


# ESSAY

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SEXAHOLICS ANONYMOUS

## SOBER TRAVEL

Featuring  
Highlights  
from the SA  
Japan Fellowship



HAPPY  
DESTINY

JUNE 2023  
SA.ORG

# SA Purpose

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

*Adapted with permission from AA Grapevine Inc.*

## RESPONSIBILITY DECLARATION

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

## Sexaholics Anonymous STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLE

We have a solution. We don't claim it's for everybody, but for us, it works. If you identify with us and think you may share our problem, we'd like to share our solution with you (*Sexaholics Anonymous* 2). In defining sobriety, we do not speak for those outside Sexaholics Anonymous. We can only speak for ourselves. Thus, for the married sexaholic, sexual sobriety means having no form of sex with self or with persons other than the spouse. In SA's sobriety definition, the term "spouse" refers to one's partner in a marriage between a man and a woman. For the unmarried sexaholic, sexual sobriety means freedom from sex of any kind. And for all of us, single and married alike, sexual sobriety also includes progressive victory over lust (*Sexaholics Anonymous* 191-192). (*Adopted 2010 by the General Delegate Assembly.*)

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

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

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

*ESSAY is a publication of Sexaholics Anonymous*

[essay@sa.org](mailto: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*

## *Many people take vacation during the months of July and August.*

Some take short city breaks, others go for lazy beach holidays, still others prefer weeks of hiking and trekking. Of course, people travel for a whole variety of reasons and at any time of the year—work, to visit family and friends, for religious or other personal reasons. Whatever the motivation, we sexaholics find that we can travel safely and enjoyably so long as we take certain steps, like our friend on horseback here.

In this month's theme, 'Sober Travel,' we offer you a collection of stories from members around the world who testify that they can maintain their sobriety, joy, and serenity whilst traveling, so long as they keep working those same program tools and maintain the same boundaries that they work at home.

We are also delighted to give special coverage to the fellowship in Japan, featuring members' stories from that country along with the history of the Japanese newsletter 'JIGSAW PUZZLE,' and an interesting smattering of facts and figures.

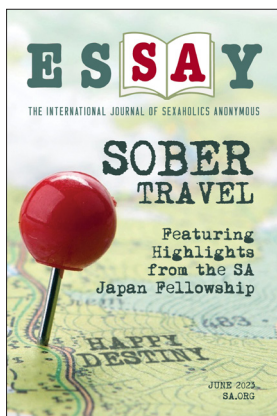
*In fellowship,*  
THE EDITORIAL TEAM  
[essay@sa.org](mailto:essay@sa.org)



# June 2023

*We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny. May God bless you and keep you— until then.*

AA 164



*On the cover: Sober travel is part of the promises that are being fulfilled among us, as we do not have to avoid a place where there is lusting, if we have a legitimate reason for being there.*

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## What's Going On In SA

# Please Keep Contributing As SA Does Not Accept Outside Donations



It fills me with awe to write this ESSAY column each issue. Who would have thought, when this sexaholic entered a meeting many years ago, that my experience and recovery could help so many? I get to share with you all the marvelous things that contribute to international recovery all over the world.

**New Region.** The General Delegate Assembly in February approved the creation of a new SA region for Australia and New Zealand. The ANZ Delegate took part for the first time in the May GDA meeting.

**Finances.** This is 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](http://sa.org). Remember: We accept no outside donations, so it's up to all of us to make sure we can continue to provide the services we do.

**Meeting Census.** It's taken a few years, but our 2020 census is now complete. We have registered over 1700 meetings around the world. Our largest region is Europe and Middle East (EMER) with 338 meetings. The seven North American regions each have about 100 to 200 meetings. Other meetings help sexaholics stay sober in many regions around the world. The Regional Alignment Committee is now digesting the data to offer new proposed representation for the General Delegate Assembly.

**Meeting Registration.** Please keep your meeting registration current, because the IT Committee is working to convert the [sa.org](http://sa.org) Meeting Finder to use the same

database. If your meeting isn't registered, do so today! This new app puts the power of the web in your hands for newcomers to find you.

**Web Application Developer Needed.** SA is looking for volunteer web application developers to build and maintain new functions on our [sa.org](http://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. Talk with your sponsor about what you can do. If you are interested, contact SAICO to be connected to the IT Committee.

**Board of Trustees.** We have a large turnover of Trustees this year, with three of the current Trustees terming off in July. The GDA has already elected two replacements who started service in May, so our servant leadership does continue.

**New Video.** Public Information Committee has created a new video, coming soon on [sa.org](http://sa.org), that highlights what the Correctional Facilities Committee does. It's a compelling description of the problems of our disease.

ERIC H., *Florida, USA*  
Trustee Chair



## Dear ESSAY

# My God Is Even at a Subtropical Swimming Paradise!

**DEAR ESSAY, SOME-**times the most beautiful things happen, even early in recovery. Having two kids, ages 2 and 4, gets me to places I'd rather avoid as a sex and lust addict. As a treat for the children, my parents invited us on a little weekend trip to a holiday village close to where we live. In these kinds of villages, accommodations mainly revolve around the center plaza, with a subtropical swimming paradise as the main attraction.

I had been dreading going for weeks, knowing it could get me into a risky place with regards to my sexaholism. My mind is very photographic and the pictures my mental camera takes stay with me for a long time.

Once inside the swimming pool, things were tough for me. All around me, people in bathing suits were

having a great time, going on waterslides and wild water rapids. Mothers sat lazily in bikinis around a children's pool, talking and enjoying their day. Everyone was having a great time. But not me. Being in a crowded place filled with temptations was quickly getting way too much.

Things were heading down the wrong path very quickly. I kept staring at the ground, the ceiling, and my children, praying to my Higher Power to guide me through this and to keep me from lusting. Oh, how I wanted to reach out to my sponsor, whose name is Fries. I knew he could talk me through this thing. But all of our cell phones were left in a locker at the entrance, so there was no way I could reach out to fellows.

I needed to get away NOW! Starting to get affected by lust, I got up and started looking for a quiet place. In doing so, I passed the food corner of the swimming pool. And there it happened: My Higher Power directed my eyes right to the



word “FRIES” on the menu poster, offering the option of ordering a portion of french fries in the food corner.

He was right there with me in my time of need. He told me to “freeze” (the name of my sponsor, Fries, is in Dutch pronounced /friz/ or “freeze”), to pause, take a break and connect with Him.

I was reminded that pain is necessary, but suffering is optional. There is always a way out. My God loves me so much that He brought my dearest friend in recovery to me so I wouldn't get overpowered by the need to act out. God, thank You for helping me recover.

Michiel R., Ghent, Belgium



# Worldwide Walls Of SA

# SA Meetings Can Be Held Just About Anywhere ...



*Heliopolis Meeting  
Cairo, Egypt*



*Laguna Hills Meeting  
California, USA*



*Vincentini Meeting  
Bratislava, Slovakia*



*Holy Family Church  
Taipei, Taiwan*



## Share your photos

Send your meeting place to [essay@sa.org](mailto:essay@sa.org). Remember to include your name, address, group name, and location of the meeting.

# USING THE TOOLS SHIFTED HER VISION

*A praying mantis symbolized her Higher Power's loving presence amid the uncertainty about her health.*

I received some news about my health that I was not quite ready for. It meant multiple trips to the doctor and waiting on test results. Waiting has never been a strong suit of mine. I found myself wrestling with fear, for as a sex addict, fear can be quite triggering. Fear is the spark that, if not surrendered to my Higher Power, can start a forest fire of bad decisions.

Such thoughts were spinning a chaotic mental web within. I desperately did not want to feel my fear. The addict in me wanted to turn to the familiar ways of acting out in order to cope: "If you reach out to your acting-out partner, you'll feel much better." At one point, I literally said out loud, "Not today, satan!"

The day of my surgery came and went. When I got home, I noticed there was an insect on the bumper of my car. When I left home to return to the doctor's office the next morning, it was still there. (And still alive!) I drove thirty minutes on the freeway each way and rested when

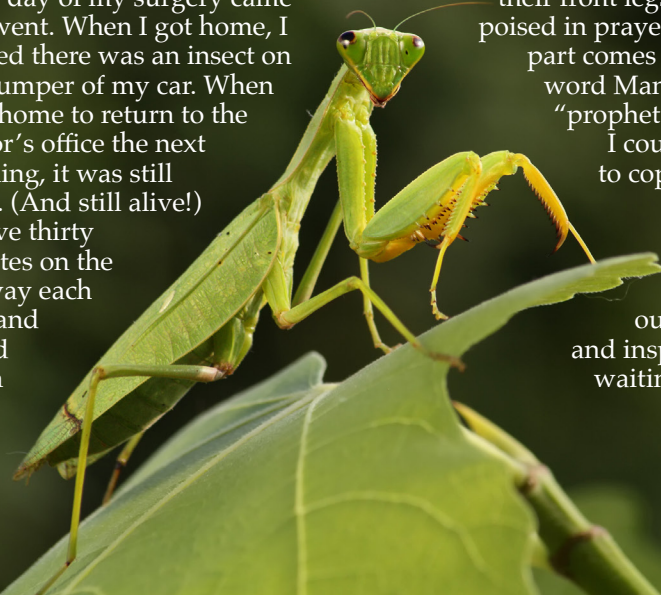
I got home. After a few hours I got back into my car. I looked out through the windshield, and the insect was now on the hood of my car. I suddenly realized it was a praying mantis.

