

ESSAY

A man in a white karate gi is kneeling on a wooden floor, holding the hands of a young child in a white gi with a black belt. They are in a dojo setting with warm lighting and a wooden floor. The man is looking at the child with a focused expression.

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SEXAHOLICS ANONYMOUS

October 2023, essay.sa.org

LEARNING HOW
TO SURRENDER
IN ORDER
TO WIN

RELAPSE
PREVENTION

SA Purpose

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

Adapted with permission from AA Grapevine Inc.

RESPONSIBILITY DECLARATION

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

Sexaholics Anonymous STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLE

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

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

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

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

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

ESSAY is a publication of Sexaholics Anonymous
essay@sa.org

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

Adopted by the Trustees and General Delegate Assembly in May 2016

Editors' Corner

"We never knew there was another option—surrender" (SA 84).

In this quotation from the chapter "The Third Option" in the SA White Book, Roy K. reveals the key to stopping and staying stopped! He stayed sober from 1976 until his death in September 2009 by practicing surrender. An oldtimer from Chicago explains that surrender is not some complicated, abstract process; it is simply, "executing the suggestions of the sponsor."

In this month's edition we read how rigorously surrendering every tiny temptation helps to maintain recovery, and how giving, in the sense of passing the message on to others, is more fulfilling than taking from others.

An American oldtimer testifies how his no-nonsense mental abstinence from lust has been the foundation of his 39-year sobriety. Another member shares how sponsorship has proven to be his best relapse prevention. A Russian lady now living in Vietnam, outlines in a detailed, inspiring way how practicing her program daily keeps her sober.

In the section "Worldwide News," we read that SA is growing in Hungary; there is also exciting news about three upcoming International Conventions.

From now on, the PDF version contains only the 36 pages of the print version. As the website version has on average 5 articles more, you can [subscribe](#) to the full digital experience to enjoy these and in this way support our worldwide service.

In fellowship,
THE EDITORIAL TEAM
essay@sa.org



October 2023

Show him, from your own experience, how the queer mental condition surrounding that first drink prevents normal functioning of the will power.

AA 92



On the cover: We learn relapse prevention from those that have gone the way before and show us by their example the attitude of surrender and how to work the many tools of recovery.

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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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What's Going On In SA

International Convention in Poland: Since April, five Trustee candidates were approved by the Nominations Committee and passed on to the BOT for consideration. All five candidacies were subsequently approved by the Trustees and forwarded to the GDA. Three candidates have been GDA approved. Currently, two potential Trustee candidates await GDA interviews. The Nominations Committee continues to actively seek and invite applications for Trustee candidates.

Nominations Committee: Jack H., Trustee liaison – Gary L., Chair

Finance and the 2024 Budget: The Finance Committee collected inputs from committees, reviewed historic data, and met, discussed, passed, and submitted a proposed budget for the fellowship for 2024. The budget is ambitious, however with the growth of the fellowship, the Finance committee and BoT believe it is appropriate and achievable.

Finance Committee: Gary P., Trustee Liaison – Kent A., Chair

Regional Alignment Committee (RAC) Meeting Census: The RAC has so far recorded 1900 meetings. 52 have indicated no Region or Intergroup. 33 indicate that they do not adhere to the SA Statement of Principle. The Persian-speaking Region has not registered any meetings but has stated that they have 180+ meetings Iran. RAC is working with the Persian region to produce a Farsi version of the Meeting Registration system which will hopefully enable the Persian-speaking meetings to register. If your meeting isn't registered, do so today! This app puts the power of the web in your hands for newcomers to find you.

Regional Alignment Committee: Jerry E., Trustee Liaison – Farley H., Chair

IT Committee – New Event Registration System Approved: The current event registration is 16 years old. It is a high priority to switch to a new platform and decommission the current one. The committee recommended to the BOT that RegFox be adopted as the new fellowship-wide event registration system. The BOT approved the recommendation and work is underway to replace the old system.

IT Committee Web Application Developers 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. Talk with your sponsor about what you can do. If you are interested, contact SAICO to get in touch with the IT Committee.

IT Committee: Jerry E., Trustee Liaison – Bruno and Richard; Co-Chairs

Accessibility Committee (AC) – Help Wanted: The Trustee Accessibility Committee is looking for new members and a chairperson, with a dash of tech experience. At this moment our focus is helping the visual impaired and deaf people (ASL).

Accessibility Committee (AC): Jackie H., Trustee Liaison and Chair

Legal Committee Needs Help: Its mission is “to advise the Trustees on legal matters affecting the Fellowship.” (SA Service Manual, ch. 13, p. 2). The Legal Committee is looking for both members and a Chair.

Legal Committee (LC): Jerry E., Trustee Liaison – Chair Open

The Public Information Committee (PIC): The Public Information Committee is producing a great new set of Videos to help the newcomer entitled the “Newcomer Orientation Video Series.” They are both fun and informative. The Trustees have reviewed and approved the videos. They will be reviewed by the GDA at the October GDA meeting. The committee is currently seeking some new members.

Public Information Committee (PIC): Jack H., Trustee Liaison – Chair Open

Next Year in Jerusalem! “Stepping into the Light”: Our next International Convention will be in Jerusalem Israel Jan 22-24. The Jerusalem fellowship has been working hard to make this convention a great success. Register now at sa.org or steppingintothelight.org. The Trustees will be meeting at the convention location on Jan 21st. We hope to see you there.

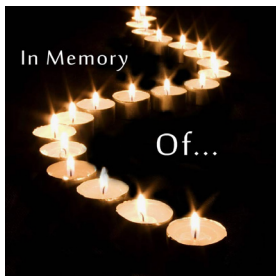
International Convention Committee (ICC): Duane D., Trustee Liaison – Rich P., Chair

ESSAY Magazine: Matt M., Trustee Liaison – Luc D., Editor

JERRY E., Virginia, USA
Trustee Chair



Dear ESSAY



In Memory of Roy K.

DEAR ESSAY, IT HAS been way over a decade since our founder died. Roy K. died on September 15, 2009 at the age of 82. He died with more than 33 years of sexual sobriety.

Why am I sharing about it now? I just don't want the Fellowship to forget the gift this man brought us. He was a very modest person. Although he was known for many accomplishments, including being a playwright, he always remained humble and unassuming.

He would never let us take a photo of him. He did not even want to write a book for the program. After much cajoling, we persuaded him to write and publish *Sexaholics Anonymous*, what we know today as the

White Book. He followed that with a second book called *Recovery Continues*. Many people do not realize that the stories in the White Book are Roy's own experiences, especially concerning his marriage.

He supported SA financially from his own finances for many years. Central Office was in his home in Simi Valley. He was never too busy to help us one-on-one. He never seemed to stop trying to improve the Fellowship.

He was also the recipient of much of the tensions we placed on him in the early years of our recovery. In my opinion, he was given the gift to bring to the world the concept of sexual addiction and powerlessness over lust, rather than putting the emphasis on acting out.

My conversations with him by phone always ended with him saying, "Let us pray now."


I was so privileged to have had him in my life, and yet, while he was alive, my rebelliousness blocked me from experiencing how great a gift this man had given me.

May he always be remembered as a vessel that was used to help save our physical, spiritual, and emotional lives.

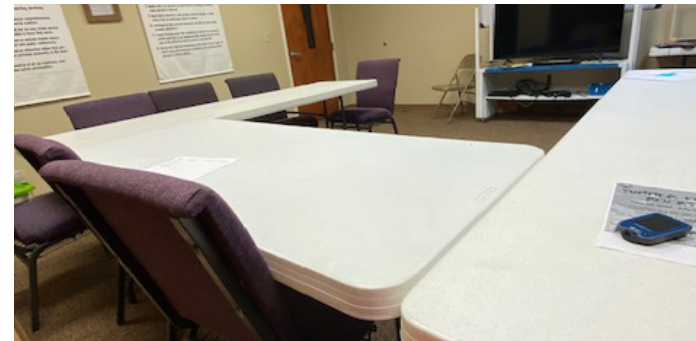
HARVEY A., Florida, USA 

ESSAY Is a Wonderful Resource

DEAR ESSAY TEAM, Thank you for bringing us together from around the world through ESSAY. Recently, I felt prompted to have a one-time SA meeting for two reasons: first, for members to talk about their relationship with their father, father figure, and sexaholism; second, to let everyone know that ESSAY is a wonderful resource for us. For this "SA Father's Day" meeting, we used an October 2019 ESSAY article, and had a wonderful meeting. I counted 50 people from around the world at the meeting. Thank you to our members for joining together in harmony, with less than one week's notice, it all worked out in the spirit of Tradition Five. We came from Canada, the United States, Ghana, Egypt, Iran, Ireland, Iraq, Israel, Germany, Georgia, India, Romania, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, and I probably missed one or two nations. It was an emotional, safe space for many to shed tears, grieve a little bit, laugh, and share the joys of SA recovery. SA is not for everybody, but for us, it works!

