

ESSAY

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SEXAHOLICS ANONYMOUS

**COURAGE
CHANGE**



APRIL 2024 | SA.ORG

**Featuring the
July International SA Conventions
Los Angeles, CA | USA**

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



he topic of this edition matches the

theme of the upcoming SA & S-Anon International Convention in July in Los Angeles: “Courage to Change.” Many men and women on the convention committee are serving tirelessly to make it an opportunity for you to continue your own change.

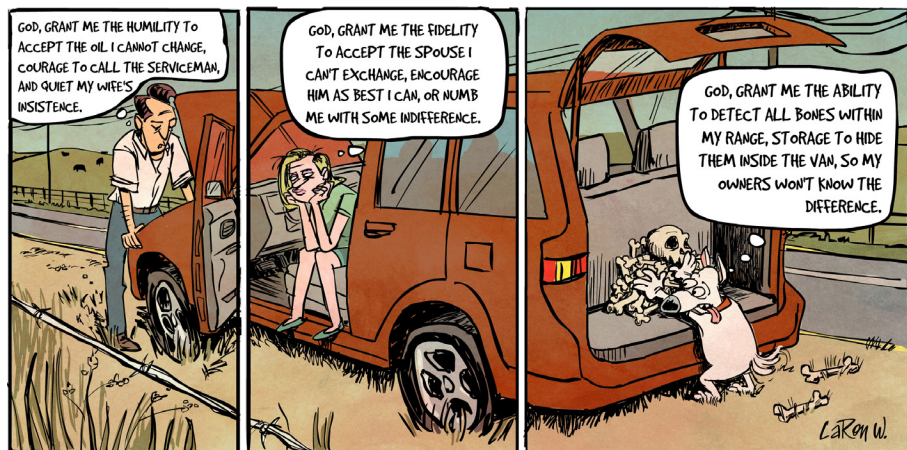
For a Lithuanian lady “Courage to Change” meant letting go of her life-long victimhood and developing new attitudes. For an Australian oldtimer it entailed deepening his progressive victory over lust and forgiving his mother-in-law. A fellow from the UK testifies he is still doing the same things today that have been keeping him sober for over 20 years.

A Mexican lady tells how her disease led her to the verge of divorce whereas her earnestly working the program has led her to a peaceful and meaningful life—as well as a restored and happy marriage. A member from Texas describes how there are two armies at war fighting for dominion over him and how, one day at a time, God grants him to take actions of love rather than feed his self-obsession.

The Nominations Committee presents itself on the “What’s Going On in SA” page and launches an appeal for Trustee-candidates.

Read about the giant breakthrough the Slovakian fellowship recently made in their CFC service by having an open SA meeting in a prison; a report of the 7th Mexican National Convention; an article of a new member on the latest Israeli Convention; and much, much more.

In fellowship,
THE EDITORIAL TEAM
essay@sa.org



April 2024

He will also report that out of every season of grief or suffering, when the hand of God seemed heavy or even unjust, new lessons for living were learned, new resources of courage were uncovered, and that finally, inescapably, the conviction came that God does “move in a mysterious way His wonders to perform.”

Twelve & Twelve 105



On the cover: It takes tremendous courage to go in the opposite direction of so many interior and exterior forces and influences—courage that only God can give.

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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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Service and Recovery Go Hand in Hand

Have you heard of the SA Board of Trustees? Do you have any idea what service the Trustees provide our fellowship? Have you ever thought that you might be a candidate to serve as a Trustee? Whatever your answers to these questions, we invite you to read on and learn more about this particular service opportunity.

We are the Nominations Committee and it is our mission to “serve the Fellowship by identifying, recruiting, screening, interviewing, and recommending candidates for the Board of Trustees” and we want you to know about us, what we do, and what you and we can do together.

Our [SA Service Manual](#) describes a Trustee candidate as “a member of SA who has a love of service, relevant real-life skills, and a willingness to take on a four-year commitment to an unpaid, part-time position for the benefit of the SA Fellowship.” A candidate “will have at least five years of continuous SA sobriety.” Our manual describes in a general way what a Trustee does and is available as a download from the SA website at no charge.

We realize that words-on-paper come alive when we hear the actual experience of members who are or have served as Trustees. Upon request communicated to us by members through SAICO, the committee will schedule special Zoom meetings during which current and/or former Trustees will be available to describe their experiences and answer your questions.

Under “What’s Going On in SA” on the ESSAY website you can find [several testimonies](#) of former and current Trustees of how their recovery has grown tremendously this specific service.

As stated so beautifully in our program brochure, [The Spirituality of Service](#). In Sexaholics Anonymous, as in all Twelve Step fellowships, service and recovery go hand in hand. Indeed, service on behalf of the Fellowship is recovery in action.

We thank each of you for the service you do at every level of our program and look forward to hearing from those of you who are interested in service on the Board of Trustees. Please contact SAICO: saico@sa.org

In Fellowship,
SA NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE



Dear ESSAY

David Changed



Everything For me

DEAR ESSAY, I LOVED

the issue on “Sober Living, Sober Dying” and wanted to add something about David M. I have always been ashamed of acting out with men, of being attracted to men. I did everything I could to cover up what I had done sexually. I tried to appear to be masculine to avoid arousing suspicion in others. I hated the questions about whether I had been married or had children. Being asked if I was dating was enough to make me sweat. I dated women to see if I could make it work. I couldn’t make those relationships work. So here I was. I had been in SA for over

seven years. I had less than one year of sobriety. I went to a one-day conference in Sacramento. One of the breakout meetings presented me with a life changing experience. I should say one man, David M., presented me with a life-changing experience. About 25 men sat in a circle. I can’t remember anything about the meeting except what David shared. I had been exposed to a lot of the original members of SA. What David shared changed everything for me.

David shared that he had lusted in meetings. I could understand that. I had too. Then David said he had lusted in the meeting we were part of. I looked around the room. We were all men. I was shocked. David could plainly and directly share about something I thought was taboo, forbidden. There were no women. There was no mistaking what David said. There was also no mistaking that he had true humility. He wasn’t in the meeting to dazzle us. He was there to grow in recovery, to practice the solution, to deepen his relationship with God and with the other men in the room. He was willing to go to any lengths to stay sober. He was willing to expose his weakness. He could have shared one of the highlights of his recovery, but he was vulnerable

enough to share an embarrassing weakness.

David gave me what I had wanted all my life. Another man to tell me he was just like me. David had more education. He was charismatic. He was a brilliant thinker and writer. It would be hard for me to identify with any of those qualities. By telling the group the truth about himself David gave me a model, and example. I could tell the truth about myself. Somehow, I was convinced David loved me because I was part of the group he shared part of himself that I could identify with.

That was 29 years ago. I still feel awful when I admit to some experience of lust for men. Usually I regret saying anything. What usually happens is someone will whisper that he has the same problem. Sometimes men ask me to tell them whether they are gay or not. Others admit things they have never told another person. David gave me the example. He taught me how to appropriately share about shameful things in a way that could help others. David’s life was proof that, as the promises say, “No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others” (AA 84).

GARY W., California, USA



Worldwide Walls of SA

SA Meetings Can Be Held Just About Anywhere ...



Thursday Meeting,
Ramat Gan, Israel



North Toms River Meeting,
New Jersey, USA



Public Information Gathering,
Mumbai, India



SA Tuxtla Meeting
Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Mexico



Tahir Meeting,
Cairo, Egypt



Share your photos

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

The Tool of Service



This oldtimer has found that his life depends on being of service to others, which is the spiritual antidote for his selfishness.

I am convinced that the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* is correct when it says that “Selfishness—self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles.” Selfishness is a spiritual malady, a spiritual problem rooted deeply in my being. I consider or evaluate everything by how it affects me. My fears are self-centered. A lot can be written about selfishness. It is enough to say that it is what causes my problems.

