

ESSAY

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SEXAHOLICS ANONYMOUS



WHAT IS
JUST?

AUG 2024 | SA.ORG

SA Purpose

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

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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

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

Adopted by the Trustees and General Delegate Assembly in May 2016

Editor's Corner

Soon after the death of our SA founder, Roy K., I became

very concerned that without Roy's living presence, there would not be a continued and consistent voice saying to the fellowship that lust is the problem. Therefore in 2009 I wrote an article in ESSAY called "Lust Is the Problem." I truly wanted the fellowship to remember that Roy's primary emphasis was on lust. Unlike other fellowships, where the emphasis is on the powerlessness over acting out, Roy's emphasis was on powerlessness over lusting. Our First Step does not mention acting out but certainly mentions the word lust.

Over the 15 years which have passed since that article was written I am still witnessing the emphasis in our fellowship that is put on sexually acting out rather than lust. It is very difficult to get the idea across that it is lust that leads to sexual acting out. Without lusting our chances for staying sober from acting out are greatly increased. "Lust is the driving force behind our sexual acting out, and true sobriety includes progressive victory over lust" (SA 4).

Lust seems to be minimally mentioned in meetings, yet, sexually acting out is a predominant theme. It is so interesting that the membership requirement for SA is a desire to stop lusting and become sexually sober. How many people actually join SA from the inside out? How many people are really willing to stop controlling and enjoying lust? People are more concerned with staying sexually sober so as to avoid the consequences rather than to stop lusting which no one would know they were doing. So many of our members think technical sobriety is the end all. In reality just technical sobriety without lust sobriety often leads to relapse. Roy gave us solutions that are found in the SA book in the chapter "Overcoming Lust and Temptation." It is interesting that most people call it the "18 Wheeler"—another way the word lust is avoided.

Let us again emphasize the primacy that our founder placed on lust and give rebirth to our desire to stop lusting and a deeper meaning to a desire for sexual sobriety.

HARVEY A., Florida, USA



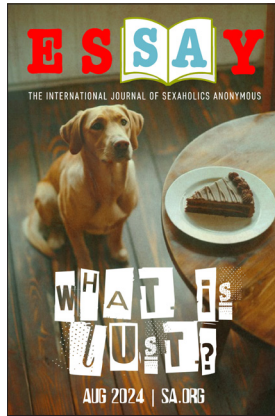
Lust is wanting more than God's intention for me.

LaRen W.

August 2024

Therefore, my basic problem as a recovering sexaholic is to live free from lust. When I entertain it in any form, sooner or later it tries to express itself in every form.

SA 43



On the cover: Lust and its impact on us sexaholics is so elusive and difficult to describe that we often resort to images and metaphors to transmit what words alone cannot capture.

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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

I love SA. I am really committed to my SA program and this fellowship. I have peace and serenity in my life because through SA I have found a way to live a sober life. I am grateful to my Higher Power, my sponsor, and our 12-Step program for this great gift. Upon receiving a great gift, it is very natural to want to give back. When I was asked if I would consider being nominated to serve as a Trustee, I said, "Yes."

There are so many wonderful people in our fellowship. The members I have met are generous, kind, and humble people, who provide service with care in their hearts. Service is so healthy. I am drawn out of my habitual self-centeredness to engage in healthy relationships based on service. It has been a blessing.

Our SA service structure is very unique. The outstanding quality of SA service is trust. I had to learn not to govern! Our leaders had to trust me while I was learning how not to govern. When given a leadership role in the service structure, I find that I have to trust my committee members. I can't govern them and demand a product that I want. Rather as a trusted servant, I have to trust them to use their personal resources and follow through with the responsibility that they've been given. I have to let them do their job and not micro-manage. This is Concept 10: "Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority, with scope of such authority well defined."

Trust is also present as we work out our Tradition to put "principles before personalities." Earlier this year I found that another SA member was really getting on my nerves. I had to pray that my Higher Power would help me. I bit my tongue when I wanted to blast the person with my opinions. The amazing thing was that my hesitation bore good fruit. My tolerance toward my fellow member allowed him space to do the right thing. Our SA slogans, "Think" and "Let go and let God" reflect the true reality that I am not God.

Through service in SA, I have learned to trust my fellow servants and my Higher Power more.

KB, MISSOURI, USA



Dear ESSAY

To Fathers in Recovery



DEAR ESSAY, I CROSSED every line I could imagine in my addiction. Ultimately, I even sexually abused my own daughter. I was quickly arrested because she bravely told her school counselor the very next morning. I was convicted and served a sentence. Shortly after my arrest and my addict house of cards came crashing down, I found faith in Higher Power with the help of the SA program. Released from jail for a time, I found a house of worship and went to my first service. I didn't realize until I was sitting there that it was Father's Day [here in the U.S., we recognize fathers on the third Sunday in June]. I was already filled with

shame over the monster I was, but I only felt worse hearing them celebrate all the great dads; I left in the middle of the service.

After years of no contact with my daughter, she reached out to me through her mother. After several more years of counseling, working the SA program, and turning my life (and even my will) over to Higher Power, my relationship with my daughter is now largely restored. I woke up this Father's Day morning to a wonderful message from her that ... just means the world to me.

Recovery is not a destination but a journey, and it's one I want to bravely navigate on a daily basis. As I continue to work on myself, I seek to remember that HP's grace and love are always with me, even when I don't feel it. It's never too late to rebuild and strengthen bonds with our children, even when we must do it from a distance.

I wanted to take a moment to honor and celebrate every father who is reading or hearing this right now. I understand all too well how difficult your journey is. Even if those closest to you don't recognize it yet, I know you are taking steps that require courage and determination every single day.

Father's Day has been difficult for me because

I tend to focus on the things I did wrong and on all my shortcomings. Can you identify? With me, try to remember that your story is not yet complete. Your fatherhood story is still being written. Whether you're on the cusp of, or in the thick of, your transformation phase, no matter what happened in the past, you can still be the example of fatherhood your kids need you to be. Keep writing that story—with all the help the Program offers.

Your commitment to recovery sets an incredible example for your kids. I know it did in my case. It showed my daughter the power of perseverance and the importance of taking responsibility. Even if things are far from perfect now, have faith that through your continued effort and staying open to HP's support, positive change is possible.

Today, I celebrate your love for your children, your resolve, and HP's strength that's within you. Keep hope alive on the journey ahead.

Here's wishing you a happy belated 2024 Father's Day, and may 2025 and beyond be filled with encouragement and hope. Don't quit before the miracle happens!

ERIC N., *Virginia, USA*



Worldwide Walls of SA

SA Meetings Can Be Held Just About Anywhere ...



*Monday Noon Meeting,
Akron, Ohio*



*Lviv Meeting,
Lviv, Ukraine*



*Harrisburg Meeting
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania*



*Sunday Meeting,
McLean, Virginia*



*English-Speaking Meeting
Brussels, Belgium*



Share your photos

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

Lust is a chemical substance in my organism that wants to kill me.

Practical Tools

LUST IS BEAT

Lust is ugliness disguised as grace.
Lust is disgust staring into my face.
Lust possesses my entire living space.
Lust takes all my hopes to erase.
Lust removes the beauty from life.
Lust fills the room with unbearable strife.

