeting
American Fork, UT, USA



Practical Tools

children, played guitar and studied harp in college. She's the one who got me started playing guitar when I was 16 years old—now over 50 years ago.

SURPRISED BY JOY

Due to the impact of growing up in a dysfunctional family which included a sexaholic father and a co-dependent mother, I had a lot of emotional issues as a teen and suffered depression which, at times, led to suicidal thoughts. What kept me going was listening to the popular music of the time (the mid / late 60's) and learning how to play a lot of those songs on guitar and have fun singing them.

Years later, after beginning my journey in recovery, I came to believe that my Higher Power had kept me alive during my adolescent struggles through the power and the joy of music which made my life worth living. The man who later became my sponsor once said to me after a meeting where I had celebrated a recovery milestone, "Congratulations on your sobriety birthday! But, where is your

This American oldtimer is very grateful to his Higher Power for keeping him sober since 1998 and letting him be of use through his music.



Music As a Spiritual Experience

CONNECTING WITH A HIGHER POWER

Two of the best tools in my "spiritual toolkit" for connecting with the Divine Intelligence (along with working the Steps, attending meetings, talking with my sponsor, and service work) are singing and playing (or listening to) music. Music is a lifelong passion for me and an important component of my recovery.

I grew up in the American Midwest in a musical family. As a young boy and teenager, my biggest joys were singing in church choirs and playing on my father's baby grand piano. My father was a minister and choir director who played piano and taught voice lessons. My mother enjoyed playing piano and singing with young children. My sister, the oldest of five

Joy? I don't see it." Which reminds me of something in the literature that states, "If newcomers could see no joy or fun in our existence, they wouldn't want it. We absolutely insist on enjoying life" (AA 132).

LIVING IN THE PROBLEM

After starting to play guitar during my high school years, I began writing poetry and songs in my early 20s. Around that time, I became an active member of an international yoga community. As a member of that community, I spent many hours playing and singing devotional songs and chanting to the Divine. As part of my spiritual practices, I was celibate for four or five years which was my first experience with sexual sobriety and years before entering recovery.

Later, after I left that community, I married my first wife and we had a son together. After that relationship fell apart, I began to play music in public venues (coffee houses, parties, etc.). Sadly, during that time, I was pursuing unhealthy dependency relationships with women that were lust-based and ended in unhappy messes.

One of the songs I wrote during those days is titled, "Beauty Is." What I find most interesting about the song is that it's about a sex addict who is "on the hunt" and, through his obsession with sex and self, is "headed for the void." So, even before I found my way to the rooms of SA, I knew I had a problem. I just didn't have a solution, yet.

SINGING IN SERVICE

Early in my recovery, as I was making my way through working the Steps, I had come to Steps Four and Five. When I gave what was my

first-ever Step Five to my sponsor at the time, I expected him to lower the boom on me and tell me I was a "bad person." I was stunned when he suggested that I focus on playing more music and sharing it with others, along with continuing with my Step work, of course.

After that, I started to change my old attitude from just seeking attention and praise by playing music for oth-

I started to change my old attitude from just seeking attention and praise by playing music for others to playing music and singing for others as an act of service.

ers to playing music and singing for others as an act of service by carrying the message of how to live life with a greater purpose. And, I found a new way to connect with feeling and expressing joy via musical expression.

After being in SA recovery for two years, I found a new spiritual community to connect with and be part of. It was a large and active group that had church services and a great choir which I joined and enjoyed singing with. What I didn't know, at the time, was that my future wife was also a member of the choir! My Higher Power gave me a huge blessing at the right time. Eventually, I began performing solos at church services and even became a member of the house band. That was the first band I had

ever performed with and the Promises were coming true for me.

LIVING IN THE SOLUTION

My sobriety and recovery have had a powerful impact on my songwriting focus and content. Two examples of that impact are my songs, "Thread of Love" and "Brand New Day." The first one, "Thread of Love," is about living in the Solution which is all about seeking my connection to that Divine Love I wrote about earlier. The second song, "Brand New Day," is my Joy song

about enjoying Life, one day at a time. This tune came into being during a jam session with my nephew, James.

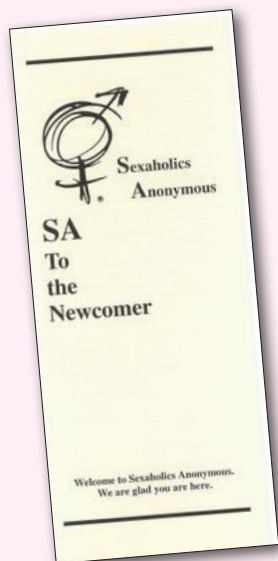
And, finally, in the spirit of service and during my time in recovery, I wrote a birthday song titled, "Happy Sober Day to You." I have sung this celebratory tune at the end of meetings when a fellow has acknowledged a sobriety milestone. Today is always a great day to be alive and sober! Thank you, Higher Power, for keeping me sober since Dec 28, 1998, and letting me be of use through my music.

MARSHAL M., *California, USA*



- Marshal's beautiful recovery songs and their lyrics can be listened to and read on essay.sa.org under "Get Involved" and "Recovery Songs."
- You can send your own recovery songs to essay@sa.org for our consideration to be added on the "Recovery Songs" page.

SA TO THE NEWCOMER



Our program literature is one of the main Practical Tools we have at our disposal. In order to welcome and keep newcomers, every group ought to have an attractive and well-stocked literature table. Many members testify about the crucial impact the first pamphlets they read had on them. Among the 20 pamphlets our fellowship has produced so far, this one is especially written for newcomers.

It contains life-saving topics like: What is SA? What is sexual sobriety? Is SA like group therapy? How can I become a member? How can I tell if I'm addicted? What do I have to do to get sober?

Find all our SA books, e-books, audiobooks, ESSAY magazines, and pamphlets on our SA online store: sexaholics.org/store

"Let Go"—that saying sounds so strong.

Holding on to my pain has almost become my life's song.

Letting go of my painful thoughts would probably feel like cutting off a piece of me. Oh God, it has become part of me, can't you see?

I now realize that it's because of the feeling of security that comes with it.

"Go, go!", my inner child shouts, "Don't even try to show me a different way! I love this so much!"

When really, there are so many better, easier, lighter ways.

God, I want to feel like the little boy holding the hand of his older brother.

I want to feel Your presence; I want to feel that You know it all, and You have a plan for me.

I want to be able to lift up my head, look You in the eyes with awe, and get that feeling,

"Oh, it's You, my Big Brother holding my hands all along? You mean to say You were there the entire time?"