Early in my recovery I fell in with a group of sexaholics who considered their home group to be North Hollywood on Friday nights. They hammered it into my consciousness that I was selfish. They wouldn't let

me leave a meeting without talking to the newcomer. If I approached one of them after a meeting they would deflect me to talk to someone who was new or was feeling the foundations of his recovery were not going to withstand the problems he faces. The watchwords were from *There Is A Solution* in the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, “Our very lives, as ex-problem drinkers, depend upon our constant thought of others and how we may help meet their needs” (AA 20).

My life depends on my consideration of others. It is not a mild suggestion. My life depends on it. If I live in selfishness I will lose my life, the life God gives to recovering addicts. It is

not a once in a while effort. I have to constantly think about others. It will cost me. In thirty years I have probably turned off my phone twice so I could sleep without interruption. One of those nights a friend couldn't reach me and he lost his sobriety. I didn't cause him to act out. I can't keep anyone sober. However, I was not thinking of him when I shut off my phone. I take calls if it is humanly possible. If someone asks for help I will give him what I can. When someone shares in a meeting that he is desperate, I stop the meeting and ask what we can do to help or suggest something the members can do to help the one who is sinking.

I call people whom I have not seen in meetings lately. I have been told not to chase people who seem to be walking away from the program. I pray for them and sometimes reach out to them. I was at the birthday celebration for a member of another program. He was an odd, but lovable older guy. He shared that when he noticed that someone had been absent from a meeting for a while he would begin praying for that person. I want to be like that man. He was an example of love and concern for others.

I have spent time riding bikes into the mountains with guys in the program. I have taught them how to use power tools and to repair their cars. I have helped them remodel homes. I have visited them in hospitals. I helped care for a member as he died. No level of service in the program can take the place of caring for another member. Being a trustee, an international speaker or having enough sobriety to impress people never replaces passing the message to fellow sufferers.

Bill Wilson wrote in Bill's Story that he experienced "a sense of victory,

followed by such a peace and serenity as I had never known. There was utter confidence. I felt lifted up, as though the great clean wind of a mountain top blew through and through." He was describing the impact God had on him which he went on to say was sudden and profound. On the next page he wrote that he was plagued by waves of self-pity and resentment, and that he felt close to drinking. Pink cloud to utter despair. He was flying high then

**After a meeting
I try not to
gravitate towards
old friends, but
rather seek out
someone who is
new or hurting,
maybe someone
who is lost.**


dependent. He wrote that he "... soon found that when all other measures failed, work with another alcoholic would save the day."

I need to think of others. I prayed that I could speak to a newcomer as I was driving to a meeting. I have asked God to keep me sober for others' sake. My sponsor tells me acting out is the most selfish thing I can do. After a meeting I try not to gravitate towards old friends, but rather seek out someone who is new or is hurting, maybe someone who is lost. I try to think of who I could call to encourage.

In short, my life depends on being of service to others.

GARY W., *California, USA*





I could not go on. I had to change. And one of the many promises of the 12-Step program is that I will change fundamentally, if I work the program.

My introduction to the 12-Step program started with a professional interest. At the time, I had no awareness of my own problems and addictions; rather, I was the one providing the solution to those with the problems and addictions. I liked the role, being in charge, the one providing the solution, helping those who, as I thought, were worse off than me. I liked, too, the principles of the program; they sat well with my spiritual and religious beliefs, but I always noticed that I was never as happy or cheerful as the recovering

alcoholics and drug addicts I saw in the groups.

I asked God a question: “Why isn’t my faith in You filling me with happiness and joy? Am I missing

Slowly, it dawned on me that there is a Higher Power behind everything I do and that I should place my trust in Him.

something here?” Gradually, the solution that we read about and the tools to get there started filtering through to me.

It started with sobriety from drugs and alcohol; NA and AA helped me a

By practicing the program tools, she is able to live a happy, joyous, and free life today, no matter the external problems.



**Tools
That Changed
The Power
Behind
Her Actions**

lot here. To get sober in SA, I had to embrace the first and foremost tool it offered me, which has been working with an SA sponsor and going through the Steps according to the book “Step into Action.” I started to experience something of happiness, joy, and freedom. It was very difficult for me at the beginning to accept that I too am a sick person with allergies to drugs, alcohol and lust.

Even today, as I work hard at my program, I am still amazed at the level of God’s love and mercy for me, granting me so many years of sobriety and clean living; my once shattered life taking on so much more meaning and steady direction each day.

Another important tool has been the Serenity Prayer. Before working the SA Program, it was just one more program prayer; I was never sure what the word “courage” meant in its context in the prayer. Slowly, it dawned on me that there is a Higher Power behind everything I do and that I should place my trust in Him; my courage can come from Him: my sponsor quotes the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* and says, either God is everything or He is nothing; either He

will be my Higher Power or lust will be (AA 53).

The ultimate tool is reaching out to the God of my own understanding. Now I know for sure that for me to make the changes I need to make and lead a meaningful life, I have to ask a Power greater than lust; a loving God who is happy to give me the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to distinguish between those and the things I just need to accept in life. This trust, and the serenity,

**I know for sure
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courage and wisdom that flow from it, helps me to live a happy, joyous and free life today, no matter the external problems and circumstances.

OLGA S., Ukraine



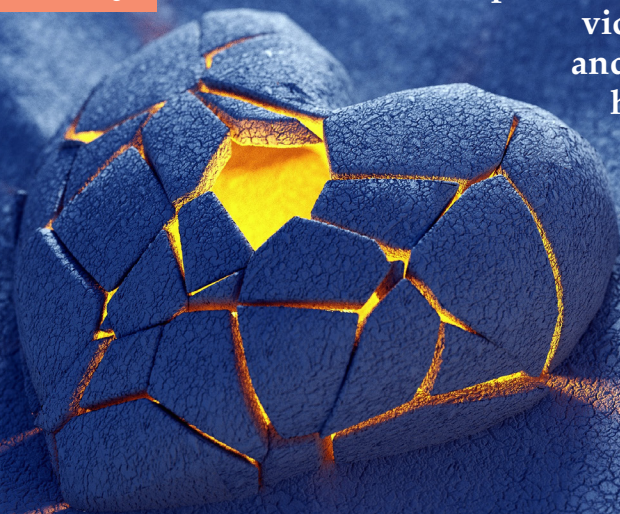
Financial Update Feb 29, 2024

↷	Total income	\$ 367,285
↷	Total expenses	\$ 410,678
↷	Net Income	\$ 43,393
↷	Prudent reserves	\$ 283,733
↷	Total Reserves	\$ 221,168
↷	Months of Reserve	5.4



Our SA Central Office budgets for 6 months of prudent reserves. As of February, our reserves are low. Please contribute if your groups are able. Thank you.

God broke down
the walls around her
precious sense of
victimhood
and showed
her a way
out.



Letting Go Of Victimhood

I came to Sexaholics Anonymous 4 years ago. Before that I had no idea I was an addict. Daily suicidal thoughts were the last straw. After acting out I didn't feel good; I just felt strong pain and had no idea what to do or how I could help myself. I was praying that God would give me the way out from my obsession.

Then I read a story on the internet from an SA woman from somewhere and identified with it, that I too was addicted to lust. When I came to a meeting and listened to members' shares, I could not believe that they were suffering from the same things as me. My first feeling was, "I am home. I can be myself here and tell the truth, little by little." After three

months in the program I could feel in my heart that I didn't want to act out anymore.

Being sober I realized that I wanted to have more than just sobriety; I also wanted to work on the Steps. Inspired by one of the sisters in SA, I decided to join Russian-speaking SA meetings and to search for a sponsor there. At that time, there were only a few SA sober sisters in my country so there was little choice.