Seeing it three times in a row prompted my inquisitive mind to discover the

**Fear is the spark that, if not surrendered to my Higher Power, can start a forest fire of bad decisions.**

origin of their name. The "praying" part is probably obvious: it's the way their front legs are seemingly poised in prayer. The "mantis" part comes from the Greek word Mantikos, meaning "prophet." I was in awe.

I could have chosen to cope with my fear by living in the problem, but then I would have missed out on the beauty and inspiration quietly waiting for me in the





solution. Left to my own devices, I would have seen the world through tangled cobwebs to the point of acting out; but because I stayed vigilant and used the tools of SA, my attitude shifted my vision to a beautiful praying

mantis who symbolized my Higher Power's loving presence amid my uncertainty.

JENNIFER C., *California, USA*



## Praying outside of the



He found a form of Step 11 which brings together his recovery and his daily life.

**O**ne of the practical tools I have found most helpful in recovery, particularly as a method of working Step 11, has been setting aside time to pray outside of my house during the day. I have worked remotely since the start of the lockdowns in 2020, so I am often able to get away, doing so to houses of worship near my home. I have also prayed in parks, airport chapels, or in lobbies or waiting rooms when out and about.

My favorite places to go are places of worship where there are kneeling cushions available, since kneelers provide me with a physical representation of my powerlessness before God. (I have actually got one in my home if I am unable to get away from work.) Regardless of where I pray, I notice a distinct positive difference in my day after I do so. By contrast, on days when I do not get outside to pray, I note that I am often more “restless, irritable, and discontent” (AA xxviii).

What do I do when I pray? I start out by taking 10 deep breaths, to try to get physically present. Then I take a short inventory of what I am feeling

(fear, resentment, gratitude, etc.) and surrender these feelings to God. I then ask him what he would have me be, and look for inspiration to take my next best step (AA 86). Sometimes I am struck by the clarity of my thinking when I create space for it in the course of a day. “Oh, that’s why I am so fearful/selfish/resentful towards him—I am afraid that he may be right!” Other times I simply get the gift of presence and peace through a quiet moment. I end with 10 more deep breaths before leaving my place of prayer. I will often call a recovery member afterward to surrender things that came up.

For me, this pattern of prayer has been an important form of my Step 11 practice. I have prayed with my wife at times as well, and have been struck by how connecting those experiences can be, even without words being exchanged between us. I am grateful both for this Step, and also for finding a way to practice it which brings together my recovery and my daily life. It works when I work it!

JAMES H., *South Carolina, USA*





*This Russian lady found out that she needs to take the Twelve Steps and God with her in her suitcase whenever she travels.*

**T**raveling broadens my outlook, inspires me, and acquaints me with new places, new people, and new countries. Whether I'm relaxing or working, traveling is a part of my life. I am so grateful to God for this gift. Why is sobriety required for me when traveling?

First of all, sobriety enables me to reach the goals and to solve the tasks that I set for myself at the beginning of each trip. It doesn't make any difference if I am on a vacation or on a business trip. Traveling is meaningless without sobriety, and traveling in illness is a wasted time.

Secondly, sobriety helps me to enjoy traveling to the fullest extent. Nature, connection with God, unity with people, new impressions—all of those things are delightful in sobriety.

And thirdly, it does not matter why

I am going somewhere. If I am sober I can serve people during the trip, be in the service of God, e.g. to support, to help someone, to fill the hearts of people who are as sick as me with the shine of God.

I noticed some pitfalls in my trips I want to share here:

1. There are thoughts that while traveling, especially if a trip is associated with relaxing, I am allowed to postpone all tasks including the program, and to return to them after getting relaxed, just not to bother about anything. However, this is a way to relapse, so I need to intensely practice Steps Nine to Twelve when I am on vacation.

2. I can get so overwhelmed with positive emotions that it feels like working the Steps is not necessary. This is also a lie. I am a sick person, that is why I can lose my emotional balance and feel like I have fallen from a high swing even if I was in a good mood. I get tired of per-

manent joy, positiveness, overflowing emotions, so I need God to restore my emotional balance. I really need Step Eleven and the renewal.

3. Change of my usual diet is a trigger. I always eat at home since I need to cook for myself because of problems

**I can get so overwhelmed with positive emotions that it feels like working the Steps is not necessary. This is also a lie.**

with my stomach. When eating outside I forget about my needs and start eating fast food, ready-made semi-finished food that is available in stores, salty, fatty, fried food. I start eating sweet food without limits, which is prohibited to me. As a result, I feel bad, become angry, start craving for lust, feel annoyed, and discomforted. This is a dangerous situation for me. During a trip I need to be attentive to my body every single moment and care beforehand about where and what I will eat.

4. It is triggering for me to hear pop music that I do not listen to at home as such music is toxic for me. I used to feel ashamed and uncomfortable in such situations. Now I smile and ask to turn off the music. If for some reason I am unable to avoid toxic music I pray and while praying I watch the situation with “God’s eyes,” and perceive what is happening. “God, help me to treat all that music and people listening to the music with tolerance and compassion.” I ceased watching TV 10 years ago as almost 97 percent of information that I saw there was toxic for me.

5. Sometimes I am surrounded by

extremely toxic people who use bad language, act aggressively, and so on. I need to pray for them and for me in order not to react to their aggression and not to become a source of negativity as well as to avoid damage that I can cause to those people. In complex cases I call or write to my sponsor or to my renewal partner. Sometimes I ask for a blessing from sisters in the women’s chat. I do all those things even if I travel around my home city.

6. One more important thing is that my daily schedule changes when I travel. I cannot get enough sleep, I get lost in time or don’t notice that I do not follow the HALT rule. Here I need the program. I need to stop in the overload of tasks, to slow down and to ask God what is the next step I need to take to live this day with Him.

During my New Year holiday trip I did not notice that I was breaking my rules: I chatted a lot, went to bed late, ate too much sweet food, tried a little alcohol in order not to offend the loved ones and to please myself. I felt self-pity, flirted a little, did not practice

**When I write my gratitude list, I feel that life plays with new colors and my heart is filled with light and love.**

the Tenth Step, did not call my renewal partner. By the end of my trip I rushed home to restore my sobriety and my usual way of life as soon as possible. I need to live with the program and not lock it in my apartment. I need to take the Twelve Steps with me on my trips!

My attitude is important too. For ten years I went to my father living in another region with the same attitude—I

knew that I would have to listen to his lectures and blaming. Everything was predictable in those meetings. But lately I made a decision that the next trip shall be full of joy, love, acceptance and forgiveness no matter what. And so it happened! God went with me. I did not leave Him in my tiny apartment.

It is crucial for me to take my spiritual toolkit with me when I travel. During my last trip, my sponsor reminded me about being grateful to myself, to God and to other people. I always forget about that, so I can suffer from a lack of

bread or complain that the sun shines too dimly. But when I write my gratitude list, I feel that life plays with new colors and my heart is filled with light and love. My Higher Power and my hope work wonders. No matter where I am, if God is inside me and if I apply the spiritual principles in all my affairs, then I am not only happy, but ready to serve God and to be useful to the people who really need that.

VERA A., *Novosibirsk, Russia*



## Having Fun in Travel with My Recovery Friends

**By actively participating in fellowship activities, he found out how he could fill the empty space within and find love and new friends.**



recently celebrated my fifth sobriety anniversary in SA and I've never been grateful enough for that. I remember talking to an oldtimer after a meeting in my country. I was still new to SA. He had been in the program for eight years. I asked him what to do with my friends

if I'm to stay sober. He told me that it would be difficult to have relationships with friends from my old life because it could be dangerous and make me relapse.

I was shocked. I was very lonely and I only knew some friends from when I completed my bachelor's degree at university. We used to gather every

two weeks in a mixed party of lustful men and women. Alcohol, drugs, and cigarettes would be served. All my friends were like that. I couldn't even imagine having fun or joy without chatting, gathering, partying, and traveling with them. On the other hand, I was doing terrible and my life was unmanageable. I didn't have any other choice. So, I told myself that I would follow the oldtimer's instructions for a short period of time. I would just not call those friends for a few weeks.

After attending meetings for a while and starting the Step work, I realized that I cannot get in touch with any of my "former playmates"— meaning the people I used to lust after, or past acting-out partners. I accepted that reality and deleted the phone number of every one of those friends I used to hang out with. I also left many groups in social media apps. I felt lonely and I didn't know what to do on weekends or during holidays.

One day, a recovery fellow after a meeting asked me to go out together to eat ice cream and I accepted. It'd been several months since I had eaten out with anybody. It was fun, but we did have a negligible discussion about paying for ice cream. My first time out with a recovery fellow and only a small challenge! It was then that I realized how I could fill the empty space created from letting go of my past life. I could have fun and even travel with my recovery fellows. We started going into nature on the weekends and barbecuing.

When I reached 10 months of sobriety, my sponsor relapsed. It was a shock. I tried to find a new sponsor in Tehran, but I couldn't. As a result, and after talking with recovery fellows, I decided to go to Isfahan to find a sponsor. I went to Isfahan with two

recovery fellows—my first trip in SA.