HAL C., Virginia, USA 

Worldwide Walls of SA



Meeting Room, Sommersville, Tennessee, USA



Meeting Entrance Lincoln, NE, USA 

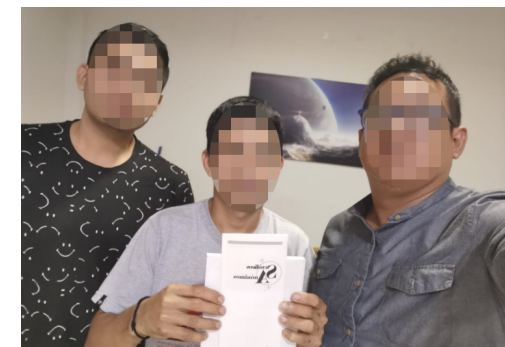
Share your photos

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

SA Meetings Can Be Held Just About Anywhere ...



Safe Port Group Bogota, Colombia



First Meeting Plaza de Armas, Piura, Peru





THE PROGRAM IS HIS PARACHUTE TODAY

Just like trusting the parachute to carry him safely to the ground, today he trusts his Higher Power to carry him to the end of each day.

When I was 18, I went on a parachute course with a few friends. I was looking for a new adventure and an experience that I could feel proud about. After one day’s instruction on the theory, we were given the go-ahead to make our jump. We would be using the “static-line” technique for our jump. Here, a cord runs from the parachute to a rail fixed on the inside of the plane. When jumping, the cord pays out, then pulls out your parachute; one doesn’t have to do anything. The plane we were using was very small. For the jump, I had to step out from the plane onto a grill-step and grab hold of a metal grip that was underneath the wing. The idea then was to let go of the grip

and allow the rushing air to carry me away from the plane. I had heard it said that the second and third jumps are scarier than the first because by that stage you know what’s ahead of you. This was my experience too. For the second jump, I stepped out of the plane, onto the grill-step and grabbed onto the metal grip. The instructor pressed my arm when the moment arrived to let go, but I didn’t let go. I couldn’t let go. I was too scared and held onto that metal grip for all my life, even though I knew there was no point in holding on—there was no way back into the airplane—but I still couldn’t let it go. When the instructor pressed my arm a second time, I did let go and instantly fell away; the cord pulled,

the parachute opened and tugged me from my free-fall into a slow, graceful descent at the end of which I landed safely on firm ground.

This experience is so very similar to my experience with resentment. When I resent, I hold onto fear and pride, even though they both keep me from serenity; fear that I might be judged, condemned and rejected by others; then fear that if I let go of my right to revenge, I’ll just be a simple-headed walk-over for others and always get stood upon. My ego is telling me to dominate or be dominated. There are times too when I judge and condemn myself after I have been careless on the computer, almost landing myself in trouble with lust; then the self-blaming begins, calling myself stupid and being really fearful for myself and my recovery.

But to be serene I must let go of all these defects and, when I do, when I go ahead and surrender to God, it works. I don’t have to go around being scared all the time and being shame-bound over my past. I just surrender

the fears and shame to God, then take an action like praying or picking up the phone or something like that.

Just like trusting the parachute to carry me safely to ground, today I’m

To be serene I must let go of all these defects and, when I do, when I go ahead and surrender to God, it works.

trusting my Higher Power to carry me to the end of the day safe from fear, resentment, and lust, no matter what went on during the course of the day. And it’s working. This program is carrying me away to sleep one night at a time.

HUBERT P., Wrocław, Poland

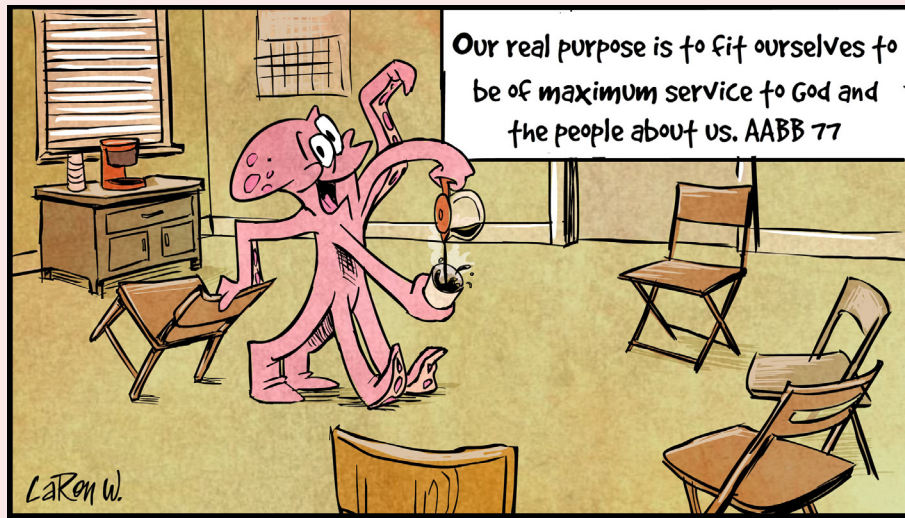


Our most special thanks goes to Josh G. (USA) who shared his know-how of creating illustrations by means of the pioneering and groundbreaking AI technology with a team of SA creatives. One of them is Laura W. (USA) who wrote ESSAY history by making the front cover and most of the illustrations of this issue. If you are skilled at using AI technology to make illustrations and want to join this team, please don’t hesitate to contact us.

If you are skilled at making promotional videos and want to make a video to make ESSAY better known to the local SA fellowships all over the globe, contact essay@sa.org.



The Only Answer Is Doing the Right Thing Myself



His Higher Power gave him the answer to the haunting questions about the evil in his own heart and in the world through a movie.

Recently, I had a spiritual awakening as I watched a well-made movie, based on true events, about a young lawyer who, 15 years after the second World War, decided to pursue the people responsible for Auschwitz. A lot of these people, after the war, had taken all kinds of ordinary jobs: primary school teachers, woodcutters, bakers, businessmen, dentists, etc.

In the process of his investigation, he found out that a great number of the post-war citizens had been Nazi party members during the war. The task grew into a real labyrinth, accompanied by intense emotional torment. He discovered that his own father and his girlfriend's father had been party members too.

At the end of the 1950s, most of the young people he questioned about Auschwitz had never heard of it. The war was not talked about at all. The post-war country acted as if nothing had

happened, sincerely believing this was the right way to heal and go forward.

He went to visit Auschwitz at one point and, while there, recited mourning rituals for the twin daughters of a survivor friend of his. When he came back, he said something which touched me deeply: **"The only answer to Auschwitz is doing the right thing myself."**

My grandfather and granduncle on my mother's side were deported to a concentration camp near Hamburg and died there because they were farmers and had given food to the resistance. As a teenager I had no interest in any of this at all. I closed myself off from it. I thought it was just stuff from the past, stuff for old people. I'm me, independent; none of this need concern me, I thought.

However, the more I avoided my past, the colder and harder I became— more remote from my roots, from the world, from reality; I became more remote

to my own callousness, cruelty, intolerance, selfishness, and my tendency towards violence. Strange and shameful as it sounds, as a teenager I fantasized being a perpetrator in a camp myself, sexually abusing beautiful women.

Years later, when I talked it over with a spiritual mentor, he said that it is not uncommon for a victim to take the side of the aggressor, in a subconscious way of dealing with fear of the aggressor—a subconscious way to deal with fear of being abused and feeling unsafe.

This is comparable then with my time in boarding school when I started to bully other boys so as not to be bullied myself. The biggest bullies don't get bullied. "Hurt people hurt people," as one of the slogans goes. About 15 years ago, my therapist told me that inside every human being there's a nazi and an angel, and it's up to me which one I feed.

In the past number of years I made two visits to the concentration camp where my grandfather and granduncle died. The second visit was with my mother and two brothers. That was a healing experience. I needed to "hug my demons before they bite me in the ass." I needed to process my past and the past of my ancestors in order to connect with my roots and become whole.

Since then, I have still been asking myself so many questions like, Why is there evil in the world? Why is there evil in my heart? Why was my father so sick and insane towards me that, up to this day, I am still so damaged from him? Why World War II? Why wars, murders, violence, rape? Why sexual abuse, incest, stealing, destroying? Why envy, jealousy, hatred?

The answer came to me when the lawyer said: "The only answer to Auschwitz is doing the right thing myself."

The only answer to the evil in my heart and in the world is doing the right thing myself!! There is no all-satisfying, all-solving intellectual answer, no golden explanation. No intellectual answer

or mental reasoning will change these realities. The only answer is DOING THE RIGHT THING MYSELF.