I studied Russian at school, but had never spoken it after graduation. Without knowing the language very well, I took courage and gave it a try because I really wanted to change my life and get on the Path of Recovery. I joined the Russian-speaking fellowship then with the help of google

translate. Those times I prayed for the courage to try, and trusted my Higher Power that it would work out. It wasn't easy and I thank God that He heard me and found a sponsor who believed we could successfully work together on the Steps.

Step by step with the help of online translation I started to work with a Russian sponsor because my desire was greater than my fears. I was afraid all the time—I made mistakes in writing, I tried to speak but also made many mistakes. Despite my fears, I still went on with it.

Working on Step 4 with a sponsor helped me to realize that I have always been “a victim.” I constantly found myself in situations where others were guilty, not me. I blamed others that they hurt me, looked at me wrong, told me wrong. Pain and accusations—that's what I wanted and what my illness wanted. When my sponsor recommended that I pray and reflect on how to best move on from my precious victimhood, I did not want to hear it—I was angry. However after our talk I prayed a lot that God would show me if I was a victim.

And God showed me that I had always sought the role of victim. I prayed so much then that He would help me to drop my sense of victimhood and move on in life; I needed His help; I knew I couldn't do it myself. I cried like a child. It felt like something inside me was breaking; that God was breaking down the frozen walls around my precious sense of victimhood and showing me a way out. I wanted with all my heart to stop blaming others because I was tired of living with it. Surrender gave me the courage to let go.

Now, today, I have decided that I am no longer a victim and I ask God

each time I am tempted to say, “No” to the temptation to victimhood. I have a choice today: to be a victim or not, to trudge the Road of Happy Destiny or to go back to the dark, depressing state of perpetual victimhood. I prefer light, joy, and freedom today.

It took a lot of humility to admit my character defects. Thanks to the work on Steps 4 through 7, I dared to admit that I am a selfish, dishonest, and controlling person. Every time I choose the solution, I gain an inner freedom, and the courage to admit

I have a choice today: to be a victim or not, to trudge the Road of Happy Destiny or to go back to the dark, depressing state of perpetual victimhood.

that I am a sick person getting well, not a bad person getting good. I am a loved daughter of God.

Again, my desire for recovery was greater than my fears of making amends at Step Nine. A particular amend I had to make was to pay for a random person's purchases in a random shop. I had a big fear of doing this and kept putting it off for a long time because I had no idea how I could do it. But I had to face my fears and do it if I wanted to be free, and no one could do it for me.

One Sunday I set out to make the amend. I was full of fears. I continued

praying that God would give me the courage, because this amend seemed so impossible for me. I had never been in a situation like this before. I had always preferred to take from people than to give. I passed by two shops and I couldn't do anything. When I stopped at a third one, I told myself: "God, give me the courage; my fear is stronger than my will to do what I have to, but You can help me. I don't know how to go about this. Just give me the courage and the right situation."

And the funny thing is, it all happened so fast! God gave me a person whom I could approach and offer

to pay for his purchases. I made the amend with His involvement. The man gave me a big hug and said this was a miracle for him, that no one had ever done anything so kind for him before.

It is a miracle how God encourages my desire for bold change. I do not want to live in the past anymore, feeding myself—poisoning myself—off dark memories. I am alive today in a new way; happy, joyous and free, and I believe that God will give me even more courage to help me along the Path of the Recovery.

JOLITA P., *Lithuania*



WILLINGNESS TO CHANGE

Today, this Australian oldtimer can honestly say that he has turned into a better person than he ever could have imagined.

Arrived in SA in 1999 under dire circumstances following a long period of compulsive poor behavior involving few other people but leaving devastation within my own family. I did not discover the extent of the devastation until many years later after engaging in the SA program wholeheartedly.

Typically, once I discovered I was sick and not just a sinful broken person I needed to be the sickest person in the whole of the program, including all past and present members living and deceased.

Although my opinion of myself was "healthy" and I was as pure as the driven snow, I reluctantly attended meetings of SA regularly right from the start. This was mainly to get my life back into order, to get my wife off my back, and to resume a happy

carefree disposition which I previously occupied in society and commerce. Willingness was virtually non-existent for me.

I attended meetings but often looked at "raw material" but in terms of the SA sobriety definition I stayed sober but also held down several key positions in the groups I did attend. In the early days in Melbourne, Australia there were only three meetings, no telephone meetings, and Zoom was nonexistent. Willingness started for me when I believed I had a spiritual happening during an early meeting. The topic was resentment. I carried no resentments, needless to say, however I hated my mother-in-law's guts with a passion for the harms she had inflicted on both me and my wife but especially me. In the meeting the sharing turned to anger, hatred, retribution

and guilt.

I heard a small voice in my head that said “Forgive her”.

I struggled in my mind, yes, no, yes, no, and finally I said a flippant, throw away prayer that somehow, I meant deep down. I prayed “God, I cannot forgive her, can you please forgive her for me.” Then I felt a huge weight lifted off my shoulders and I felt almost weightless, but ecstatic and confused. I left the meeting and drove home never to carry bad or damaging thoughts of her any longer. A few months later she passed away and I was able to fully support my wife and her family in the grieving process and the funeral arrangements.

Where did this willingness come from, I often ask myself. SA says that a spiritual awakening has to come about in the three areas of emotional, physical, and spiritual which comprises a change in behavior resulting in a change in thinking (and attitude). I have concluded that the spiritual process of the program is both progressive and inevitable from the working of the Steps in conjunction with others who are doing the same.

One of the scariest aspects of Sexaholics Anonymous lies in Steps One through to Three where I absolutely admit a lack of control and power. Then, as if that was not enough, I had to hand all my control over to someone or something I don’t really know or have ever really experienced. This was a huge step for me but in the light of few other choices (read—none) I did follow this path and miraculously the result came out alright—but not just alright, it produced a new improved and better person far greater than I ever could have imagined.

In retrospect I see now that the program does offer a guarantee in the form of two passages:

1. “Rarely have we seen a person fail who thoroughly followed our path” (AA 58).
2. The 12 Promises (AA 83-84).

To this day I have never found any part of the AA Big Book and the SA White Book to be incorrect, misleading or in conflict with any part of my own spiritual program and beliefs.

STEVE P., *Melbourne, Australia*



DISCUSSION TOPIC

Where are you today related to the willingness to change?

The author of this article describes how he came into the rooms of SA in 1999 with the purpose of getting his life back into order—but not to change.

His willingness to change by true progressive victory over lust grew over the years. His willingness to change by forgiving his mother-in-law

came about due to a spiritual awakening. His willingness to change by engaging fully in the SA program and handing over all his control to a Higher Power was the scariest yet most miraculous step for him.

How are you doing with the progressive victory over lust in your life today? How is your willingness to forgive

each and every person on your resentment inventory? Have you truly surrendered all control to a Higher Power of your own understanding? Have the 12 Promises come true in your life today?

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

CHANGE AS AN ACTION

Today, this UK oldtimer is doing exactly the same things he started doing over 20 years ago, which is changing him into the person God wants him to be.

We hear a great deal about change in the fellowship. Our Serenity Prayer talks of having the “courage to change.” In our early days, sober members talk to us about having the “willingness” to change. But what exactly is change, as it relates to the fellowship and sobriety?

Change, as I have come to understand it, is simply taking a different action, or doing something differently. And change, as an action, requires effort. As with anything meaningful in life, change requires work.

So, in my first few weeks of sobriety, change was the action of going to meetings. This was something new

and different. I had never been to meetings before. It was also the action of calling my sponsor and other sober members. Regularly. It was the action of being rigorously honest with sober members, of having no secrets, of letting my life become an open book. Surrendering temptations instead of succumbing to them was also an action of change.

Prayer to God, whilst not new for me, took on a different meaning, as it was approached with more honesty and humility. Regular meditation was a change.

Over time, as my sobriety grew, I had the opportunity to do service. Working selflessly with no desire for reward was certainly a change for this self-centered addict.