Lust remains silent when I cry out in pain
And laughs at my heart breaking from its chains.
Lust attacks me when I try to leave
And lies when God wants me to believe.
Lust commands when I disobey
And confuses when trying to find my way.
Lust cries out when I seek God's voice
And decides when trying to make the right choice.
Lust never quits chasing after me
With all its bitterness and jealousy.

Lust will capture, conquer, and destroy me.
So to SA I flee with brothers and sisters welcoming me
To lift me up and out of the pit.
As the wrongs I've done, I start to admit
The freedom I find is beyond description
By working my program, my daily prescription.

Alone, I'm lost and enslaved to the foe.
But together and unified, God's power is bestowed.
The power of God lust cannot defeat
But rather lust itself is the one that's beat.

LAURA W., Florida, USA



entered the world of SA through an invitation from a friend of a friend. At the time, I didn't recognize my own lust addiction. I simply enjoyed the company of women, and I sometimes (read: constantly) indulged in pornography. To me, those explicit images were no different from any movie broadcasted on TV. And when I heard about Sexaholics Anonymous, the word "Anonymous" intrigued me. It seemed to hold excitement, secrecy, and freedom—words my lust craved. I envisioned dimly lit meetings where people shared their shameful, sordid stories. I was all-in with this: I thought I could keep lusting but still start on a path of improvement. Little did I know that my twisted attitude and expectations would lead me to a place of gratitude.

In June 2015, I was in Egypt where the SA group was very small. However, back then there was a website called the SA Buddy List that connected me with sexaholics throughout the world. There, we posted our Skype contacts and email addresses, seeking fellowship and support. Despite chronic relapses over the next three years, I returned to the SA Buddy List in search of a sponsor. I hesitantly emailed those SA Fellows, fearing embarrassment: would they shame me for my terrible behavior? To my surprise, they responded with love, compassion, and open hearts. I found contacts from the USA to the UK, Poland to Venezuela. I dialed the numbers with bravery mixed with deep desperation, and I grew to be unafraid of their reac-

tions to me and my degenerate life. One of those voices became my sponsor, and he has been my sponsor for five years now.

I learned that there is no need for hesitation before helping a suffering sexaholic. My phone number was now circulating globally, and I remembered when my email address was linked to countless dangerous websites. Why hesitate to connect now just as widely for recovery? But I was still half-heartedly avoiding some of the people from my acting out days.

Navigating this intricate web of decisions and trying to maneuver between healthy people and those with diseased intentions reminds me of bureaucratic hurdles like we face every day: sign here on the third floor, stamp it in the basement, then return to the second floor for final approval ... after three weeks. Sometimes it overwhelms me.

But now in Program, I pray for the newcomers. Roy K. once risked his life searching for them, just as Dr. Bob, Bill W., Ernie G., Dorothy, and other AA "good oldtimers" did. They understood their influence had limits—they couldn't control the sunrise or sunset.

To you, dear newcomer, finding a sponsor or a fellow member may seem daunting. Don't give up. Miracles happen when we keep going. We're here to help. Keep reaching out, and you'll find us.

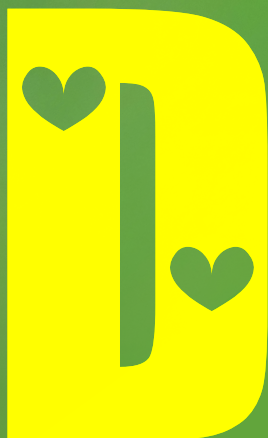
MINA S., *Dubai, UAE*



Asking God to Send a

NEWCOMER





ear Porn,

I gotta say that this is the weirdest thing for me to be doing right now, but I wanna thank you for lotsa stuff. Y'know, we haven't been in contact now for like 126 days (but who's counting), and I'm not gonna lie—I DO miss you. A whole lot. See? I even count the days! That's how important you are were in my life!! And although I don't want you in my life anymore, there was a time that you were crucial to my survival. We've been through a lot together and, although it's time to say goodbye, I really must say thank you first.

I want to acknowledge how much you helped me. If not for you, Porn, I would no longer be alive. You see, I for sure would've blown my brains out, no doubt about it. There's no way I would've been able to withstand the craziness of my life while growing up. My environment was chaotic, I felt out of control, and you were the only one I was able to really count on. You, Porn, have always shown up for me—time after time, without fail. When I needed you as a crutch, you were always there. You were my anchor in the storm—the storm that raged inside me, the storm that raged in my home, and all the external storms that ever came my way. You numbed all the bad feelings; you even got me high.

If not for you, I for sure would've died. Without you, it would have been just too much. You were so trustworthy. You made me feel good. You made me feel loved. You made me feel safe. You gave me a sense of control. You made me feel like I belonged. You helped me escape from my chaotic life. You eased the intensity of the horror. You helped me forget my past. You helped me escape when I so badly needed to.

Time
To
Live
And
Give



On a temporary basis, you took away the pain, the fear, the flashbacks, and the nightmares. For at least a little bit, you numbed the depression, anxiety, and boredom. The worry, guilt, and shame. The anger, loneliness, sadness, and jealousy. You gave me respite from the emptiness ... the burden ... the stress ... the resentments. The abandonment ... the bitterness ... the confusion ... the hurt. From the frustration. The vulnerability. The hopelessness. The helplessness. The hatred. The insecurities.

I want to thank you for all the time you gave me, too (so, so much time you spent with me!). And for the growth (you took me so low, anything after that seems like growth). Thank you for showing me how messed up I was—I would've never otherwise asked for the help I have now. I was the slave, and you were my master—thank you for showing me how sweet freedom can be. Thank you for showing me what brokenness feels like so I can hope and pray for wholeness. Thank you for acquainting me so well with what's fake out there so I can know to seek the real. Thank you for putting me at war within myself so I know to beg God for His serenity. Thank you for getting me so sad and depressed so I can truly yearn for happiness. Thank you for messing up my life so bad that I had to find a way to fix it.

Thank you for putting me through hell to contrast with how wonderful life can be. Thank you for triggering my sexaholism because without it, I never would've met all these incredible people in SA. Thank you for showing me what persistence and self-control ... are not. Thank you for acting like my friend. Thank you for making a shambles of all my contacts with people so I would be motivated to start making amends and rebuild them into strong, firm relationships. Thank you for your unwavering patience. Thank you for putting me through all this, so I can start putting some meaning to my pain.

But now, I'm done with you. You played a role. You served your purposes, and you performed most effectively. At this point, though, I'm just too dependent. You've been too pushy (more like relentless), and I'm ready to follow a different kind of Master now.

But thanks again for giving me something to live for ... even though it was short lived. Porn, you really changed my life, but now I'm changing it again.

Farewell! It's time I face the music. Time for me to walk on my own—with a lot more dependable help. Time for me to learn to cope in a more lasting way. Time for me to grow up. Time for me to feel. Time for me to work on myself instead of run from myself. Time for me to live ... and give ... and be responsible. Time to become strong. Time to become joyful! Time to feel free.

It's time for me to develop independence ... and dependence on something much greater than me (and certainly, than you!). Time for my health to shine through. Time for connection ... "real Connection" (SA 62). It's time for me to be honest and authentic, to come clean. It's time for me to face stuff I've been dodging, so I can heal.

It's time for me to recover.

DEVORAH G., *New York, USA*





What Is Lust?