The only answer to all these questions is to give up trying to answer them, to surrender my own good and my bad to God as I understand Him (Step 7), and do the next right thing myself. And this fits with the spirituality of our program: - "I can't think or feel myself into a new way of acting, but I can act myself into a new way of thinking and feeling."

- "Our program is not a program of thinking but of acting."

- "I am not in the thinking management anymore."

- "God is now the manager of my life, the Director, the Principal. My role is to do the Next Right Thing; not to think the next right thought."

- "It's Not Them!"

- "If I want to change the world, I have to change me."

- "Whenever I am disturbed, there's something wrong with me."

- "Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us."

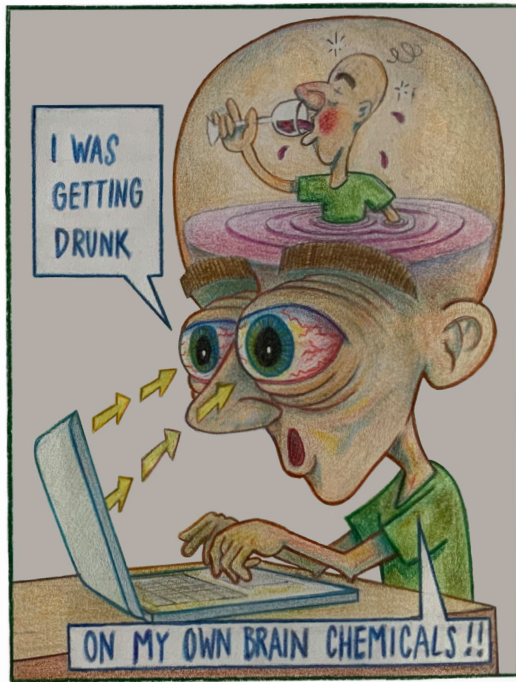
"Why?" questions make me a prisoner to the problem; they keep me trapped inside my head. They make me blame others, shifting my focus everywhere but to my side of the street. They keep me in the victim role. They keep me in that anti-spiritual division of "they" and "we," instead of, "We are all in this together. We are all sick."

So, rather than ask "Why?" questions, I need to ask "How?" questions: How can I feed the angel inside me? How can I improve my conscious contact with a loving HP Who is all-powerful and Who is the ONLY one who has no evil in Him? How can I be helpful? "How can I best serve Thee?" How can I work my program today? How can I try to carry the message today? How can I practice these principles in all areas of my life today?

Luc D., Ghent, Belgium



The Disease Lives Between Our Ears



The program that has been working for this American oldtimer for over 39 years is based on his mental sobriety from lust.

This article is about relapse prevention. However, deep down inside of me, I am uncomfortable writing about this. I feel relapse prevention applies to people who are sober. It is about how to prevent people from relapsing once they get sober. My belief is that many people do not get sober although they think they are sober. How can I make such a statement?

The First Step says we are powerless over lust. It does not mention being powerless over sexually acting out. The emphasis is on lust. Why would part of the First Step be stated that way? The reason is because the illness lives between our ears. Lust, or what we might call sexual fantasies, ignites the allergic reaction that makes us drunk and leads us, inevitably, to acting out.

Our membership requirement in SA is very different from that of Alcoholics Anonymous. In AA, Tradition 3 states that the only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking. It is a single requirement. Membership by SA's Tradition 3 is two-fold. It says, "The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop lusting *and* become sexually sober." Many people want to stop acting out and become sexually sober because of the negative consequences. Yet, they have no desire to stop lusting. Without their realizing it, this leads to a phenomenon which sees them standing on the outside of the program, rather than actually becoming members of our fellowship.

Needless to say, this is only my opinion. I do not talk for SA as a whole. We end up seeing people chronically struggling because they think they are sober

while they are still trying to control and enjoy lust. There is a saying that relapsing is not a prerequisite for recovery.

Yes, the gateway to stop lusting is to first stop acting out sexually. This is achieved by working the many tools listed in the chapter "Overcoming Lust and Temptation" (SA 157-168); and by working the Steps and through fellowship and sponsorship and relying upon God as we understand God. Once you enter that gate and have stopped acting out, for one day at a time, then the essence of the program begins. It is called progressive victory over lust.

The White Book says: "... true sobriety includes progressive victory over lust" (SA 4). It also states that, "our primary purpose is to stay sexually sober and help other sexaholics to achieve sexual sobriety" (SA 4). How is this accomplished without a desire to stop lusting?

I believe this is a true disease. I am not like a normal person. Normal people can possibly lust without the consequences. I know I am allergic to lust. As soon as I take it in, the phenomenon of craving begins and I have to do it again and again. It is like eating a taco chip. Once the flour, the oil and the salt touch my tongue, a brain reaction occurs that causes me to crave and eat a second taco chip and a third, a fourth, etc. This is called the phenomenon of craving. This does not happen from eating broccoli or cauliflower with me, but it does happen when I eat a taco chip. So too, once I take the second thought, or the second look, the phenomenon of craving begins.

As one oldtimer said: "The first look or thought is on God. That is how God made us humans. The second look is on me." Once that photograph in my mind turns into a motion picture, the phenomenon of craving begins. Once that craving begins we are potentially destined for sexually acting out.

To summarize how to prevent a re-

lapse:

1. We first need to get sober.
2. We need to be sober not only in our body but in our mind.
3. We have many tools to block the first thought turning into a motion picture. Our White Book lists many helpful tools that we can use to prevent the motion picture happening. Yes, Higher Power is involved, but as the AA Big Book says, "Faith without works is dead" (AA 88). If we are expecting God to keep us sober, we could be very disappointed. We need to utilize the tools

We end up seeing people chronically struggling because they think they are sober while they are still trying to control and enjoy lust.

that God has supplied us with in the program. We are told that God does for us what we could *not* do for ourselves. It does not say God will do for us what we *can* do for ourselves.

My hope, for all of us, is that one day at a time, we continue to block the first thought or look from turning into lust.

I know this program works. If it worked for a low bottom sex drunk like me for the past 39 years, I know it can work for you. God watched every low-life thing that I did in my active addiction, and loved me so much that I was led to SA. Now it is up to me to accept the gift of being brought to SA and be willing to utilize the program, one day at a time.

HARVEY A., Florida, USA





SPONSORSHIP IS THE BEST RELAPSE PREVENTION

Passing on the message and connecting with other human beings has been vital for him to have an ongoing spiritual experience to keep him sober.

I met my sponsor at an online SA meeting that I had never before attended. The fact that both of us decided to join that same meeting on the same day is evidence of my Higher Power's love for me. Meeting him came at a time when I felt alone and disconnected, longing to feel loved and understood by my Higher Power.

After that online meeting, we talked for about two hours over the phone, sharing experiences and relating to each other. During the conversation it felt like God was giving me a warm embrace and that everything would be OK. Through that phone call, I believed that God noticed me, knew what I was going through, and specifically sent someone to me to help me feel His love.

A few weeks later, my new sponsor

took me through the 12 Steps in one session lasting over four hours. After working the Steps, he encouraged me to immediately find other sponsees and begin carrying the message.

As a recovering perfectionist, I had fears about doing sponsorship perfectly and wondering if I would be good enough. In response, he pointed out the wording in Step 12, which says, "we tried to carry the message" (SA 208). As long as I was willing to try, I could be a sponsor.

I was also concerned about the fact that I only had a few days of sobriety at the time. But he shared how he was a chronic slipper for years in the program, and he never got sober until he started sponsoring others. Because of his experience, I realized that sponsoring right away would be vital for me in order to

have an ongoing spiritual experience. As I began working with others, I found that the excitement of passing on the message and connecting with other human beings far outweighed the temporary rush of acting out. God put multiple brothers on my path who allowed me to take them through the Steps quickly in the same way my sponsor did for me.

I met one brother on an international SA group chat, and it turned out that he lived only a few minutes away from me! I met with him in person multiple times to work the Steps and he became a strength to me in my recovery. Meeting other sponsees both face to face and on Zoom helped me to create the fellowship and connection I craved.

Another miracle happened about a year after I met my sponsor. I had the idea that I should plan a trip to visit him and attend my home group in person, even though I had only attended this group online. I was nervous about flying to another state to attend an SA meeting I had never attended in person, but I decided to go ahead, trusting my Higher Power that things would work out.

The trip was a success! I enjoyed spending time with him in person, as well as meeting many other brothers whom I had only met online. On the day I visited, there was a special speaker meeting planned where three names would be chosen to share their experience with the group. I happened to be chosen as one of the speakers! That was another evidence of my Higher Power's love for me. I was so grateful for the chance to share my story and feel the support and love of my recovery brothers in person.