But where does the courage come in? I believe courage is taking action regardless of how I feel. So, I went to meetings regardless of whether I wanted to or not. Regardless of whether my head told me I was “too busy”, or “too tired” or too whatever. I picked up the phone to sober members regardless of how nervous I felt, or how down I felt, or how ashamed

I believe courage is taking action regardless of how I feel. So, I went to meetings regardless of whether I wanted to or not.

I felt. I was honest regardless of my fears. I made time for prayer, meditation, reading literature, no matter how busy the structure of my day was. I began to see that my head was full of excuses. There would always be a “reason” for not doing the right thing. But I began to see where those excuses would eventually take me back into the addiction.

It didn’t, and doesn’t, matter to me whether I want to do something or don’t want to do it. “Wants” are transient and can fluctuate. What matters to me is whether or not I need to do something. That is what my relationship with God is built on, a simple question, “God, do I need to do this?” And if the answer isn’t clear, or I’m unsure, as I don’t have a direct line to God, I have my sponsor and other sober members to ask what to do. But as for simple fellowship things, such as going to meetings, phone calls, and prayer, the answer is always “yes.”

For me, lasting change can only take effect through consistency of action. Through living this way of life over many years, I have come to see it as a kind of Spiritual Discipline. Sobriety, a gift from God, is the framework around which I am able to build a happy, fulfilling, and meaningful life.

As I grow in sobriety, change, though sometimes challenging, becomes an exciting opportunity rather than something to be feared, avoided or postponed.

God constantly presents me with situations that give me the chance to grow spiritually, emotionally, and psychologically. I came into the fellowship stunted. An irresponsible, petulant, impulsive child in an adult’s body. Through sobriety, and through the courage to change, God changes me into the person He would have me be.

And so today, I do exactly the same things I started doing two decades

Sobriety, a gift from God, is the framework around which I am able to build a happy, fulfilling, and meaningful life.

ago. I speak to my sponsor, and to other sober members. I pray and meditate. I read the literature. I do service. I help others. I go to meetings. Because if it worked twenty years ago, then it will work today.

JOSEPH, UK



Change Your Ways Or We're Finished

By the grace of God she has a fellowship that really fits her and a true level of peace and meaning in life that had always eluded her.

I am Lina, SA, sober since 2010, Mexico City. I was born in 1968. I only stopped taking a bottle when I was 6 years old. As a result, I was the subject of mockery at home. I remember my house made of tin, and a dirt floor; we had scarce resources and many financial needs. I was the last of 8 siblings in addition to being a girl with a stomach disease.

My parents were never available, always consumed in their addictions—alcohol and nicotine. Communication was not good in the home; there was domestic violence, bullying, psychological, and verbal abuse.

In primary school, I remember that I was a well-behaved girl and got excellent grades in all subjects, but I had no friends. I hardly ever played outdoors, spending my time cutting out, painting, drawing, reading stories, and studying. I didn't feel comfortable engaging in conversations with others; I was very reserved.

At age 9 I started to gain weight. I also started compulsively practicing frotteurism with the furniture until I injured myself. When I saw my skin was badly injured, I told my relatives and was taken to hospital. I got treatment, but at the end of the medication, I started again. I was too

young to understand what was going on. My relatives did not understand either. They may have thought I was a precocious child and they watched me carefully because, whenever I could, I slinked away to practice my frotteurism.

By age 15, in high school, I was already doing diets in order to lose weight as quickly as I could; I hated my body, loathing myself whenever I looked in the mirror. I turned to romantic fantasies like TV soaps, eroticism, snooping, exhibitionism, and erotic stories.

By now I was masturbating compulsively. Instead of going to study, I used to go to cinemas where they showed sexually explicit movies and allowed myself to be touched by others and I touched them too. Unfortunately, I did not finish my high school because I fell into a very strong youth depression with tons of suicidal ideation; I had a constant desire to leave home and never come back.

When I was 17, God guided me to ask for help from AA. Although I was not an alcoholic or a drug addict, the group accepted me lovingly and taught me how the program worked, the Steps, services, meetings, etc. I felt very good but I didn't quite fit in there. They suggested I continue searching around other fellowships. I did search other fellowships and came close at times to finding a home, but always felt incomplete.

A few years later, I found my first boyfriend; he is now my husband. That's when I started having more problems. As a woman who had indulged in lust in a variety of forms for many years, I now found it difficult to sexually adapt to a real man, to be intimate emotionally and sexually with him.

I reverted to masturbation, romantic

and sexual fantasies, flirting. In time, I became pregnant and lost my first daughter because she had genetic malformations which was terrible for me, feeling guilty because at the time I was addicted to nicotine, smoking several cigarettes daily and my eating disorder had progressed so that I hated myself even worse when I looked at myself in the mirror and had taken to pills to suppress my hunger. I never cried for the loss of my daughter; I hid my feelings, always trying to be the strong, brave woman.

It was an act of providence, an act of mercy by my Higher Power, that led me to other people like me in Mexico who have this addiction.

Then, after the birth of my next three children, I was totally indulging in masturbation and always feeling anxious; lusting after my brothers-in-law, my neighbors, acquaintances, thinking that anyone and everyone was physically better than my husband.

In order to relax, I started studying and finished high school, then university and then I found the internet which I turned into my own personal jail. On the internet I spent hours doing school homework but also entering web pages looking for casual friends, sex, and romance.

I finished high school when I was older, but I no longer had the concentration to continue on to college. My head was full of obsession, full of

sexual and romantic distraction; my energy was low and I fell into constant depression, frequenting seedy hotels, getting entangled in several toxic relationships, spending a lot of money on trying to look splendid, frequently contracting sexually transmitted infections that took me to the gynecologist. I watched porn almost daily. I couldn't sleep at night and I went on food binges that occasionally made me vomit. I became pregnant outside my marriage and had an abortion. I didn't perform well at home or at school or at work.

Then, after several years, my husband discovered me. I had left my phone at home and he looked at it because I had been getting a lot of messages. Like a clay idol dropped to the ground, his image of me was broken: in one second inside his mind, I went from beloved wife to prostitute. He kicked me out of the house and told me that he was going to file a complaint with the judge so that he would have custody of my little children. He told me he was going to leave me with my family, and was going to tell them that I was a prostitute and show them my phone as evidence.

When he confronted me, he burst the pink lust bubble I had been living in for years and I was terrified that I would lose my children. With my suitcases waiting for me by the door, he told me that if I didn't get help and change my ways, we would be divorced.

One day, craven with anxiety and desperation, I tried everything to outwit the blocks that he put on the computer. In doing so, I came across a Mexican website called Sexaholics Anonymous and became interested. I continued reading, more and more, and came to the test question that said, Do you have a double life? I drank it all in, all that information about the

disease, the problem and the solution, and very soon made my way to my first meeting.

I think it was an act of providence, an act of mercy by my Higher Power, that led me to that web page; to think that there are other people like me in the world, in Mexico, who have this addiction and who meet up every week to support each other to recover! I had no idea. That act of Providence illuminated the path for me to SA.

Today I thank God for choosing me from amongst so many women who

My lust sometimes shows up, but I no longer indulge it nor go around afraid of it. I call on my Higher Power who is way more powerful than lust.

need this program; for giving me the opportunity to join a wonderful, loving program that helps me accept myself for who I am; to love myself in a healthy way and respect my body, my soul and my being.

Today I have a fellowship that really fits me, identifying as I do so naturally with each of my fellows.

Trust with my husband is growing every day, and so is true love. No longer do I want to change him; today I rejoice in his love, loving him for who he is. Today I see that the problem was me, not him.

I sleep peacefully and am joyful, even with life's problems. My lust sometimes shows up, but I no longer indulge it nor go around afraid of it.

I respect it—cunning, baffling, powerful—and that helps me to stay clear of it; if the temptation persists, I call on my Higher Power who is way more powerful than lust.