"You saw me being neglected as a very little child? You saw me wandering the streets as I got older?"

"You saw me fighting for my life, not knowing what I was missing and therefore always being either all the way on the top or really completely on the bottom?"

"Feeling always misunderstood, unworthy, inadequate, afraid and alone?"

Then the feeling of finally growing, falling, growing and falling again.

Seeing all this You kept on cruising ahead, as if You really had a plan or knew my destination, as if You are saying to me:

"My dear son, it's Me here walking along with you the entire time.

"I'm crying along with you. Yes, all those questions, wow, are they real! I agree that a human being's mind will never fully understand why all this suffering.

"For what you might think is success, a good life, might be just the opposite.

"Please remember one thing, I am still the creator of all this; I never left you, and will never leave you.

"Remember that true feelings are real but not reality.

"Please put aside a few minutes a day for us two to just connect, reboot, refresh your senses,

"Reunite, reprogram, and restart with a fresh attitude and perspective every morning.

"That all this was and is for the best of your growth.

"My dear son please make it a daily routine

"To make space in your heart through meditation and prayer so My grace can enter.

Just Let Go and Let God."

SHEA K., *New York, USA*



let Go and let God

"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." (SA Service Manual, back cover)

Whenever You Want to Come, Be Welcome!



MY FIRST MEETING— MAY 2012

At the age of 51, some time after my wife discovered my double life, she gave me the White Book. I read the title and was inwardly outraged. How could she think that I was a sex addict? I was “only” having an affair and so I put the book aside.

A few months later, I came to realize that I could no longer maintain this unconscious denial. During a visit at our couple’s therapist, I agreed to read the White Book and visit an SA meeting. Somehow I was ready, even though I was not yet fully convinced that SA would be able to help me.

I called the contact number for the

Munich meetings. At the other end of the phone, a man started asking me questions about my motivation, which I answered honestly. He also said that there were three meetings per week. I told him that initially I just wanted to attend one meeting per week. “In that case,” he replied, “you’re probably not ready yet.” That’s how it used to be in Munich and in the German-Speaking Region. Some fellows decided who was ready and who was not. It hurt me. I felt that I was not worthy to attend an SA meeting.

Our therapist disagreed. She explained to me that my willingness to stop my addiction is my ticket to SA. I should just go without a preliminary talk—they couldn’t kick me out.

After a few weeks, I took the plunge and attended my first SA meeting. I entered the group room excitedly and without invitation, explained my concerns, and was met for a moment with incredulous bewilderment. After some discussion the group agreed to hold a newcomer’s meeting with me. I told my story and my desire to stop lusting, and that I needed help. There was a vote on whether I could stay and come back. Even though I wasn’t able to express it, it made me feel unworthy, and it lined up with earlier, similar events in my life. Today I can say that I do not wish this on anyone who reaches out his hand and asks for help.

What I also remember from that meeting was that there was almost no one who was “in recovery” for an extended period of time, except for one older man.

RECOVERY BEGINS

A few months later, an SA/S-Anon oldtimer couple from the States visited our local fellowship. They shared their experience, strength, and hope at a 12-Step workshop. That weekend changed everything for me.

The SA oldtimer lives and speaks the language of recovery. He loves simple and clear words. He showed us a way to make it work. “Learn to give instead of take,” it says in the White Book on page 162. He emphasized again and again the importance of the Big Book as the foundation of the White Book, and of the beginning of its Fifth Chapter as the basis for recovery—and it became the basis for my journey of recovery.

NEW YORK AND NASHVILLE—JAN 2014

On my way to the International Convention in Nashville, I made a three-day visit to get a taste of New York. My plan was to support my visit with daily meetings.

On an SA website from the New York SA Community, I found all the meetings taking place in the city with the exact times and locations, so I planned my sightseeing tours according to the meetings schedule. This was helpful and at the same time surprising to me (since in my own region the fellowship was quite rigid about having a meeting place open to the public).

To my surprise, no one at the meeting asked me who I was or looked at me strangely even though I was obviously a stranger. At the end of the meeting, I

Some fellows decided who was ready and who was not. It hurt me. I felt that I was not worthy to attend an SA meeting.

asked how they would have reacted if I had been a newcomer or journalist? “Then we would have held a newcomers meeting,” was the simple reply.

Three days later in Nashville, I recognized some New Yorkers at the airport, and they invited me into their cab to ride together to the convention hotel. At the convention, I experienced in a real way the spirit I had already encountered in the White Book. Everything there seemed simpler, bigger, (spiritually) wider, and more inviting. I felt that I had “come home.”

Back in Munich, I could not keep silent about what I had experienced. I shared these experiences in meetings and at workshops, and challenged our own newcomers’ procedure. Thankfully, the Munich groups were open to change. We discontinued the old practice of a preliminary interview and the

(humiliating) question of whether anyone would object to the newcomer being allowed to come back. Since then, every newcomer in Munich can simply walk into a meeting. We offer him a preliminary talk if he wants it. Anyone who wants to stop lusting, is welcome.

EXPERIENCE WITH NEWCOMERS

Since then, the Munich membership has at least doubled and today, there are strong meetings everyday. On the other

hand, most other groups in the German-Speaking Region still use the old newcomer procedure. I wonder why SA groups make it so hard for the newcomers. At the same time, I trust God and know that everything has its time.

A few groups of our region now use the letter that has proven so successful in Munich. You can read it below.

Bernd S., Zurich, Switzerland



Thank you for your request. Welcome to SA Munich. Enclosed please find a little something about us and our meetings.

The sexaholic has taken himself or herself out of the whole context of what is right or wrong. He or she has lost control, no longer has the power of choice, and is not free to stop. Lust has become an addiction. Our situation is like that of the alcoholic who can no longer tolerate alcohol and must stop drinking altogether but is hooked and cannot stop. So it is with the sexaholic, or sex drunk, who can no longer tolerate lust but cannot stop.

This is why SA, like Alcoholics Anonymous, adopts a sobriety definition. Our sobriety definition is: *We abstain from any form of sex with one's self or with partners other than the spouse.* This definition provides us with the clarity we need to abstain from lust in any and all of its forms.

Our meetings are held seven times a week:

Monday 7:00 pm

Tuesday 7:00 am

...

In-person meetings are held at the SHZ (Street Name) in Munich. You can come to all meetings or just individual meetings. For the first time, we recommend attending an in-person meeting.

We also offer the possibility of a pre-meeting (by phone or about 15 minutes before the meeting, except Tuesday), if you are a newcomer.

Ideally, reply to this mail and let me know when you wish to come along. If you wish, someone from our group can meet you about 15 minutes beforehand and explain the way our meetings work. If you do wish to talk to someone beforehand, please call V. (Telephone Number).

