

# ESSAY

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SEXADDICTS ANONYMOUS

## HOLISTIC RECOVERY



Healing Had To Come  
About In All Three

DECEMBER 2023 SAORG

# 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*

**W**e saw that our problem was threefold: physical, emotional, and spiritual. Healing had to come about in all three (SA 204).

There are many ways to work on our threefold recovery. In this special edition, members share what has worked for them.

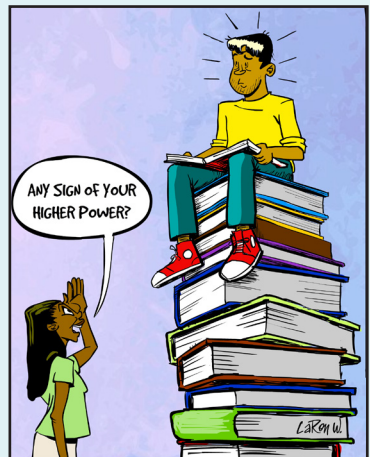
An American fellow and Egyptian lady share about working the Steps as well as therapy on their emotional recovery. A German member reveals the link he found between binging on sugar and the intense lust dreams he endured. An Indian female member has found intuitive watercoloring very helpful to voice her inner child. Another member recounts how his Higher Power helped him to forgive the man who abused him over 40 years ago.

Learn about the precious service of the Public Information Committee, which is looking for creatives to tell the world SA is there to help those who identify with us.

Read all about how the Ukrainian fellowship organized a convention notwithstanding their difficult circumstances and how the participants had a very uplifting and spiritual time together.

The goal of all these efforts—whether it is Step work, therapy, art work, reading lots of program as well as self-help books, physical exercising, prayer, attending fellowship events etc.—is to experience a spiritual awakening. To improve our conscious contact with our Higher Power. The One who has all power. May you find Him now!

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

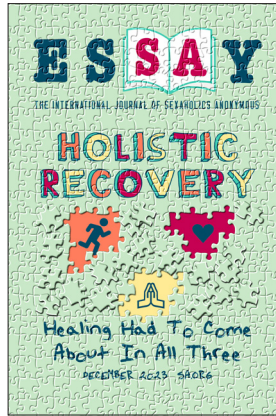




# December 2023

*A.A.'s Twelve Steps are a group of principles, spiritual in their nature, which, if practiced as a way of life, can expel the obsession to drink and enable the sufferer to become happily and usefully whole.*

*Twelve & Twelve 15*



*On the cover: In order to become whole and joyous persons, we need to work on different levels and recover many pieces that we had lost in our active disease.*

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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

# Help the PI Committee Save Lives

# W

ho are we? We are the Public Information Committee who serve under the Board of Trustees. I call us the band of creatives. We reach out to the general public, telling the world SA is here to help those who identify with us. Today, addicts are immersed in the digital world. Many of them will never stumble upon vital information about sexaholism and SA. That is where we come in and why we need your help.

Whether you have skills in social media, video development, graphic design, coding, web building, audio recording and editing, music writing, you can play a part in helping save lives. Some initiatives have been setting up accounts on social media to post resources about SA. Other projects we have done are producing videos for [sa.org](http://sa.org). One project is the *Women's Welcome Packet*, letting women know that SA is for them by communicating the message through the women's experiences. Inspired by the *Women's Welcome Packet*, PI members expressed their desire to create a similar packet for the whole of SA. The result was the creation of *The Newcomer Orientation Series*, a delightful series of videos developed by a gentleman who walks the newcomer through getting set up. The series will be presented to the General Delegate Assembly in February 2024 for approval. We can't wait for you to see them!

Would you please help us? Contact us at [sapublicinfo@gmail.com](mailto:sapublicinfo@gmail.com) to get connected. We would love to have you join this band of brothers and sisters who are often the first point of contact with those in need of recovery.

LAURA W., *Florida, USA*  
FORMER PIC CHAIR



## Surrendering

### DEAR ESSAY, THANK YOU

for writing about Japan in your June edition, which gave me special joy.

I had read about the tool of “90 Meetings in 90 Days” in an ESSAY edition when I first started coming to SA. But I had decided that I couldn’t do it as there weren’t that many SA meetings in Japan.

Lust attacks me heavily every month when I have my period, especially by promising it will soothe my severe menstrual cramps and the emotional turmoil that usually accompanies them. Some time ago, under such a fierce attack, I feared losing my sobriety but remembered the “90 Meetings in 90 Days” tool. Pondering that I couldn’t do 90 SA meetings in 90 days, I suddenly got the idea of attending open meetings of AA. I know the idea came to me from my Higher Power.

As there are many online AA meetings in Japan both day and night, I’ve since added them to my weekly schedule of meetings. When I go to an AA meeting, I am still surprised when I get that familiar calm feeling with no further need to act out. The other day, I was triggered by worry over my husband’s health and felt trapped by the

thought of acting out. But instead, I surrendered and asked my Higher Power to take care of him. That simple surrender kept me from acting out again.

I admit to my sponsor every morning that I am a sexaholic. I engage in Step work, meet daily with my online fellows, and I calm down by sharing in my meetings. My sexaholism hasn’t gone away, but I’m gradually gaining trust that if I follow the program by surrendering my struggles and my will, my Higher Power will keep me sober. I am going to spend one more day without relying on lust, but instead, surrendering the option to act out.

IKOBI, *Saitama Prefecture, Japan*



## The Program Works Everywhere

**AN INCIDENT TODAY WAS** another lesson in emotional sobriety:

I live in a “golf cart community.” Lots of golf courses, but we also use golf carts to go to the store, to dinner, to recreation, to meetings. Many streets have a dedicated golf cart lane beside the normal traffic lane.

Today, in such a lane, I came up behind a slower cart. I checked that the way was clear, then started to pass the other cart using the automobile lane. As I got just ahead of him, he sped up, blocking

me from getting back into the cart lane. (These carts don’t have much speed, I was doing all I could.)

What I did: I looked over and glared at him. He glared back. Still couldn’t gain enough to get in front. I yelled at him, “Slow down!” He yelled back, “Speed up!” After perhaps 15 seconds of this foolishness, he slowed back down and I completed the pass. My entire head and insides were in turmoil and anger. I brooded about the incident for another mile of travel before working out...

What I should have done: When I realized he was being obstructive, I should have quietly dropped back behind him and accepted that I wasn’t going to pass this person.

(See SA 100)

1. I did wrong. Not by passing, that was okay, but by reacting badly to his insanity.
2. I was disturbed
3. I tried to quiet the disturbance in my own way
4. I denied to myself that I was in any wrong.
5. When that didn’t work, I only had two choices: treat my disturbance by blaming him, or treat the cause of my disturbance, my own wrong.
6. By dropping back, I would have made positive amends for my wrong, correcting/amending my wrong.
7. Had I done so, I would have felt better immediately.

Program. It works everywhere. Even in a golf cart.

ERIC H., *Florida, USA*



Worldwide  
Walls of SA

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



*Beige Portable,  
Nashville,  
Tennessee,  
USA*



*Meeting Room,  
Bonn, Germany*



*Thursday Meeting,  
Havana, Cuba*



*Dubai Meeting Room,  
Dubai, UAE*



## 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.



## Practical Tools

In an AA article, I once read about a fellow who is in the military. He wrote that he is taught to always wear a helmet, that it's a habit ingrained in him. Going outside means putting on a helmet, period. In the beginning, it was something he had to learn, something people had to keep reminding him to do, and something that had to become a real habit. But eventually, he did it without thinking.

He recounted how once, during a training mission, he had to stand guard in a tank at night. Because he thought he heard a noise outside, he put on his helmet and went to check. It turned out there was nothing wrong, but just at that moment, a hinge broke, causing

a metal plate to crash against the back of his head. He realized that the helmet had saved his life, even though there had been no rational reasons afterward for why he had put it on: it was a training mission, everyone was asleep, and the noise was probably just some wild animal or something. But the habit of doing things without thinking, like

**I have nothing to be ashamed of; I am a survivor, and today, I stand here in recovery.**

putting on a helmet, had saved his life here. He concluded his article by saying that the AA program works in exactly the same way.