My first meeting with my sponsor over the phone, as well as my trip to meet him in person are just a few of the many miracles that have happened through the SA program. Even though I am an imperfect sponsor, I am learning that my Higher Power's love is not limited by my imperfections. I am learning that

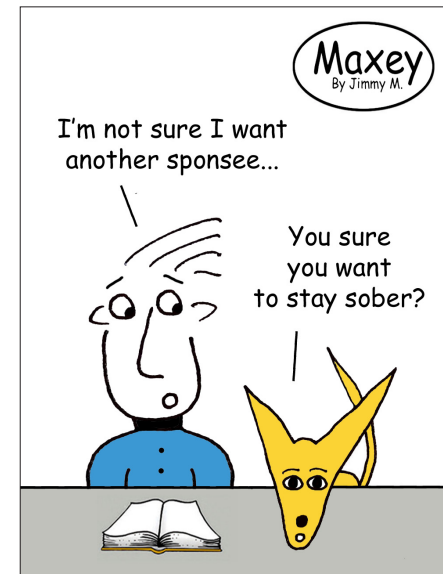
God is in charge of healing others, and it is not my job to fix my sponsees or worry about controlling the outcomes of my efforts to carry the message of recovery.

The love I felt from God during that first phone call with my sponsor continues to multiply as I sponsor and love others. It's funny how God has a

I feel God's love the most when I am focused on helping others to feel His love.

way of inspiring me to say things to my sponsees that I need to hear myself. I feel God's love the most when I am focused on helping others to feel His love. Just like Dr. Bob shares in the Big Book, I am learning that every time I try to help someone else in the program, "I take out a little more insurance for myself against a possible slip" (AA 181).

ZAC A., Utah, USA 



DAILY PRACTICING THE PROGRAM KEEPS ME SOBER



Although she moved from Russia to Vietnam, her strong program routine has kept her sober and full of gratitude towards her Higher Power and life.

My home group is in St. Petersburg, Russia, but one year ago I moved to Hanoi, Vietnam, where there are few other recovering sexaholics. Since my first meeting my life has changed a lot, and it is still changing. I am grateful for everything, past, present, and future. My life is happening exactly as the God of my understanding wants, so I accept everything life brings to me. I want to live this life.

While working Steps 11 and 12, I realized that I need to do more to follow the program. Previously, the only time I worked the Steps was right before I met with my sponsor, and then I just hastily read some program literature and answered some questions. I now want to work the Steps more consistently. I listened to a recorded SA speaker talk about the routine he began to follow after his relapse. Based on his daily program, I created one that fits me and where I am in recovery. This is the result:

- ⌚ Read program literature (15 minutes)
- ⌚ Step work (10 minutes)
- ⌚ Stretching and physical exercise
- ⌚ 2-3 SA meetings (weekly)
- ⌚ Keep boundaries on anime and television (half an anime magazine, one episode of TV series)
- ⌚ Report progress on this recovery routine to my sponsor (daily)
- ⌚ Three program calls or text messages (daily)
- ⌚ Daily Sobriety Renewal (DSR) with my DSR partner (daily)
- ⌚ Prayers and meditation (daily)
- ⌚ 1-2 service activities (weekly)
- ⌚ Write in my feelings diary (daily)

Reading literature and working the Steps for a set time helped me avoid my usual thoughts of failure. At first I thought, This is too difficult, it takes too long, and I can't do this. But as I stuck with my new routine, I realized that even 10-15 minutes on a regular basis moves my recovery forward.

My short memory makes it hard to remember what I've surrendered and what victories my Higher Power already gave me. Now, thanks to completing and sending my recovery action list to my sponsor every day, I find serenity in having done my part to improve my condition. I call my sisters in the program to discuss my progress, but when I wake up to my sponsor's simple message, "Received!", I feel acknowledged, safe, and closer to my Higher Power. I consider this both an action and a benefit of working this recovery routine.

PROGRAM CALLS
When I call my sisters, I speak and I listen. I feel a part of something real. I hear my sisters; they are alive and sincere; they trust me, and I trust them. Quite often, we discover we have very similar experiences, and I feel a warm bond because God brought us together.

I like calling each other "sister" and "brother" because it reminds me of our kinship, and it creates a boundary against my lust. "Sister" reminds me of my bond with others and that we're supposed to be connected. When I call someone "brother," lust backs away. It becomes my lust repellent.

DAILY SOBRIETY RENEWAL
My DSR partner and I started with a 5-minute version but usually spent about 30 minutes discussing each question. When we switched to a 15-minute script, we took up to 45 minutes. I wanted more structure and less emotion in our DSR, so I began writing out that day's lust, distracting thoughts, and character defects before I got on the phone with my "sister." I also noted the program tools I would use that day. Written preparation helped me begin to take action on my recovery before I even got on the phone. Now my renewal

sister and I use a 30-minute format, and we take anywhere from 20 to 45 minutes, which helps me dig deeper and listen to myself. I try to recognize when I find myself distracted.

FEELINGS DIARY
Whereas with my DSR, I recognize my lust triggers and my character defects, in my feelings diary, I discover where they come from. Before I began writing about my feelings, I had no idea how many different feelings were possible, and I certainly couldn't identify most of them by name. But thanks to my feelings diary, I began to identify my feelings as I experienced them. Sometimes I noticed that I felt different feelings at the same time, such as gratitude and shame. I also began to see that feelings are not the same thing as thoughts. My feelings diary has helped me accept my thoughts, feelings, wants, and past behavior—I can accept them because I know God loves me. That makes it okay to make mistakes.

WHEN I'M NOT OKAY
When I'm not feeling well, the first thing I do is practice H.A.L.T. (Am I hungry, angry, lonely, or tired?). I acknowledge what I'm experiencing, then I surrender it to my Higher Power, my sponsor, and to my SA sisters ... then I go wash the dishes. In other words, after I practice surrender, I DO something that's productive or helpful regardless of what I'm feeling.

GETTING THINGS DONE
Responsibility and follow-through have always been difficult for me. The program has taught me to break things down into doable segments so I've accomplished tasks I could have never done before the program: schoolwork, past-due assignments,

preparing for the work week, thinking before I speak (I'm still improving here), reading program literature, and consistently paying something toward my utility bills.

These things are still difficult and even scary, but I recently opened the White Book at Step 11 where it says, "I'll pray that God will bring His kingdom into some area or enterprise, that His will be done in it" (SA 140). I said it out loud several times, referring to utilities. Surprisingly, there was no more indignation, I trusted God, and the defect disappeared; peace came.

HIGHLIGHTS OF MY DAILY ROUTINE

I wake up most often without an alarm, around 6 a.m. Once, I quit my job after a week to avoid getting up early. Now, getting up early is a fruit of the program for me.

I always start with the Serenity Prayer, a daily reading of SA book *The Real Connection*, a prayer from my religion, and meditation. I refrain from listening to music, or anyone's analysis of the economy, work, or life. The program showed me my limits on dumping any trash on me from family

members or friends. During the day, when I get immersed in work issues and my feelings and thoughts, I take a few minutes to connect with God, and suddenly I begin to feel my breath, to see what surrounds me, to see beauty. This newfound ability brings with it a feeling of gratitude to the Higher Power.

In the evening I use subdued lights, maybe calming music, and I only talk about work with my husband immediately after he returns home. I appreciate our time together in the evening. I still do not cope well with condemnation or discontent. I end any communication with the outside world by 8 p.m. I get ready for bed like a caterpillar in pupation: all processes slow down, and I slow down.

My days are not perfect, but I am no longer looking for perfection. I am looking for honesty, openness, the desire to live now, and the understanding that everything I have ever wanted is already with me today. And this understanding is the greatest gift to me from God.

JENYA N., Hanoi, Vietnam



DISCUSSION TOPIC

How can you strengthen your and your sponsees' programs in order to prevent relapse?

This awesome article describes Jenya's strong daily program routine which keeps her close to God and life. She goes in great detail to tell us about the tools that have been working for her—even after having moved from her country of origin to the other side of the world. Her recovery program includes daily program

calls, calls with her DSR partner, an in-depth feelings diary, taking actions of love, accomplishing tasks, getting up early, structure, connecting with God during the day. She sees that she needs to not just hastily read and answer some program questions, but work the Steps consistently.

What does your daily program routine look like? Are you aware that you can't stay clean on yesterday's shower but that your program must keep growing or your disease will start growing again?

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

In the beginning of recovery, when I was struggling to find long-term sobriety, every relapse seemed like a death sentence. This was a delusion and a lie. Who was judging me? Not my Higher Power. I was the judge, and again I was making myself the god and center of my world. My Higher Power never stopped desiring a relationship with me. He was and is the real center of the world. He was not concerned about judging me. His intention was to call me away from bondage to lust because it blocked our relationship. For this reason, guilt did not serve me. Guilt distracted my attention from seeking help from my HP and from the help of others in the SA fellowship.