SA is an anonymous program: We don't keep the names, addresses or phone numbers of our members (or we delete them immediately after use).

I hope you find this information helpful and I look forward to seeing you at one of our meetings. You are welcome whenever you want to come along! Just let us know in advance the day on which you would like to come and we will let you know the room in which we meet that day.

I am part of the duo that welcomes newcomers in an SA email group called SA Net. SA Net currently has over 1,000 members where the majority transition to meet on Zoom leaving few to actively participate on email. I am one of the few and have found great

recovery in not only participating in SA Net but also in doing service.

To participate on SA Net, a member shares their experience, strength, and hope by sending an email to the entire group. Every week there is a topic that is suggested by members whose services are to suggest weekly topics. I like being part of SA Net because prior to joining SA, I would exchange emails with men I had found on some "friendship" websites. What I used to feed lust then is now being used to experience and share recovery. What a miracle!

We welcome newcomers at SA Net by sending them an "initial email" which is a brief introduction of SA Net followed by five questions. The first question is asked to find out if the newcomer is an adult. This is because SA Net is a fellowship of adults

suffering from sexaholism so one must be above 18 years. I have had a few situations where people as young as 16 years have reached out and I have halfheartedly been forced to reject their request and refer them to seek

I would exchange emails with men I had found on some "friendship" websites. What I used to feed lust then is now being used to experience and share recovery.

help from counselors or adults they trust or S-Ateen.

The second question seeks to find out if the person is a newcomer. We sometimes have situations where a person was once an SA member but left the Fellowship. In such situations we treat these people as newcomers.

Helping others By showing up



The third question seeks to find out if the newcomer has a desire to stop lusting which is in accordance with SA's Tradition 3—the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop lusting and become sexually sober.

The fourth question asks whether the person is male or female because the next process is to connect the newcomer to a 12th-stepper. 12th-steppers are men and women who are there to share their experience, strength, and hope with the newcomer, and answer any question they may have about SA or SA Net. The rule is a male 12th-stepper guides a male newcomer and likewise with a female newcomer.


Once this process is over and we have confirmed that the newcomer's email address is private for the purposes of anonymity, the 12th-stepper sends an email to let the Join Coordinators know that the newcomer is ready to join SA Net. We share some newcomer resources which include SA literature, SA podcasts, an infographic with summarized information about the SA and SA Net sharing guidelines, and links to the Zoom, telephone, and face-to-face meetings.

We encourage newcomers to com-

plement their recovery on SA Net by using other meetings. Personally I use SA Net, Zoom, and my Kenyan face-to-face meetings which have really boosted my recovery and offered me a variety of fellowship connections.

Tradition 5 and Step 12 require me to carry the message. In my initial months of recovery, I was convinced I could save all newcomers and would nag every one of them to go to meetings, get a sponsor, and work the program. After a while, I realized I could not work other people's program because I am truly powerless.

So my way of helping newcomers stay in SA is by sponsoring some, showing up, and being there for them—whether on SA Net, Zoom, or my Kenyan fellowship. My physical presence in my local fellowship helps some women stay and some men learn how to practice recovery around women. I participate actively in meetings where I carry the message of my experiences so that they can be encouraged to keep coming back. While some leave, it is always a joy to see those who stay and become sober.

KAWY W., Nairobi, Kenya 

DISCUSSION TOPIC

How are you and your home group welcoming and keeping newcomers?

Kawy shares how her way of helping newcomers stay in SA is by sponsoring some, showing up, and being there for them in different ways.

She goes into great detail to explain how SA Net goes about welcoming and keeping its newcomers.

What is your home group's procedure of dealing with newcomers? Has it been successful?

Have you given serious thought on how to improve your initial email or phone contact? How to welcome them at their first meeting?

What (spoken and unspoken) message is

conveyed by the culture of your group? Is it one of hope, sobriety, and joy? How do you follow up on your newcomers? How do you welcome members who left SA and show up again?

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

BEING A NEWCOMER IS AN ATTITUDE OF THE HEART

My first meeting at Sunday Night McLean was nearly two years ago. At the time, the meeting was exclusively on Zoom. An older member messaged me and asked if I was a newcomer. I was too afraid and full of pride to be honest with him. I wasn't sober then. I know I didn't sound sober either. He was just glad I was there. They have been my home group ever since.

Fourteen months later, this same fellow attended my wedding, accompanied by several members that have been with me from those first meetings. If anyone were to ask one of those members if I did at one year sober, one month sober, or not sober, I'm sure they would have a chuckle.

As a recovering sexaholic, I'm growing up.


I'm discovering my voice. And with each new season, where I sound noticeably different, I'm made again into a newcomer. To me, a newcomer is not exclusively measured by inexperience with recovery or the length of one's calendar sobriety. Rather, the newcomer can be an attitude of the heart. God is constantly revealing more to me as I continue to attend to my spiritual hunger.

Recovery is a foreign landscape, described at times as beautiful vistas, and others as a fog where I see nothing besides placing one foot in front of the other (SA 78). I'm a newcomer at each new phase of my development—phases that Sunday Night McLean have seen me through.

This group celebrated with me as I graduated college, supported me in a new marriage, connect-

ed with me as I wrestle with my understanding of a Higher Power, and grieved with me as I prepared to move across the country for my next endeavor.

The fellowship dinners at "Lazy Mike's Deli" (*see photo below*) and sports arena-like cheering for sobriety chips are not only staples of my home group, but a glimpse of sober living. Our group is open-minded, willing, and honest. We currently have one meeting a month dedicated to studying the Traditions and Concepts to connect with a program greater than ourselves. We're built for the newcomer. Any group built for the newcomer is a group built to last. Sunday Night McLean has welcomed me, the newcomer, with a grace that has helped inform my conception of God.

NOAH B., Virginia, USA 



NOT SO UNIQUE AFTER ALL

Back around 2003, at my old home group in Philadelphia, we developed an orientation meeting for newcomers. We had written to a number of intergroups around the world, asking if they did orientation meetings for newcomers. Many wrote back sharing their orientations, and we combined ideas that we received in order to create one that we felt worked best for us. Our

goal was to help the newcomer feel as welcome as possible and reduce any apprehension that he or she might have. After all, we would tell them, from our own experience, we were all well aware that the hardest thing they may have ever done was to get out of their car, walk across that parking lot and open the door to ask for help.

Here is our orientation as it has developed over decades. Different from a newcomers/beginners meeting, this is a more casual dialogue. Feel free to use it—and best of luck with it!