I recently experienced that as well. Last week, I went to a local folk dance group for the first time, this after I had gone folk dancing with some SA fellows a week earlier. It was so enjoyable that I

*Always*  
*Wearing My*  
**Program**  
**Helmet**



wanted to do it here in my own city too. The first dance was great, and everything went smoothly. However, during the second dance, at a certain moment, we had to step forward and put our arm around our neighbor's waist, then step back. When my neighbor placed her arm around me, I had an incredible flashback to five years ago, when I was sexually abused by a one-night stand. That touch triggered the memory, and I just broke down. I finished the dance while crying.

I went to the dressing room and prayed. *That's the first tool I practice when something happens, thanks to the program: I turn to God.* I prayed and cried, and felt a real need to make a phone call. I went outside and called my sponsor. *Making phone calls is another one of those tools that have become habits.* Thankfully, my sponsor was available, and we talked for about half an hour via video call. I was in deep pain, trauma can be so terribly painful. She advised me that when I felt ready, I should go back inside, even if just to observe. Shame inside me wanted to run home, but I knew she was right. I have nothing to be ashamed of; I'm a survivor, and today, I stand here in recovery. So, I followed her advice and went back inside, and I even danced a little bit myself.

The following days were very difficult. Numbness and sadness alternated with each other. It seemed like the abuse had taken place that Wednesday, not five years ago. Fortunately, I could take the right

actions at any moment, purely out of habit, and that really helped me get through it. The morning after, I attended an online morning meeting that I often participate in, and seeing my friends there and hearing their voices provided me with real comfort. I made phone calls, prayed, wrote gratitude lists and listened to SA recordings, but also going about my household chores provided comfort due to the routine.

Despite the intense trauma pain I was in, I truly felt the healing power of the program. And because I

**I could take the right actions at any moment, purely out of habit, and that really helped me get through it.**

attend meetings on a daily basis, make phone calls, pray, listen to recordings, etc., it didn't feel like an extraordinary effort now but rather a habit. A habit that has now ensured that I stayed sober last week. I am—thanks be to God—still sexually sober and also abstinent in my other two recovery programs.

I am grateful that the program has been drilling into me for the past few years “to always put on my helmet,” because I never know when it will save my life.

NATHALIE V., *Antwerp, Belgium*



**T**

hree years ago I was in pain. It was the pain of slavery to lust which was causing me deep trouble and threatening to ruin my entire life. The pain brought me

into the SA fellowship. Thanks to the SA fellowship, and to my sponsor and through working the SA program, my deep trouble gradually turned into a blessing—into a life that is clean and sober. Sanity returned and I found a true

connection with God. I don't think I would ever have sought God so actively but for the pain and the brokenness that lust had caused me. This amazed me. What had seemed to me my worst misfortune turned out to be my greatest blessing. Isn't that a miracle?

I wanted to share my experience with people in SA and so, I began to help others to turn the greatest trouble in their lives into their greatest blessing. The most sacred gift for me has been to find purity and connection with the Truth and to become happy through giving up lust and working the Steps. It

**From  
Deepest  
Pain  
To  
Greatest  
Blessing**



*Sharing his own suffering and the SA solution through the tool of sponsoring other sexaholics is giving him the highest joy.*



has given me the strength to help others on the same journey.

To consider the difficulties briefly, I find that most people are not ready to seriously surrender a lust hit. The newcomer, tormented by the pain of lust-insanity, has no experience of sobriety to which he can relate; it's all hazy and distant while lust is a life-long, deep, deep habit; lust is never further than a fantasy away; resisting is unfamiliar and painful.

My task as a sponsor is to help him to want a sober life. By sharing my experience, I can feed the fragile sprout of his desire for sobriety; the desire to live a life that is happy, joyous, and free. I try to inspire him by my example. I go through it all with him, the states of recovery that I experienced; the phases I identified; the challenges of recovery and the hope for a meaningful life that I have achieved, one day at a time, through recovery. The rest is up to the Higher Power.

Sometimes my ego wants the sponsee to recover according to my idea of how it should be. At times, I am tempted to be the leader in the sponsee's recovery instead of God. The truth is that God is in control. I am just an instrument for doing His will.

This means that I must constantly invite God into every facet of my work with the sponsee. In this way I allow Him to work more effectively through me—to find the right words, the right suggestions, the most appropriate recommendations to make in every particular case. God teaches me to be flexible

with each sponsee, showing me how each one is different, and that each needs his own individual approach.

Therefore, I listen to God and I choose His leadership suggestions in the sponsor-sponsee relationship. This makes it much better and more interesting.

In my experience, one undeniable blessing that accompanies sponsorship is the deep joy at seeing sponsees' lives change and become successful through the help that I give them in working their pro-

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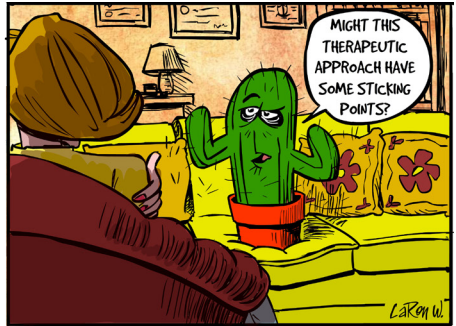
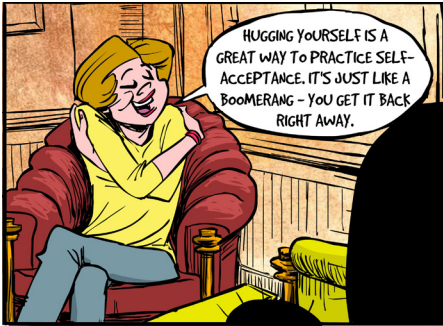
gram. I too have my own recovery story, the story of being sponsored. With God's help, I can really make a difference to someone who is suffering the horrors of lust addiction. When I do this, I feel I am acting in accordance with God's will; and life in harmony with God's will brings me the highest joy!

ILYA K., *Russia*



*Working on the psychological part of the solution and learning to love himself has been a long and painful process for this oldtimer, but he is finally starting to feel happy, joyous, and free.*

## ACCEPTING OUTSIDE HELP



**T**he first good feeling that I can recall in life was when I was five years old and my father had given me a bottle of Rolling Rock beer. I felt the effect of the alcohol as I sat drinking in a corner. Looking across the room at my father, I was just full of love for him. It was a wonderful feeling.

The next good feeling I remember was around the same time and involved a girl named Nancy who was also about five years old. It was a warm summer day, and I picked little Nancy up in my arms, carried her over to my mother and said, "Nancy and I are gonna get married." I remember the happiness and joy I felt inside.

When I was eight, my 14-year-old sister had taken me and my 10-year-old brother to the river where she was going to teach us how to swim. My brother drowned there that day, and I was narrowly rescued. I was pulled out by my hair, but I thought my brother got the better deal—he got to die and go be with God while I had to go home to my family. My dad let his drinking take

off, and it got steadily worse from that point on. What made it even worse for me was that my family wouldn't talk about it and acted as if I never even had a brother. But I knew what happened, and I knew I had an older brother.

Then when I complained of stomach pain, which is all an eight-year-old could do with those impossible feelings, they drugged me. They gave me this stuff called paregoric, which was used for children's diarrhea and stomach complaints. Paregoric is an opiate. I have no recollection of the four months after my brother's drowning until the day JFK was assassinated. That's when I regained consciousness as if from a long blackout. I looked around the classroom to see everyone crying. All that registered was that I felt nothing.