Thank you, Sexaholics Anonymous. I have found a level of peace and

meaning in life that had always eluded me. Thank You, God for always taking care of me with Your anonymous hand.

LINA, Mexico City, Mexico



SA Pamphlets Free to Download

On sa.org/literature/pamphlets/ you can find the SA pamphlets free to download for personal use with distribution to 10 or fewer. Permission is not granted to print copies of these. Print copies may be purchased from the SAICO Online Store.



Most members first experience the benefits of early sobriety in their Home Group. What does it mean when we say that an SA group is a “spiritual entity”? What are common SA Home Group issues? What are its service positions? How are group business meetings held? How are the group funds managed? Read all about the SA Home Group in this great pamphlet.

NEW GROUPS APRIL 2024

North, Central and South America

Aztec, New Mexico, USA
New Orleans, Louisiana, USA
Oceanside, California, USA
Medina, Ohio, USA
Austin, Texas, USA
Lafayette, Louisiana, USA
Tempe, Arizona, USA
Columbus, Indiana, USA
Stickney, Illinois, USA
Kingwood/Porter, Texas, USA
Cullman, Alabama, USA

United Kingdom

Edinburgh, Scotland, UK
High Wycombe, England, UK



Extreme Steps To Joyful Sobriety

Today she is able to experience joyful sobriety and accept God's will for her without any regrets.

I started coming to SA at the beginning of 2019. I had experience in other recovery fellowships, so I already trusted the 12-Step approach. Thanks to AA, my father got sober for the first time in his life in 1995, and even though he had relapsed before he passed away, I knew for sure that the Program worked.

I had the opportunity to participate in Nar-Anon a year into my marriage when I learned of my husband's drug addiction. He minimized his problem with "light drugs," but the consequences were still quite heavy. I helped him stop by introducing him to rehab, and we participated in meetings together. Psychologists helped me sustain the marriage for another 10 years, but we had much less in common than problems. A big problem was our sex life. SA has taught me to stay on my side of the street, and now I recognize how I contributed to our

problems. I had a promiscuous youth, and my behavior and attitudes about sex seriously affected our relationship.

My family was religious and dysfunctional at the same time. I turned a blind eye to the moral principles I was taught and sought to relieve the pain of my loneliness with lots of sex. I was faced with a decision between a proper Christian life and frequent unmarried sex, and I chose acting out. I experienced a lot of emotional trauma and pain, and then cynicism came.

I was faithful to my husband throughout our marriage, but my many defects of character were rampant. Even though I was physically with only him, the addiction poisoned my life. I thought sex was the foundation of a relationship, and I felt unwanted as he continued to refuse me. When I found out that my husband preferred porn and masturbation over being with me, I took it quite personally. I lost all trust in him, but I still

tried hard to save my marriage with therapy, church programs, and even a “sexologist” who advised us to watch porn together.

I became involved with a program for children of alcoholics and began to work their Steps. I wanted to clean up the cluttered shelves of my life. I received solace for the problems from my childhood. More specifically, I found relief from the missing safety, support, and love in my life.

While writing about my adolescence as a part of those Steps, I kept finding problems that stemmed from my sexual behavior and attitudes. My sponsor in that program told me about SA. By this time, I had made a clean break from my husband, and I had firmly decided to have no affairs outside of marriage, but how could I manage the sexual desire, how could I calm the obsession? I never understood how deceptive lust could be; I thought its needs were my needs.

In SA, I learned that deciding not to feed lust won't kill me, that sex was indeed optional. What amazing news that was! Right away, I chose a sponsor and started working the Steps. I had intense memories of many traumatic relationships throughout my life, but working the Steps helped me let go of much of that trauma. Much of the pain began to leave, too, and better self-understanding and trust in God came instead. The Fellowship brought people close to me. I never had this before. I also found opportunities to serve in many different ways; this has truly brought me joy. Some of these service opportunities include supporting newcomers and participating in SA conventions where I get to experience different emotions and receive lots of useful information.

An experience last year really blew my mind. Being in my 15th year of

sobriety (of which 3.5 years after my marriage), I found myself suddenly very interested in someone. Despite the fact that it was mutual, and I was now single, he was not.

Because of how it quickly crossed boundaries of appropriateness and through the enlightenment I had already received by working the SA Steps, I decided to reset my sobriety date so lust wouldn't again completely absorb me. I also started another cycle of the Steps with a new sponsor. I attended 90 meetings in 90 days, a

I never understood how deceptive lust can be; I thought its needs were my needs.

common suggestion I've heard for when recovery gets shaky. I prayed and surrendered lust. I prayed for help to surrender all my lust.

I wrote out a page of gratitude every day. I listened to recordings of people reading from the White Book and read SA and AA literature. I stayed in communication with other sexaholics, and I took lots of service opportunities in both face-to-face and online meetings. I even decided to give up sweets and starchy foods to attack lust from different directions.

After one year of this newfound sobriety, I felt myself a different person. It was a long and difficult journey for me to achieve such a simple thing as joyful sobriety, but I'm able to finally accept God's will for me without any regrets—with humility instead. My heart is getting better and better.

CATHERINE B., *Moscow, Russia*



Steps & Traditions

When I was new to the Fellowship, I heard something that made me laugh: “I’m a self-loathing narcissist.” I thought it was funny, but I also wanted to cry at how true this statement was for me. I’m a sexaholic and have truly earned my seat in these SA rooms. I have a fatal, incurable, progressive disease—a real soul sickness. By an incomprehensible miracle, the program helped me find my way to a Higher Power who restored me to sanity. Granted, all I have is a daily reprieve contingent on my spiritual condition, but that much is an absolute miracle to me. The other part of my story is that I am also a

raging volcano. My self-loathing has led me to near-fatal road rage and some actual suicide attempts.

Four years ago, I had an incident that baffled me. I struggle with an intense sense of inferiority in regard to my brothers-in-law. One of my wife’s brothers came to visit and brought her an e-reader device. She cherished the e-reader I had given her, but now her brother’s gesture made my gift obsolete. Fearing a violent reaction on my part, my wife was nervous about accepting the gift. When we were alone, I said I thought the gift was very nice. She said, “Aren’t you upset?” I replied in a sincere and calm voice, “Why would I be upset? That would be so immature.”

Both of us were stunned in disbelief! Was I somehow possessed?! My old behavior would have been to smash the gift with a hammer if she had accepted it. Yet somehow, to both of our amazement, I seemed to have been transformed. I thought of the Tenth-Step promises: “We react sanely and normally, and we will find that

There are two armies at war fighting for dominion over him but, one day at a time, God grants him to take actions of love rather than feed his self-obsession.



My Inner Civil War

this has happened automatically . . . without any thought or effort on our part. It just comes! That is the miracle of it" (AA 84-85).

I get that it was a miracle, but when did this happen? Careful consideration and reflection led me back to Step 4. When I last worked this Step, a light shone on my soul, and my Higher Power broke past the wall of my ego and reached me. I believe that for the first time, He enabled me to face an inescapable reality trapped deep in my being. At the core of my person, in the center of my soul, there has been a civil war raging.

I've heard similar descriptions of this internal conflict, for example, the allegory of the two dogs fighting inside a person where the winner is the one who is fed. In my case, this fight is on a much larger scale and has a sinister slant.

There are two armies at war fighting for dominion over me: Shame and Pride. The Shame army fires a non-stop barrage of destructive missiles called criticism, perfectionism, isolation, and fear. In the heat of battles waged inside of me, the Pride army retaliates with a heavy arsenal of justification, rationalization, anger, and resentment. Standing in the middle of the battlefield of this intense conflict, I'm a defenseless little boy. The abuse that bombards my inner child leads to unpredictable emotional episodes ranging from deep depression to uncontrollable rage and everything in between. The pain is so unbearable that it drives me to my favorite anesthetic: lust.