Orientation Meeting — Suggested Talking Points

1. Welcome them and establish that the person is there for their own personal recovery.
2. Explain that this is an informal meeting—different from a regular one. They can ask anything they want.
3. How did they hear about us?
4. Read: “The SA Purpose” and “What is a Sexaholic and What is Sexual Sobriety?”
5. Let the newcomer know how we define sobriety:
 - a. SA is not a one-size-fits-all fellowship.
 - b. There are other Twelve Step fellowships where members can define their own sobriety.
 - c. Our “Sobriety Imperative” is no sex with self; no sex with anyone you’re not married to; marriage is defined as a marriage between one man and one woman; progressive victory over lust.
6. The Addiction: Explain that, although our acting-out methods may be different, we all have in common the addiction to lust.
7. [NEED TIMER VOLUNTEER] Briefly (3 minutes) tell the newcomer your story:
 - a. This lets the person know that he/she’s talking with an actual sex addict.
 - b. Gives a live demonstration of openness, honesty, powerlessness,

and willingness to get well.

- c. Ask other members in the meeting to introduce themselves, state length of sobriety and tell their 3-minute story.
 8. Ask the newcomer to take 3 minutes to explain why they’re here.
 9. What have they been doing that they wish they could stop? Ask them: “Do you really want to give this up? Or just partly?” This addiction is as if they were riding down in an elevator, and they can step off at any floor they want.
 10. In a general way, explain SA’s Twelve Step program of recovery—the program’s spirituality, and please be aware of their possible viewpoints on God.
 11. Explain what to expect during meetings:
 - a. When they go to the meeting, they can share whenever they feel comfortable to do so. There’s no expectation that they need to say anything or do anything, except introduce themselves.
 - b. If they’re not sure that they’re a sexaholic, they can just give their first name and say that they’re new, during the regular meeting.
 - c. We may not have a formal dress code, but we don’t want to be a trigger to others.
 - d. Suggest that, if they’re not sure whether or not they belong here, we suggest they attend six meetings to help them decide.
 - e. Explain about raising of hands and being called on to share.
 - f. Explain about the 7th Tradition.
 - g. Explain about the 24-Hour chip.
 12. Offer to exchange phone numbers and be sure to check in on them in the next day or two.
 13. Give them: *SA To the Newcomer*, *The SA brochure*, and your local meetings schedule.
 14. Briefly explain about Sponsorship/Temporary Sponsorship.
 15. Bring them into the meeting a few minutes ahead of time, in order for them to meet the other members before the meeting begins. Be sure to invite them out for fellowship afterwards if you’re planning on anything.
- “We’re not associated with any particular religion but we do pray at every meeting. After a moment of silent meditation for the addict who still suffers both in and out of these rooms, I’d like to ask _____ to lead us in a traditional 12-Step Fellowship prayer.” [Everyone stands in a circle.] “Keep coming back! It works if you work it—so work it, you’re worth it!”

Over the years, it has been such a joy to watch brand-new members at these orientation meetings while this information is shared with them and we tell them our stories. There have been quite a number of times where newcomers have expressed that they felt surprised that their stories were

not so unique after all. They have also told us that they felt grateful to know that there was help available. Most of all, though, they’ve said that it has helped them feel at home.

MICHAEL J., *Texas, USA*



*God
Makes
Amazing
Things
Happen*

By surrendering to sobriety and accepting God to be his Principal, his life has become completely transformed into a journey of expanding joyful service.

Just before I came to SA, I hit my personal rock bottom. On the outside, it was not so obvious that my life had become unmanageable. I was still married with children, had my health, a home, a job, and a community. But inside I was at my most desperate and darkest hour.

My mind was obsessed with sexual fantasy. If my brain was not occupied with some demanding task then it was planning how I could get my next fix. What pornographic videos could I search for? When could I create a window of opportunity to sexually act out? And there was no “OFF button.” My whole day became a burdensome slog of activities and interactions that I needed to get out of the way so I could get down to the real reason for

my existence. A few hours in front of the screen with self-indulgent fantasy, the high, the stimulation, the masturbation and the attempt to hold on to it as long as I could before fatigue and emotional exhaustion would take hold. And then go to sleep, wake up, and do it all again.

As I engaged more and more in my drugged fantasy state, I became more and more detached from reality, from people, from my own sense of self. My obsession with sex led to sick attitudes; it made me more self-centered, a complete narcissist. I could not stick the drudge of reality with all its responsibilities and obligations and demands, things that distracted me from my goals—constant self-gratification and the oblivion of unreality.

I had become a shell of a person. Isolated, ashamed to look others in the

eye, pained at looking myself in the mirror, not recognizing the “thing” that was looking back at me. Anything valuable and worthwhile in life was useless compared to lust. I had no di-

I had become a shell of a person. Isolated, ashamed to look others in the eye, pained at looking myself in the mirror, not recognizing the “thing” that was looking back at me.

rection and felt I had nothing to offer anyone. I just wanted to escape into sexual oblivion. But, after a two-year spree, in which I had completely given myself over to my disease without reservation, a Higher Power did for me what I could not do for myself.

I burned out. The drug stopped working. For twenty years lust had always provided a measure of escape and sedation. But now it wasn't working, even as I persisted with the same actions, the same effort to enjoy lust, the last vestiges of the illusion fell away. This graceful respite gave me pause long enough to experience the horrific spiritual and emotional deadness that I had been medicating with lust. The pain was unbearable.

With the pain came the openness and willingness to try and let go of some of the weight that had been dragging me down. It was clear to me then what I needed to do. I became

willing to remove the internet from my home and devices. That first night, disconnected from the main source of my “life,” I anticipated that I might go crazy with restlessness and bounce off the walls, but instead a peace descended on me such as I had never known. I felt embraced by the loving presence of a Higher Power. I felt hope, that maybe it is possible to find another way to live.

For a short time, I was on a pink cloud of relief, but slowly, the street lusting and fantasies crept back into my consciousness. I had been told about Twelve Step programs by a friend but I had never been open enough to consider leaving the comfort of my familiar hell and sharing my weakness with others, especially in this area. Again, my Higher Power intervened. It happened by a fellow reaching out to me in the spirit of the 12th Step. I had participated in a self-improvement group, where we shared about personal challenges. I had never been honest about my lust issues until then. When he heard me share about street lust and fantasy and how I felt powerless over them, he identified. He had been struggling with similar behaviors. He told me, “I'm a sexaholic and I think you may be too. Myself and another guy want to have a Sexaholics Anonymous meeting in town. Will you come?”

I'm not sure what made me say yes but, by all I had been experiencing up to then, my mind and heart opened up enough to say yes.