Again and again, the White Book speaks of relationship with our HP and calls it "the real Connection" (SA 62, 205). Was it smart of me then to move away from my source of strength? "Our own surrender to God brought the Connection that finally worked and kept on working" (SA 79).

To make and keep that connection with my HP, I must make time every day to pray and meditate (Step 11). If the connection to my HP is broken, it is because I am moving away. Am I trying to be my own god again? My HP will never abandon me for I am the one who is powerless (Step 1), and my HP is the One to whom I surrender (Step 3). This is the nature of our relationship.

My HP was and is always encouraging. As Bill W. writes, "God is not

asking us to be successful. He is only asking us to try to be" (*As Bill Sees It* 11). Willingness is the key. This is why I had to keep coming back to the 12 Step program, fellowship with other people in SA working a program, and my HP—despite a relapse. It would have been too proud of me to turn my back on these and think I could find a better way, or that it didn't matter. Bill W. advises a friend, "Though I know how hurt and sorry you must be after this slip, please do not worry about a temporary loss of your inner peace. As calmly as you can, just renew your effort on the [SA] program, especially those parts of it which have to do with meditation and self-analysis" (*As Bill Sees It* 68).

All of us have only a daily reprieve despite the length of our sobriety. Our literature and that of AA remind us that sobriety comes "One day at a time." This means that I must be concerned about the quality of my sobriety, not the quantity. Why? Because I could relapse later today. Once I start to indulge lust, where do I stop? There is no way out but surrender. I believe I must surrender each and every tiny temptation in order to stay free. To tell myself that this little one is OK, is a lie. There is no good way but forward. Our White Book states, "Surrender is a constant thing. Practice. Day by day, hour by hour. Put into practice so often, it becomes habitual. That's how we get the attitude change that lets the grace of God enter to expel the obsession!" (SA 70)

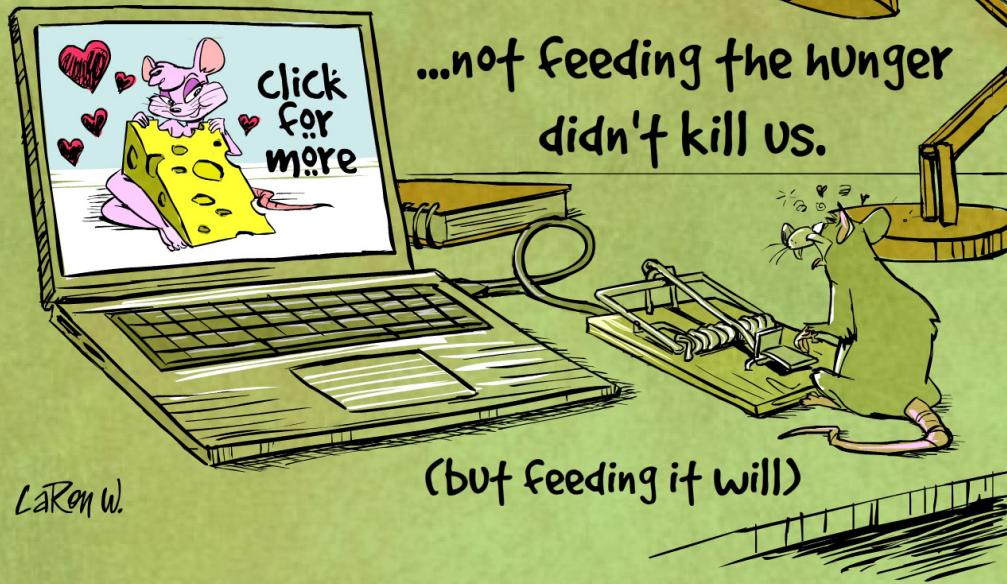
My sobriety and serenity are worth my best effort.

ANONYMOUS, Missouri, USA



SURRENDERING EACH TEMPTATION IN ORDER TO STAY FREE

This Egyptian fellow has come to understand there is a life beyond addiction, a life filled with serenity and genuine connection with God.



LaRen W.

(but feeding it will)

My sponsor used to say to me, “Why Feed the Wolf? Let It Starve,” referring to the lust residing in my brain. At first, I partially agreed with him. Deep down, though, I believed that this lust was integral to my character, to who I am, even though I knew that it was killing me, killing my soul. I struggled with the idea of letting it starve. I associated hunger with food and believed that, if I were hungry, the only solution was to eat; calling a fellow, attending a meeting, or praying to alleviate the feeling of hunger won’t put food in my belly. Likewise, I projected that only acting out could feed my lust hunger. I even-

tually realized that this perspective is false, but it took me a couple of years to truly grasp it.

During the initial phase of my sobriety journey, I experienced periods of shaky abstinence. I would maintain a good quality of sobriety for a few months, but then I would start seeking out lustful experiences, bringing myself to the edge of relapse. This would cause me to panic and then I would flee back to full engagement with the program—attending meetings daily, making calls, and leaving the house to avoid temptation. I would regain good quality sobriety for a few months, only to repeat the cycle again.

At one point, my sponsor suggested a period of total abstinence—to stop having sex with my wife for a period of time—ranging from one to three months, also known as “drying out,”

so that I could discover for myself if sex is indeed optional and if Not Feeding the Hunger would Kill Me. There was one condition, however: my wife had to agree to it. I hesitated about discussing it with her because she had been skeptical about it in the past, exhibiting the kind of behavior typical of an addict’s spouse. But, to my surprise, she agreed; and, with her support, I embarked upon the journey.

The first attempt at abstinence lasted for a day, the next for three days, and the next for five days; each attempt ending in failure. I didn’t despair; this was all new to me and after each failure, I resolved to start over again. I persevered, striving for one day, then for five days, eventually achieving nine days’ abstinence. But the pattern persisted, falling back into sex each time. Frustrated with my lack of progress, I reached out and called my sponsor. When he asked me why I thought it wasn’t working, I explained that my wife and I still engaged in intimate activities, such as hugging and kissing, which inevitably led to sex.

However, I assured him that I had a solution in mind and wanted to discuss it with him first. I believed that abstaining from intimacy with my wife and potentially living apart for a while might be the answer. To my surprise, he didn’t agree with that idea. Instead, he advised me to maintain intimacy with my wife but refrain from having sex. I considered his suggestion impossible, asking myself if somehow he had turned into an angel or some class of being who, after 30 years of sobriety, had forgotten the power of sexual desire. I began to think he didn’t fully comprehend my situation. As the phone call went on, I resisted his advice, dismissing the idea of intimacy without sex as unreal.

He stuck with me though and

shared a story about a fellow who had successfully followed this approach and stopped in the middle of sex with his wife because he had thoughts about other girls. I could hardly believe what I was hearing, and what was even more incredible was that the guy’s wife respected him for it. He assured me that I would appreciate the approach if I gave it an honest try. I am deeply grateful that God granted me the strength to try and keep trying. I persisted until one such attempt at abstinence succeeded

While sobriety is God’s gift to bestow, our program is nonetheless a program of action: I must do my part.

and my wife and I managed a month of abstinence. About a month later, we had two months of abstinence. I still don’t know how we accomplished it; it felt like a miracle. We were intimate and close, yet we didn’t engage in sexual activity. And most importantly, I didn’t die. My attitude towards sex changed completely as the meaning of true intimacy revealed itself. I had never experienced true intimacy before.

In the SA meetings, I used to listen to “A Vision for You.” It always inspired me, providing a sense of calmness and hope. Now, it resonates on a deeper level, accurately describing how I feel about sex. Tears well up as I reflect on these simple words. How grateful I am to God to have such an appreciation. Now I understand the truth

of my sponsor's words; you cannot truly comprehend something until you have experienced it firsthand. I used to share a similar example in meetings, saying that no matter how much I described an apple to someone who had never seen or tasted one, they would never truly know what an apple is. The same principle applies to experiencing sobriety and serenity.

I used to struggle with YouTube and social media. Although I needed them for work and studies, I recognized the potential risks they posed to my sobriety. In the past, I saw it as a black-and-white situation: being on social media and YouTube will inevitably lead to slips, and there is nothing that can be done about it.

However, one day, I decided to establish a YouTube boundary counter, meant to reset every time I crossed the particular limit that I set for myself. For this intervention to be effective, I needed to set a definition for "YouTube boundary sobriety," just like SA has a definition for sobriety. Without clear guidelines, it would be nothing more than a superficial barrier.

Thinking about it then, I came up with the following definition: no access to YouTube unless it serves a work, study, or well-being-related purpose. I conceded to myself that, up till then, my YouTube usage had always been motivated by lust or by unhealthy curiosity. The new approach worked; it increased my awareness of what I was looking at, denying denial, adhering to clear boundaries. While sobriety is God's gift to bestow, our program is nonetheless a program of action: I must do my part.