A friend from Isfahan proposed that I use one of his properties for accommodations. Another friend took us to meetings. Still another one took us to the historical and beautiful places in Isfahan. Another fellow even invited us to have a local dish called Biryani for lunch.

We went to three meetings a day— morning, noon, and evening. Between meetings we went around the city with recovery fellows. Unfortunately,

**I realized how I could fill the empty space created from letting go of my past life. I could have fun and even travel with my recovery fellows.**

I couldn't find a sponsor during that trip. But I found a lot of love, companionship, and new friends. What a blessing!

I had similar experiences with other fellows in the following years. We went on a lot of trips together around Tehran, my home province. We also visited other provinces in Iran, like Shiraz and Khuzestan. I learned a lot on these trips and enjoyed the companionship of my recovery fellows. As I've heard from my sponsor and other fellows, the fellowship is a safe place to exercise recovery in relationship with others.

As I build relationships, I try to exercise unconditional love, acceptance, forgiveness, and honesty. That last one is the most difficult for me. Being hon-

est with myself is still a big challenge. For example, I started a new type of eating style about two months ago. On the last trip I went with recovery fellows, it was hard to find somewhere which had appropriate foods with regards to my eating style. One of the members was looking for a special type of place and most of the time the food at the restaurant wasn't satisfying and would trigger my overeating.

I needed other types of food, but I couldn't be honest with myself. I was behaving in a codependent way. I thought we had to be together in every place and activity. But after that trip, when I talked with my sponsor, I realized it was my disease. I was being overly dependent. I could have told my fellows that I would go find another restaurant with convenient food for me to eat. But instead of doing that, I started to become resentful toward myself. Again, I am still in the process of learning to be honest with myself.

Another thing I learned from my own experience is that it is better for newcomers to avoid having trips with other newcomers or a chronic

relapser unless there is an oldtimer or a member with a considerable length of sobriety with us.

I once had a newcomer with me on a trip and it was a very powerful experience in dealing with my ego and trying to be tolerant and lenient. It was very hard and troublesome. It helped me to realize that having years of sobriety and recovery doesn't mean that I know everything or that I am better than a newcomer or chronic relapser. It doesn't mean that I can manage them or try to convince them of recovery. As we say in our Traditions, "Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion."

I can't talk to a newcomer about spirituality and recovery, but I can behave based on my own recovery. Newcomers and chronic relapsers are very keen to find a contradiction between my talk and my behavior. It can be hard for me to try to behave based on recovery instead of talking so much about it. It's a big challenge, but I like it.

Moein M., Tehran, Iran



## DISCUSSION TOPIC

### Are you having fun in travel in your sobriety?

**D**id you, like Moein, go to any length to let go of former playmates and playgrounds? Or do you still have some hidden bottles "to provide you with fun" in case recovery wouldn't give it to you on your terms?

Do you truly experience that "the fellowship is the substitute of the

addiction"? (AA 152) Do you invest in socializing time with your fellows?

Do you only take or also give in such activities—by helping to organize or by participating in the logistics?

Have you taken the risk of going out of your comfort zone and traveled with program fellows to conventions, workshops or retreats?

What are your main challenges while traveling in sobriety, with fellows, family members or other friends, today?

What can you and your home group do to welcome newcomers to socializing activities?

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

**T**raveling was never appealing to me. Why should I spend money

to visit places that millions of people already visited and take pictures to bother my relatives with?

But it was also a matter of fear. I resolved very few situations on my own. There were always enough parents, teachers, and older siblings to handle it. Avoiding responsibilities was convenient.

Once after a meeting, I went to grab a pizza with my fellows and one of them said: "I've always been afraid of making decisions on my own... but I decided that I will do it this time and go to the Ireland convention." And I said to myself: "Dang! If he can break the habit, why couldn't I?"

Okay, there were several relevant reasons why. I knew nothing about airplanes, buying tickets and staying abroad. I nearly broke down when I tried

to choose the correct plane options, and after all that suffering I realized I couldn't buy them because of not having sufficient bank limits. One of my biggest fears is bureaucrats, and I had to face them! Luckily (with God's help?), one of them helped me and I bought my tickets.

However, there was one more problem. Family. In my great providence, I hadn't told them anything about this journey. I hoped that it would somehow resolve itself. But it only got worse. My mom told me that my cousin, the only one I'm talking with, was having a wedding on the date of the convention. I couldn't see a valid reason for skipping such an event. But I had bought my tickets without the possibility of a refund. So I had to go.

My lame thinker was already cooking up plans. "I will tell her after breakfast because she will be well fed and less aggressive," that's

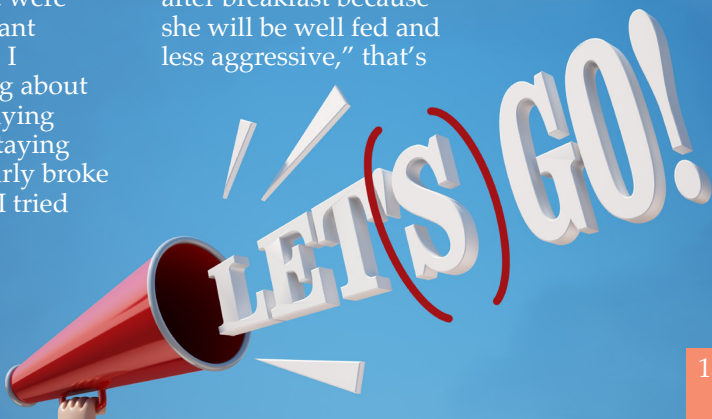
the way I was thinking about my mom!

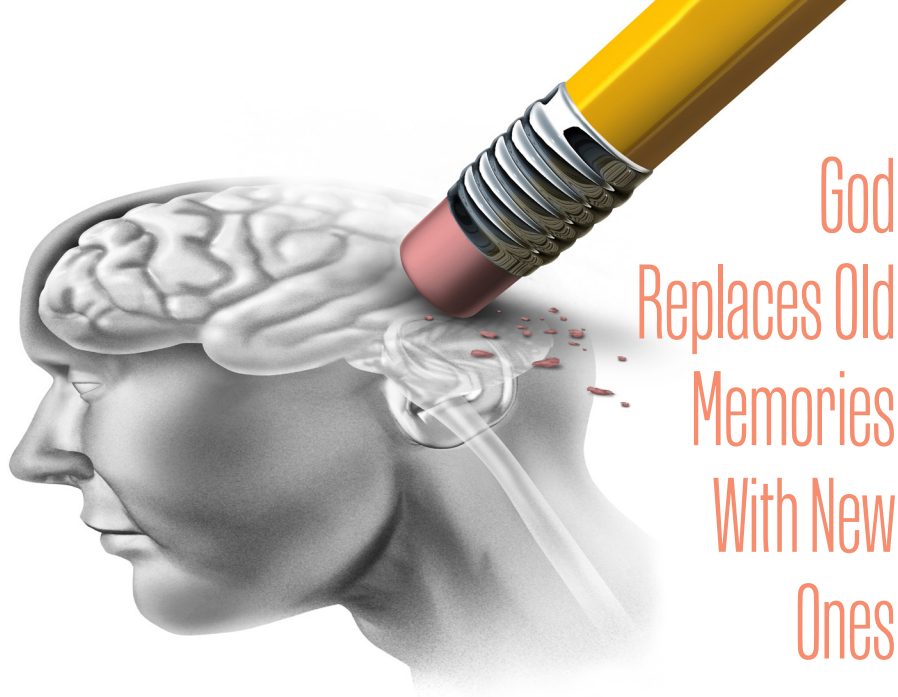
When I told her I couldn't attend the wedding because I was going to Ireland, she clapped her hands and joyfully said: "You are finally going somewhere!" She gave me money, and wished me good luck. Needless to say, I was surprised and relieved. God provides solutions where I only see problems.

I stepped out of my comfort zone and had a wonderful time. I traveled across Ireland with my SA friends and attended the convention with amazing, recovering people. They let us stay one extra night for free. And one of the members took us to the Cliffs of Moher, despite having other plans.

I had an amazing trip. And all I had to do was let(s) go and let God.

Beata M., Bratislava, Slovakia





## God Replaces Old Memories With New Ones

*When she went back, in sobriety, to a former acting-out city, she came to see that God did for her what she couldn't do for herself.*

I'm back here again. I have missed this city. It has been just shy of a decade since I've been here. I breathe in the coastal air. The cooling embrace of the sea in front of me, and the towering skylines and mountains behind.

But old memories soon come flooding back. I breathe deeply and surrender them to my Higher Power. This conscious contact with my Higher Power is incredibly life-giving. My younger self would have never imagined my life turning out this way, nor that I would feel as I feel now. But it's true—I am really grateful that I don't live that way anymore; I'm not that woman anymore; I don't make those choices anymore. And a sense of gratitude slowly settles inside me.

My first time traveling to this city was too good to be true: The oppor-

tunity fell on my lap to stay with my friend and her aunt's family for two weeks. Between the hustle and bustle of our host's travel itinerary, we were free to explore the city's nightlife by ourselves. Unlike in our own country, we were free now to do whatever we wanted. We went to places we could never have gone to and did things we could never have. We even visited a specialty shop to buy "souvenirs" for use with acting out partners, since such shops are banned in our country and when I got home, I was determined to live life to the fullest.