I could never have imagined what a profound effect this decision would have on my life and the lives of others. This was the first English-speaking SA meeting in my city of Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel. That was in 2013.

I got into recovery and have been sober, one day at a time, ever since. I

gave up my old, selfish life. I gave myself over to the care and guidance of a loving Higher Power. I was willing to take direction, and to live by spiritual principles. As I gained sobriety and recovery, I felt finally I had something of value to share with others—my experience, strength, and hope with the still suffering sexaholic. I sponsored others and grew spiritually under the guidance of my own sponsors. My life changed. I was reborn.

When God is my Principal, and I become His agent, His carrier of the message of SA recovery, amazing things can happen, for myself and for those around me.

But I want to share with you about how my own spiritual awakening became a seed, planted by my Higher Power, for personal and group growth, over the next ten years.

We went from two or three people meeting once a week, to three meetings a week with a dozen or so committed members. From the beginning I contributed to the development of my local group by doing service as secretary or treasurer. Eventually I helped found our first local intergroup out of the three groups at the time.

From there I represented my intergroup among a larger local intergroup in Beit Shemesh. Eventually, we grew to a point where we joined the regional intergroup and I became the represen-

tative. Our local intergroup grew into representing around seven meetings. I served in different ways. When we put on a local English conference, I chaired that event and later helped with another two events with the other large English intergroup in Jerusalem.

My Higher Power continued to motivate my heart to seek out new opportunities to grow in service and give back to SA. A fellow who was involved in the Sponsor by Mail program for the Correctional Facilities Committee (CFC) asked me to get involved. I sponsored an inmate and got involved in helping assign sponsors to fellows in prison in the U.S. I became involved in the International Convention Committee (ICC). I helped us secure the slot for our upcoming convention in 2024. I became Co-Chair for the convention. I became an Alternate Delegate for the Israel Region, and recently became the Delegate, part of the voice of SA as a whole.

I got to see, not just myself, but several members of my home group grow into significant contributors to the SA service structure, locally and internationally. I mention all this not to boast, but to share with you what my Higher Power has done with my life, which used to be so selfish, lonely, empty, and self-destructive. When God is my Principal, and I become His agent, His carrier of the message of SA recovery, amazing things can happen, for myself and for those around me. I want to encourage others to grow in service and seek out opportunities to contribute to the spiritual health of SA as a whole. It continues to repay in greater measures of joy and real connection than I could have ever imagined.

DANIEL K., *Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel*



Working The Steps Is Her Top Priority

A loving God brought her from a double life ruled by lust to a contented attitude of service to Him and His creation.

I am a sexaholic. Or perhaps, more correctly, a lustaholic. I was using lust to cope with life as far back as I can remember, perhaps from the age of four or five. At first I used fantasy and compulsive masturbation, way before I even knew what sex was. These behaviors weren't a problem then—they were my solution.

During my teen years I became addicted to unhealthy relationships, and later on to erotic literature. I began to deteriorate emotionally in my teenage years, and started seeing mental health professionals. A psychiatrist diagnosed me with clinical depression, and gave me a prescription for antidepressants. The therapy and meds helped up to a certain extent, however there was still a gaping hole inside me that I kept trying to fill

(unsatisfactorily) with relationships and fantasies. I didn't know that I was addicted to lust.

Fast forward a few years, and I was a young married woman with a newborn baby. I don't remember what triggered it, but there was one night when I experienced my first emotional rock bottom. The pain, emptiness, and loneliness that I felt were unbearable, and I decided to attend a Twelve Step meeting. I was pretty clueless. All I had learned by that point was that addiction existed in my family (never mind myself) and that I desired the comfort, support, and understanding of other people who might have had similar experiences. I didn't know what the Steps were, or sponsors, or anything else. Still, I cried throughout that first meeting. Perhaps it was the feeling of a Higher Power in the room, or maybe the relief at realizing

that I wasn't alone. All I know is that I finally felt like I belonged.

I continued to feel restless, irritable, and discontent. I searched for more help and ended up at an outpatient facility to treat my codependency. I began working the Steps, taking responsibility for my character defects, and making amends to others. I completed treatment after about a year and a half, and continued to attend various Twelve Step meetings. Much about my life had improved; my relationships and ability to function

I had joined in order to get sober, but sober wasn't enough. I could never do life on life's terms, and so I needed to make the program and Step-work the top priority.

in the world were markedly better. But lust continued to be my deep, dark, shameful secret. I was leading a double life.

Ironically enough, it was after I became a member of S-Anon that I finally realized that I was powerless over my sexual acting out. The realization hit me for the first time at a convention, where the SA and S-Anon members split up into different rooms for some of the talks. I remember thinking, "Here I am, completely lust-drunk, sitting in an S-Anon talk. I should be in the other room." It took some time,

but with the encouragement of other women, I finally decided to deal with my sexaholism.

I went to a different "S" fellowship first, where I took half-measures for my recovery. I sort-of worked the Steps, sort-of talked to my sponsor, and talked to one other woman. I was high on the "pink cloud" of sobriety, and after six months, inevitably, I acted out. My one female friend from the fellowship had left to join a women's SA group, and, having concluded that I had nothing to lose, I decided to join as well. That evening was June 10, 2020, and I have not acted out since.

Since then, I have come to realize that lust was the driving force behind my sexual acting out, along with all the other unhealthy emotional attachments from my past. I started out slow; my first sponsor was very patient. She talked a lot about doing service, especially at home, which helped immensely to get me out of my head.

Eventually I began to work the Steps, and switched sponsors along the way. I had joined in order to get sober, but being sober wasn't enough. I could never do life on life's terms (which is how I came to act out in the first place), and so I needed to make the program and Step-work the top priority.

I try to read and apply Steps 10 and 11 from the Big Book every day. It says that "we have a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition" and I take that very seriously. If I believe that my sexaholism is a disease, then I have to take my medication every single day. I made this decision and commitment when I took the Third Step. It says "We made a decision to turn *our will and our lives* over to the care of God..." It doesn't say, "Made a decision to turn *our lust* over..."

Yes, turning over lust is important! I have to be willing to relinquish the right to lust after someone and be lusted after by someone else. I have to be willing to acknowledge that no other person belongs to me. This, however, applies to all aspects of my life. Whenever I make demands on the world or others, I am unhappy. Throughout my recovery I have become more and more aware of this. Whenever I am disturbed and take inventory, there is always an underlying expectation for something to give me a sense of security, something that I can identify with, like status or beauty.

The truth is that my identity is rooted in the fact that I am a beloved child of a loving God. Everything else I do in this life is a role assigned by the Ultimate Director. All these different roles are a gift and a privilege.