Later, I set up another counter called, "Fishing for a Second Look." Its purpose was to heighten my awareness when I intentionally objectify women, whether this is through their social

media profiles or in real life, scrutinizing their physical appearance, their attire and other aspects. It took me about a month of resetting this counter repeatedly, but now I am experiencing progressive victory over that kind of lust too, and the measure has significantly improved the quality of my sobriety. Today, my sobriety is characterized by tranquility, serenity, and a newfound appreciation for life. I experience less internal struggle.

Once again, I find solace in the words of "A Vision for You": "We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us."

Not having experienced something doesn't mean it doesn't exist. I have come to understand that there is life beyond addiction, a life filled with serenity and genuine connection with God. May God continue to reveal more to me, to all in recovery, and to those who are still suffering.

I am grateful for SA, for my sponsor, for my fellow SAs, and for my wife, who has endured her own share of hardships throughout this journey.

LOAY Z., Egypt



it's me and god for the rest of my life



Thanks to the fellowship and a God of her own understanding, who loves and likes her, this Zoom baby has a life beyond her wildest dreams.

I've been a sexaholic my whole life, and it's the most important fact in my life. I have other addictions and other Fellowships also. Sexaholism is not the one which would kill me quickest, but it is the major focus of my life in recovery, being the most all-encompassing and all-pervasive of them.

Indeed, as I read in the literature, and in Webster's Dictionary, lust takes countless forms; it's not just sexual, by any means. Therefore, I conceptualize all my other compulsions as being a manifestation of my primary addiction to lust. So SA is my major emphasis in recovery. It's also the one in which relapse is the most tempting, day by day, as I do not have to go to a shop and buy something, or go to a place, to relapse, etc., and I have read long ago that "the price of recovery is eternal vigilance." I am also aware that complacency kills addicts. I can therefore say with some certainty that I will be sober in SA one day at a time for life, as my history is that I was

perpetually desperate to die before I found SA. No other Fellowship cured this mental health issue, when I was not sexually sober.

I discovered lust in my primary/grade school years; my youthful experience was typical for the age, sex with self; but I was under religious instruction at the time and was told that sex with self was evil. Then I was sexually abused by two men, whilst still legally under protection laws (which I have reported to the authorities). This experience resulted in severe self-rejection. At age 13, I began asking for help to stop sex with self—which I was still asking 43 years later when I found SA. I qualified for SA the year before it began to exist!!

My late husband was 37 years older, with physical disabilities. I needn't go further than to say that I couldn't manage to be faithful, under those circumstances. I admit and take responsibility for my own defects of character in this, deriving from my sexaholic disease. I don't blame him.

I continued to seek help, but until SA, nobody had a solution. Since his death, 14 years ago, my problem with sex has been entirely with self. I have no intention of remarrying. Sex with self brought me to despair and it was in this despair that I contacted SA. I am still religious, not in the same tradition as my youth, but it does mean that of the 'S' Fellowships, SA is the one for me, as the SA sobriety definition accords with my own beliefs about sexual behavior completely.

I joined SA in September 2020. I attended on Zoom, as I don't have a car and live 55 miles from the nearest in-person/hybrid meeting. It was during the period of Covid-lockdown, which was a huge blessing to me, in that SA went enthusiastically onto Zoom, as it still is. I am an SA Zoom baby, and would not be sober today but for Zoom.

Coming from other Fellowships, I had the great advantage of knowing how a newcomer must behave. So, in my second week of membership, I began asking women to be my sponsor; I got the literature in print and on Kindle, and straightaway began my 90 meetings in 90 days. In those 90 days I estimate I attended 330 Zoom meetings. I threw myself into the whole thing, going to any lengths for my sobriety. I managed to get a temporary sponsor, wrote my First Step, and gave it to her all-women home group. This turned out to be only three of us, so I later gave it to a larger international mixed group. Now I felt I was becoming a real member.

After four months, it became possible to occasionally attend my home group in-person. In the course of time, they held an in-person recovery day. At this I burst into tears, and I hope I will never forget what I said that day, "I have joined SA today. Until

now, I have been floundering around in my own front room." I have since attended another recovery day and two conventions, and I continue to attend my home group in-person occasionally. I find in-person to be a totally different, far more life-giving experience than any Zoom meeting, no matter how good Zoom meetings are. Those guys in my home group saved my life.

Two years and four months down the road, I am still working with the

The God I believe in today not only loves me unconditionally, but actually LIKES me, and wants me to be "happy, joyous and free."

sponsor that I started out with. We work the Steps together. Having been through two weekend workshops, at which we worked all the Steps (except for finishing 9), I am working Steps 10, 11 and 12 on a daily basis. My sponsor is reworking them in more depth with me from *Step Into Action*.

I will never forget showing up at the international meeting that I mentioned, apologizing for being only 24 hours sober. Someone replied that the world record for sobriety is 24 hours! Today as I write my history, I could easily let my inner-addict-voice condemn me for my past, and sentence me to a life without hope. The 24-hours principle is crucial to me. It's a part of my particular religion also that the blessings of my Higher

Power, whom I call God, are renewed every morning; this accords with my SA mindset perfectly. Today I am not sentenced by my past. Today, I feel "happy, joyous, and free" and the literature supports me, telling me that this is what God wants for me.

This is very much how I am living today. In the solution. As it says, a price must be paid; it means I have to "turn in all things to the Father of Light Who presides over us all" (AA 14). When, as happens on occasion, my inner addict refuses to open my heart to God and does its own thing, I consider myself at risk, and do my best to reach out, tell sober members what's going on, and get back on track as quickly as possible.

For a long time, I only contacted women, but today my sponsor is happy for me to reach out to sober men, such as in my home group—provided that I mainly turn to women. I just have to use my head, and be honest with myself about my motivation and their sobriety. I don't speak with men who are not at least medium-term sober, nor do I private message any such men. This has never been questioned by anyone, in fairness.

I imagine there are as many ideas of God as there are members, and so it should be. I am, as I mentioned, in a religion. That obviously shapes how I see God. But that idea of God presided over almost half a century of despair and sexual acting out. So recently enough, I worked Step 2 hard, using the Step 2 chart in *Step Into Action*. It only occurs to me now, as I write, that I have been sober from that day to this!!! That chart examined in detail my old ideas of God, shaped by my unhappy experiences, and moved me to the new beliefs I have about God today. It was a total, humbling revelation to me. I cried often during the exercise.

Without using non-SA terms, the God I believe in today not only loves me unconditionally, but actually LIKES me, and wants me to be "happy, joyous and free"; at peace and serene. He wants me to be sober and will keep me sober, regardless of the difficulties and pain that life will throw my way, so long as I maintain the Real Connection with Him and not trust exclusively in fellowship. When all else fails me, I have been taught to fall back on my Step work, and in so doing to recover my God connection.

When all else fails, I work with other sexaholics. At other times, literature and Step work, prayer and meditation, by whatever method, and a BREAK from communication with other SA members, is what is required for me.

I have absolute confidence in SA, and absolutely no confidence in my own willpower. This will, as I say, be the case for the rest of my life. Because this illness kills people, and it almost killed me. Today, and today only, I have a life totally "beyond my wildest dreams." Thank God that "God is surely for the sexaholic."

KATHIE S., Devon, UK



This Latin-American oldtimer testifies how the spirit of the First Step has changed his attitude and has become a real path to his Higher Power.

The Spirit Of the First Step

In the chapter on the First Step in the *White Book*, it says: “A broken and contrite spirit—the spirit of the First Step—is the key that opens the door and sets us free” (SA 88). Why do we go slowly and painfully backward to hell, when I can go running joyfully to heaven? The broken and contrite spirit is essential, because I know the physical and emotional damage that addiction brings me. I am aware of the terrible consequences that my lust can cause me and I do not want to run the risks of the past again.

I had to be very obedient, when, for

example, my sponsor told me that in order to go to the beach, I had to wait until three years of sexual sobriety, and after having worked the Twelve Steps. Although it cost me, I did so, and when I went to the beach again, I went accompanying my wife to serve her, to take care of her and being careful of what I looked at. I thanked God for the wonders of creation, giving thanks for nature, for the sun and for the beauty of the sea. I had a very different attitude: moving from resentment to gratitude; trying to fulfill God’s will, instead of seeking to please my ailing ego.

We seek progress, not perfection, but AA literature tells us that the only Step that can be taken perfectly is the first one. So, in my case, what that same chapter of the *White Book* dealing with the First Step said, came true. It is not that I took this Step, but that the First Step took hold of me. It penetrated me in such a way that one day at a time I have been able to remain sober since 2006.