My memory from that point is still vague, but I do remember that I was drinking regularly by fifteen. Fast forward to 25, and I've got liver damage. I didn't normally drink to blackout, but I remember hearing my name, "Kirk!" But that wasn't my name. I went to my bedroom to find a girl sitting on my bed without clothes and a bottle of beer

in her hand. I said, "You need to get dressed. And you need to leave!" She just said, "Well, can I keep the beer?"

I got sober in AA on Feb 24, 1980. My sponsor sat me down and told me to look at the seven deadly sins as part of my Fourth Step. I looked over the list: anger, greed, gluttony, sloth, pride, envy . . . but when I got to lust, I thought, that's not a sin! I NEED that to get out of bed in the morning — I need that to get to sleep at night!

Seventeen years after that, I was still sober in AA. I had been sponsoring people, visiting alcoholics in prison, active in the Fellowship, but I lusted like crazy for my sister-in-law. One day she and her husband stopped by all dressed up for a wedding they were headed to. I was then very much into photography and a whole plan unfolded in my mind: I'll ask my sister-in-law if I can photograph her in her nice outfit. But as I stood up to make the proposal, something said, "Buddy! What's wrong here?" And I realized, there's a whole lot wrong here! I sat right back down. My wife, her sister, and my brother-in-law all looked at me wondering what was going on. I just wanted to disappear. I tried to sink into the sofa realizing right there, I have a lust problem, and it's about to wreck my life. I'm sure I was white as a sheet.

I was already heavily into pornographic magazines. I had girlfriends and a lot of other stuff that I thought "wasn't good for my marriage." Someone had told me about SA and what they called the "white book." They told me there was a meeting nearby, and when I first sat in that meeting, I felt like I was home. When they said, "we felt inadequate, unworthy, alone, and afraid," that was ME! I knew these Twelve Steps inside and out from AA. I got busy working the Steps, and I began to see character defects in me that had never materialized in AA.

When I would have intimate relations

with my wife, I would fantasize about this or that woman or somebody I saw in a magazine or someone I saw in the mall. My wife suspected I was having an affair—she absolutely knew I wasn't spiritually and emotionally present with her. I was often in fantasy-land during sex even though my dear wife was physically right there with me.

My sponsor suggested a period of abstinence, so I started in on 90 days. That's when my addiction to lust really became evident. I felt a lot of disturbing stuff about myself. But I also got to work on all of it. I did a real thorough working of Step Four on lust. I also

**Somewhere around this time, I thought, I'm having a lot of fun, but it all seems to be just in my head. I'm not feeling joy in my body—in my spirit.**

began to develop my spirituality by working the SA program. I applied in SA what I had learned in AA, so I got involved and started taking on service positions. My sponsor and I together started a weekly SA meeting at the local prison. We would grab guys from our local meeting who had only 90 days of sobriety, and we dragged them into the prison with us saying, "You gotta speak!"

Somewhere around this time, I thought, I'm having a lot of fun, but it all seems to be just in my head. I'm not feeling joy in my body—in my spirit. I thought if I just worked the Steps harder and took on more service commitments, then I'd get this! All the while,



others in SA and AA were talking about feeling “happy, joyous, and free” while I thought, what’s wrong with me?!

As I started to examine my beliefs, I thought that what was wrong with me was that I was simply broken, that there was something wrong with me from birth. If I was born an alcoholic, then I was born a sexaholic. But there was something even deeper inside, an idea that I was just broken.

I remembered hearing other SAs say they “felt inadequate, unworthy, alone, and afraid,” and I remembered Bill W mentioning doctors and psychologists. So I talked about stuff with a therapist, but I never seemed to get to the root of the problem even though he was also sober in AA. He said I sounded depressed and wanted to put me on medication. I talked about that with my Higher Power for quite a while.

As a Philadelphia firefighter, 9/11 (the 2001 attack on the New York World Trade Center among other targets) took me into a downward-spiraling blackness. After another doctor prescribed an antidepressant, my head started to feel clearer, but I still felt depressed. I decided to do what I knew, so I just redoubled my efforts. Each day when I got out of bed, I felt like I was wearing a lead suit. I worked as hard as I could with new guys in the program and kept going to meetings, but the heaviness just wasn’t lifting.

I went to Spain in 2019 for an SA convention in Madrid, but I isolated myself. I was among 300 recovering brothers and sisters, and I felt alone. I couldn’t bring myself to ask another member to see the city with me. My sense of unworthiness was still deep even though I had over 40 years of sobriety in AA and over 20 years in SA.

I had been reading about this thing called “PTSD.” I didn’t understand it much, but I knew there was something I wasn’t addressing. Later on I would learn that I was trying to make a “spiritual bypass.” It says right in *The Solution*

that we have to get sober in three areas: spiritual, emotional, and physical (SA 61). I was bypassing both the emotional and the physical. What I came to learn is that I was neither broken nor was there something wrong with me. I was instead, simply injured. I found a therapist who helped me see how I had experienced lots of pain and confusion and self-blame in my childhood (she

**It’s been a hard journey for me, but I absolutely refuse to give up on myself. I recognize today that I’m not broken, I do matter, and I’m worthy because I was and am a child of God!**

called it “trauma”), and I still carried it with me in my body (these were both the physical and emotional parts of the Solution I had been bypassing). I had never grieved the loss of my brother. I had decided as a child that I would never let myself love anyone because if I love you, you will die on me. You’ll either die or abandon me in some other way. I realized at this point that I was not close to anybody. I wasn’t even too sure I was close to my wife!

I started to work on the psychological aspect of the Solution. The more I peeled the onion, the worse it got. I started to experience physical symptoms like hot flashes, low appetite, weight loss, and even paranoia. Some days I was even afraid to leave the house.

Without the Twelve Steps of SA and AA, I would have been back out there

boozing, lusting, and acting out. And I would have been dead. The program helped me see that I don't want to go back to that kind of life. I want to get through this—sober!

This is where asking for outside help comes in. I followed what Bill W said: *God has abundantly supplied this world with fine doctors, psychologists, and practitioners of various kinds. Do not hesitate to take your health problems to such persons. Most of them give freely of themselves that their fellows may enjoy sound minds and bodies. Try to remember that though God has wrought miracles among us, we should never belittle a good doctor or psychiatrist. Their services are often indispensable in treating a newcomer and in following his case afterward* (AA 133).

I thought I must not be working the Steps correctly. If I were, I wouldn't have this depression. I began working with a different therapist who used the term, "spiritual bypass"—I had tried using the Twelve Steps and so much service work to jump right over all the grief from my childhood. The main thought in my head was still suicide. This therapist helped me get in touch with the emotional and physical process of healing. I slowly built a trusting relationship with him or, as the 12&12

calls it, a "true partnership" (12&12 53). It's only been in the past couple of months that I've been able to start feeling "happy, joyous, and free" (AA, 133). I was at a meeting last night and something in the reading brought to mind an experience my son had in kindergarten, and I sang, "I'm a little teapot, short and stout. This is my handle, this is my spout." I couldn't believe I had just sung a nursery rhyme in an SA meeting! But it was evidence to me that I'm finally starting to get that happy-joyous-and-free thing.

It's been a hard journey for me, but I absolutely refuse to give up on myself. I recognize today that I'm not broken, I do matter, and I am worthy because I was and am a child of God! The biological parents were an instrument of my existence, but I was created by God, and I am not giving up on me!

Do not hesitate to take your physical and emotional health problems to "doctors, psychologists, and practitioners of various kinds." Bill knew what he was talking about, and he was doing it himself. If it was good enough for him, it's good enough for me.

Buddy S., Philadelphia, USA



## DISCUSSION TOPIC

Which actions are you taking in order for the healing "to come about in all three," as the White Book says?

**T**he author of this gut-honest article describes his long and hard journey from initial sobriety to the painful awareness of the deeper layers of the disease, and the work on his psychological and spiritual healing. What do you do to work on the physical, emotional, and spiritual level of your recovery?