As long as I can walk through life one day at a time, with the intention to be of service to my Higher Power

and all beings and creations, I can be content. I am grateful that, just for

My identity is rooted in the fact that I am a beloved child of a loving God. Everything else I do in this life is a role assigned by the Ultimate Director.

today, I am free of the obsession to lust, thanks to God and the wonderful fellowship of SA.

MEIRA D., Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel



Going to Any Length to Carry the Message

- Our website essay.sa.org offers the articles and recordings of each new magazine in English. The home page has nine other language tabs by which translations of six articles of each magazine can be read and listened to. In this way, ESSAY is really going to any length to carry the message worldwide. And did you know that the ESSAY print magazine is sent to friends-in-prison for free?
- The tab "[Recovery Songs](#)" has gotten its first recovery songs by fellows, which can be listened to on your favorite podcast platform. Find meeting pictures from all over the world at the bottom of the "[Get Involved](#)" page.
- Enjoy our newest pages: [The Program in Cartoons](#), [Memes in Recovery Themes](#), and [Take Part in Art](#).
- To use your talents to improve this innovative and multilingual website, click on "[Help Us Improve This Website](#)." We are especially looking for members who have experience making podcasts or videos.
- Please consider supporting our worldwide service by clicking on "[Subscribe](#)" and taking a paid subscription. You can also give a subscription to a sexaholic who needs it by clicking on "[Carry the Message](#)."



He came to a deeper understanding of the Power greater than the negative power his First Step had revealed.



Two Powers Greater Than Me

Recently, I was working Step Two with a sponsee when God decided to grace me with a revelation that has completely changed how I see my recovery. As it is still settling within me, I ask God to give me the clarity of thought, the presence of mind, and adequate words to be able to relate this spiritual experience.

I often thought of Steps Two and Three as the first of the Steps dealing with a Higher Power. In Step Two I came to believe in a Higher Power that could restore me to sanity, and in Step Three I turned my will and my life over to that Power.

However, if I had thought about it, I actually accepted a power greater than myself before taking Step Two. When I take an honest Step One, I am humbled into accepting the truth of a power greater than myself: lust. When I admit in Step One that I am powerless over lust, I am admitting too that lust is more powerful than I am. It is a “power greater than myself”—a “lower power” for sure, as opposed to a Higher Power, but a power greater than I am, nonetheless. If I reach Step Two and am still in any doubt about a power greater than I, then I need to consider my Step One again.

So then, if I already accept a power greater than myself in Step One, what

am I doing in Step Two? The answer, for me, lies in the wording at the end of the Step: “Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves *could restore us to sanity.*” And so at Step Two, I come to believe that there is a Power even more powerful than my addiction, but One which has an altogether different effect on me.

But I began to wonder then if this is just a leap of faith—a Higher Power that can reach down into me and *restore me to sanity.* Or, I asked myself, is there something more than just faith that points to a Power, greater than my addiction, which could restore me to sanity?

I began by considering the nature of my addictive process. I came to understand that the actions I took in my addiction—the sex, the drugs, the overeating—were really external manifestations of the addictive process; that the root of the addiction came from way deeper inside of me. It was here, at this root, where my powerlessness began—all the trauma, all the suffering, all the darkness and shame, all the guilt, the delusional beliefs and spiritual concealment, these were the roots which sustained my addiction which then, expressed itself outwardly in destructive behaviors.

I started to see then, just how big the root was, lying at the very core of my self, sustaining itself in my beliefs, ideas, and attitudes, and it was ever clearer then just how poisonous this root was. I understood how utterly incapable I was to stop the addiction process within my own resources as it consumed me from the inside out. I understood my powerlessness.

From that place of utter powerlessness came a question which rocked me. “How come I’m still here?” If this addictive process could destroy me to the extent that it has, where does

the hope, the faith in recovery come from? What is this thing, this light deeper inside me that challenges the urges over which I am powerless? Why do I show up to meetings? Why do I go to therapy? Why do I work the Steps? Why do I not just succumb to the darker inner entity that tells me to go ahead and give up? How was this inner light that insists upon hope not extinguished long ago?

Then it hit me like a ton of bricks. The fact that I still hope, have faith and show resilience, demonstrates an inner presence that has always been

I shouldn’t still be in this fight and yet here I am, trudging on in my own enlightened self-interest.

there and always more powerful than the darkness around it. The Big Book says that “we found the Great Reality deep down within us. In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found” (AA 55). Whenever I read this line, a deep sense of chills runs right through me. The Great Reality, the Power that I’ve come to realize in Step Two, that is stronger than the darkness ever was, has always been with me, deep inside of me.

I choose to call this part of myself the Soul, and I choose to believe that this Soul, deep inside me, is inherently connected with the Infinite outside myself. The words I use to describe this experience don’t really matter and everyone has the liberty to choose their own words.

The bottom line is that, after spend-

ing my whole life searching for something outside of myself that would make me feel whole and complete, what I was really looking for was within me all along. Covered and concealed with layers of brokenness, this inner point or inner light was never damaged by the addiction and remains completely pure. I shouldn't

still be in this fight and yet here I am, trudging on in my own enlightened self interest. To me, that demonstrates, beyond faith alone, a reason to come to believe in a Power that is stronger than my addiction and can therefore restore me to sanity.

DANIEL S., *New York, USA*



The Israel fellowship has seen tremendous growth in numbers and quality of recovery since it began in 1996. At our annual national SA conferences, with S-Anon's participation, we often have between 400 and 500 attendees. Our Israel Region is made up of five intergroups from around the country, and it includes both Hebrew- and English-speaking groups, with over 70 meetings registered. Nonetheless, we have been experiencing challenges as a fellowship, beginning around the time of Covid-19. The number of sober members has dropped. There is less long-term sobriety. A generation of new members have mostly known Zoom meetings and not face-to-face recovery. There is a feeling that understanding of the spiritual foundation of our life-saving program is at a bit of a low. There are fewer conferences, and groups have become more centered around themselves. There are fewer 7th Tradition donations to the Region, and fewer people are do-

ing service outside their home groups. Coming out of the pandemic, we are trying to switch from surviving to thriving by restarting workshops, conferences, and overall service activities. An ad-hoc committee was set up to work out financial problems that didn't exist before the pandemic. Conferences and working on the upcoming International Convention are helping rekindle the spirit of the fellowship. There are outside issues here that are apparently giving the program a tailwind, pushing us forward here in Israel. Using prostitution has become an illegal offense. The welfare services are slowly recognizing and attempting to treat what is called CSBD (Compulsive Sexual Behavioral Disorder). Courses on the subject are being taught to professionals, where they are meeting SA representatives and hearing the SA message. An internet program for overcoming pornography and lust addictions has launched an advertising campaign, leading to increased public awareness and to more new members coming to SA.