UNHOOKED

Thanks to God and SA, this American oldtimer has been able to stay in the light and away from his dark days of lust for over 39 years.

The chapter in the White Book titled “Lust—The Force Behind the Addiction,” is, in my view, a magnificent introduction to the underpinnings of what lust is really all about. In that chapter Roy defines lust as “an attitude demanding that a natural instinct serve unnatural desires” (SA 40). It was certainly my experience.

Sometime during my high school years I discovered masturbation and pornography. I can’t remember which came first, but one certainly

followed quickly upon the other. Looking at those images certainly brought arousal. And sex with myself certainly brought pleasure. For some, perhaps, returning to that experience on an occasional basis might actually work. For me, however, I was immediately hooked. I had to have the lustful experience again and again and again. My experiences with masturbation, pornography, adult bookstores, X-rated movies, strip clubs, etc. were “an isolating obsession with sex and self.” Just as Roy said in that chapter, my lust was an attitude demanding that this new natural instinct I had discovered serve unnatural desires.

I needed lust because I was lonely, fearful, insecure, etc. It was the atti-

tude of lust itself that was controlling me. I felt entitled to these private moments, alone with lust. The problem was that it was killing my spirit. I was in the high school seminary at the time beginning my studies to become a priest (which, just for the record, never happened). My religion taught me that my behaviors were wrong. But I knew in my gut that they were wrong anyway. How did I know? Because every time I acted out my lustful attitudes and fantasies, I felt so terribly ashamed afterward.

I ended up living a sort of double life. In my so-called real life, I was on the student council, I worked on the school newspaper, I was involved in intramural sports, I got good grades etc. But in my private world I was a person who devoured images of what Roy calls “picture women” over and over again as if they were mine to take. I look back on it now and shudder at the lack of respect I had for these fellow human beings. But at the time, I was so lost inside myself and lust that my morals and values fell by the wayside so that I could keep filling myself up with the very thing that was destroying me: lust.

The worst time for me came after I graduated college and got my first full-time job. At the time, I was dating a young woman whom I have now been married to for almost 40 years. Despite this, I got “involved” with a colleague at my job. After being sexual with this woman a few times, the guilt and shame were overpowering. But the lust was way more powerful. Despite trying to stop—oh, I did stop, so I’ll say, despite trying to stay stopped—I simply could not. Finally I was able to stay away from this colleague for about two months only to return. Before we did

anything this time, she looked at me point blank, “Do you still love me?” At that moment, the darkness took me over like never before. I never loved this person in the true sense, but I certainly felt some affection. By this time, I already knew I was quitting this job, and part of the reason was to get away from this “relationship.” I knew if I told her the truth, I wouldn’t get my lust satisfied. So I lied through my teeth.

In my religious tradition, there’s something called “mortal sin.” And I knew before we even started having sex that night that this lust-driven lie was a mortal sin, and I had completely lost myself. So while I didn’t know

I was so lost inside myself and lust that my morals and values fell by the sideways so that I could keep filling myself up with the very things that was destroying me: lust.

what the textbook definition of lust exactly was, I knew what it was for me. And Roy’s chapter describes it really well.

Writing this piece for the ESSAY was quite painful. It’s tough remembering what I was and what I could be again if I stop working this program. But I’m incredibly grateful to my Higher Power and to all the many of you who have helped me stay sober.

Have I been tempted over the years? Yes. Have I occasionally strayed to look in a magazine or at a real person longer than I should have? Yes. But through God's grace and with all of your help, I've been able to surrender those moments very, very quickly so as to stay unhooked and not to let the darkness descend on me again.

Thanks to the grace of God and the Steps and the fellowship of Sexaholics Anonymous for over 39 years, I've been able to stay in the light, far away from those dark days of lust.

MIKE C., Chicago, USA



My History With Lust



The pursuit of lust pushed her to cross all boundaries while wrecking her life, but today she is a sober and happy SA member.

For me, sexual lust started as a simple game that I played with the kid next door. I never imagined that such a game could develop into a "way of life." My family paid more attention to my beautiful,

smart sister, and to attract their attention, I started stealing from them to get more attention. This didn't work. I didn't know how to say, "I'm here! See me! Love me! I need my father to hold me!"

I remember a family trip to Alexan-

dria when I began to fantasize about a life where I was loved and cared for. I started to dress provocatively to become visible and steal people's looks. I wanted to be the most beautiful and lovable girl. That's how I started to lust.

In my drive to feel wanted, I met a young man who respected me and seemed to love and care for me. It wasn't enough, though, because I wanted to be seen and have power. I left him and got involved with a neighborhood gang member. Now I felt visible and powerful, and I was recognized by other men. I thought I was happy starting a life I thought I wanted, but I was disappointed again. At first, I thought I'd finally found home and I'd be seen and valued from here on. But I soon became focused on lust and drugs.

But lust took me over, erupted like a volcano inside my soul, and I became very promiscuous. The euphoria wasn't enough, though, because I still craved visibility, power, and control. I ended up crossing many boundaries (including gender and species) in order to transform myself from the weak girl I felt like into some sex goddess. Though I failed in school, I took pride in succeeding with lust. I was the queen sitting on her throne of lust. Lust gave me visibility, made me strong, and put me in control. But it was never enough, I had to go deeper and explore every aspect of this sex-drunk life.

I finally managed to graduate from high school and got accepted into university. Here, I met international students and used the language of lust to communicate with them. We all understood its language; it worked incredibly well. I learned that lust is the world's language, and one's age, education, or faith cannot of itself

overcome its power.

Lust brought a sense of certainty that no one could reject me anymore. I spared nothing in my devotion to lust, which eventually convinced me to marry. I married a man, came to think I owned him, and decided then that he was not enough, so I divorced him and continued my life of lust. Lust accompanied me everywhere, even ironically on my trip to a holy place. I

I couldn't live without lust. Lust was what I worshiped. What I didn't know was that I was in fact a victim of my own pathologically high level of lust.

couldn't live without it. Lust was what I worshiped. What I didn't know was that I was in fact a victim of my own pathologically high level of lust.

By some miracle, I recognized I had a problem and began to look for a solution. But the problem couldn't be with me, it had to be external, other people, places, or things. Around that time, I decided to quit my job and return to school. Surprise, surprise! Lust was still there. When I got a new job, lust was there, too! I tried therapy, but the addict in me didn't want to give up lust, so I tried to seduce my therapist. My inner addict told me, "Lust is the solution; life without lust is the problem."

I felt I was going insane, so I decided to take my life just to finally be free—

free from home and especially from my controlling father. But even suicide didn't work for me.

Around the same time I decided I had to stop, I met a man from another Twelve-Step program. He became my higher power, and I really thought I had found the answer, but my lust had other plans for me. That became

I have learned that lust can take many forms. It can drive me to be the best meeting chair or Super Sponsor! It can drive me to compare myself to other women in SA.

a codependent relationship (driven by lust), and I thought I was alive—because of him. My addict told me I was getting what I most craved from this man, love and acceptance. He was the father I never had. He was the master and I was his minion. I offered myself to him to build with me and to do with me as he willed. Unfortunately, the man died, leaving me in utter despair.

Joining SA was the beginning of the Solution for me. I still remember my first face-to-face meeting. My mind was full of questions and fears and doubts. At first, I thought I was only supposed to stop acting out with others, that I could still engage in pornography and masturbation. I didn't understand the SA sobriety definition yet, especially the part about progressive victory over *lust*.