Or are you satisfied with mere sobriety without deeper recovery?

Have you tackled the grief of your childhood? Have you worked on your traumas?

Do you really feel whole today—whole in body, feelings, and spirit? Or are you still living mainly in your head?

Are you really

experiencing being happy, joyous, and free?

Are you open to accepting outside help to assist you in your healing, as the AA Big Book offers?

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



***He found out that changing something on the physical part of his disease had an immediate and beneficial effect on his lust sobriety.***

Upon reading the White Book in a psychosomatic hospital in 2020, I realized I am a sex addict and gained abstinence from any form of sex up until today. After sexually drying up, I soon observed very clearly that the pain in my lower abdomen came about with fear, anger, flat breathing, and so on—with just stress.

So the daily challenge ever since has become for me to stay out of stress as much as I can, and take time to relax. Moreover, I had to become honest, give up fighting, gain hope and trust, and find forgiveness—i.e. just work the Steps—because I cannot afford ongoing resentment, fear, remorse, shame, etc. They all mean stress to me and lead me back to lust—and pain in my lower abdomen.

Then Christmas came. My daughter and I bake Christmas cookies every year. As in every year before, I ate many cookies every day from Christmas Eve until 6 January. Soon, I began having very graphic sexual dreams repeatedly every night. I didn't know why.

One morning, I sat on the edge of my bed crying. I knew I would relapse if this went on. In my desperation, I asked my Higher Power: "God, why do I have these dreams every night? What do I have to do in order for them to stop?" That morning, I ate a number of cookies and immediately sensed pain in my lower abdomen.

Shortly afterwards, I had a phone conversation with my sponsor. I mentioned—somewhat casually—the cookies and the pain. He replied he had heard a member speak about how sugar was a driver for lust in him. I finally understood. I stopped eating sweets entirely for some time. The erotic dreams ceased.

As I don't suffer from a compulsive eating disorder, I went back to eating sweets from time to time—and baking and having cookies for Christmas—but much less than I used to. It works for me. The episode increased my trust in the power of prayer—of just honestly talking to my Higher Power about my concerns.

J. K., Bochum, Germany





# Recovering My Inner Artist



**I**t all started with a pinching pain I felt when doing my Fourth Step work over the past three months. I thought that I would be fine in time. Step One had been the most difficult: seeing my disease from a very close distance and accepting my powerlessness over it and the unmanageability caused due to lust in my whole life.

I thought that I could do all the other Steps more easily than Step One, but it hit me when I started doing Step Four, specifically my sex conduct inventory listing all my adult partners, romantic relations, abusers, and all others with whom I experienced sexual exposure in some or the other way. It was a swirling experience for me, especially when I started seeing and feeling the pain due to the amount of harm I have done to all the boys and men in my lust-filled life. I was not able to bear that pain. I shared with my sponsor from time to time, reached out to my sisters' group and attended meetings, but when I still wasn't able to cope after all the surrenders to my Higher Power, I needed something more than this to come out of the guilt, shame, self pity, and remorse. I cried, became worried, stressed, and anxious.

Suddenly my younger son came to me and started showing me some paintings and I had an idea from my Higher Power! I also picked up the paper, some water and the colors, and started playing with them. I put a drop of water, touched it with a brush of color and the spectrum of colors appeared.

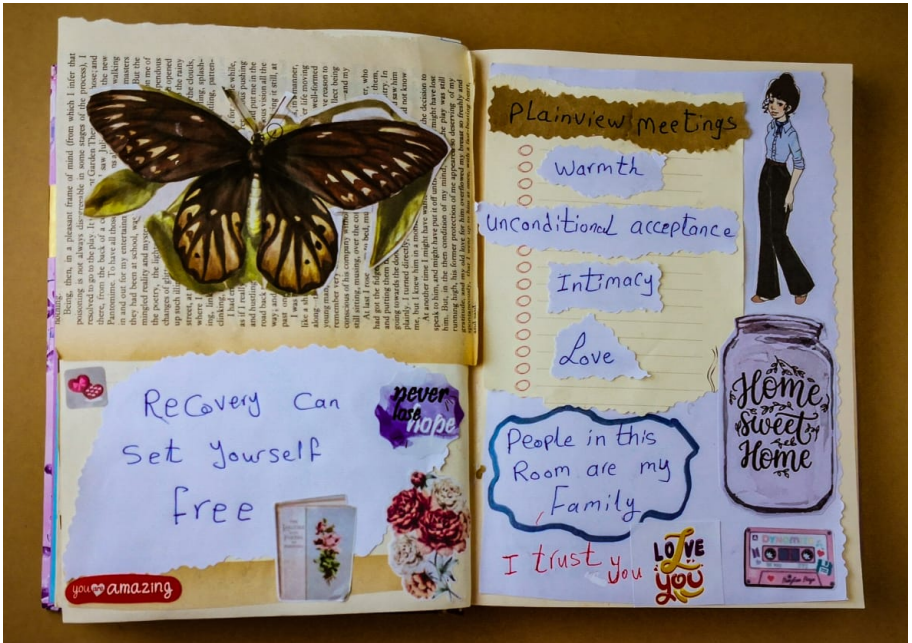
It looked to me as if my secrets were coming into the light and showing me that wide range of colors which is another life for me. I need not mix colors, but when I spread the water on the whole sheet of paper and touch it slightly with the tip of the colored brush, a shape of a beautiful flower appears, as if my life is blooming with yet another meaning to it in the form of sobriety and recovery.

I felt much much better and became engrossed in the process, making more and more of these paintings, like the ones you see to the left. The hidden artist in me from my childhood was reborn and I was diverted from the unbearable pain I had been going through. I felt relieved and today I feel I am in a much better place in my life spiritually. The healing began as I did my Step Five with my sponsor. She moved me along to Step Six now. God does for me what I cannot do for myself. Thank you for letting me BE.

Iris, India



# Dealing With My Pain



To work on her recovery, she uses SA, therapy, medication, physical exercises, prayer, and lots of art work like the journal above.

**B**efore joining SA I tried so many times to stop acting out but nothing worked for me, so I used to tell myself that there was no recovery when I heard stories about people who were in recovery. I thought of it as nothing!

At first when I joined SA, my mind refused to believe in the power of this program. I was in total denial. Later on my mind and my ways of thinking started to change. My story started when I admitted that I am powerless over lust. I need a power greater than myself, I need a power

greater than my addiction as it was my higher power!

I have been a member in SA for about 3 years and sober for over 1.5 years now. To be able to live a better life, my recovery has to come in all three aspects: emotional, spiritual, and physical.

Concerning the emotional aspect, I lived about 25 years in the darkness of my addiction. There were times when I tried to commit suicide. There were times when I cried in pain. I am also a hypersensitive person so I get triggered very easily. So I have to work on all those things.

I lost a lot of jobs in the past. I panicked due to the lack of financial security. I got lots of somatic diseases.

The program and therapy taught me how to acknowledge my feelings and how to take care of it. I learnt a lot about the reality of my addiction and the causes of my relapses. I learnt how to describe my emotions and I am still learning.

Right now I am dealing with my PTSD with my therapist. It is a tough journey that needs a lot of vulnerability and courage. I am dealing with lots of hard emotions from my childhood. I am dealing with nightmares. There are times when I feel that I can't go on anymore, I need to quit, I can't endure the pain anymore. I get triggered so easily. But there is still hope.

SA is helping me to stay sober in spite of all those tough emotions. I have a good supporting system in SA. I have healthy relationships in my life. I am not alone anymore. I have a wonderful therapist who is helping me to go through my traumas using EMDR, trauma-focused therapy, and internal family system.