Little did I know, I had made a contract with a thing called lust, a very dangerous disease of the spirit that was about to take over my life. It got so deep into my heart that I became infused with lust; my identity, my being, my relationship with others, with the world, with reality all sodden



and rotted with lust.

Lust became king. I worshiped it but, by degrees, the altar of pleasure became the altar of sacrifice, and now I began sacrificing my safety, my boundaries, my dignity, and my will. Time and again, I was beaten and broken on this altar, sacrificing all to lust, until beaten so low I could hardly

**Little did I know, I had made a contract with a thing called lust, a very dangerous disease of the spirit that was about to take over my life. It got so deep into my heart that I became infused with lust.**

stand, I surrendered to a Power much greater than lust and was restored to sanity.

I fully embraced the Lord of my faith tradition. This time, I desperately needed Him to be more loving, more accepting, more compassionate and more gentle than the Lord I learned about when I was a child. I begged, I pleaded, I cried, and surrendered over and over. And, at each new step of surrender, He showed me that He really can do what I cannot. In fact, all this while, He was far more generous and merciful to me than I ever realized.

Gently, He guided me further and further away from sources of lust. My journey began with regular prayer. Then came fasting. In the course of

time, I dressed more modestly and changed my manner of interacting with men, my looks, words, touch. My intentions changed as well, which helped to keep the interactions dignified. I stopped looking at inappropriate material, threw away my stash of “souvenirs” and blocked all ways that former acting out partners could reach me. Along the way, I took up the sobriety definition of SA; it followed so naturally in the progressive elimination of lust.

Miraculously, and for the first time ever, I was sober for more than a month. God was truly doing for me what I could not do for myself. I had a new lease on life. Soon, I was called to give service to a local NGO. Serving with this NGO over the next few months led to an opportunity of representing them as their speaker at an international conference. When I found out where the conference was going to be, I chuckled—God’s definitely got a sense of humor. It felt nice to have a little inside joke with Him.

And so, my return to this city is a completely different experience. This time it’s to give back. To give hope. To inspire. What a world of difference God can make if only He is sought.

After the conference, I stayed on for an extra few days. I revisited the places where we had had more wholesome experiences together; explored new places too. One night, there was a little carnival in one of the islands nearby, and I got to try my first ginger ice cream there (it is lovely, I promise!). These new memories are more serene, more wholesome than those old ones, don’t you think?

I left the city sober, by the grace of God. He truly has been doing for me what I couldn’t do for myself.

ANN R., *Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*



# CHANGE YOUR MINDSET

*The program changed her mindset, and that changed mindset changed her experience in a city where she used to act out.*

**B**eing a sexaholic is a life-long condition, and it goes back to my childhood where I felt inadequate, unworthy, unloved, and lonely. I used to drink resentments about how I walked, talked, and about my body shape. Thus, I never dismissed an opportunity to make myself feel better, including active lusting.

Active lusting was a lifestyle that I carried with me just like my purse. I carried it to work, the streets, shopping, and traveling. Of course, I had to excel in that! Otherwise, I'd be unworthy. Lust was my drug to sedate the pain of coping with life itself!

My memory takes me back to more than three decades ago, when I used to visit a coastal city in my country, and I used to dress in a provocative way that sent a message: "Please connect with me and make me whole." I wanted to be lusted after! Men looking at me gave me a fake feel of

worth and acceptance! Unfortunately, I did not realize that I was hooked to that city; I was too drunk. For I used that city as an accessory of my active lusting and sexual acting-out habit.

We owned a place in that city! Woo-hoo! I traveled over and over. My acting out escalated in that city until I almost lost my life. I reached my bottom in that city. I declared defeat!

So, what has changed? I still visit the city, but I am not acting out anymore. I am now able to make better choices. I joined SA and I started working with a sponsor, who taught me how to surrender and took me through the Steps.

After I regained my balance, I resumed my visits to that city, but now I walk around carrying my spiritual toolkit with me, with which I stay sober when I am traveling to the very same city where I used to act out. It is a miracle, what else can you call it?

It is a very rich and game-changing, yet very simple, toolkit:

**1** I pray and surrender a lot throughout the whole day.

**2** I am cautious to dress modestly wherever I go.

**3** I keep vigilant to sit, walk, and talk modestly.

**4** I am conscious to keep my looks checked.

**5** I don't cross my boundaries with anyone.

**6** I take my copy of the AA Big Book with me.

**7** I take sufficient money to buy internet bundles to stay in touch with my group and meetings remotely.

**8** Most importantly, I carry the fellowship in my heart. I recall the looks and voices of the fellows which fill me with love and acceptance.

Working my program with a sponsor has granted me freedom from active lusting on a daily basis, and I am eternally grateful for that.

MERVAT, Egypt



# Traveling Again After Getting Rid of Emotional Baggage



She attends meetings from hotels, traveling, temple visits, everywhere, and keeps her program in the first place.

I started my SA journey on May 25, 2021 when my husband confronted me once more. But the difference this time was that my inner voice (Higher Power's voice) strongly directed me to some God (Good Orderly Directions), so I googled, found SA, and got connected to an Indian female member who introduced me to the program. In our first long call, she told me the basics of SA and explained the SA sobriety definition to me. She told me that I couldn't go out of marriage—as I am married, couldn't do anything inappropriate with myself, and recommended me to try to maintain total abstinence in my marriage too for a few months, which my husband and I mutually maintained for 14.5 months.

I started doing whatever the program was telling me as I came here

after hitting rock bottom. I decided to be honest to the core of my being, open-minded, and to keep myself willing, learnable, and teachable. I started attending meetings, found a sponsor, and got added to a world-

**I decided to be honest to the core of my being, open-minded, and to keep myself willing, learnable, and teachable.**

wide group of more than 180 sisters. I started connecting to sisters on a daily basis through WhatsApp, chats, voice notes, calls, etc. The Next

Meeting link became my lifeline and a true lifesaver as in India we don't have any physical meetings, nor do I have any identified member in my city, state or nearby.

I just kept myself engrossed with SA recovery work, Step work with my sponsor, meetings, readings, reaching out, and so on. I was still not ready to start going out of my home on my own due to my emotional baggage but I needed to come out of isolation. I started traveling with my husband after I completed six sober months in SA and also after discussing with my sponsor.

I decided to do more prayers, meditate, practice more conscious contact with my God/HP while traveling by road, train or air. No matter what may come, I didn't skip doing my meetings at least twice a day, kept connected to my sponsor through chats and updating her, kept connected to sisters all over worldwide SA through chats and voice calls if need be. I kept myself very mindful. My sobriety length motivated me to not go back and also that I very well know that I don't have any choice but to keep sober as I need my hubby, sons, family, and a beautiful life ahead. I knew that, on my own, I would die; instead, I chose to be sober and with family.

I traveled with my husband for the first time to search for a countryside living place in order to leave city life, during which I kept doing my daily meeting, at least one a day. I read on the train from my book which I always carry, which helped me to save myself from lusting or wanting to be lusted after. I had challenges including anxieties, palpitations, lust hits, and temptations. I had no option sometimes but to share with my hubby who is in his own addiction recovery program. He also knows,

supports, and understands my addiction, recovery program, and journey. He gave me his feedback in his perspective which I related a lot to and made me relax.

I fell for a few men too, and thankfully and gratefully remembered to immediately pray for them, surrender, and stopped objectifying them. I asked God to give them what I could have wished for myself. I kept doing my daily calls no matter where I was—in villages, remote areas, bus travel full of music, auto rickshaws, and in trains.

**I have attended my daily meetings from hotels, traveling, temple visits, everywhere. In fact, I have managed to share in meetings from wherever I was.**

Once, I remember I got triggered so badly but was saved when I immediately reached out to one longtimer sister and she gave me her time. I got down at one station where my train stopped for a few minutes. I had a call with her, cried out, shared, and brought my issue into the light and followed her feedback. It helped. Instead of leading me to slip, I was able to do the next right thing by being mindful.

One day, my hubby and I were in a remote village in my state searching for our countryside house. There was a man who was a little drunk on the way and urinating near an aban-

doned house wall and I happened to see the act while crossing the scene in an auto rickshaw. I panicked and went into self-pity thinking why God made me see that, why me? Then after some time, I understood that I won't be able to handle it alone but need to reach out. I had a call with a longtime sister and needed to request my hubby to take a break and give me some space as I was struggling. He understood that very well and I became okay after a few hours.

I have attended my daily meetings from hotels, traveling, temple visits, everywhere. In fact, I have managed to share in meetings from wherever I was. I showed up and kept my on-line mixed home group also updated to be accountable to all of them. They always knew if I was traveling. I have done my Step work also in travels as I carry my White Book and one more book always with me.

After talking and sharing with my sponsor, and evaluating that I got freed of sufficient emotional baggage, I traveled alone by train this year for the first time since in sobriety. I requested my sponsor to give me time for our scheduled call as soon as I reached the metro city almost 650 km away from my own city. She agreed for which I am not sufficiently grateful to her. As soon as I reached and checked in to my hotel, we had an early morning call for an hour doing my Step work. I did my journaling and writing work during my previous overnight trip. Overall, I felt so grateful and sober.