When I hit my bottom, I announced

in a meeting that I was not sober and I would have to start right there and then from square one. I worked the Steps and learned how to surrender *all* of my lust—in fact, how to surrender my whole *self*. When I joined SA, there were no women there, so I had to work with a male sponsor. Surrender was our shield against temptation. He showed me the path of recovery and taught me how to make amends.

Now after more than six years in the Program, I have learned that lust can take many forms. It can drive me to be the best meeting chair or Super Sponsor! It can drive me to compare myself to other women in SA. I realized these things when I got sexually sober by the SA definition. But my lust develops in other ways as my recovery grows. Lust tried to make me codependent on my sponsor, but I know better now.

Today, I simply work the Steps and give up my right to act in my character defects. Lust is cunning, patient, and powerful, and it can appear in any form if I let go of my Program. My lust has no boundaries and drives me to capture anyone in its trap—fellow members, sponsors, therapists, family, coworkers. Only the power of a loving Higher Power can expel lust out of my soul!

Living sober from lust is unbelievably rewarding. I'm now part of the larger SA family and help to carry the message of recovery. Although I don't speak English, my loving, caring, and ever-present Higher Power has sent me an SA colleague to help me with language barriers.

Recovery and continuous surrender help me accept that I need outside help in many areas. Through recovery and consistent surrender, I have learned to keep an open mind and an open ear. I am so grateful today that

I am able to work on my resentments and fears instead of numbing their effects by sexually acting out. I am able to see myself as a woman, worthy of love and acceptance. I am no longer

alone and no longer enslaved by lust! I am a SOBER, happy, joyful and FREE sexaholic!

MERVAT, Egypt



DISCUSSION TOPIC

How is your progressive victory over lust going today?

The author of this article describes in detail how lust took over her entire life from childhood onwards. Lust influenced the way she dressed; affected how she behaved at school and university; destroyed her marriage; and even drove her to a suicide attempt. Understanding our full sobriety definition was

a gradual process for her. But when she hit her bottom, she started working the Steps and to surrender *all* of her lust—and her whole *self*.

How is your progressive victory over lust today? Are you experiencing the unbelievably rewarding adventure of living sober from lust? Have you come to see

how lust can take many forms in your life and has no boundaries? Are you experiencing the power of a loving Higher Power that expels your lust if you ask Him?

Will you use this article for a discussion topic at your home group?

Send a story of your own recovery journey to essay@sa.org



LUST IS MUCH MORE

She came to realize that her emotional dependency on men is another form of lust that needs a deeper and constant surrender.

Love plants! I have plants in my living room, kitchen, bedroom...everywhere! All that greenery in the house makes me feel good, and since I'm in recovery, I can take good care of them, too. Before, all my plants were dying. I just wasn't able to give them what they needed, which isn't surprising,

considering I could barely keep myself alive.

I recently experienced something remarkable with one of my plants. My grandmother gave me some money to buy something nice, so of course I bought a new plant! I immediately knew where I wanted to put it: in my living room, on a plant stand that once belonged to



Lust is owning and being owned by a false image of another person.



my grandmother herself, about one and a half meters from the window. However, after barely a few weeks, the plant began to struggle. Its leaves started drooping limply and some of them even fell off.

At the same time, I myself was going through the exact same phase in my SA recovery. I had begun to have warm feelings for someone I had been seeing regularly for the last few years, because we are in the same circles. I called it friendship. I found it all very healthy because we never saw each other one-on-one, but always in a group.

We realized that we were giving each other a little too much attention. I hated it. But I wanted to make the sacrifice for recovery, to be and stay sexually sober, because something in me said that being so focused on a man was not healthy.

A few days later he contacted me again, and we expressed to each other that we do care about each other, and that we are and will remain good friends. Yes! Finally, I could smile and be happy again! Meanwhile, I worked my program as I had for three years: daily meetings, service, etc. I was doing all the right things, but, without realizing it—or wanting to admit it—I was deteriorating. I was thinking about him constantly. The obsession was huge. And because I was always thinking about him in a non-sexual way, just constantly wishing to be with him, I didn't call it lust. Isn't lust the desire for sex? That kind of lust was what got me into SA. That kind of lust I knew well! This was different; this was a constant feeling

of "I want to be with you and laugh with you, and if I could, I would also give you a big hug and never let you go." Since it was not the kind lust that got me into SA, I thought it was love.

I shared everything with my sponsor; I discussed my feelings at length with my therapist; I attended one to two meetings a day, and shared honestly there; I made my phone calls with my sisters and brought everything into the light there as well; I did service; called sponsees; and I stayed true to my prayer and meditation practices.

But I declined. Besides the obsession and emotional dependency, I felt depression creeping in, and I felt the light in my soul dim little by little. With my plant, meanwhile, I saw something similar happening: even though its living conditions were theoretically fine, it was quietly dying. Just like me: even though I did my meetings and followed the advice of my sponsor and therapist, I was quietly dying.

And then lust attacked me so hard, screaming that I *had* to have sex with myself. I was in total despair. For me, to act out is to die. I prayed and I cried. The addiction kept shouting that I had to act out. The fears of abandonment, commitment, and not being good enough were destroying me little by little.

Until someone was straight-forward enough to tell me that this was not love, but lust, I wasn't convinced. However, I was convinced that I couldn't keep up my behavior because I knew it was





going to kill me. I had to do more than work the program the way I wanted to; I had to surrender. That is something very different from doing meetings and service. I had to recognize who I really am: a love cripple. I am—and I didn't know it—as addicted to relationships as I am to sex. Without intending to, I make men my Higher Power. And I can pray all I want, I don't seem to be able to do otherwise. Not even with the support of the program. I am too sick to love men.



It was time to be honest with myself ... and with my plant, too. Let's start with the plant: the leaves hung limp, and about five of them had already died. I reluctantly moved it to the windowsill. Not my preferred spot, believe me. It's a big plant in a big flower pot on a narrow windowsill. It doesn't look good there but I knew I had to go to any lengths to save it, and it is noticeably happier there now.



I took similar actions with my life, actions I didn't want to take. I thought they would break my heart, but I knew deep inside myself they'd "give me light." I ended the friendship with this man. We still see each other in the community, but we keep our distance and no longer talk to each other. The first week I found this terribly difficult. At least once a day I got an irrepressible urge to cry, because my heart felt broken. At the same time, I also felt how right it was. As the White Book says: "We simply knew it" (SA 78).



I had to admit that lust is much

more than sexual acting out. For me, lust is also losing myself in another, being sickly dependent on the other person, resulting in depression, anxiety, and the urge to act out.

Now, just a few weeks later, I feel myself recovering. I feel the Light in my soul again, I feel the strength and energy I seemed to have lost for a few months, and now I really surrender any temptation (in the form of friendship, romance, whatever) to my Higher Power. I am coming back to life, and translate that energy now by doing a lot of service. I am (almost) grateful again to be a sexaholic!

I am, under the guidance of my sponsor, rewriting my entire First Step, this time focusing on dependency relationships. I've found firsthand that the program only works when I acknowledge who I really am, a love cripple, and surrender everything to my HP. Working a program "in theory" doesn't work. *It is not ticking off a checklist, but constant surrender, in all areas of my life.*

Wondering how my plant is doing? Well, after three weeks on the windowsill, it is shining again as ever! Its leaves are no longer hanging limply, but are standing proud and upright showing off. For both of us, it appears that the closer we are to the light, the closer we are to what we really need—and not what I think we need—the more life there is in us then. It is time to grow and flourish again!