Concerning the physical aspect, I was diagnosed with fibromyalgia. It is a chronic pain in all the muscles in my body. There is no radical healing for it. It goes side by side with the mental state. So I have to find a coping mechanism. I can't move my body when I am struggling with a fibromyalgia flare. I can't do my favorite activity in life which is photography and art journals as it needs lots of effort and muscle movement. The pain is unbearable. I was on a vacation a week ago. I did a lot of effort to enjoy my time, to hang out enjoying the beauty of nature and taking photos in spite of the pain.

I am proud of myself for my trials. By the help of the program, medication, and therapy, I was able to go through physical therapy. Now I go

to the gym regularly to work on my weak body and muscles. At first I wasn't able to accept that I am different from people at the gym. I can't do any heavy exercises or movements. I cried a lot. Now I am working on acceptance, I am looking for suitable exercises for me. I believe there is light at the end of the tunnel.

Concerning spirituality, I am developing a healthy relationship with my Higher Power. I have a good concept and image towards my God. He is not the cruel punishing one. He is a kind merciful God. He loves me. He knows what I am going through. He is there for me all the time. He is helping me to have a better life. Now I am a good English teacher with good chances at work. I have no struggle with the lack of financial security. He gives me many blessings. There are times I feel resentful over my Higher Power, but the program, my supporting system, and therapy are helping me to go back on track. I have an online home group. They are amazing members. I have a good sponsor. Her name is Nicole and she is so helpful. She understands me very well and encourages me going through therapy and deeper work. I have an amazing friend too.

To be honest, life is not easy. Life is hard. Recovery is hard too. It needs surrendering, acceptance, connection, and acknowledgment. Sometimes I feel that I am bored so the voices of my addiction are telling me to quit therapy and recovery, even to quit life. I know that is not an option for me. I should go through the recovery process. It is my journey in life. I am so grateful that I am working on the deeper things to be better and to have a more stable life.

SAMAR G., *Cairo, Egypt*





## Working the Program Has Changed His

# BRAIN CHEMISTRY

*The intense physical cravings of lust have been replaced at the core by a more satisfying, deeply nourishing flow of life from his God.*

**O**ur White Book says, “We saw that our problem was three-fold: physical, emotional, and spiritual. Healing had to come about in all three” (SA 204). I have found it helpful to think of four areas: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual.

I spent six years trying to manage my sexaholism in another fellowship.

Fellows and sponsors did not see my sex problems as a real disease. Alcohol was the real problem, the ‘sex stuff’ was no big deal. I thought, You don’t get it; this stuff is killing me. I could not stop and in desperation came to SA, my last chance.

Finally, I met people who understood. I was taught about lust and came to understand that to stop my behaviors I had to surrender my inner fantasy and obsession—get clean inside and out. I knew I was very sick



and believed I had a severe mental illness (mental and emotional), not clinically recognized at that time. I knew I was spiritually sick because all my beliefs, faith, and prayers had achieved nothing. But I still had a voice telling me that this “wasn’t a proper addiction” and was less of an issue than substance addictions.

The AA Big Book (Doctor’s Opinion) talks about “the body of the alcoholic being quite as abnormal as his mind” and not being satisfied to be told that we could not control our drinking just because we were maladjusted to life, etc. This was me with lust. As I sobered up, I could see my extreme sensitivity to lust triggers, how my mind would be flooded by an image and my whole body would activate in seconds and start craving more. There was something physically different. What was it?

By God’s grace I had studied neurology years before. I could see in myself how thousands of sessions of acting out created neural superhighways in my brain. The neurons change (potentiate) as they are used over and over again, increasing release of neurotransmitters and receptors becoming more numerous and sensitive, until there is a cascade effect. Thousands of programmed triggers could each send these neurotransmitters crashing through my brain—a mental obsession. But it’s far worse. A hugely powerful natural system (the sexual system) is hijacked, and hormones are released in the body, not in response to natural sexual stimuli but for unnatural purposes—in response to images, inner emotional states, etc. SA 33 describes them.

My body changes over time just as my brain does, oversensitive to adrenaline, testosterone, etc., and the phenomenon of craving occurs when it is

activated this way. Physically, I’m just as abnormal as any substance abuser. I’m addicted to my own body chemicals, which I have trained my body to abuse. I activate them myself—I do not need an external substance to activate them. I understood that my whole being was extremely ill.

Add in an emotional age of about seven, significant emotional and social poverty from my childhood, and masturbation being my only coping mechanism for my emotions, and it’s no surprise I couldn’t stop. It wasn’t

**I’m addicted to my own body chemicals, which I have trained my body to abuse. I activate them myself—I do not need an external substance to activate them.**

working, the game was up, I couldn’t stop and all I could see was a short, bleak future of acting out into insanity and death. But I’m here, sharing with you. Impossible! What happened?

It started at the core—spiritual. I had no power to stop. My channel to God was blocked up with my disease. I realized all my so-called knowledge of God was distorted; I knew nothing. I cried out “whoever you are, whatever you are, please help me.” On my knees. Dropping everything I thought I knew. One day at a time, something happened. God did not take away the

pain, but one day at a time gave me the strength to stay sober, even when I thought I would die without my drug. This was in the context of using the SA program God had given me—doing what was suggested to the best of my ability—meetings, sponsor, Steps, phone calls, conventions, service. I had to surrender all lust and all of me to God. I was scared about what lay ahead, but more scared of continuing in the disease.

Mentally, my scrambled thoughts started getting replaced by direction from sponsors and trusted program friends, program slogans, and then the Steps. Wonderful Steps that taught me how to live and interact with the world. They are now my mental framework for how to live my life one day at a time. These new, healthy thoughts must be translated immediately into action—I get well by taking action, not by thinking.

Applying the Steps over and over started to heal my damaged emotions and allowed me to start the painful but necessary process of growing up. Which is, of course, a work in progress. I love Step Ten. “Whenever I’m disturbed, there is something wrong with me” (*Twelve & Twelve* 90). Used over and over, it is a vehicle for never-ending growth. Then mental, emotional, and spiritual healing comes about through Step Eleven—“more God, less me.” In Step Twelve, I have gradually surrendered all areas of my life to this spiritual program. I’m becoming less self-centered and looking for ways to be effective in passing on the wonderful gift of recovery given to me.

Physically, not feeding the neural and hormonal superhighways led to a phase of withdrawal—insomnia, anxiety, waves of craving, mood swings,

irritability, etc. Gradually, I’m finding progressive victory over lust and not feeding these highways. They’ve gone into remission and my thoughts/feelings go down new neural channels. But I know they are still there—if I don’t surrender a trigger quickly, the unnatural and painful activation of mind and body starts to occur. My need for God has never been greater, because without God one day I will be overwhelmed and slip into my old delusional thinking and insanity. Fortunately, God is absolutely wonderful and always available.

The intense physical sensations of lust have been replaced at the core by a more satisfying, deeply nourishing flow of life from my God. I also have healthy behaviors in my life instead of constantly acting out—walking in nature, caring for my home, wife and dog, listening to the radio, talking with friends in and out of the fellowship and lots more. All the “normal stuff” that my disease prevented me from connecting with.

SA’s beautiful sobriety definition puts my sexuality into a healthy context. It allows my sexuality to be a gift to the woman with whom I am sharing my life, one day at a time, until death do us part. It keeps it that simple, for me, alongside progressive victory over lust. It was what I always wanted and aspired to.

I never really wanted all the endless masturbation and images, acting out, self-loathing, spiritual disintegration, etc., but in the end I had it for keeps, until God gave me one last chance through SA and I took His hand.

MIKE B., Cardiff, UK



# Escaping The Valley of Lust

She rose from the Valley of the Shadow of Death to become alive through honestly surrendering to the God of her understanding.