When I work fearless and thorough inventories, my Higher Power reveals to me the nature of this internal civil war. When I take the action of looking at my shame and pride in light of my resentments, I begin to

see how my inner conflict is driving my lust and rage.

For example, I recently broke the side view mirror of my car while backing into a parking spot. Unfortunately, I had done this at least four times before. When my wife pointed this out to me, I got mad and made a rude, sarcastic remark. Not too much later, I was surprised that my wife

When I work fearless and thorough inventories, my Higher Power reveals to me the nature of this internal civil war.

was upset because I didn't even remember my earlier remark. Once she reminded me, I saw an opportunity to conduct an inventory on the situation.

Who was I resentful toward? My wife. What happened? She looked down on me and overreacted when I was rude to her. It was then that I realized I had been judgmental of her on far too many occasions. If I spot it, I must got it!

What did this affect in me? My inner civil war was activated! Immediately, the Pride army thundered, "Who does she think she is? I'm a better driver than her! Heck, I taught her how to drive!!!" At the same time, the Shame army rallied with Fear and retaliated with, "She's right! You're a terrible driver; likely one of the worst! Think about it, how many people break so many mirrors?"

What part did I play in this scenario? Well, for starters, I broke the mirror! Is it so unreasonable for her to be disappointed and frustrated with the unexpected repair expense? (Take it from me, with the new technology packed into them, side view mirrors aren't cheap!)

What's the manifestation of my self-obsession? Fear! I'm afraid she'll tell me not to attend the SA Convention and save the money to fix the mirror. I won't get my way; my will won't be done.

Do I owe an amends? Absolutely! I promptly let her know that I was wrong to be sarcastic and to assume she was being judgmental. She just kindly responded, "Let's mourn together."

Whenever I go through this process, my Higher Power enables me to set aside the thing blocking me from Him, others, and myself. Through a true miracle, the little boy inside

me is rescued from the battlefield of self-obsession and placed safely in a position of neutrality. I can see and face my mistake with humility and self-love without drifting "into worry, remorse or morbid reflection" (AA 86).

Although I can't (and don't need to) understand how the miracle works, my Higher Power can restore me to sanity. Twenty-four seconds at a time, I begin to see how this is a program of action, and how working the Steps is different than just participating in the fellowship.

God, on this day, grant me the serenity to accept that I am a perfectly-flawed, lovable human being who is no better or worse than others. Allow me to bestow grace on others and on myself and take the actions of love rather than feed my self-obsession.

AMJED B., *Texas, USA*



Learning in Group Conscience Meetings

Fam Oscar, a recovering alcoholic, sober by the grace of my beloved Higher Power since March 6, 2012. At one time, when I was participating in the work meetings of my face-to-face group, there was an AA old timer who knew the program literature very well, and when asked to speak, he used to go on and on, making me impatient; and then, there was another fellow who never spoke at work meetings; he

just said "Yes" or "No" when it came to voting. Those fellows irritated me.

I really like work meetings—group consciences and intergroup meetings—because, as the book *Discovering the Principles* says, "group conscience meetings are often the place where we feel the heat."

Trying to change other fellows is impossible, just as I have no power over lust. While I was in those meetings, I prayed for wisdom and courage to change, to let go of the burden that

my ego was carrying. Finally I was able to appreciate those two fellows and to thank God for their presence. From each one, I learned to live the Traditions and spiritual principles; to be tolerant, to be grateful for the service of each fellow and for everyone who turns up at the meetings of my home group. I have to accept that I am just a student on the spiritual path and continue to recognize that my ego is not always right.

I love the text that says, “We absolutely insist on enjoying life” (AA 132). But how can I be happy if everyone around me is wrong? How can I enjoy life listening to chronic relapsers at meetings and to those who “... regret the past and wish to shut the door on it”? (AA 83)

The answer came when I worked the Steps and began to really live the spiritual principles. My dark side always wants to criticize others; it is never happy, always uncomfortable and intolerant. But today I have a choice—I can ask for divine help, work the Steps, take frequent inventories of myself; I can own and surrender my immaturity, surrender the desire to throw a childish tantrum, pointing to everyone else’s defects.

Little by little, working the Steps, making my way towards the light, I began to see that the answer to true freedom is to take responsibility for my life—even if it hurts and I don’t want to do it; to face change, to be brave in the face of the pain of growing spiritually. Little by little, I have become more tolerant, more loving and understanding of others instead of always complaining about them. I have started to experience the joy of living in reality, of enjoying this precious life, whilst discovering a deeper relationship with my Higher Power—all of it earned through working the

Steps on my defects of character as they arise, especially in service.

The slogan “Stick with the winners” encourages me to listen to recovery stories at meetings and in recordings; it also encourages me to talk about the benefits of service—the changes that have happened in my life through service on my country’s intergroup,

I begin to see that the answer to true freedom is to take responsibility over my life—even if it hurts and I don’t want to do it.

by working in the Spanish Translation Committee of the ESSAY magazine, by sponsoring inmates in prison—discovering through it all that I too can be a winner, just for today. I always enjoy sharing this joyful message with my group.

OSCAR M., *Bogota, Colombia*



SA CFC

The Program of Sexaholic Anonymous is still not available in most of the prisons around the world and in Europe. My addiction made me a prisoner of lust. It was horrible and I was thinking that I threw my life out the window in the pursuit of lust. I can not imagine how hard it must be being prisoner of lust and being a real prisoner at the same time.

One long-term sober member from abroad came two years ago to Slovakia with a big message. He was saying that prison work is really import-

ant, people in prisons are lost and do not have the SA program. Imagine that you are addicted to sex, you do not know about the SA program and are incarcerated for many years. What a hopeless state! Since then we started to put a bigger emphasis on SA prison work in Slovakia. We arranged a meeting with the bishop who was head of prison chaplains in our country and he was open to the SA program. Very important for us was to pray for this service and we also visited a very spiritual place to pray together for hopeless inmates. I think that without a lot of courage which our Higher Power gave us, strong support from other members and our sponsors, we would not be able to help anyone.

The next step was that we started working on translation of prison pamphlets and it took us almost a

Helping Our Friends With A Double Sentence



The Slovakian Fellowship recently achieved a giant breakthrough in their CFC service and was able to organize an open SA meeting in one of their country's prisons.

year until it was finished with graphic design and finally printed. Then one member came with an idea that we should organize an open meeting in a prison. Another member said that he knew an AA fellow who comes regularly in the prison to tell

I threw my life out of the window in the pursuit of lust. I can not imagine how hard it must be being a prisoner of lust and being a real prisoner at the same time.

inmates about the AA program. He agreed that he would ask this AA fellow what was necessary to go to the prison.

It was amazing how things worked together. The AA member suggested we directly contact a psychologist in one prison which he attended regularly. We contacted the psychologist and she invited us to come and have an open meeting for inmates. Firstly, I did not believe what she said because I heard stories about how difficult it is to arrange an open meeting in prison.

The day of our visit came and I felt really fearful. What can I—a sexaholic who was never in prison and who did not even reach the age of 30—say to these friends in prison who probably crossed much more boundaries than me? However, I overcame my fear and came there with two other SA fellows.

Before us sat 20 inmates, all men. We started sharing our stories and after that they started asking questions. I was surprised. I thought all of them would laugh at us. Some did, but most of them did not. The most surprising thing for me was that after the meeting, some inmates came to shake our hands and to thank us for our courage and message of hope. I realized that for God nothing is impossible and He can use a sick person like me to spread the message of hope anywhere.

There is a solution for sexaholism! In the end we talked with the prison psychologist about future cooperation and open topics like sponsorship through mail, virtual meetings, and Step workshops. We will see what will work.