Nathalie V., Antwerp, Belgium



SA Stories

I was born in Nicaragua. My parents divorced when I was a baby. I was raised by my maternal grandparents in the countryside until about 8 years old. When I was around 6 or 7 years old, I was sexually abused by two adult men who were neighbors. I was also abused by older relatives and friends from my childhood. I always felt guilty about the abuse and never told anyone about it. When I was 11 years old, my mother immigrated to New York City.

She left me in the care of an aunt, and it was very difficult for me because I am an only child. At the age of

13, I felt depressed, and an uncle took me to see a prostitute, but I couldn't do anything. I was very scared. Also, at the age of 11, I started masturbating. Then, at 15, my uncle took me to see a prostitute again. This time, I did engage. And I became addicted until the age of 21.

Also, at the age of 13, I began to act out with anonymous men. At that age, I started roaming the streets for acting out. At the age of 18, I had to emigrate to the US to escape the socio-political situation that my country was going through. I went to live with my mother in New York. I started to act out with people of the same gender again. I used to go to public parks. I was living a double life because while I was lusty, I was also active in my church, I was one of the leaders of my prayer group. I even thought I was possessed by a demon. I asked a Catholic bishop to perform an exorcism on me, but he refused and advised me to pray.

THE HIGHER POWER CALLED ME THROUGH SA

His first SA meeting had been in 1990 but it wasn't until 2007 that he came back to SA and was finally able to feel at home.

I had low self-esteem. I felt like I was the only one in the world with these problems and that there was no one else like me. My self-esteem was at rock bottom. I suffered from self-pity and guilt. I blamed my mother for my acting out. I felt anger, a lot of anger. At the age of 24, I had an emotional and mental breakdown. I talked to the priest of my church, and he told me that my problem was that I had SSA (Same-Sex Attraction). My world fell apart when he told me that.

I knew before he told me that I had that problem, but I was in denial. I started attending another fellowship for my SSA. There, I met a member who in December 1990, invited me to a meeting but did not tell me what it was about. We went to the meeting one Sunday in Manhattan and I realized as I heard people introduce themselves, that it was about Sexaholics Anonymous. I identified with them immediately. But I was a newcomer and only went to meetings occasionally. At the same time, I was hitting rock bottom, was also going through depression, and was under treatment with a psychiatrist. Months later, I started attending meetings more frequently and eventually attended meetings every day.

I got a female sponsor because I couldn't find a male one. Later, I had two male sponsors. In 1993, my then sponsor suggested I do my Fourth Step. It took me 6 months to finish it, but I was still acting out because I was a chronic relapser. Then I achieved a year of sobriety but relapsed because I did not have a sponsor anymore.

I went to another fellowship, but I did not like the definition of sexual sobriety; it did not align with my values. In 1999, I moved to Florida at a time when I had only two months of sobriety. There were no SA meetings

in the city where I lived or in nearby cities. I attended an SA meeting almost an hour away from my city where there were only two members. In the meantime, I started attending another fellowship for a few months but began to feel uncomfortable and stopped attending. I fell back into lust and hit another bottom for about five years.

In 2007, an uncle passed away, and his death made me reflect on my life. I realized I needed to return to recovery

SA has given me what no other fellowship could give me and taught me that I am addicted to lust and that lust is a cancer of the soul.

and started attending another fellowship, making it five different fellowships I belonged to. I still didn't like it and returned to the one I had attended previously. In that other fellowship, I met a member from SA meetings in New York who told me there were SA meetings in a nearby city. I started attending and finally felt like I was home. In the other fellowship, I had worked the Steps with a sponsor and had achieved sobriety as defined by SA because that was the sobriety that worked for me.

I got a sponsor in SA and, one day, when he asked me for my email address, he sent me the email address of an SA member from Latin America who was looking for a sponsor. When this sponsee told me about the work of SA in Latin America, I became a

member of SA for Latin people. In April 2020, I got a sponsor from Colombia and I have worked all 12 steps with him. Currently, I have 9 years of sobriety according to the SA definition of sobriety. My Higher Power allowed me to attend the annual SA convention in Colombia last November. It meant a lot to me to have gone to the convention because I was going through a grieving process since my mother passed away on September 7, 2023. I

thank my Higher Power who listened to my mother's prayers; she prayed a lot for me according to a sister from my church.

SA has given me what no other fellowship could give me and taught me that I am addicted to lust and that lust is a cancer of the soul.

I thank my Higher Power for bringing me to SA.

José S., Florida, USA



I've been powerless over lust for as long as I can remember. Unfortunately, it took decades for me to finally acknowledge this fact. I am originally from the United States, but my wife and I currently reside in the Philippines.

I first came to SA back in 2012. We were living in the Pacific

Northwest at the time. My default attitude during meetings was to be highly judgmental. I would listen to shares and immediately think, "Wow, this person has serious problems. I'm doing great!" My addict brain also made the classic mistake of believing that I could somehow stay sober on my own. The delusion was truly profound. I stopped attending SA meet-

An Internet Connection And My Higher Power

Although currently living in the Philippines, he participates in the SA program through modern technology.



ings after a few months, and began acting out again shortly thereafter.

My rock bottom occurred back in 2022. I was perusing various adult websites while contacting women via text and through multiple apps installed on my phone. Money was being sent and I was quickly spiraling out of control. I knew that my actions were wrong, but I was unable to stop. Lust had me firmly in its grip and would not let go.

In my experience, lust is an endless obsession with fantasy and the unreal. It involves an irrational fixation on physical characteristics while simultaneously objectifying the other person. Lust is the direct opposite of love. It is devoid of empathy. It is insatiable and voracious. Lust can never be satisfied. It always wants more and more.

My wife had noticed my odd behavior and she started to become suspicious. One day in January 2022, she decided to randomly pick up my phone. The messages were quickly discovered, and she immediately confronted me. Initially I was resentful, but now I firmly believe that my Higher Power miraculously intervened to save me. Denial quickly turned into acceptance. I knew deep down that the “party was over” (SA 28). This nightmare had gone on for long enough. I was truly powerless over lust.

Via the SA website I located a phone meeting, and called into that meeting later that afternoon. Fighting back tears, I explained to my fellow attendees that I desperately needed help. To my amazement, everyone was incredibly kind and gracious. Several people immediately gave me their phone numbers. I reached out, and began receiving regular fellowship calls and texts. I had also managed to save my printed White Book from almost a decade before. Another miracle!

There are no in-person SA meetings where we reside in the Philippines, so I still consider this weekly call to be my “home” meeting. I dial in regularly and help with chairperson duties. My schedule includes attending several SA Zoom meetings each week. What a blessing to have these for people located all over the world! I have been fortunate enough to meet many wonderful folks during these Zoom meetings. My addiction thrives in shame and isolation, so it is critical to engage in regular fellowship. Reach-

My addiction thrives in shame and isolation, so it is critical to engage in regular fellowship.

ing out via WhatsApp is an important part of my ongoing recovery.