**I**walked through the valley of the shadow of Death—or Lust—since I was a four-year-old. I lived there for more than 3 decades, not knowing the wages I had to pay: my life. When I joined SA, I was cautious about sharing, thinking that everything was just between me and Him. But recovery is full of surprises and I had to change my attitude. I would like to share 12 experiences that I have had on this, my beautiful journey:

## **Experience One: Confession**

I was cautious about telling it all, asking myself, should I share explicitly and get a lust hit? Is that what this fellowship is about, or am I mistaken? The answer I heard: purposefully en-

gineering a lust hit is a relapse! I was happy to realize this because now I knew that life in the Fellowship was not like life in the Lust Valley. I learned how to share without resorting to lust.

## **Experience Two: Honesty**

During my first 18 months in SA, I attended and shared at meetings. I did not have a sponsor at this time but attendance and sharing helped me quit my lust patterns one after another. However, I was still in Lust Valley, although I did not realize it. By the grace of God, I slowly came to understand SA's sobriety definition and I declared that I cannot call myself sober so long as I still drink lust, no matter the source.

It was a steep learning curve. I had to do a 3-column inventory after each relapse in order to understand my

pattern of thinking and behavior; what I was doing wrong, and what the next right action was. It worked! God spoke to me through these inventories and I learned how to quit my patterns one by one.

### **Experience Three: Working the Steps**

When I joined SA, there were no females available to sponsor me. So, I started working with a male sponsor. Working the Steps uncovered my Higher Power to me and taught me how to let go, but I had to take some extreme measures in order to sustain and maintain that precious connection. I stopped riding a car or a bus if that caused any lust in me. I did not stay alone, and I attended meetings even if it meant walking, and it was quite a distance. I also learned how to LET GO! Today, I can finally say I have left Lust Valley.

### **Experience Four: Surrender**

Surrender is the weapon that helps me not to give in to any form of lust. Working the Steps has helped me to identify lust, my old enemy, in any of its guises! I give up fighting lust but I never give up my program.

### **Experience Five: Acceptance**

I worked the Fourth Step with my sponsor with total honesty. I left empty the column, "Where I was wrong" because I wanted it to come from God, through my sponsor's words. I needed to listen to my sponsor more than I needed to talk because I could not understand "My Part." I accepted that I had to pray and surrender during the taking of this phase of my recovery. And I said YES, without hesitation, at each amends that I needed to make.

### **Experience Six: Being Respectful toward my Triggers**

My attitude toward my triggers needed a lot of work—how I dressed, how I sat on the bus, how I tied my

shoes, how I talked to others. In my addiction, I parceled myself to attract others down to Lust Valley.

Now, I know better. I have completely changed my attitude in clothing, walking, and talking. I have zero tolerance for any form of lust! And that clarity has paid off.

One day, after a couple of years in sobriety, I received a text on my cell phone from an unknown number. I forgot I was an addict, let go of surren-

## **Personal defects are no longer tools of lust, but stings from God to remind me just how much I need Him.**

dering, and opened the door to lust—I thought my calendar sobriety would protect me from drifting off. Things got involved. One thing led to another until finally, I had to face the question: am I acting out or not? It was both a wake-up call and a miracle. I called my sponsor, and explained everything with complete honesty. We agreed that it was a partial slip, and that I should not do it again. Since then, I don't respond to any unknown numbers.

### **Experience Seven: Personal Defects**

Early on in recovery I still played the victim role and tolerated my defects of character as "My Rights." But they were a false Higher Power. They controlled me. They drove me to acting out. But by the grace of God and Steps Six and Seven, I have become grateful for my defects. These defects are actually messages that help me remember that I need God and so I



continue my day surrendering as I go. Personal defects are no longer tools of lust, but stings from God to remind me just how much I need Him and how much He wants a true and wholesome connection with me!

### Experience Eight: Financial Harms

My lust does not have any boundaries. It does not limit itself to sex. It can take the shape of anything. Driven by financial insecurity, I did financial harm to others. What made it even harder was that it was not hidden; it became public!

Like alcoholics, I had to pay off my debts. And I did so. I also made several direct and indirect amends. I am grateful for having done so as it taught me how to live free from any form of acting out, financial or otherwise. The promise has materialized: I can look the world in the eye and stand free!

### Experience Nine: The Way of Amends

I learned from my sponsor how to make amends, and began making them immediately. I learned from her also to pray for those who harmed me. I dropped old, favorite resentments as they will eventually lead me to a relapse. I have learned that a well-made amends under God's care is the antidote to acting out, and the strongest manifestation of the recovery freedom.

### Experience Ten: Joy through Amends and Service

Service and amends keep me out of my defects. Actually, identifying and surrendering resentments toward my boss helped me to practice harder taking the actions of love toward him. What joy!

### Experience Eleven: Living with God One Moment at a Time

In my active disease, I used to ask God, "Why did you let go of me?" But I have come to realize through

my Step work that God never let go of me; He loves me unconditionally; it was just that my heart, my mind and soul were in bondage to the poison of lust and I wasn't capable of a single clear thought. Now, today, when lust entices me back down the easy slopes, I cry, "GOD HELP ME!" and it works.

God is giving me what I really want. I used to want lust and so I found myself trapped down in the bottom of Lust Valley, the Valley of the Shadow of Death! But by joining the fellowship, working with my sponsor, and helping others, I have become happy, joyous, and free!

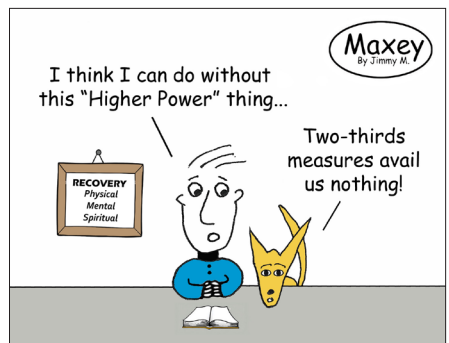
Today, I live with God one moment at a time by surrendering, listening, amends, and service.

### Experience Twelve: Service by the Grace of God

By the grace of God, I am home, finally safe. Service is the greatest defense against acting out. Service has kept my mind free of lust which helps me to live with God. Whenever my sobriety is threatened by strong feelings or emotions, I take to service so that I can keep my connection with God.

I have now been sexually sober since Nov 1, 2017, rising from the Lust Valley, the Valley of the Shadow of Death, to become alive through honestly surrendering to God.

MERVAT, Egypt 



After praying for a full year for the neighbor who had abused him in his childhood, his Higher Power helped him to forgive and took away the resentment he had carried inside him for over 40 years.



# The Most Unbelievable Thing

**W**hile participating in a Twelve-Step workshop last weekend, I had the opportunity to share my experience, strength, and hope on the topic of forgiveness. After the workshop, I was asked to write down my share for the ESSAY magazine, which follows here:

When I first worked the Twelve Steps a few years ago, I came to the Ninth Step through the guidance of my sponsor and, of course, through the grace of God. After making all the amends (none of them came easily to me) I went to my parents' house one day. Just before I got there, I was met by the neighbor who had sexually abused me when I was 10 years old. I

immediately felt resentment rising in me when I saw him coming toward me from a distance. I immediately turned my gaze away from him and rang my parents' doorbell to escape the situation.

That same evening, I shared this situation with my sponsor and he recommended that I pray every day for this person who had inflicted this abuse on me. I then did so. I had to pray for my neighbor morning and night for a year until my Higher Power finally took my resentment away from me.

About a month after that time, I visited my parents again. They had invited me for lunch and we had spent a nice day together. As the early evening approached, my mother asked me to buy something for dinner at the nearby grocery store. This

is extraordinary because my mother usually never misses an opportunity to do the shopping herself. However, she told me that day that she was not feeling well and asked me to do the shopping for her.

So I went to the nearby grocery store. When I entered, I saw my neighbor sitting at a table across from the adjoining bakery. I had to walk right past him to enter the store. As I passed him, I already suspected that this could not be a coincidence. While shopping in the grocery store, I learned from my Higher Power that the day and hour had come to forgive my neighbor. All the way to the checkout, I was inwardly discussing with my Higher Power whether I was ready to forgive today. At first, I resisted. But my mother had told me to go to the bakery and bring some rolls for the evening meal.