I made a point to meet my two brothers in recovery while in their city which I shared with my sponsor in advance. The three of us met in a cafeteria and held a wonderful meeting by reciting our beautiful Serenity Prayer, reading from the White Book, and sharing. We closed with the Se-

renity Prayer by holding hands and it was so strengthening and very helpful for another level of my recovery with my first ever physical SA meeting. No lust hits or temptations.

Lastly, I traveled by air with my father to a metro city two months back for some art show and it was honestly a kind of progressive victory over lust. I had no issues in the airport, plane, art show nor while coming back. I invited a brother to the show, and we had a great recovery talk.

I have accepted totally and am willing to keep myself sober and in recovery One Day At A Time, no matter what, going to any lengths.

At the end, I would say that I wish to live a beautiful, sober life where I will be more available to others, not harm or hurt my hubby, children or parents anymore as I have so much to enjoy, and be happy, joyous, and free. Sobriety is my daily choice and in fact THE ONLY CHOICE! I keep myself useful and to be an instrument to my Higher Power. What a beautiful gift of my recovery to be able to write my share for this ESSAY Magazine. I love it.

IRIS, India



This Japanese member testifies by his own experiences that there is a loving Higher Power that is always guiding everything for the best.

**E**ven after I connected with SA and started taking the Steps, there were many things I did not understand. One of them was the “timing of my Higher Power.”

I was repeatedly told by one of my fellows ahead of me in the Steps, that I would “always know” when to make amends, and to whom, and what to say to them, as long as I was properly connected to my Higher Power. When considering making a Ninth Step amends, I would check with my sponsor the words to use and to whom and when I might know the right time to make the amends. I thought that recognizing the right time to make the amends would be a real Higher Power moment—the “timing of the Higher Power.” Such a way of thinking might not be wrong per se. However, I later had an experience in which I recognized the right time with greater clarity and conviction.

In January of one year, my sister, who lived about 500 km from me, contacted me, asking me to come to the hospital with her to hear her doctor explain her medical condition. I had heard that my sister was ill, but she had never explained her specific condition to me, only telling me that she was fine and not to worry about it.

I grew up in a family of four with my parents and older sister. My father was a tireless worker, and my mother

made sure we had enough food to eat every day. Thanks to them, I grew up to be a person who enjoyed the act of eating and always pursued my education regardless of my economic circumstances. My father, on the other hand, was a problem drinker who inflicted a lot of emotional abuse and some physical abuse on us, his children. My mother facilitated his drinking problem. I cannot recall ever receiving a single compliment from her. My sister and I were comrades, the two of us trying to survive the discomfort of our home.

At the hospital, the doctor told me that my sister’s condition was bad. To an extent, I had expected this. Even I, a layman, could see that she had cancer and that there was little hope for her recovery. I thought she might survive until the cherry blossoms that year,

**I thought she might survive until the cherry blossoms that year, but could not see how she would see them the following year.**

but could not see how she would see them the following year. (For those

of us who grew up in Japan, cherry blossoms in the spring have a very special meaning.)

My sister seemed to have understood her situation for quite a while

## **I had to trust the words of my fellows that I would know what to say, when to say it, and to whom, so long as I was properly connected to my Higher Power.**

and was resigned to it. That night, I had dinner with my sister, and I remember that we talked about our childhoods and our recent mutual work, not much about her illness or her future. When I returned alone to the hotel where I was staying that night, I cried in the bathtub, saddened by the thought of my sister's passing in the not-too-distant future.

There was a major concern at this point. My sister had had very little contact with our parents. She had not even told them that she was sick in the first instance. She was very clear that telling them about her illness would only upset her, and was quite firm that I should not tell them about it. I myself was not very close to my parents and agreed with my sister's opinion that it would make matters more complicated

It was daunting to imagine myself saying to my parents at some inevita-

ble point that their daughter, my sister, had been ill for years and had now passed away, and that I had known all along.

Of course, it was my sister herself who was suffering the most, so my first priority was to fulfill her wishes. My sister, who was working in the medical field, had done a lot of research on her own illness, and as a result, she decided to receive only the standard treatment and told me not to do anything unnecessary. It was also her wish to continue working and lead a normal life for as long as she could.

Then, when it came to fulfilling my sister's wish, there was not much I could do for her. She hated being bothered with this and that just because she was sick. Every day I tried to think of whatever I could do for her, pray for her, bring to her.

I had to accept many times that it was my own wish to do something, not a request from my sister or my Higher Power. Of course, I prayed many times for His guidance. As for the question of when to tell my parents, I had absolutely no idea, no insights, no intuition whatsoever. I had to trust the words of my fellows that I would know what to say, when to say it, and to whom, so long as I was properly connected to my Higher Power. Looking back, I see that I was dependent upon connection with my Higher Power during this period, and perhaps even more strongly connected to Him than I am today.

In January of the following year, my sister, now in a palliative care ward, contacted me to come over because she wanted to go out to take care of some business. I went to the hospital and took a cab to go out with my sister, visiting her home, the bank, and other places to attend to her business. When I asked if she needed to tell her parents

yet, she replied curtly, “not yet.”

Soon after the beginning of February, my sister’s doctor contacted me while I was at work, asking me to come to the hospital as soon as possible. I asked him if I needed to go immediately, telling him that I lived 500 km away. He asked me then to come as soon as I could. When I rushed to the hospital, my sister was still conscious and barely able to speak. When I got

## **It is my hope that someday, when something hard happens again, I will be able to stay connected to my Higher Power again.**

there, I was convinced that the moment had come: it was now or never. I felt no doubt whatsoever and said, “I’m going to tell our parents.” She agreed, joking that they were entitled to see her before the mortuary. The doctor said she probably had about another two weeks or so.

I called my mother and told her that my sister’s death was imminent and that I had been hiding it from her at my sister’s request. She seemed to have guessed that and asked that I come home and go through it all with her and my father. I went to their house that night, explained it all and told them I had arranged with her doctor that we all go to the hospital together the next morning.

Early the next morning, the hospital informed me that her condition had worsened. I went there with my par-

ents but when we got there, she had already passed away. I think that both of them regretted not being able to see her alive. However, from my point of view, I was able to fulfill her wish to the very end, but also let my parents know the situation while she was still alive. Other than the fact that my sister had passed away, none of the things I had feared actually happened. It was as if my sister had arranged the timing of her death so that I, her loving younger brother, would have as little trouble as possible.

The day before, standing by her hospital bed, I got that strong Higher Power timing and was in no doubt that it was really now or never. I have never had such a strong conviction before or since. Looking back at it now, I believe that it was my Higher Power’s plan to let me feel what such certainty is like and that I had been given the Steps by my Higher Power in the lead up so that it could happen.

There are many things that have helped me to connect with SA, take the Steps, and feel happier. My relationship with my wife has also improved amazingly. When my wife casually said to me at the end of a day when nothing special was happening, “It’s fun to be with you,” I thought that such happiness was not possible. The fact that I can face hard things, distinguish what I can and cannot do, and act quickly when the time comes, as I did when my sister passed away, is a result of working the Steps, and a gift from my Higher Power.

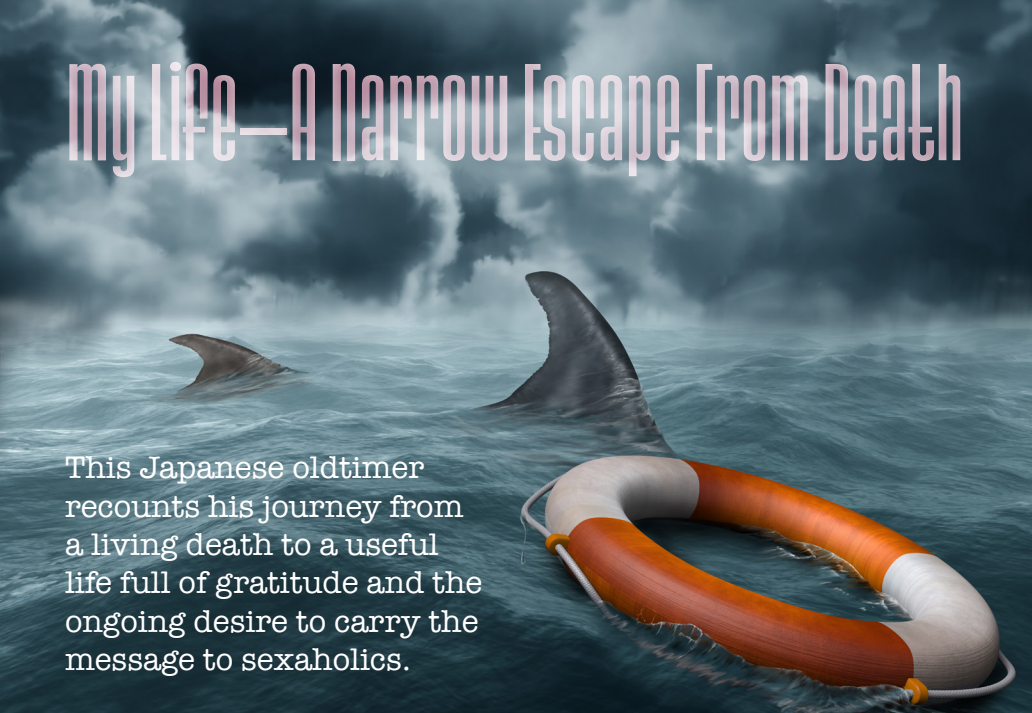
It is my hope that someday, when something hard happens again, I will be able to stay connected to my Higher Power again. To that end, I hope that today will be another day when I can work the Steps without hesitation.