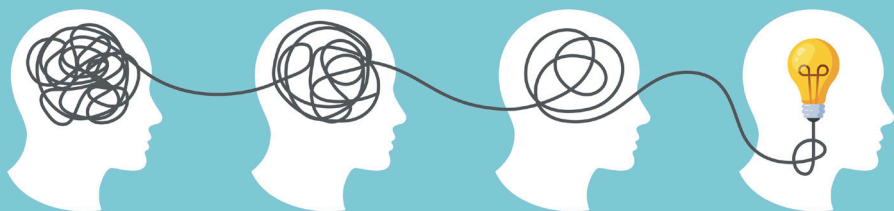
Working the 12 Steps has taught me that I am no better or worse than anyone else. My formerly immense ego has taken a backseat to serving others in the program. I now lead with weakness and honesty during shares. It is no longer about me. What an incredible relief!

Life is so much better these days. Through the miracle of modern technology, I can regularly participate in the SA program. Living on the other side of the planet from my country of origin poses no imminent risk to my ongoing sobriety. All I need is an internet connection and my Higher Power. And for that I can never be sufficiently grateful.

JON W., *The Philippines*



Having celebrated 18 years of SA sobriety, he has never felt more connected to his Higher Power and to all of us.



A SOLUTION TO MY LUST PROBLEM



believe that the best way to help “the sexaholic who still suffers” (Tradition 5) is through our very sobriety definition. This is the SA message that we carry to the newcomer in our meetings. I believe there are many ways to achieve sobriety from sexual addiction, but there is only one way to achieve recovery from sexaholism—that is by working the SA program.

The miracle is that it can work for anyone. As it says in our White Book, “whether we are male or female; married or single; whether our acting out was with the same or opposite sex; whether our relationships were “committed,” “meaningful,” or simple one-night stands, and whether we resorted to just a little sex with self as a “physical outlet” (SA 2), “rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path” (SA 206).

To me, the most important part of our sobriety definition is what appears in italics, “sexual sobriety also includes progressive victory over lust” (SA 192). SA is the only S-program that offers a solution to my lust problem, and that’s why I would never want any other program of recovery in my life.

I started lusting after and acting out with the other boys in elementary school. I never stopped lusting after and acting out with myself or with other men until I came to SA at 54 years of age. I had been married for over 30 years. I had been aroused by my wife at times, but my lusting was mostly about other men. There’s lots more to the “what [I] used to be like” (SA 206) part of my story, but I don’t need to go there here.

My story is not only for same-sex lusters. It’s not only for married same-sex lusters, nor just for men or even older men. The beauty of our SA stories is that we all can relate be-

cause we are all powerless over lust in all its forms.

Gratefully, I've learned in SA that triggers are triggers, and lust is lust. This truth has set me free of worry, shame, and much fear. What are triggers? To me, triggers are stimuli that come through my senses or my own mind and that get sexual thinking (my lusting) to start up or intensify.

When I first came to SA, I wanted to be like the men I saw in meetings. I've wanted to fit in with the "other guys" all my life. I quickly got a sponsor and asked, "Why do I have these triggers?" All he would ever say was, "because God gave them to you"—end of explanation. I'm grateful that he never focused on helping me understand myself or explore my inner child. He knew all would take care of itself as I worked the Steps.

Over the years I've sponsored guys with lots of different triggers: shoes, certain types of pants, people with specific skin color, hair color, certain ages ... the variety of triggers out there is endless. I finally realized that just as HP made each person a person, HP also gave each of us our own unique triggers. Today, I don't care what my sexual triggers are. What unites me with everyone else in SA is that I'm simply a sexaholic and what works for their recovery, works for mine. My triggers may be different or uncommon, but they are neither good nor bad, right nor wrong. They're just triggers. And that makes me just a sexaholic.

Our world is full of sexual triggers (sex sells, you know!). What has worked for me is to work the second point of the "eighteen wheeler" as if my life depended on it. I need to eliminate "from what [is] under my control" (SA 158) as many sexual triggers as I can. I don't own a TV. I

rarely watch movies. I don't go to the beach or pools. I don't go to gyms. I'm so sensitive to triggers out there, I have to treat it like an allergy. I prefer to live my life as comfortably as possible, and as a sexaholic, I can't be comfortable with triggers bombarding me from every direction.

I look at sexaholism in terms of the SA sobriety definition, which includes "progressive victory over lust." I see "sex addiction" as only

To me, triggers are stimuli that come through my senses or my own mind and that get sexual thinking (my lusting) to start up or intensify.

covering physical acting out. SA is unique in that "sexaholism," with its attention to lust, completes the three-fold healing this problem requires: physical, spiritual, and emotional.

As the Big Book states, "Here are the Steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery" (AA 59). I've found sobriety and recovery by working the SA Steps with an SA sponsor who has an SA sponsor.

When I first came to SA, I stayed sober with others' help, but I carried lots of fear. That began to change as I kept coming to meetings, calling other SA members, meeting with my sponsor, and working the Steps. I developed a relationship that kept me sober, and that was with HP. I learned how to surrender my lust to HP rather than to push lust aside in

my brain just to stay sexually sober.

I remember one oldtimer in my home group suggesting, "listen to a talk by another oldtimer, Jess L." Jess suggested that our first lust thought was on God (triggers are gonna happen, right?), but the second lust thought, we just couldn't allow. I thought, *that's not progressive victory over lust, that's impossible!!*

Thankfully, Jess actually explained how to surrender lust. He suggested, as soon as I could feel myself lusting, I start praying short, repetitive prayers beseeching Higher Power to take my lust from me. Then he suggested I pick up the phone, call my sponsor, then call other SA friends and keep talking about my lust thoughts. Jess said that he could always keep surrendering longer than his luster could lust. Gratefully, I've come to know he was right.

I've used Steps 6 and 7 over and over on my lust. When I did, I became willing to surrender more and more quickly. With practice, I could surrender lust after my first lust thought. What a miracle!

As I grew in recovery I didn't even want to entertain the second lust thought. I knew it would lead me to a third one and a fourth. And then I'd play that video in my mind as craving developed, and I'd inevitably act out again.

I used to think that a lust thought was my biggest problem. In reality, my problem is when I allow my lust thoughts to build up. Lust would tell me things like, "You can't stop ... You never could stop ... You don't have the right relationship with your Higher Power to stop ... You're not worthy of stopping ... You enjoy this too much to stop ... Why not just act out this one time? You can handle it .. You can stop next time!"

By surrendering lust and doing it "one day at a time," I've now celebrated 18 years of recovery in SA. I have never felt more connected to Higher Power and to all of you.

I am in awe of SA. I am in awe of how it feels between my ears most of the time. I am in awe of how power has been taken away from the triggers that used to cripple me. I am in awe of how quickly I can turn any body back into a real person in my mind. I am in awe of Higher Power, who has made my new way of thinking possible. And because we are all powerless over lust, I have never felt more the same as everybody else.

Is our Statement of Principle exclusionary? I don't think so. I think it's just difficult for people to understand the difference between sobriety and recovery. As we say to the newcomer, "We have a solution. We don't claim that 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" (SA 2). If newcomers put their faith in SA, it can work for them. If you put your faith in SA, it can work for you.

RICH D., Philadelphia, USA



Thank God I have a program. I have come to believe that a power greater than myself can restore me to sanity.