In the morning when I get up the first thing I do is to offer to God my intentions and actions for that day; then I prepare coffee for my wife. At noon I pray for a while. Throughout the day I call fellows. At night I answer emails and messages from my sponsees or fellows who need help. If I am in a place where there are face-to-face meetings of SA I attend at least one a week and by internet I also attend at least two meetings a week. I also attend face-to-face meetings of other Twelve Step fellowships.

If any temptation of resentment or lust comes to me, I call a fellow to make the surrender, because every day I wake up sexaholic, and every day I must seek my salvation. Once a sexaholic, always a sexaholic. Since sexaholism is a spiritual disease, the solution is spiritual as well: an attitude of much prayer throughout the day.

The program does not promise me that I will not have any more temptations, but it has taught me that I should not get nervous when that happens. I simply have a disease and I live with it, as many other human beings do. I can choose. I know what is happening. I stay calm and I say what I learned from “*The Joy Response*” in *Recovery Continues*: “My God, thank you for this temptation and for the victory that you will have here. May your will be done and not mine.” Truly, the feeling is one of freedom,

peace and joy, not mere relief at being saved, like those who are rescued from a shipwreck.

In the *AA Big Book*, the following is noted: “To sum up about sex: We earnestly pray for the right ideal, for guidance in each questionable situation, for sanity, and for the strength to do the right thing. If sex is very troublesome, we throw ourselves the harder into helping others. We think of their needs and work for them. This takes us out of ourselves. It quiets the imperious urge, when to yield would mean heartache” (AA 70). This clearly indicates to me what I should do: pray sincerely, whenever I am tempted; and work intensely with other sexaholics.

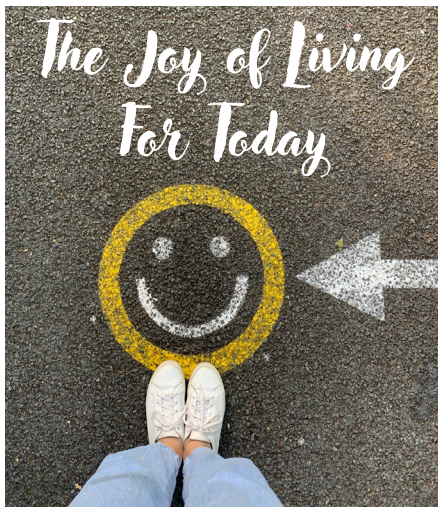
I remember once complaining to my sponsor because I had attended an SA meeting and no one else had gone. He said, “It helped you because you came out of your isolation.” Working with other sexaholics includes making calls, surrendering, or simply finding out how folks are doing. The imperious urge that the *Big Book* talks about subsides, if I follow the instructions. As Dr. Silkworth, Bill W.’s doctor, used to say, relapse does not happen by chance, it is not a rare occurrence; the patient simply did not follow instructions.

The spirit of the First Step leads me to be disciplined and obedient. I want to follow instructions because I really am remorseful, I want to change. This addiction had me desperate and will have me desperate again if I back off.

It also serves me to remember that it is not knowledge that saves me, but the practice of the program. As a priest friend once told me: “Nelson, to do God’s will you don’t have to study theology, but put into practice what you know your Higher Power wants for you.”

NELSON V., Venezuela





(see essay.sa.org under “Get Involved”), where positive recovery tools are practiced on a daily basis and recovery habits formed. I have always been inspired by the testimonies of those who have embraced the program, to hear how their lives have changed so much.

When I first worked on the shortcomings of my character, I hoped afterwards that life would conform to my will and become non-stop wonderful. But no sooner had I completed all 12 Steps with my sponsor’s congratulations, than a series of trials befell me. Again I had to look at my anger in particular; how very angry I am! However I did not lose hope and continued to hand my life and my will over to the care of God. I also needed to take action about my anger so that it wouldn’t kill me.

The Step 4 prayer about getting rid of anger became my sigh and exhale. Gradually, I became free of my hatred towards those who caused my heartache. And then I felt fear for my life because increasingly I felt value and respect for my life. I was so glad to feel this because before then, I hated my life and just changed one addiction for another, always devaluing the gift of life, never seeing any meaning in it if there could be no euphoric pleasure involved.

Before the program, I always asked God to spare me from pain and from suffering; to whisk me away to heaven so I would only feel good things. Today, I acknowledge pain and emotions and hand them over to God in case they overwhelm me. I must deal with my emotions. I know, from personal experience, how sick I can become—even physically—when I suppress my emotions with addictive thinking and behavior.

The most important thing I ask of God today is for peace of mind and to hold in my heart as much of His love as I can. Today I also pray for the courage to live life on life’s terms; to stay the course through whatever pain comes my way so that I can develop my character with the wisdom that God provides to all who ask Him for it.

OLGA S., *Alchevsk, Ukraine*



A Prayer for Working with Others

I wrote this prayer to help me when I’m working with others; it’s adapted from chapter seven of *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

JOHN M., *Tennessee, USA*



God,

Help me to remember that that man is very ill, not to push or prod him, not to chase him or force myself upon him, not to place him under any obligation or pressure or insistence, and not to exhibit any passion for crusade or reform.

Help me to stop fighting everything and everybody.

Enable me to make it clear to him that he does not have to agree with my conception of You, to encourage him to follow his own conscience, and to stress the spiritual in everyday language without instructing in religion.

Enable me to never talk down to him from any moral or spiritual hilltop; allow me to simply lay out the kit of spiritual tools for his inspection.

And grant me the grace to share my experience in a spirit of friendship and fellowship, to give him practical advice on the Twelve Steps, and to walk day by day with him on the path of spiritual progress.

Amen.

Newest SA Groups

Europe

↪ Eindhoven, The Netherlands

North & South America

- ↪ Piura, Piura, Peru
- ↪ Bremerton, Washington, USA
- ↪ Kalamazoo, Michigan, USA
- ↪ Fort Wayne, Indiana, USA

Financial Update at Aug 31

↪ Total income	\$ 323,980
↪ Total expenses	\$ 363,582
↪ Net loss	-\$ 39,602
↪ Total reserves (7.8 months of expenses)	\$ 283,733

I am sober by the SA sobriety definition eight years now, by the grace of a Higher Power. I like the number eight because it reminds me of the infinity sign. And even though I’m still learning to live within the day, the program offers me endless hope, day by day.

One of the texts of our literature warns us that the path will not be easy, and it is true. However, the easiest thing in my recovery was to start writing the Steps as per

the book, *Step into Action*. From the start, I believed in the solution and plunged into the recovery process under the sensitive and specific guidance of my sponsor, and based on our literature.

As there are no face-to-face SA meetings in my region, I tried to plan my days in such a way as to visit as many online groups as possible, and made certain I shared whenever the opportunity came. SA provided me with many opportunities to share and so it was deeply fulfilling for me to become part of the global fellowship and participate in all SA events, such as: online conventions in different countries, online round tables—the purpose of which was to carry our message to doctors and psychologists.

One especially enjoyable activity in becoming part of the fellowship was participation in the “ESSAY Recovery Game”

Entering the 2023 IC Cracow hotel I walked straight into the welcoming arms of a Polish fellow who is a regular attendant of the *Sponsoring by Mail* workshop. First time we met face-to-face. It was meeting a brother. The entire weekend we couldn't stop smiling when we worked together or bumped into each other. A real connection. All the troubles of traveling by train vanished at that moment, in hindsight.

In no time I met most of the fellows who had signed up to do service during the weekend. In no time the CFC table was set up and covered with the service material we have. I met up with trusted servants I had been meeting online many times. What a blessing and a joy! "Hey man, you are much taller (or 'smaller,' for that matter) than I thought!"

I had agreed to be responsible for the CFC program at the convention, including the bookmark. Originally produced by the former CFC chair for the international convention in Madrid, it has useful information and "CFC attraction" in English on one side, and the local language on the other side. (Please edit, translate and use it for your local CFC events.)

At general sessions there was room for attracting fellows to the CFC break-out

session and table. I am very grateful for the sympathy and support of the Polish convention committee. Grateful for the fellows who did service at the table and solved technical problems at the break-out session. We kept smiling!

The list of fellows signing up for service or information extended from 15 to 55 after the final general session where we talked about CFC service and decided on the spot to send the list around the room. Nine fellows indicated that they want to be a sponsor, ten to be a first responder; twenty fellows asked for more information; the rest did not specify. All got a letter with the internal CFC service folder, the SACFC bookmark and a print version of *ESSAY*'s special CFC issue.

Eight fellows started sponsoring right after the convention. As at that moment there were no more unassigned sponsor requesters, there was no need to engage the first responders, but as I write this article there are ten requesters unassigned and by the time you read this, there may be many more.

So, here's the call to service: If you have six months of sobriety, are working the Steps, and your sponsor agrees, do sign up for one of the best tools in recovery: working with others. If you don't meet these requirements, do sign up as a first responder, writing a letter of encouragement to a sexaholic in prison waiting to be assigned a sponsor. It's a most rewarding service. Moreover, welcome to this wonderful circle of CFC servants!