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We are super-excited to be hosting the International Convention for the second time. It will take place in the Bayit VaGan Guest House, nestled in the rolling hills of Jerusalem, and just a short cab or light-rail ride away from the city center and Old City. The entire venue will belong solely to us for the full event. There will be freedom to experience so many different activities, available simultaneously. Besides the breakout sessions and keynote speakers, attendees will be able to enjoy a plethora of specialty rooms including: a hospitality room constantly stocked with refreshments and snacks; an oldtimer room, where you can just schmooze and take in long-term recovery and have impactful conversations; a room dedicated to Step workshops, and much more. Don't miss out!

THE CONVENTION COMMITTEE
Jerusalem, Israel



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DAVE H., *California, USA*



A Threefold Safe Haven



It has been very important for me to complete my SA Twelve Step work with my sponsor as well as to keep all SA letters and worksheets to show to my parole board that I have been taking actions to get better. They have been looking to see whether I am sober from my active addiction, and have a post-release support group. I've learned a technical skill to use once I get out. There were many things to choose from, like welding, electrical, machine shop, and carpentry. I got a certificate in one of those skills.

I have been trying to contact my family to see if they are available or willing to talk to me. But as for the moment, they aren't; I will need religious services or the Salvation Army for support. I've made connections with AA and religious organizations, such as Gideons, Karos, and church groups. A minister will drive me to the county of my conviction where I will have to register with the sheriff's

office within twenty-four hours of release and get a parole officer.

I will first need to find temporary shelter which is not easy because, as a sex offender, there are many restrictions on where I can reside. I will try to see if I can find a halfway house for temporary shelter, away from churches, parks, and schools. For permanent residence, I will not be able to live in my home, as I have children and it is in a neighborhood with a swimming pool. One parolee pitched a tent near a truck stop where there was access to public transportation. Many truck stops offer showers and a laundromat.

I plan to register with the welfare department and apply for food stamps as soon as possible. I will also contact the VA or community hospital for medical attention.

When looking for work, I have to be prepared that retail operations will not employ me. In general, retailers do not want convicted sex offenders to have contact with customers. I will

probably be more successful seeking work at warehouses, construction sites, and manufacturing. I will have to renew my driver's license. I will be allowed to use a flip phone. As I will be wearing an ankle monitor, I will have to have it checked periodically.

I am hoping that local SA groups will be helpful too. I have already found the local SA group in order to attend meetings from day one. It will be paramount to have a support network. So far, the local SA guys have been very helpful in providing me with useful information. I need to continue my addiction recovery with SA. There are very few people with whom I can discuss this addiction. Inside the SA rooms is the best opportunity to talk about my addiction. The White Book continues to be a threefold safe haven where I have found inner sexual sobriety; emotional balance amidst the tough circumstances in prison; and ongoing support and friendship.

A friend told me that the parole board is not interested in what I've done, but how well I speak about it. For example, they might want to know what I have retained from my

years in the program. If I haven't retained it, then it is not important to me. If it is not important to me, then it's not important for them to let me out.

They are looking for post-release plans. The main thing is an assurance that I won't repeat the behavior. This is what they call a relapse prevention plan (RPP). This plan is a support network, e.g. being able to talk to someone before a relapse, or how I will seek help in the event I need intervention before I hurt someone.

My friend suggested having a psychiatrist write a letter saying that they will treat me upon release. That coupled with letters from a 12-Step Program saying I will have a place to recover upon release and a letter from my church saying I am welcome back.

A letter from my sponsor saying we will continue the sponsoring has helped convince the board that I have people I can turn to and open up to before another relapse. I am grateful to SA for giving me a safe harbor on the outside.

A FRIEND IN PRISON, USA



New SA Groups

Middle East

- Chisar, Tehran, Iran

United States

- Longmont, Colorado
- Camden County, Georgia
- Pullman, Washington
- Hutchinson, Kansas
- Marina, California
- Salina, Kansas

Canada

- Duncan, British Columbia

Financial Status Q2

Total Income

\$215,962

Total Expenses

217,174

Net Loss

-\$1,211

Total Reserves

\$289,969 (= 8 months of reserves)

Trust in God Brought Him From California to Cracow



entered recovery on Feb 16, 2019, which also happens to be my SA sobriety date. In the first 15 months, my recovery was basically 2-3 in-person meetings per week, regular meetings with my sponsor in order to work the Steps, weekly visits with a local therapist, phone calls and text messages with brothers in the program, reading SA literature, and growing in recovery with my wife who is an active member of S-Anon since Feb 2019.

My recovery program was good and consistent, but due to a limited number of in-person meetings in my area as well as my work schedule, I really struggled to find and attend more meetings, which I felt I needed and desired.

This all changed right after the start of the worldwide pandemic. Our local meetings had switched to Zoom but since the local meeting times had not changed I still struggled to attend more meetings. By the grace of God, I accidentally stumbled across a Zoom meeting started by a few fellows based in Singapore and the Netherlands about one month earlier. Its atypical start time of 1:50 p.m. Singapore time happened to provide a unique time slot attracting regular attendees from the Asia Pacific region, Europe, and the USA. Although that meant 10:50 p.m. my time, I attended every night for nearly one year. The meeting was relatively small, generally averaging about eight members. It was in this group that my recovery program took off. I chaired meetings and provided tech support regularly. Now, three years later, the group is flourishing, averaging about 30 attendees daily, and up to 40 for weekly speakers meetings. Its WhatsApp chat group has nearly 200 participants.

The brothers and sisters that I am the closest with in recovery, the people that I call when I am struggling, my DSR and

check-in partners, three of the five spouses I currently sponsor, I met through this Zoom group. Paradoxically, being a member in this 'virtual' group for the last three years has resulted in the most 'real' connections I have ever had in my life! These members are my recovery brothers and sisters. I am grateful to be walking the road to recovery with each of them and I love them dearly.

Once the convention was announced, there was no doubt that my wife and I would make the journey to Poland. Finally an opportunity to meet in-person many SA brothers and sisters I had known for so long. Unfortunately, our initial plans got put on hold due to my wife needing to start her new job and would not be able to take time off to attend the convention. But with less than one month before the convention weekend we learned that my wife's job would not start until August. I scrambled to make hotel and flight reservations with a plan to vacation in Europe around the convention. Our prayers

were answered when everything was set up and we registered for the convention. God had certainly done for us what we could not do for ourselves. It was a miracle of recovery, a spiritual awakening.