I continue to have lustful thoughts. They come to me because I live in an environment where titillation of the senses is a tactic that businesses use to sell their products. This tactic is used in all modern media. Unless I live in a cave, I can't avoid temptation. Even in a cave, I can't avoid euphoric recall of lustful thoughts. There is no way I can avoid lustful thoughts. I have to accept the fact that I am vulnerable to them..

Perhaps one day, I won't be so vulnerable. I do have that hope. Because of the SA work I've done, I can now sit at a computer, do service work and other positive activities, and not think to search out pornography. However, this freedom is still limited. There are many other places and times each day where I'm triggered. Lustful thoughts come.

Even though I'm still vulnerable to lustful thoughts, I recognize that I'm sane. My faith in Higher Power and

my daily practice of the SA program has brought me a new sanity. When lustful thoughts come, I have a new response. I recognize the thought is a threat to my sobriety and my sober way of life, so I surrender the thought to Higher Power and ask for help. This is my new sanity.

I now know how to respond to a lustful thought. I don't have to act on it. I have a choice. Knowing I have a choice is sanity. To remember how to handle a lustful thought and act on it is to live a sober life.

It occurs to me that this is exactly what Steps 1, 2, and 3 entail. I recognize that I'm vulnerable; I believe that responding with Higher Power's help will get me sober; I decide to respond. In this way, I am sober and restored to sanity. Wow! I'm vulnerable but sane.

Of course, to continue living a sane life, I work the rest of the Steps, listen to my sponsor and to Higher Power, and I go to meetings. It's also sane to remember, "It works, if you work it."

Kwaku B., Ghana



Vulnerable, But Sane

Working Steps 1, 2, and 3 whenever lustful thoughts come, keeps him sober and restored to sanity.



Recovery begins when one sexaholic talks with another sexaholic, sharing experience, strength, and hope — even in prison.

One of our friends-in-prison, Raphael S., who has had two articles over the last couple of years in ESSAY, started an SA meeting in Virginia State Prison. He is sponsoring another fellow, James D.

They gave permission to have this photo put in ESSAY with blurred faces. It was taken in the room where 12-Step meetings are held. James is on the left and Raphael on the right. It's meaningful for them to be part of the fellowship although they are currently incarcerated.

James has only been in the program since around September of last year

after Raphael started the meeting on his pod in prison. There were five guys but all fell away except for these two men in their pod. I recently visited Raphael but was able to greet James with my eyes because of security protocols, etc. They are working a good recovery program, connecting with SA members on the outside who write to them.

To visit Raphael is always worth the all day commute and visitation procedures. It was easy to pick out the two SA members in the prison visitors center because, in the room of twelve inmates, they were the only two glowing and smiling.

HAL C., *Virginia, USA*



My name is James D, I am 21 years old and a grateful recovering sexaholic. I am the youngest out of three boys and all my life I struggled with abuse from my brothers up until I was 15 and I could fight back. Going through this abuse caused a glitch in my mind that led to a growth defect that I had until I was 17.

At the age of 13 my parents got divorced and I got blamed for it by my brothers, so I ended up with stress and depression. The way I dealt with this stress and depression is I acted out and I continued to act out every day multiple times to release the built up depression and stress.

When I turned 17 I moved into a friend's house. He also ended up being my boss at work. Life turned upside down instantly. Good looking females came over every day for a long time. Sometimes they didn't leave for a few days because my friend/boss was a drug head. I ended up lusting over ladies I didn't know because my mind would go straight to that. My

acting out got really bad and eventually landed me in jail with some time hanging over my head.

Incarceration brought the worst case of acting out. I would act out non-stop every day all day to the point I got sick. My life was unmanageable at the time and still is today. I declared powerlessness over lust and haven't looked back because I know the second I look back I will fall and hit the ground running for the only solution I know, which is to act out.

Since I have been in lock up from January 28, 2022 until now I have learned that I can't get sober alone. I need some Higher Power to pull me through the tight places and keep me sober. Having a fellow SA member here with me in my pod, I became officially sober on November 29, 2023 and the experience is great! Knowing I'm not alone anymore is exhilarating. I'm sober today by the grace of God and the help of my sponsor. My release date from prison is July 17, 2027 as of right now, but that may change.

JAMES D., *Virginia State Prison, USA*



NOT ALONE ANYMORE



Experiencing The 2024 LA International Convention



The beautiful challenge coin with the LA Convention logo which each participant received as a souvenir and the ESSAY information table where 200 copies of the Courage to Change issue were handed out.

just got home from the SA International Conventions in Los Angeles. This was the first International Convention in the United States since 2020, and the final registration count was 664! There were another 70 people around the world who joined sessions via livestream. Eleven countries were represented (including Kenya, Israel, and Belgium) with 40 of the U.S. states.

After finding my way to the large hotel that hosted the convention just down the street from the LA airport, I got to my room, dropped my bags, and headed down to the ballroom level, hungry for both food and fellowship.

Friday night was the "Birthday Celebration." I learned that they would recognize everybody in order of their sobriety time. The leader started at those with 30 days of sobriety but less than two months to come to the dais to share their first name, where they had traveled from, and their sobriety date. Each person was

presented a beautiful challenge coin with the LA. Convention logo on it. Before each person sat back down, they were to sign a fresh, new White Book at a nearby table.

As each sobriety period was announced, a new group of convention goers would head to the microphone as the applause became successively more enthusiastic. After we heard some wonderful ESH from the attendee with the most sobriety (40 years!), the meeting leader invited those with 29 days of sobriety to come forward and worked backward. The person with the least amount of sobriety was presented with the clean White Book everyone had signed. By this time I was beaming and a little misty-eyed seeing these amazing individuals whose lives SA had changed so much and the promise and hope for the newcomers.

It was quite meaningful to get to talk with oldtimers I've listened to over and over again on SA speaker tapes. For the rest of the weekend, I kept my convention challenge coin in

my pocket where I could feel it and remember all the spiritual experiences I was having.

I found both yummy snacks and nurturing fellowship in the Fellowship Room. I enjoyed the fellowship with known and new brothers and sisters between meetings, and at each meal, I was afforded a new friend in the Program. I now have a handful of phone numbers that connect to new friendly faces I can add to my Program Call list. As Roy K. used to say, "What a boon!"

I was privileged (again) to give a reading in front of the entire assembly of around 600 people. I found the reading quite difficult to understand and wondered how I might make sense of it for the big audience. I asked HP for help and walked up to the lectern ready to surrender and practice acceptance of whatever my best effort turned out to be. As the meaning of the written words sank into my heart, I became more choked up.

Miraculously, they seemed to understand me through tears of gratitude. As I read a long list of "satisfactions of right living"—benefits of living a life of recovery—many of which I realized had already been bestowed upon me, I felt that these words on the page were my very own. For these satisfactions and benefits, "no amount of pomp and circumstance, no heap of material possessions, could possibly be substitutes." I can't adequately describe the impact of Higher Power I felt (12&12 124).

After leading a Sunday-morning meeting, it was time to choose which breakout meetings would finish out my last day of the convention. This is where I get excited about living this new life in SA. I'm learning to

listen to my gut. When I feel clean, pure peace, I follow whatever idea I'm having. It's like what I learn from the Big Book, "We are often surprised how the right answers come after we have tried [asking God for an intuitive thought or a decision, then relaxing and taking it easy]. What used to be the hunch or the occasional inspiration gradually becomes a working part of the mind" (AA 86-87).