ANONYMOUS, *Japan*





# My Life—A Narrow Escape From Death



This Japanese oldtimer recounts his journey from a living death to a useful life full of gratitude and the ongoing desire to carry the message to sexaholics.

**M**y name is Yoshi. I have a desire to stop lusting and become sexually sober. My sobriety date is July 29, 1994. I am now 77 years old and have had many “lifesavers” in my life. I was born in suspended animation, fell from the second floor of a building as an infant, was hospitalized with a legal epidemic called children’s dysentery, and suffered a head laceration from falling from a steel-framed swinging circle tree. I was often bullied.

My first sexually problematic behavior was having sex with myself. It started as soon as I entered junior high school and continued for a long time afterwards because it was the best anesthetic that I knew. My father was a very strict man who routinely built up a lot of anger. I always dreaded when he would explode. My mother was a very anxious person, and whenever a small anxiety would arise, it would

multiply and swirl around me. In order to survive this high-stress family environment, I “needed” to have sex with myself.

When I was 18, I applied to five universities and failed them all. When I found out, I went to a porno theater. The content was exciting, but not inspiring. The next year, I applied to five more universities and failed them all. And I went to a porno theater again. While I was feeling devastated, I received a notice from one of the universities that I had been accepted as a substitute candidate. It was a lifesaver.

After graduating from university, I overcame my father’s opposition and became a social worker. I worked for 27 years in public institutions such as psychiatric hospitals, mental health welfare centers, child consultation centers, and public health centers. During that time, I had an affair problem. When I was 40 years old, I went to AA meetings for three years

due to the nature of my job—another “lifesaver” because, as an EMT (Emergency Medical Technician) I needed to be clear-headed: the addict who thinks he is an EMT suddenly turns into a hit man. I am not an alcoholic, but I was lucky enough to be in a recovery program when I realized I was a sex addict.

When I attended an AA roundup, I received a message from one of the SA members. He invited me to an SA meeting at a church in Tokyo. At first I thought, “I don’t want to participate

**I never considered that the problem was my side of the street—my constant search for approval from my father and affection from my mother. I was always searching for a balm for my low self-esteem.**

in SA,” but I couldn’t refuse and began attending the English-speaking group every Saturday. It was painful to read the White Book, and listen to these strangers, speaking in English, talking about my very closest, most secret issues. One of these, one of my future fellows, suggested we start a Japanese-language group.

There are several items in the White Book that are in AA’s Japanese books. I picked them up, made a handbook, and went looking for Japanese SA fel-

lows. Thus, the SA Tokyo group was born on March 5, 1994. I was 48 years old. My adulterous affair had stopped four months into AA, but I continued to have sex with self.

I initially thought that the SA sobriety definition was too strict, but later came to understand. I went to counseling at the age of 51, and the peak of it was the day, 3.5 years into counseling, that I discovered I was incapable of asking for help. I had been in the helping professions for years at this stage.

Every month since 2015, fellow SA members and I have been carrying the message to a juvenile prison. It is an intense 90 minutes during which we share our experience, strength, and hope with sex offenders and also sex addicts. In September 2022, I published my own story. I had contracted COVID-19 two months before this and was hospitalized in isolation for 10 days. I was worried that I might not be able to submit a proofread manuscript, but right after I got out of the hospital, I got to submit it. This was such a fulfilling achievement. When things go most smoothly for me, it’s when I haul my will into alignment with my Higher Power’s will.

Another ambition of mine is to become a fourth dan in judo, which I took up at the age of 63. If Higher Power’s will is fulfilled, I may be able to achieve this too. Looking back, my life was one of “vigorous misuse and destruction of self and others,” but today I am able to donate two books to public libraries throughout Japan.

Somewhere along the way in my youth, I learned to cope with setbacks by turning to rage and self-pity, gnawing at my wounds in isolation. I was always looking for Someone—a Madonna—to heal me. Sometimes the Madonna was sex with self; some-

times it was an adulterous partner. Sex was always on stand-by as the solution.

I never considered that the problem was my side of the street—my constant search for approval from my

**I am very glad that I have this disease that cannot be cured and therefore I need to cling to a way of life that works, if I work it; a way of life that assures happiness, joy and freedom.**

father and affection from my mother. I was always searching for a balm for my low self-esteem. I used to treasure any little success I had, reflecting on it over and over again, hoping it would increase my self-confidence, soothe

my aching lack of self-esteem, fretting all the time about what others thought of me. But, by the grace of my Higher Power, it is different today; I don't need others' estimation of me in order to enjoy healthy self-esteem.

I feel such a sense of gratitude today for having been saved from the living death of this addiction. I have learned along the way many useful lessons about life and myself, and am grateful to be able to pass them on. When I found out I was a sexaholic, I thought I had the worst kind of addiction. But now I am very glad that I have this disease because it is a disease that cannot be cured and therefore I need to cling to a way of life that works, if I work it; a way of life that assures happiness, joy and freedom.

There are many things I would still like to do in life, notwithstanding my good age, and greatest amongst these is the desire to continue carrying the message of recovery to fellow sufferers.

With gratitude for the blessings of my Higher Power.

YOSHI, *Saltama, Japan*



## Going to Any Length to Carry the Message

- Our website [essay.sa.org](http://essay.sa.org) offers the articles and recordings of each new magazine in English. On top of that, the home page has nine other language tabs by which the translations of six articles of each magazine can be read and listened to. In this way, ESSAY is truly going to any length to carry the message worldwide.
- The whole [“Aha!” Moments video series](#) can be found under the tab “Get Involved.” The tab [“Recovery Songs”](#) has gotten its first recovery songs by fellows, which can be listened to on your favorite podcast platform.
- To use your talents to improve this innovative and multilingual website, click on [“Help Us Improve This Website.”](#)
- Please consider supporting our worldwide service by clicking on [“Subscribe”](#) and taking a paid subscription. Or [give a subscription](#) to someone else.



# The Explosive Power of Love



*Discovering  
God's love  
became his  
key to lovingly  
serving others.*

**A** few years ago, I read a book, the theme of which was hiding from love. When I entered SA, I discovered—like many addicts—that I had been hiding from love my whole life. For me that's 70 years which is no short time. A friend in SA who means a lot to me, shared that he too was hiding from love, but that God was working powerfully in his life to change him from the inside out. Slowly, a new desire for real loving connection with people began replacing his old tendency to keep away from people.

Recovery is about making the real connection—first with my Higher Power, then with members in my local fellowship. Discovering God's love is key as I learn to conquer my anxiety and fears with His love. A book of my faith tradition says, "that perfect love casts out fear." Someone called this "the power of an explosive new affection." That is the uniqueness and

power of the SA program because the Twelve Steps are a God-given program in which the grace of God flows.

Last year at our Sunday Oxford meeting, I decided to do an experiment and search the PDF-version of the White Book to see how many times it uses certain keywords. Below are the results, applied to the subject "hiding from love," which may surprise you.

Note: The numbers are the number of times each word appears in the White Book:

- **What is the source of true love?** *God* x 222 times; *our Higher Power* x 4; *Creator* x 2, and *Maker* x 1.
- **The hope in recovery is I need a real spiritual connection to God because in addiction I am loveless:** *I* x 948 times; *Us* x 451; *Me* x 253; *You* x 111; *Men* x 13, and *Women* x 15.
- **But why do I hide from love? Because of:** *Lust* x 217 times; *Sex* x 125; *Addiction* x 54; *Acting out* x 31; *Lost and Pride* x 15, and *Sin* x 1.

- **Let's look at a portrait of my hiding. It's because of:** *Unforgiven guilt* x 27 times; *Fantasy and resentment* x 17 each; *I'm lost and dying* x 15; *I fail and full of pride* x 12; *I give up and face death* x 7; *I'm guilty* x 6; *I have loss, shame and remorse* x 4, and *sin* x 1.
- **What then are the powerful SA steps to love?** *I surrender* x 99 times; *It starts inside* x 70; *I begin to feel it* x 68; *I begin to change* x 64; *through union* x 57; *making amends* x 50; *working the Steps* x 32; *so I grow* x 24; *discover* x 19; *have faith* x 16; *admit* x 15; *so I cried* x 9; *I will confess* x 7; *commit* x 3, and *not give up and it works* x 2.
- **Finally, sobriety is loving God, myself and others:** *Love* x 51 times; *I rest* x 34; *I call* x 33; *I experience new joy* x 17; *Faith* x 16; *Sanity* x 15; *Grace and peace* x 13; *I grow and support* x 11, *serve* x 9; *am happy* x 6; *blessed* x 4, and *listen and give away* x 3.

I decide NOW to stop hiding from love and discover the power of God's infinite love. He made me in His love for Himself hence He loves me. In His mercy He has led me to SA. I want to discover daily the power of His love and share it in daily service with my spouse, children, fellow SA members, and those suffering outside my meeting room. With His love, I can grow in lasting sobriety; without it, I will remain full of self, fantasy and lust, and a never-ending cycle of acting out. I will hate myself and resent others. With His love comes real freedom; without it is bondage, guilt, shame, and misery.