While I was ordering my rolls from the saleswoman, my neighbor was sitting right behind me. At that moment, I gave up my resistance to this pending forgiveness and my Higher Power's will. I accepted the rolls from the saleswoman, paid for them, and then turned and walked toward my neighbor at the opposite table. I addressed him kindly by his first name and asked if he recognized me. He recognized me immediately, although we had not seen or spoken to each other for more than 40 years. I asked him if he had time now because I had to discuss something with him. He agreed. Thereupon I told him calmly and patiently what had happened at that time.

"Werner, I was 10 years old when I rang your doorbell. You opened the door for me at that time and I explained to you that I wanted to visit your brother. You told me that your brother was not yet home, but that I was

welcome to wait for him here. We then went together to the terrace."

At this moment I felt Werner getting very restless. Nevertheless, I continued my story gently and attentively.

"On your terrace, there was a large mound of sand. We walked toward it and then we both settled down on it. Suddenly, you stood up and pulled down your pants. You took my hand and let yourself fall again on this sand mound. Afterward, you masturbated yourself with my hand."

When I said this, he reacted with horror and denial. He claimed that it was not true. I then explained to him that I was not here to accuse him. I took my left hand and placed it on his hand. I told him that I was not here to accuse him, but that I had forgiven him. When he heard that, he immediately started crying and swore that he'd never done that again. After that, I said goodbye to him and walked away, freed from any resentment.

To this day, that resentment toward my neighbor that I carried inside me for over 40 years has never returned. I owe this miracle only to this wonderful program, my sponsor, the tools, and of course, mainly to my Higher Power.

DETLEF, *Düsseldorf, Germany*



Showing Up For  
**OTHERS**

**M**y name is Raphael. I am a grateful recovering sexaholic. I've been sober by the grace of God and with the help of all of you in this SA fellowship since April 7, 2019.

I recall when my 100-year-old grandmother was in a rehabilitation facility, and my parents were going to go and visit her one winter's evening, and they invited me. Instead of agreeing to go with them, I opted to stay home. Of course I acted out that evening. She died a few days later.

I definitely have experienced feelings of guilt and shame for not putting aside my own self-centered desires for one evening to provide some company to a sick relative. I never got to say goodbye to my grandmother because I preferred to act out.

Now, in recovery, I do my best to show up for others. It started with showing up to meetings. Once I could consistently do that, I showed up to work the Steps with my sponsor. Then once I could do that, I showed up to sponsor others. Finally, I can show up for others in my life: my wife, children, parents, brother, friends, etc. I actually show up for them, not for myself.

Of course, at this very moment, I can't actually show up. I'm incarcerated as a result of my acting-out behaviors. But even now, I'm showing up for all sexaholics who don't believe their disease will take them down to the depths of insanity, prisons, and death. I'm here to share that if I stop showing up, that is precisely what will happen. Thanks for letting me share.

RAPHAEL S., *Virginia, USA*





*Today she is going to any length to lead a free and joyous life, and while doing so she has found that home is the heart-to-heart connection with other fellows in recovery.*

## *Her Heart Has Many Homes*

**T**am Colombian but currently living in Germany. I registered for the Ukrainian convention the very first day I saw the flyer. I remember that day as I felt sad about not being able to attend the convention in my home country, Colombia, which coincidentally was scheduled for the same weekend. So, without hesitation, I filled out the form and attended my first SA convention!

However, my mom and friends were not happy; they were worried about my safety. One of them even suggested that I was insane for going to a country in the midst of war. Maybe that's true—I lack sanity, and that's precisely why I came to SA in the first place. I took many risks while I was acting out, and now in recovery, I am willing to go to any length to stay sober and lead a free and joyous life, as the program promises. As the organizers said it's a safe area, I trust them.

The convention exceeded my expectations. The Ukrainian fellows were incredible hosts, and we spent a lot of time together. We had a BBQ, ate chocolates, tried delicious Ukrainian dishes, and

made string figures. I heard many stories and was able to ask many questions. I met three amazing sisters and even shared a room with a Ukrainian female of my same age and very similar stories. She generously shared her experience during her five years of sobriety—an amazing opportunity for me, especially because I have always felt like a “foreigner,” not from a specific country but from the entire human species. I always knew

I was different, but that feeling disappears as soon as I join an SA meeting.

It was mesmerizing to hear the Serenity

Prayer in seven languages. I was there, surrounded by the Carpathians, while

seeing pictures of my Colombian fellows at the convention venue in the Cocorá Valley. At the same time, I missed my home group in Germany.

Now, it seems that I have many homes in my heart, because home is not a place anymore; home is our heart-to-heart connection with the common intention of recovery.

Conventions are wonderful examples of how strong SA is. I will always remember this experience.



EVELYN, *Germany/Colombia*



# A String IN THE BOW OF HIS LORD



Dave (to the right) at work at a string workshop in Cairo, Egypt

Many fellows from all over the world were deeply saddened by the news that oldtimer Dave T. had passed away. He had recently been diagnosed with lung cancer but it didn't seem anything was imminent at the time.

Dave had been sober in SA since 1990. He was well-known as the “string man” as he was a very gifted storyteller and had creatively adapted a series of string exercises to illustrate our program principles with.

Dave truly was a string in the bow of his Lord. A great example of the difference that one man can make. He traveled to over 25 countries holding string workshops and carrying the message, including Australia, Costa Rica, Russia, Dominican Republic, Kenya, Egypt, Israel, Mongolia, Finland, Slovakia, UAE, Singapore, Poland, Canada, Germany, France, Netherlands, Mexico, UK, Armenia, Ireland, Colombia. Literally SA exists in some countries just because of his visiting, holding workshops, and breathing life into the young local fellowship. Sometimes his workshops were attended by 20-30 members, sometimes up to more than 200. He also did several online workshops and talks for the Iranian fellowship and was dearly loved by them.

Even in his 80s he continued traveling for months on end, thereby sacrificing his own comfort. He always preferred to stay at fellows' homes over staying in fancy hotels; to eat home-made or local dishes over standardized meals; to travel by car or local bus over airplane. He talked tirelessly to members whenever they wanted.

Dave would say we ALL have the potential to have this kind of impact. He would add, “Carry the message! Pass it on! Even if it's just to one more person.”

JEAN V., Belgium





avid M., my grandpa sponsor, just passed away after struggling with cancer for some years. You

would never guess he had cancer because he never complained. For me, he was the embodiment of Tradition Two, "Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern."

Some of you might know him from the Portland noon meeting, the attendance of which went global and exploded during the pandemic.

I would not be here without David M. He was my counselor, my ex-wife's counselor, our marriage counselor, the frequent chair of the S-Anon and SA couples meeting, and my sponsor's sponsor. He guided me on many things through his "ESH" and through his example.

David M. was twice the editor of this magazine for many years, and helped author our program texts. He helped Roy move Central Office from Simi Valley, California to Nashville, Tennessee. He served in every local group, intergroup, and region he was involved in, and ultimately a Delegate to the GDA. The only trusted servant position he never held was Trustee. He established SA in Portland Oregon. He sponsored over a thousand men and some women in SA (among whom Dave T.). He counseled SA/S-Anon couples (non-sponsees) through their early recovery. He spoke numerous times at international, regional, and local SA gatherings.

The first time I saw him, in a meeting in downtown Portland, he introduced himself

as "David, sexaholic. I just saw three crotches walking toward me as I was entering the meeting place." I thought he was not sober. I have now come to realize his share was a shining example of an oldtimer who knew how to drop lust instantly and "tell on himself." I was not capable of that kind of self-honesty then, or even of recognizing it.

Given that David was one of the shapers of SA, the fact that most SA members do not know him is a testament to his unique humility and practice of anonymity. He will be missed by many.