I scanned the remaining meetings and saw several descriptions of forgiveness. My mind said, *No, you don't need those meetings*, but my gut felt clean and pure about them. I'm recognizing my mind's lies so I followed my gut all that morning—and what a glorious morning it was! These meetings about forgiveness, ego, and "How Higher Power Sees Me" were all wonderful.

I've found that I have to work my Program even at these recovery-supportive events. For me, that includes meditating, making phone calls, getting to the breakout meetings, praying away temptations to lust, checking in with my sponsor, and doing 10th-Step inventories and gratitude lists. I don't have to make every breakout meeting. It's important that I take breaks to keep my sanity; the sensory overload on me is real.

A big, special *Thank You!* to the organizers of the Los Angeles SA & S-Anon International Conventions!! I think I'll be sorting out the awesome nuggets of recovery I found there for a while.

This report was a collaboration between two SA members and worded as if by a single person.

AARON C., Washington, USA
KEVIN B., California, USA



In April, about 20 SA members came together for “Truro Recovery Day” in Cornwall, UK. It was a total game-changer for me. I was often seen removing my glasses to dab at my tears because of many spiritual experiences I enjoyed.

I had no problem being the only woman, which is a huge tribute to the recovery of the guys that attended the event. I felt completely at home among everyone and had no thoughts of lust. I got some warm handshakes, and I even held hands for the Serenity Prayer, which we all seemed very comfortable with. I clearly communicated that I preferred handshakes over hugs, and everyone graciously respected this safety line of mine.

We began with a check-in sharing our names and addictions, followed by a top-plate meeting. Then we enjoyed reading and sharing on Steps 2 and 3. We enjoyed a fun recovery quiz over lunch, which the Truro group thoughtfully arranged thinking of vegetarian, halal, and kosher needs.

The afternoon meeting featured our wonderful guest speaker from Alaska via video link; his ESH was amazing to hear. He laid out a simple kit of spiritual

tools I took home with me. It gave me a powerful arsenal to more effectively live a Program-centered life, whether I’m directly working my recovery or “practicing the principles” in all my affairs. It was helpful to me as my sponsor and others are teaching me to implement a similar structure in my own life.

I was truly humbled as I took a chip for a significant sobriety milestone. I realized how far I had been drifting in my recovery, and I shared my fear of going back home to my isolated life. I’m so grateful for those brothers with whom I could get that in the light. We ended the day with a daily sobriety renewal meeting and the Third Step Prayer.

This was the best recovery experience I’d had since the Scottish Convention two years before. The wonder of the experience began with group dinner on Friday night, spilled across breakfast on both days, and washed into Sunday morning as several attendees enjoyed a walk on the beach together. It was an amazing experience for me overall, and being the only woman, I felt totally safe at all times.

KATHIE S., *Devon, UK*




Truro Recovery Day



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.




**Sexaholics
Anonymous**

**Do You have a
Problem with
Pornography
or Lust on the
Internet?**

Our Fellowship developed these two pamphlets to better understand the concept of lust and to explore the various tools available for overcoming lust in our daily lives as well as on the internet. They contain topics like:

- *Why Can't I Lust, Just a Little?*
- *How Can I Stop Lusting?*
- *What Will Happen to Me?*
- *Breaking the Lust Habit*
- *I'm Not Alone Anymore*
- *Escape From the web*



**Sexaholics
Anonymous**

**Why
Stop
Lusting?**

New SA Meetings, August 2024

Europe ↳ Lisbon, Portugal 🇵🇹 ↳ Argus, Scotland, UK 🇬🇧	North America ↳ Tallahassee, Florida, USA 🇺🇸 ↳ Huntsville, Alabama, USA 🇺🇸 ↳ Phoenix, Arizona, USA 🇺🇸 ↳ Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA 🇺🇸 ↳ Valparaiso, Indiana, USA 🇺🇸 ↳ Merida, Yucatan, Mexico 🇲🇪
Africa ↳ Mauritius Island 🇲🇺	

Our SA Central Office's reserves are staying rather low. Please contribute if your group is able to. Thank you!

WIN A FREE ISSUE BY CRAFTING *THE BEST CAPTION*

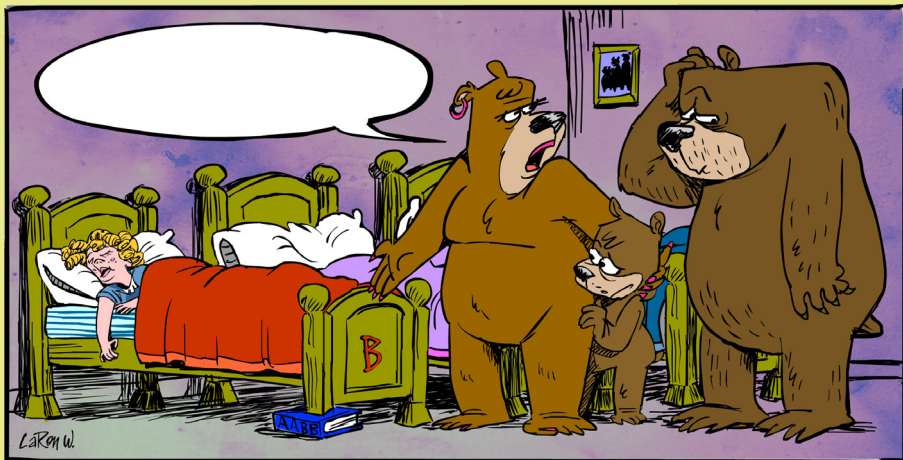
Choosing from the numerous excellent submissions was again a challenging task. The winner of the June issue's contest is **Dan M. from Illinois, USA.**

Congratulations, Dan! You'll receive a complimentary print of the August issue.



Attention, dear readers! Are you prepared for this edition's challenge? We encourage you to devise **the ultimate recovery caption** for the cartoon below and submit it to essay@sa.org. If your caption tickles our funny bones, it will grace the pages of the October ESSAY edition.

Don't forget to mark your calendars—the **submission deadline is September 15**. Let your creativity flow, and may the wittiest caption triumph!



COMING IN OCTOBER



NEXT EDITION

The October edition will be devoted to "Using the Literature of the Program," which is the eighth tool in the chapter "Overcoming Lust and Temptation" (SA 161).

Find God or Die

This American oldtimer passes the Big Book-way on to his sponsees as his sponsor did with him 31 years ago.

Our-Meeting-in-Print

They set up a thriving new meeting using ESSAY articles as their reading material.

Serving on the SA Translations Committee

Being of service to those who translate material into Spanish and Portuguese has given him the opportunity to fellowship with members all around the world.

SUBMIT YOUR STORY

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.

February 2025 edition: God As We Understand Him (Stories due Jan 1) This phrase is perhaps the most important expression in the AA vocabulary as it frames an open door to recovery for everyone.

April 2025 edition: Rule 62 (Stories due March 1) Humorous anecdotes and stories from members about the iconic AA slogan "Don't Take Yourself So Damn Seriously."

Opinions expressed in ESSAY are not to be attributed to SA as a whole, nor does publication of any article imply endorsement by SA or by ESSAY.

While we provide all articles in English, as well as six selected articles in 9 other 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.

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.**