In this article I wanted to emphasize that in many prisons there are sick

The most surprising thing was that some inmates came to shake our hands and to thank us for our courage and our message of hope.

friends who do not know about the solution. It is possible to help them. It is possible to bring them the message of hope. If you have a desire to help inmates I encourage you to go for it!

ANONYMOUS, *Slovakia*



ESSAY publishes **future international SA events only**. Local events can be sent in to saico@sa.org in order to be listed on sa.org. Submit the following: dates, theme, location, and contact(s). An event flyer is very helpful.

Save the Date!

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



← Scan this QR code for more!

In my life, COURAGE TO CHANGE hasn't just come about randomly. I don't think I have much courage, much less the courage I need in order to change. Changing myself can be scary. Sometimes it terrifies me. But turning my life and will over to the care of God as I understand Him helps me find courage.

I find courage when I make program calls to share what's going on with me in a spirit of transparency and self-disclosure. Still more courage comes when I go to a meeting with men and women recovering

from lust just like I am. And the experience, strength, and hope at International Conventions floods me with a sense of courage that can be wonderfully overwhelming.

There is a lot to love about Los Angeles: the weather, the food, the beaches, the entertainment. But July 12th-14th, Los Angeles will be saturated with courage—COURAGE TO CHANGE, in fact! That is the theme for the Summer 2024 SA & S-Anon International Convention, and Los Angeles, California is the host city.

In my life, change has never been an on/off switch but more like an incremental dimmer switch (but I like to

call it my brightener switch). As I continue to work the SA program by working the steps, making program calls, going to meetings, and being of service, the more consistently I find myself taking "right actions" (SA 147, 164, 167). These compounding "right actions" are bringing about real change in my life. That's what recovery is to me—change. The recovery I see in others is evidence to me of their COURAGE TO CHANGE. Their courage is contagious, and I find my own courage expands as I continue this life of change and recovery. Even when I go through seasons of relapse, I can embrace

the courage I've been given, overcome the discouragement of my imperfection, continue to change, and appreciate my progress that's more and more evident as I work this progress-not-perfection SA program.

Working with so many men and women on the convention committee who are serving tirelessly to make the LA. 2024 International Convention an opportunity for you to continue your own change has already filled me with gratitude and yes, courage.

Won't you join us?

Start your plans now by going to iclosangeles2024.com and see what we have in store for you. We have plans for over 90 breakout sessions, workshops, and panel discussions on a broad range of subjects for SAs and S-Anons. Some of these topics will be Surrender, Sponsoring, Shame, Sober Dating, Same-sex Attraction & Allies, Spiritual Tools ... and those are just some of the S-topics. We're also flying in some inspiring speakers to

teach and inspire us as they share their ESH ("experience, strength, and hope" SA 201).

I'm a tall, bald guy with a deep radio voice. It would be my privilege to introduce you to attendees who have already registered from Singapore, Mexico, Israel, Canada, Kenya, and of course, right here in sunny California. I'm so excited for us to come together to grow in our COURAGE TO CHANGE.

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**

Contest

Bubble Up Your Best Caption!



LaRon, our in-house illustrator who has been breathing life into our covers and peppering our pages with laughter through his cartoons for the past two years, has crafted a recovery-themed cartoon that's missing just one thing—a **caption from you!** The speech bubble is empty, and it's your turn to fill it with wit.

Here's your mission, should you choose to accept it: brainstorm the perfect caption for LaRon's latest masterpiece and shoot it over to us at essay@sa.org. If your caption captures our hearts (and chuckles), it will grace the pages of our June ESSAY edition. Plus, you'll snag a complimentary print copy of the issue, courtesy of SAICO, delivered straight to your doorstep.

Mark your calendars—the deadline for submissions is May 15. Let the creativity flow and may the funniest caption win!

BY FAITH

And

BY WORKS



A virtual SA recovery event hosted by:

MAR (Mid-Atlantic Region, USA)

EMER (Europe and Middle East Region)

The 2-day online event, “By Faith and By Works” on March 9 & 10, 2024 was a first-time collaboration effort between the Good Neighbors Committees from both regions.

The theme “By Faith and By Works” came from Tradition One of the book, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*: “By Faith and by works we have been able to build upon the lessons of an incredible experience.

They live today in the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, which—God willing—shall sustain us in unity for so long as He may need us.” (*Twelve & Twelve* 131).

There were 596 SA members registered, from 50 different countries around the world. An event of this magnitude required several members doing service. We had 9 languages spoken, 8 wonderful speakers, 40 interpreters, 2 moderators, 4 technical hosts, 4 timekeepers and 12 committee members. During the event, we provided breakout rooms for the following: Corrections and Facilities Committee, Global Outreach Committee, EMER convention, language-based rooms, and a room for women in SA. Some members have reported that they reconnected with members with whom they lost touch by attending the event. Others got involved with CFC because of the new MAR CFC coordinator and EMER CFC chair.

We give a lot of credit to EMER for reaching across the Atlantic Ocean to the MAR. The experience was eye-opening and heart-warming for us in the MAR where we mainly speak one language. Thank you to everyone who supported the event. Please stay tuned for information on recordings.

HAL C., MAR GNC Chair

On behalf of the Joint MAR and EMER Good Neighbors Committee





ast October, the Seventh Convention of SA Mexico was held in the city of Tuxtla Gutiérrez. The convention was attended by 47 SA members and 13 S-Anon members; for several participants this was their first convention and their comments are below. We, the organizers, thank the Higher Power (God as each one conceives Him) for this experience that was so important in our recovery.

The organization of the convention began in 2022, when a committee of trusted servants of the Mexican SA intergroup was formed to plan the convention of our beloved fellowship

in the city of Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas. The planning and organization of the event lasted more than a year—activities like selecting the convention venue, costs, topics to be discussed, speakers, food, fellowship activities, etc. The work was arduous for the organizers, with monthly meetings at first, then every two weeks, and finally weekly. Despite the committee's lack of experience, the goal of moving the convention forward was achieved thanks to the dedication and care of the members.

At the end of the convention, it was decided that the next one will be in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico. See you at the VIII Convention in August 2024.

FRANCISCO, Mexico

Member of the organizing group



SEVENTH NATIONAL CONVENTION IN MEXICO





Attending such an event helped me change my perception of a long-term sober fellow whom I had disliked for not being the way I wanted him to be. Seeing his face, living with him, performing with him, and seeing him act with serenity made that resentment go away and now I appreciate him much more and trust him more. It also changed my perception of another member who gave me a lesson in humility and service by lending me his son's guitar, which he brought from his city.

José N., Chihuahua, Mexico



I thank God for giving me the opportunity to attend the convention in Tuxtla Gutierrez, Chiapas. It was a great experience to meet exceptional people that God has placed in my path in the fellowship of SA, who have helped and sustained me in my sobriety and the recovery of my dignity as a child of God.

Sharing my First Step was an act of humility to show how ungovernable my life became because of my sexaholism. Sharing my inventory of sexual behavior in my 50s and at difficult times in my life, due to the death of my mother and the illness of my father, helped me to understand that God had a purpose in my recovery from my addiction to lust.

Attending the convention, despite work demands, was an event that filled me with hope to continue working for my recovery on a daily basis. I give thanks to God, to the intergroup and to every member of this fellowship who has contributed to my recovery.

MARTÍN, Merida, Mexico



The annual convention was an opportunity to meet more members in person. The spiritual experiences that were shared and the unity created helped to further expose my pride. I was able to get a sponsor and strengthen my connection with my Higher Power. I return to the program within a framework of greater inspiration, hope, and humility.

RAFAEL C, Monterrey, Mexico



To participate in the convention gave me hope since I had the opportunity to learn more about my illness thanks to testimonies from members that are longer sober. I came to realize on a deeper level that I can stay sober only one day at a time if I work the program. I am grateful that S-Anon exists. I experienced the strength of group sponsorship in which I was shown different points of view to the same problem. It helped me to take the support of my sponsor more seriously.