MIKE M., *Taiwan/USA*



## In Loving Memory of

# David M.



# BY FAITH *And* BY WORKS

The MAR and EMER Regions enthusiastically invite you to a jointly hosted online Zoom event on March 9 and 10, 2024. The Good Neighbors Committees from the regions are collaborating to organize this historic event.

Each committee aims to strengthen the fellowship between neighboring regions and to foster learning from the regions' experience, strength, and hope.

Speakers from both regions will offer their shares, with simultaneous translation into English and select languages provided interpretation channels of a dozen languages.

In the near future, full details about the event will be announced, including topics, and speakers involved.

**BY FAITH**  
*And*  
**BY WORKS**

A virtual SA recovery event hosted by:  
MAR (Mid-Atlantic Region, USA)  
EMER (Europe and Middle East Region)

9-10 March 2024

11 am - 3 pm EST (UTC - 5)  
4 pm - 8 pm GMT (UTC)  
5 pm - 9 pm CET (UTC + 1)  
6 pm - 10 pm East Europe (UTC + 2)  
8 pm - 12 am AMST (UTC + 4)

Fostering recovery across the ocean by cooperation among regions

**REGISTER FREE AT**  
[TINYURL.COM/MAR-EMER-2024](https://tinyurl.com/mar-emer-2024)

Including speakers from both regions (topics to be announced)

Simultaneous translation into several languages

Or use the QR code below:

Please save the dates and be prepared for this first Trans-Atlantic event. We look forward to seeing you there!

**DATE: MARCH 9 & 10, 2024**

- 11am – 3pm EST (UTC - 5)
- 4pm – 8pm GMT (UTC)
- 5pm – 9pm CET (UTC + 1)
- 6pm – 10pm East Europe (UTC + 2)
- 8pm – 12pm AMST (UTC + 4)

Registration is open:

<https://tinyurl.com/mar-emer-2024>



## Financial Update Oct 31, 2023

↻	<b>Total income</b>	\$ 367,285
↻	<b>Total expenses</b>	\$ 410,678
↻	<b>Net loss</b>	\$ 43,393
↻	<b>Prudent reserves</b>	\$ 283,733
↻	<b>Total Reserves</b>	\$ 221,168



# Save the Date!

SA & S-Anon International Conventions  
July 12-14, 2024  
Los Angeles



← Scan this QR code for more!

**J**oin us for fellowship and recovery in sunny Southern California next July, 2024. **\*\*Register early\*\*** You won't want to miss these fantastic SA and S-Anon International Conventions! Scan the QR code above or visit [iclosangeles2024.com](http://iclosangeles2024.com) for more details. Early registration till March 31, 2024.

Join us for an unforgettable time of recovery with a fellowship suite with refreshments, breakout meetings, quiet rooms, a literature suite, convention meals, and lots of strong international speakers. We look forward to seeing you in the beautiful Los Angeles Airport Marriott.

DAVE H., *California, USA*



# SURRENDER, DEEP IN THE OF TEXAS



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

# JOY IN ITALY



ur Italian fellowship had a recovery weekend in Rome at the beginning of November. Despite the rain, the time we spent together was beautiful and full of recovery. There were five meetings (plus an optional

one) and a free afternoon, during which people could walk, speak, work the Steps, meditate, and enjoy time for themselves. The main purpose of the weekend was to provide a place for SA Italy to meet face to face, and foster “true union” in our nascent Fellowship. We decided to not invite international speakers but rather let our own members speak about surrender and service in a more relaxed way.

I’ve been in SA since May 2021. By now surrender should be a strong and daily practice, but it is not. Most of the time I find myself calling and texting fellows, “I need to surrender...” or “I want to bring to the light...” but my inner self doesn’t want to give up my fantasies or unhealthy actions. The solution? Listening to others’ shares and stories, and, through them, letting my HP do His job. Sometimes I forget He has a job and I’m not Him, that I need to stop with this “playing God” stuff. Having a personal, face-to-face reminder in the form of our conference was really helpful. Things change without a screen in between.

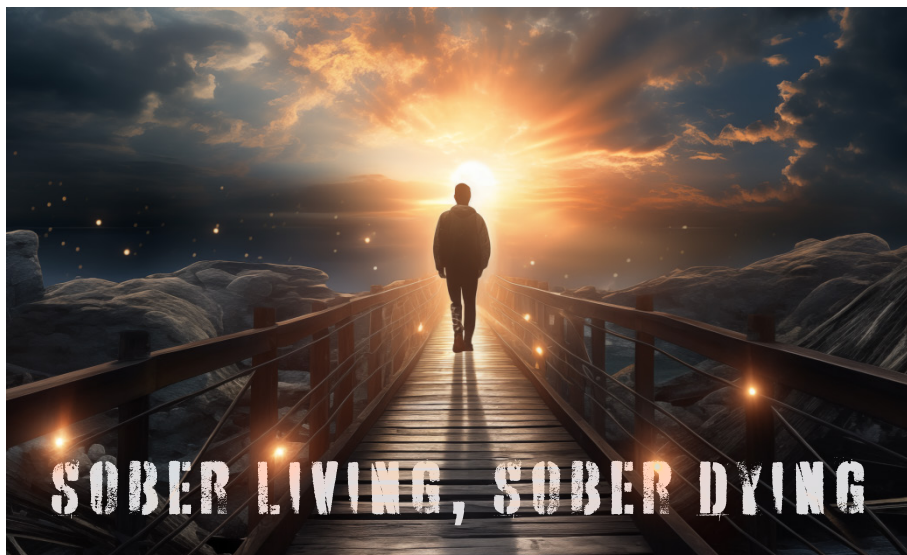
Saturday afternoon was really funny and active. We spent time together admiring the amazing view from some hills after a hike: “Is that a lake or the sea?”

The Game Night on Saturday evening was great! Five different tables with five different table-games where we could laugh hard and learn something new about our brothers and sisters! Whoever won (everybody), received a piece of puzzle, and at the end of the games, we needed to make the puzzle together! What a challenge! It wasn’t easy, but we finished the puzzle! We have just a photo to remember this special moment; however, we have all made key chains out of our puzzle piece just as each of us is part of something larger and more meaningful. Sometimes we sexaholics are brilliant!

CHIARA, *Bassano del Grapa, Italy*



# COMING IN FEBRUARY



## NEXT EDITION

*The February issue changed its theme due to the passing away of oldtimers David M. and Dave T. and will remember the oldtimers who showed us by their example that not only a sober life but also a sober death is possible by working the Twelve Step program.*

### *Joyful Sobriety in Service*

David M. was a true example of serving others inside and outside the fellowship in many ways.

### *Becoming a Whole Person*

Dave T. showed by his example and by his strings how to become a joyful, useful, and whole person.

### *Remembering the Titans*

This article focuses on the oldtimers of the first generation that stayed sober in all the challenges of life—even in the very last one.

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](https://essay.sa.org).

## SUBMIT YOUR STORY

**February 2024 edition: Sober Living, Sober Dying (Stories due Jan 1)** Read how our incredible program can conquer all problems of life, even the fear of death.

**April 2024 edition: Courage to Change (Stories due Mar 1)** This edition will be devoted to the theme of the July International Convention in Los Angeles, USA.

**June 2024 edition: Men & Women in SA (Stories due May 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.

**August 2024 edition: What is Lust? (Stories due May 1)** Its focus on lust is what sets SA apart from the other S-fellowships and makes our fellowship so efficient.

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.



# 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.

The Twelve Steps and Traditions are adapted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, INC. Permission to adapt and reprint the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions does not mean that AAWS has approved the contents of this publication, nor that AAWS agrees with the views expressed herein. AA is a program of recovery from alcoholism only. Use of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions in connection with programs which are patterned after AA, but which address other problems, or in any other non-AA context, does not imply otherwise. Sexaholics Anonymous is a recovery program based on the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous and received permission from AA to use its Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions in 1979.



# 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 lust 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.

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.