Will you join me today in surrendering our broken hearts, and work our programs so our Higher Power's fountain of eternal and life-changing love will explode in our hearts? Then anxiety, fear, and resentment will find no place in our hearts anymore, but only God's self-giving love.

PAUL T., *New South Wales, Australia*



## Ninth Step Letter to All My Acting-Out Partners

*This letter is for every man I ever had sex with.*

*I want to write this letter to make my amends to you. I have used you, either once or regularly, to fill an emptiness inside me that was impossible to fill with human "power." I was so lost, lonely and empty inside, that I really thought that chasing after you, getting you in my bed and then smothering you with my attention and (online) presence, would make me whole.*

*I used you as an object, as a tool. I never saw you for who you really were, the human being underneath. For that I am truly and genuinely sorry. I was selfish and self-centered, only focusing on what I could get out of it. For that, I was wrong.*

*I truly hope you can forgive me for what I did.*

*May God bless you and keep you.*

ANONYMOUS FEMALE MEMBER

**A**t a recent noon meeting, we were reading from Bill's Story out of the AA Big Book, "A tumbler full of gin followed by half a dozen bottles of beer would be required if I were to eat any breakfast. Nevertheless, I still thought I could control the situation, and there were periods of sobriety which renewed my wife's hope. Gradually things got worse." We call people like this "beyond help."

I'm learning about hope that is beyond hope. I've been in the program for over five years now. My wife and I are currently separated because of my behavior. She is returning home tomorrow from Arizona and doesn't want me around at all. If she's home, she doesn't even want me working in the backyard garden. I am not welcome. Our relationship seems to be beyond hope.

I have a choice. It feels like I'm on a knife's edge. On one side I can decide to forget the program, forget sobriety, and turn to the insanity of acting out my sexualism, trampling upon true union with people. On the other side is recovery, the real connection, and taking the urge to act out as a call to work on my program for recovery, healing, and freedom.

I came to that noon meeting reluctantly. I had received a text message from a potential sex partner with whom I really wanted to interact. I didn't want to accept any help from program fellows. I wanted easy relief. But, I took my body to the meeting. There, I heard about Bill who seemed beyond hope. Thankfully, I read the story before so I know how it ends. "Hope Beyond Hope" for Bill was found in an enlarged spiritual life.

At the end of the story, Bill says, "My friend had emphasized the absolute necessity of demonstrating these principles in all my affairs. Particularly was it imperative to work with others as he had worked with me. Faith without works was dead, he said. And how appal-

lingly true for the alcoholic! For if an alcoholic failed to perfect and enlarge his spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others, he could not survive the certain trials and low spots ahead. If he did not work, he would surely drink again, and if he drank, he would surely die. Then faith would be dead indeed. With us it is just like that."

When things are hopeless, God is able to do His most important work. The solution to my cunning, baffling, and powerful lust is God who could and would bring Hope Beyond Hope—if He were sought.

The Big Book also says, "Some of us have taken very hard knocks to learn this truth: Job or no job—wife or no wife—we simply do not stop drinking so long as we place dependence upon other people ahead of dependence on God."

I'm working through this truth right now. I long for approval from others, whether it be from my wife, kids, or another person in the program. I place dependence on people ahead of dependence on God. I'm not there yet, but recognition of the problem is the first step toward taking action toward a solution. I am powerless to solve my problem. The only action an addict like me can take is surrender.

Surrender to God coupled with taking the actions of love is my Hope Beyond Hope. If I fail to enlarge my spiritual life by working the program of recovery and self-sacrifice for others, my addict will take over, and I will act on my lust again.

TIM K., *Washington, USA*



Hope  
Beyond  
Hope

# 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](mailto:sa.convention.2023@gmail.com)  
[www.sa.org.pl/sa-convention-2023](http://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.

**Don't miss out on this event! Go to: <https://sa.org.pl/sa-convention-2023/>**

# 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](mailto: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.

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>**

# WHY BE A FRIEND TO A FRIEND IN PRISON?

*This Dutch fellow shares his experience, strength and hope of reaching out his hands to friends in prison for the past few years.*

**1** Because one day, I could be one of them. From a prisoner's perspective, it would surely be a comfort to be visited by people who would not condemn me, who would understand me and be willing to help me.

**2** By helping a sexaholic in prison, I am working my Twelfth Step and also the Fifth Tradition, so my own recovery is helped in the process. I meet a whole new range of people, some who struggle with the concept of a Higher Power, and others totally at ease with the concept. Prejudice and condemnation disappears, and gratitude remains.

**3** Of course, I don't have to do this service on my own. The worldwide group of CFC trusted servants is a strong fellowship. I am well connected. There's a lot of love in that circle. And whenever my motivation wavers, I know I am encouraged to read a letter from a prison sponsee to his sponsor, shared subsequently on one of the various CFC WhatsApp groups.

**4** The variety of problems and questions posed by prison sponsees deepens my knowledge and understanding of the program, including my own assets and defects of character. There

is lots of support out there—local and international CF committees, workshops, and lots of practical tools, like sample-letters to prisoners. Female and male trusted servants are on hand, ready to help out with all their experience, strength, and hope.

**5** So I continue being there for my sponsees, my "friends in prison" who oftentimes live in reduced and challenging circumstances and who can really do with my support. I have a responsibility. And again, I am not on my own.

Find out whether there is a CFC breakout session at the next convention you visit. At the July International Convention in Cracow, there will be a CFC table providing useful information and trusted servants there will try to answer any questions you may have. There will also be a CFC breakout session on Saturday July 15, 10:00-10:50 a.m. in Room 8 where Jinan C. will relate the story of a sexaholic who came out of prison in SA recovery. There will also be a workshop there to help you write a letter to a friend in prison. Come and talk to us.

BEN V., *Leiden, The Netherlands*





I wanted to share this untitled poem for the June issue on “Sober Travel” as I wrote it some time ago while away from home.

JIM D., *Massachusetts, USA*



## Untitled

It's my pity party I want to host  
So I walk along the wintry coast  
The foamy sea greets the sandy beach  
The former snail homes, within my reach and  
The clumps of black seaweed, all doth teach

When I feel unworthy or afraid  
Mother Nature's here to save the day  
She whispers something that I quite relish:  
It's good to be a little shellfish  
So why not call on me and ask for help?



## New SA Groups

### Australia/New Zealand

♣ Whitiora, Hamilton, New Zealand

### North America

- ♣ Hurricane, Utah, USA
- ♣ O'Fallon, Missouri, USA
- ♣ Vandalia, Ohio, USA
- ♣ Colorado Springs, Colorado, USA
- ♣ Sparks, Nevada, USA

## Assistant-editors

ESSAY is looking for extra assistant-editors, whose service is to edit articles following the American English spelling and punctuation rules.

If this is something you are good at and have a couple of hours per month to devote to, please contact: [essay@sa.org](mailto:essay@sa.org)



## Why Working the Steps Is Important

**M**any sexaholics are highly visual. This brochure is an attempt to provide a visual explanation of the importance and benefit of actually working the 12 Steps of Sexaholics Anonymous. Its purpose is to help demystify the 12 Steps and make them more understandable.

Find this inspiring and insightful brochure to help you, your local group, and newcomers in better understanding the importance of the 12 Steps on the SA store: [https://www.sexaholics.org/store/product\\_info.php?cPath=28&products\\_id=98](https://www.sexaholics.org/store/product_info.php?cPath=28&products_id=98)

In July 1990, our oldtimer Yoshi attended AA's 55th World Convention in Seattle, WA, USA. Being a social worker at a children's center at the time, he visited a local children's home, where his eye was caught by a poster for an international conference on child abuse held in Australia. It depicted a jigsaw puzzle of a father and daughter koala. The puzzle was still in the process of completion, but if all the pieces were fitted together, the parent-child relationship would be restored.

Four years later, on March 5, 1994 an SA Japanese-language group was born. They wondered how to carry the message to hospitals and other facilities like AA and NA do, in order to reach potential future fellows. They decided to write their stories on a single sheet of paper and make it into a newsletter to send to hospitals and other facilities. When it came to choosing a title for the newsletter, Yoshi recalled the jigsaw puzzle poster he had seen in Seattle, as we sexaholics need to collect the pieces of our broken sexuality and fit them back together.

In July 1997, Yoshi attended the SA International Convention in Canada with some other Japanese fellows. At the convention, upon being asked to introduce the development of SA in Japan, he told them about the JIGSAW PUZZLE newsletter issued to relevant organizations. JIGSAW PUZZLE was eventually edited into a pamphlet, but became more about "problems" than "solutions," so it was discontinued.

On the way back from a meeting, I was talking to my sponsor about what we

could do for SA in Japan. The next day, he contacted me and said, "About yesterday's conversation, I'd love a Japanese version of ESSAY." I could not for a moment imagine how we could make something that cool.

I looked for newsletters produced by AA and NA in Japan, and forwarded their links to my sponsor. I didn't think I had the ability to make it, but I was willing to try. I decided to find fellows to make them with me. I remembered a fellow that was making flyers for SA events as well as one in the business of publishing books. I asked them if they would be willing to help us create a kind of Japanese version of ESSAY. They both immediately responded positively.