DANIEL C, Guatemala





She Learned That God Has Unconditional Love for Her

Keep It Simple—how profound and how difficult. When I came to SA I looked for that special something that would knock my socks off and catapult me into sobriety. How disappointed I was when my sponsor said, “I’m not keeping any secret tools from you; the experience I have I have shared with you; there are no bunnies in the hat.”

When I first heard about what we call a “spiritual experience” while listening to a talk, all of a sudden something shifted, and I got it. I had been waiting for the fireworks, the lightning ... for salvation. Then I realized that the key word “awakening” means that slowly but surely something awakens in me, something there for years that I tried to keep shut.

I came to SA three months ago. Last week was my first time in a conference. The night before the conference my husband and I were in an intense therapy session, which followed upon his discovery of a painful and relatively recent affair. This discovery came after coming back together from a year of separation due to my acting out. Yet again my addiction had been eating away at something that hadn’t had time to heal because of my own actions.

I came to the conference overwhelmed with my fear of abandonment, and thinking about my husband, whom I left at home hurting. The first speakers of the conference were an SA member and his wife, an S-Anon member. I was shocked how honestly this SA member could

speak about his past sexual behaviors next to his wife while hundreds of people listened. He shared so simply without obfuscation or drama. The serenity with which he spoke allowed me to say “I have an illness that can take me over and make me do crazy things, like having an affair while I’m trying to rebuild my family after I tore it to shreds.” This doesn’t make me bad or evil; I’m just very sick.

I don’t know any place where I can be so honest and vulnerable. For example, one of my biggest fears is abandonment and being alone. What a great gift that at a conference where these feelings came up, I can go to a friend and say I’m feeling alone, or tell them that I’m feeling triggered amongst all the men at the conference, and in response get a warm and loving hug! How selfish and self-centered is it of me not to give my husband the place to be hurt and angry! When I try to make it easier for him, am I not simply trying to mitigate my fear of abandonment?

But all this is natural for me and anybody who has learned to suppress difficult emotions. I feel as if I got an invitation from my Higher Power: close your eyes, take a deep breath, sit in your painful emotions, surrender the demand for a grandiose spiritual experience. Instead I can pray to accept life on life’s terms, to recognize all the things in my life that I can be grateful for.

Like the keynote speaker, I started my journey in SLAA and didn’t manage to stay sober either. I didn’t understand the root of my addiction or that I need to solve my thought patterns, my lust, and my resentments. SA taught me simple tools to deal with these things, which is to bring them into the light and let them dissipate on their own through the grace of God.

The closing speaker finished off his share with a sentence that stays with me, “it doesn’t matter what my past is, what horrible things I did in active addiction; it doesn’t matter if I have dark thoughts, if I’m sober or have relapsed. One thing is always true—my Higher Power adores me.” How simple! My Higher Power has unconditional love for me.

ANONYMOUS, *Israel*



COMING IN JUNE



NEXT EDITION

The June issue will be on the brave men and women working together on their common solution in the fellowship of Sexaholics Anonymous.

Balancing Boundaries

A young Indian lady shares how she came to realize her addiction was in her head and how she established healthy boundaries with men.

Receiving a Pair of 3D Glasses

Her experience as a Kenyan and worldwide member has led her to see that our external differences are outside issues and that SA unity comes first.

Richly Blessed

He feels richly blessed that the previously presumed threat of women in his German meeting has today turned into a great gift.

SUBMIT YOUR STORY

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 for both men and women.

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

October 2024 edition: Using the Literature of the Program (Stories due Sept 1) Many of us find that reading the AA and SA literature in our own quiet times adds another dimension to our recovery.

December 2024 edition: Sober Dating (Stories due Nov 1) Experience, strength, and hope on sober dating from fellows from all over the world.

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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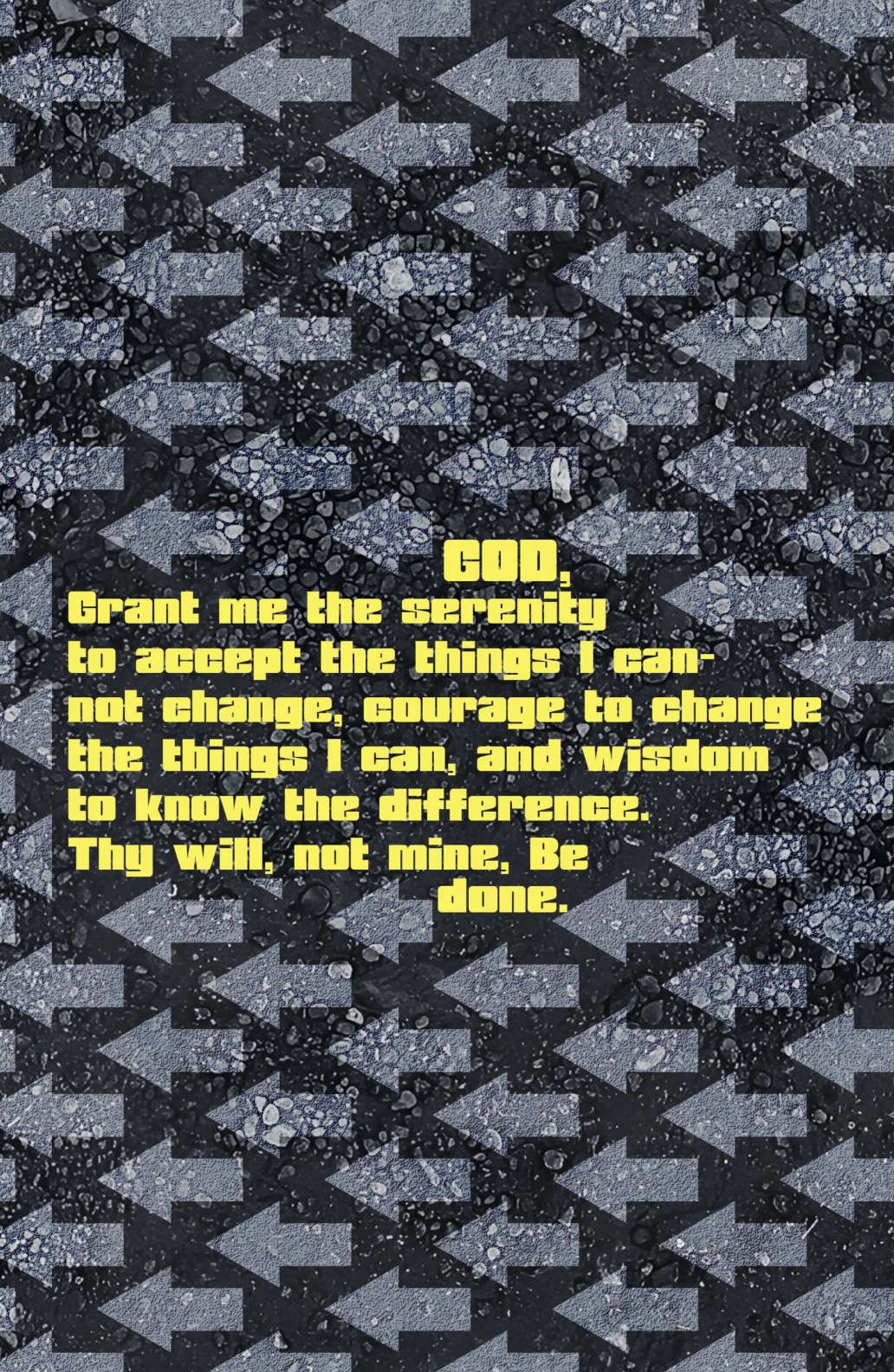
THE TWELVE STEPS OF SA

- 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.



**GOD,
Grant me the serenity
to accept the things I can-
not change, courage to change
the things I can, and wisdom
to know the difference.
Thy will, not mine, Be
done.**