The convention was wonderful. The highlights for me were the SA/S-Anon speaker shares and Q&A sessions, which were very relatable for myself and my wife; the small group topic sessions that

were helpful and inspirational; and participating in recovery with my wife which was very special.

But, by far the most valuable, heart-warming, and emotional part of the weekend were the connections with SA brothers and sisters from around the world—the overwhelming majority being my closest program friends from my daily Zoom meeting. We sat together for hours and had real and vulnerable conversations. We cried together.

I never shared so many hugs in one weekend. The entire weekend was truly a spiritual experience! God was with us at

the convention hotel. We all felt His presence throughout the weekend.

The final blessing of the weekend was a highly emotional hybrid meeting at our group's regularly scheduled meeting time on Sunday morning with 12 in-person group members and 25 members in the Zoom room. A sister on Zoom turned on her camera for the first time ever, allowing us to see her for the first time. A brother in the live portion broke down in tears! It was real. It was raw. It was spontaneous.

Attending this event was a gift from my Higher Power filled with several spiritual awakenings. My participation in the Zoom group gave me the inspiration, faith, and desire to make it happen. Trust in God's will got me there.

I would like to thank the many sexaholics who put in the countless hours to make the convention the success that it was. I look forward to attending future conventions to create new miracles in recovery. Until then!

SCOTT B., *California, USA*



We were very honored to host the July 2023 "In God We Trust" IC as well as the very first in-person General Delegate Assembly outside North America. The beginning was difficult. We had first planned to organize the convention in our capital Warsaw, but found out that we couldn't afford a venue suitable for this kind of event there. Fortunately, we found a cheaper hotel in Cracow, which turned out to be a really good venue as well as easily accessible from the airport and railway station.

The hotel had enough conference rooms for big and small break-out meetings. It also lent itself excellently for spontaneously organized meetings in the days before and after the convention.

It was great to meet our SA family from so many countries. It was a true festival of recovery for us. We enjoyed going sightseeing with our participants from all around the world. Some numbers:

- ✓ There were 414 participants from SA and 53 from S-Anon, coming from not less than 34 countries: Armenia, Australia, Bosnia, Cuba, Czech Republic, Finland, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Philippines, Slovenia, Sweden, Croatia, Romania, United Arab Emirates, Austria, Canada, Russia, Switzerland, Lithuania, Ukraine, Italy, Spain, Ireland, Belgium, Israel, the Netherlands, UK, Slovakia, Germany, USA, Poland.
- ✓ Meetings were simultaneously provided in seven different meeting rooms.
- ✓ The general sessions were simultaneously translated via auditory assistance devices into Polish, Hebrew, Spanish, and Slovak, as well as via Zoom into American sign language.

KONRAD C., *Cracow, Poland*





International Conventions and Events

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 <i>Courage to Change</i>	SA & S-Anon International Summer Convention
JULY 11-13 2025	Dallas, TX, USA <i>To be announced</i>	SA & S-Anon International Summer Convention

Local Conventions and Events

AUGUST 25-27 2023	Stirling, Scotland, UK <i>Get Sober, Stay Sober</i>	SA UK Stirling Scottish Summer Convention 2023 https://www.sascottishconvention.weebly.com/
AUGUST 26 2023	Lincoln, Nebraska, USA <i>Change in Attitude</i>	SA & S-Anon Nebraska Retreat 2023 https://sanebraska.org/events
SEPT 29-OCT 1 2023	Kansas City, Kansas, USA <i>H.O.P.E. Hold On, Pain Ends</i>	SA & S-Anon SMW Fall Family Reunion
OCTOBER 6-8 2023	Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas, Mexico <i>Sobriety As a Practice of Freedom</i>	7th National Convention of SA Mexico
OCTOBER 13-15 2023	Post Falls, Idaho, USA <i>Most Good Ideas Are Simple</i>	NW Fall Retreat 2023 https://www.inlandnorthwestsa.org/
OCTOBER 13-14 2023	Sandy, Utah, USA 2023	SA & S-Anon Utah Annual Retreat

Send in your event to be listed on the Conventions & Events page of sa.org. Please submit the following information: dates, theme, location, and contact(s). An event flyer is very helpful. Send event information to saico@sa.org.

COMING IN OCTOBER



NEXT EDITION

In the October issue, long-term sober members from around the world share how to stay sober and serene.

Not Feeding the Hunger

This Egyptian fellow came to understand that there is a serene life beyond addiction and a genuine connection with God.

Sponsorship As Relapse Prevention

God has a way of having him say things to sponsees he needs to hear himself.

The Spirit of the First Step

This oldtimer from Venezuela shares how he can stay sober and serene in the middle of the temptations.

The Program Is My Parachute Today

Today he is trusting his HP to carry him safely to the end of each day.

SUBMIT YOUR STORY

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?

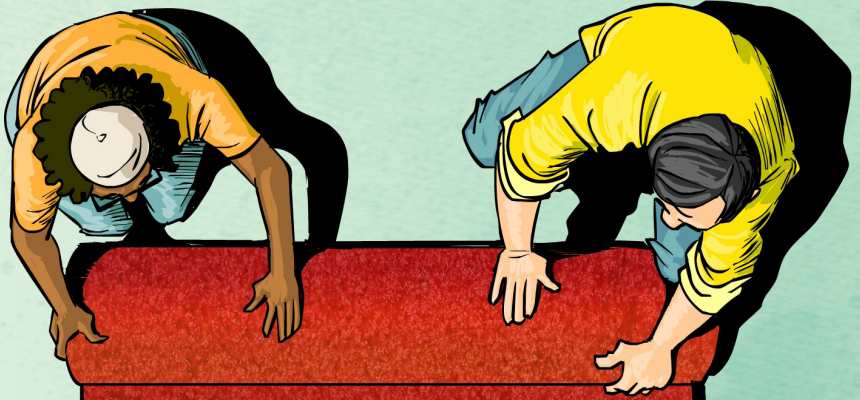
December 2023 edition: Holistic Recovery—Healing Had to Come About in All Three (Stories due Nov 1) “Sober Is Not Well,” we’ve come to see in recovery. How to develop a recovery for the whole person?

February 2024 edition: Using the Literature of the Program (Stories due Jan 1) How do you use the SA and AA literature in the solitude and privacy of your quiet times?

April 2024 edition: Men & Women in SA (Stories due Mar 1) Share with us how you and your home group cultivate meetings and socializing activities that are welcoming and supportive for both men and women.

Opinions expressed in ESSAY are not to be attributed to SA as a whole, nor does publication of

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.