Thus began our project to restart the JIGSAW PUZZLE newsletter. This time, we focus on creating something that is more focused on "solutions" than "problems." In addition to that, we are trying to create something interesting and attractive. For our future fellows who are still struggling now, a cool newsletter may be more likely to motivate them to pick it up and read it. On top of that, we feel that we, ourselves, enjoy the service activity of creating a positive newsletter, which adds to its attractiveness.

We completed the first issue in December 2022, and are working on the second one. It is my great pleasure to be in contact with the ESSAY team and to make our magazine known to my SA colleagues around the world.

ANONYMOUS EDITOR

*JIGSAW PUZZLE magazine, Japan*



### JIGSAW PUZZLE Issue 1: December 2022

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sKNrBVyDTTZl6U4FnFKLIEEJFYJTb8pQ/view?usp=sharing>

### JIGSAW PUZZLE Issue 1: December 2022 — English Translation

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lOibq02Z\\_wpiQ2fZzGq6WaYhBoAAmNz/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lOibq02Z_wpiQ2fZzGq6WaYhBoAAmNz/view?usp=sharing)

# SA EVENTS CALENDAR

Events listed here are presented only as a service and are not endorsed by ESSAY or SAICO.

## International Conventions and Events

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

## Regional and Local Events

AUGUST 4-6 2023	<b>Blairstown, New Jersey, USA</b> <i>Heartstrings of Recovery</i>	3rd Annual Women's-Only SA Retreat <a href="mailto:monseywomensmeeting@gmail.com">monseywomensmeeting@gmail.com</a>
AUGUST 25-27 2023	<b>Stirling, Scotland, UK</b> <i>Get Sober, Stay Sober</i>	SA UK Stirling Scottish Summer Convention 2023 <a href="https://www.sascottishconvention.weebly.com/">https://www.sascottishconvention.weebly.com/</a>
AUGUST 26 2023	<b>Lincoln, Nebraska, USA</b> <i>Change in Attitude</i>	SA & S-Anon Nebraska Retreat 2023 <a href="https://sanebraska.org/events">https://sanebraska.org/events</a>
SEPT 29-OCT 1 2023	<b>Kansas City, Kansas, USA</b> <i>H.O.P.E. Hold On, Pain Ends</i>	SA & S-Anon SMW Fall Family Reunion
OCTOBER 6-8 2023	<b>Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas, Mexico</b> <i>Sobriety As a Practice of Freedom</i>	7th National Convention of SA Mexico
OCTOBER 13-15 2023	<b>Lincoln, Nebraska, USA</b> <i>Change in Attitude</i>	NW Fall Retreat 2023 <a href="https://www.inlandnorthwestsa.org/">https://www.inlandnorthwestsa.org/</a>

Send in your event to be listed in ESSAY and on the Conventions and Events page of [sa.org](https://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](mailto:saico@sa.org).

# THE DEVELOPMENT OF SA IN JAPAN

There are 19 regular face-to-face meetings in Japan. One is for women only. In addition, there are two regular online meetings. In Tokyo and the surrounding areas, there are nine weekly face-to-face meetings. So it's possible for the residents of these areas to attend meetings almost every day. However, in the rest of Japan, the number of meetings is still small. Therefore, there are a few hybrid meetings too.

Currently, all regularly scheduled meetings in Japan are Japanese-language groups. Since many members speak only Japanese, few members participate in the worldwide online meetings. There are probably less than 100 SA members in Japan as a whole. Translations of *Sexaholics Anonymous*, *Step into Action*, and *Recovery Continues* have been com-

pleted and are available for the local members. In addition, the translation of *The Real Connection* is on its way.

Intergroup gatherings are held twice a year to discuss Japanese SA issues as a whole. Roundups in conjunction with the intergroup gatherings are organized to promote interaction with members who do not meet on a daily basis.

Currently, it is not difficult to obtain sponsors among Japanese SAs for male members. Of course, due to the regional distance, there are many fellows who mainly engage with their sponsors online to advance their Steps. However, it is difficult for female newcomers to get sponsors in SA. There are few female members who have worked the Steps in SA and it is difficult to find online female sponsors from abroad since many Japanese members are not fluent in English.

The good news is that

the number of members who are still sober is slowly beginning to increase. This past year we had at least three members who have been sober for 10 years or more. Fellows have been able to deliver the message regularly to one prison. One of their goals is to deliver the message to other prisons and hospitals. Another goal is to get people to keep coming back to SA. Some newcomers only come to one or two meetings. Then there are members who get a sponsor, work the Steps, support the group, and begin to participate in intergroup activities but still often leave SA after a few years.

Due to language barriers and geographical distance, the Japanese fellowship may not be fully connected with fellows in other countries but we are very happy to be able to introduce ourselves by means of the ESSAY.

ANONYMOUS, *Japan*



# COMING IN AUGUST



## NEXT EDITION

*In the August issue, learn which strategies members and groups from around the globe are using to welcome and keep newcomers.*

### *Coming Back Made the Difference*

She experienced almost three years ago how incredibly welcome she was, and it made a world of difference.

### *Preparing For Release From Prison*

This friend-in-prison describes how he has already located the local SA group in order to attend meetings from day one after his release, as it will be paramount to have a support network.

### *Music As a Spiritual Experience*

Music has been a lifelong passion and an important component of this American old-timer's recovery.

## SUBMIT YOUR STORY

**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.

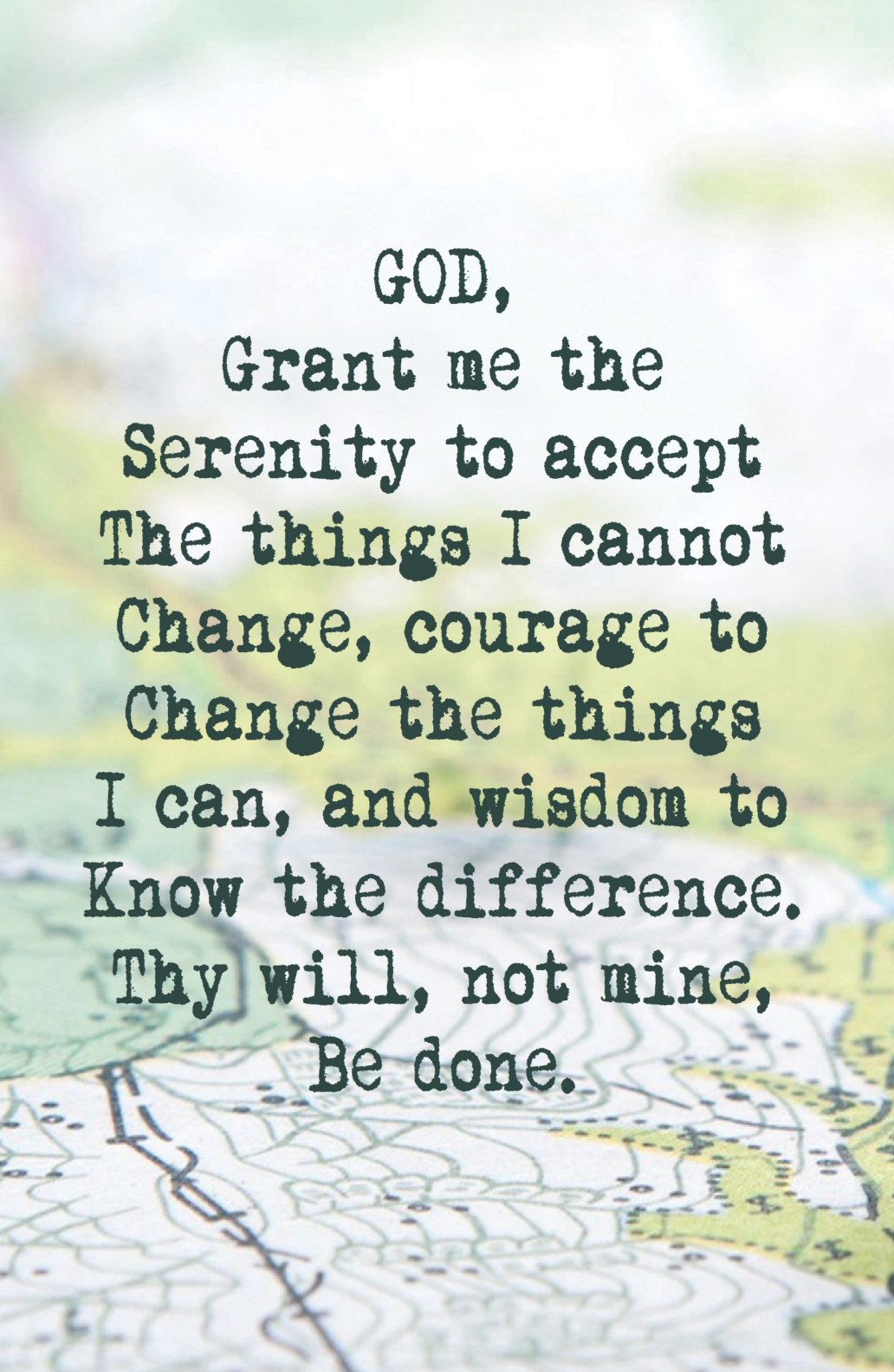
**October 2023 edition: Relapse Prevention (Stories due Sept 1)** What can we learn from those having long-term sobriety today in order to safeguard our sobriety?

**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?

**February 2024 edition: Use 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?

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](https://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.