BEN V., *Leiden, The Netherlands*



A Postcard for You

I sent this postcard from the Cracow IC, where I asked fellow attendees to write something or at least their names for my home group in Italy. It was a meaningful experience for me to engage with both familiar faces and newly met fellows, offering a small way to "carry the message" to those who couldn't be present and

serve as a bridge from our group to the larger SA fellowship. There were many names written, reflecting various languages and alphabets. My only regrets? Not buying a larger postcard to collect even more messages, and not using colored pens.

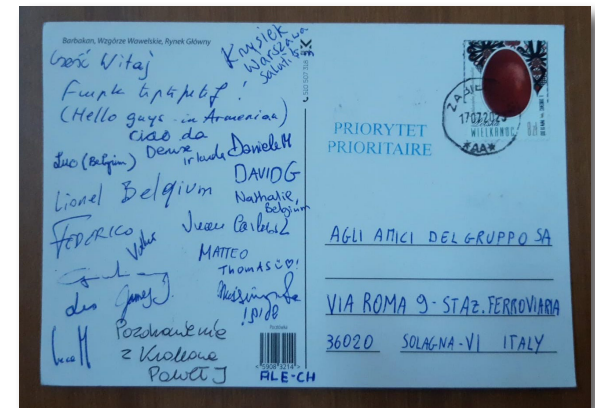
For me, postcards are also a way to take loving action to my close relatives. When I was in the problem, one of the very few reasons for me to travel was acting out, done in secrecy. However, when I started traveling for my recovery, the secrecy lessened (though forgetting to share still remains a possibility). Even though my relatives might not be interested in the reasons behind my travels, I felt compelled to lightly involve them in my changed attitudes. Thus, the commitment to send postcards began.

Even now, it's not an easy task: what to write? How to write? How not to sound awkward? What if they find it uninteresting? However, at least I write some kind of greetings to at least indicate that I'm thinking of them. Yes, my starting point is modest, but it's also an opportunity for me to learn the A-B-C of connecting with others.

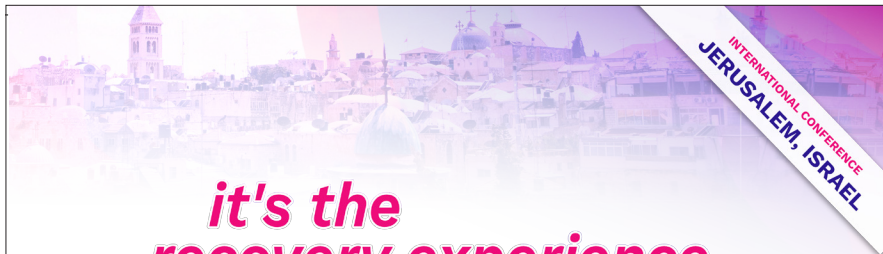
Speaking of attending conventions abroad, an unexpected side effect was a strange but powerful display of affection. Last year, when I informed my siblings about my trip to Armenia, my older brother expressed deep worry and even wanted to meet up to dissuade me from going (I still wonder why, though). Despite his concerns, I proceeded with my plans and sent postcards. Interestingly, it became the most significant display of affection I've received from him thus far.

And what about the Cracow Convention? Well, it was a truly remarkable experience. It provided a significant opportunity to meet new friends from numerous countries, each with their own recovery journey. It also allowed for reconnecting with friends I hadn't heard from in months. Even encountering Italian fellows, with whom I was already in touch, in a new environment offered a fresh perspective. A big thank you to the Polish fellowship for their exceptional service and efforts, to the speakers, and to the volunteers of the Talent Show!

CLAUDIO F., *Solagna, Italy*



ESSAY publishes **international SA events only**. However, your local or international events can be sent in to saico@sa.org in order to be listed on the Conventions & Events page of sa.org to saico@sa.org. Submit the following information: dates, theme, location, and contact(s). An event flyer is very helpful.



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DAVE H., California, USA




SURRENDER, DEEP IN THE
OF TEXAS

Save the Date, Y'all!

International SA / S-Anon Convention
Dallas, Texas July 25, 26 and 27, 2025

SA Is Growing in Hungary

In Hungary, SA was founded in September 2019. We currently have three weekly meetings, two online and one hybrid in Budapest. Participation

activity varies—members come and go—but we have about six to eight returning members. The meeting types are varied and include free sharing, SA White Book reading, AA Big Book reading, and speaker meetings. It is a significant step forward that the Hungarian translation of the SA White Book has been completed. It is waiting to be printed. It will take time for SA in one small country to become known alongside other S-communities that have been operating in the country for 30 years. The Hungarian SA is a member of the South East Intergroup (SEI). Good relations with the Slovakian SA community should be highlighted.

I started attending SA Hungary in September 2019. Before that, I went to another recovery S-community for more than two years, where my sobriety was established, but I could not get any serious recovery results. SA has given me new hope with its strict bottom-line expectation and its lust concept, which is

about how living out sex addiction itself is just the tip of the iceberg, just one manifestation of a more general deeper illness of the whole personality.

Now that after three years of SA with stumbling, compulsive relapse, but with constant active meetings and Step work, the sobriety gift has been given (I have been sexually sober for six months now), I am even more intensely confronted with the character defects that I have escaped from for many years.

SA's intense spirituality injected honesty into my religious denominational practice and made my relationship with family members deeper, more sincere (though far from passionless), and less paranoid.

I am given tangible tools in SA every day in moments of temptation and negative thoughts by avoiding the second look, by making instant calls, by leaving voice messages, by applying surrender so that I can always admit my helplessness, kneeling down and surrendering to the Higher Power, in my case, God.

Through prayer, the object of desire is humanized and I give it something instead of exploiting a created person. (The seriousness of my illness is that I wish for hundreds every week,

but I hope my prayer will bless hundreds of people. This is how God turns disadvantage into advantage.) The concept of surrender was new to me compared to the other S-community, because I was fighting there, I was battling illness, and I didn't yet understand the truth of the paradox that I had to surrender, step back in my own story in order for God to enter my life and do for me what I cannot do for myself. The egotistical problem solver cannot do anything for himself.

Over the years, the SA program has become a major part of my life. My previously "sideline," secretly-handled problem has become mainstream (daily meetings). The real connection with God, the recovery program, my family, and my religious practice keep me sober. Of course my real recovery, my continued peace of mind, is still much more than just staying sober. I learned this in SA, but at least I can experience temporarily the peace and relief that applying the program brings in times of negative feelings, thoughts, and sexual temptations. Please God bless SA, the Hungarian SA community, both local and intergroup.

N., Budapest, Hungary



COMING IN DECEMBER



Healing Had to Come About in All Three

NEXT EDITION

In the December issue, members share what "Holistic Recovery" has come to mean for them—how working their SA programs has led to recover the physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of their lives.

On Cookies and Lust

This German fellow discovered how eating too many cookies increased his lust drive.

Cloak of Lust

Ameer from Iraq shares how lust manifests itself in various forms in his life like food, fame, money, control, intimacy, and attention.

From Train Wreck to Instrument

In recovery, she has learned to take care of her basic needs and in this way, she has become an instrument of her Higher Power.

SUBMIT YOUR STORY

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.

June 2024 edition: What is Lust? (Stories due May 1) Its focus on lust is what sets SA apart from the other S-fellowships.

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

THE TWELVE STEPS OF SA

- 1** We admitted that we were powerless over lust—that our lives had become unmanageable.
- 2** Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
- 3** Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
- 4** Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
- 5** Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
- 6** Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
- 7** Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
- 8** Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
- 9** Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
- 10** Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
- 11** Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
- 12** Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to sexaholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

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THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF SA

- 1** Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon SA unity.
- 2** For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
- 3** The only requirement for SA membership is a desire to stop lusting and become sexually sober.
- 4** Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups, or Sexaholics Anonymous as a whole.
- 5** Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the sexaholic who still suffers.
- 6** An SA group ought never endorse, finance or lend the SA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
- 7** Every SA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
- 8** Sexaholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
- 9** SA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
- 10** Sexaholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the SA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
- 11** Our public relations policy is based upon attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, and TV.
- 12** Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

A young girl in a brown robe and an elderly woman in a blue robe are kneeling on a stone path in a traditional Chinese garden. They are holding hands and looking at each other with smiles. In the background, there is a traditional Chinese building with a tiled roof and a large tree. The scene is bathed in warm, golden light, suggesting a sunset or sunrise.

GOD

**GRANT ME THE SERENITY TO ACCEPT
THE THINGS I CANNOT CHANGE,
COURAGE TO CHANGE THE THINGS I CAN,
AND THE WISDOM TO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE**