

ESSAY

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SEXAHOLICS ANONYMOUS

RAISING OUR HANDS: SHARING IN MEETINGS



August 2026

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 lust 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 lust 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

Editor's Corner

You are invited to read this "Editor's Corner" in your homegroup during announcements.



The August 2026 edition of ESSAY Magazine,

"Raising Our Hands: Sharing in Meetings", is a powerful theme that breaks open the topic of healthy sharing. The hope that this topic brings is for us to grow in understanding and effectiveness in carrying the message in meetings. One member shares how moving away from cussing removed his self-loathing. Another member shares how using clinical language helped members to identify with him while avoiding graphic and triggering language at the same time. Choosing connection over holding the meeting hostage is how this member describes the decision she makes to share responsibly.

Also, in this edition, the SA Trustees share a very concerning letter to the Fellowship regarding the Seventh Tradition and the need for continual contributions to run world services. Lastly, we have two recurring series in this edition, "A Journey of 90 Meetings in 90 Days", "Concepts for World Services", and a new series called "Supporting SAICO". Join us as we trudge the road of happy destiny!

In Fellowship,
The Editorial Team
essay@sa.org



August 2026

"This is why we can quietly raise our hands if descriptions are getting too graphic or suggestive."

Sexaholics Anonymous, 179

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ESSAY presents the experience, strength, and hope of SA members. 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.

Regarding graphics, any resemblance to real persons is purely coincidental, as all images in ESSAY are handmade, bought from Shutterstock, or made by means of Midjourney AI.



On the cover: Raising our hands gives us the opportunity to ask for what we need to be safe in a meeting and gives the group the opportunity to be of service by being more considerate of others in the room.

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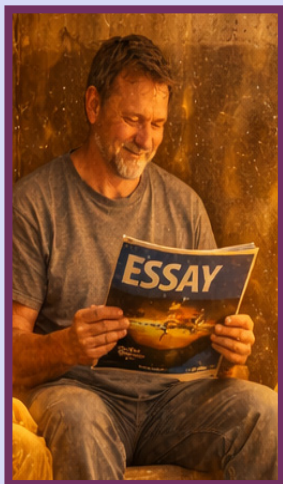
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Dear ESSAY

A CHANGED INNER PERSON



DEAR ESSAY,

I am writing for two reasons. First, I have been receiving your

ESSAY Journal for several years now, and the articles within it have changed my life and changed the inner person of who I really am.

Second, I've learned so much from the ESSAY Journal that I feel like I've actually graduated from a comprehensive, in-depth course on the sensitive subjects SA teaches by reading what others afflicted with the disorder of irrational

thinking have written about through their own experiences.

I am incarcerated due to the irrational act I committed in the past. Your journal and SA have opened my eyes to things I'd never before considered, but now reflect on every day.

Thank you very much!

Respectfully,
Calvin K.



What's Going On In SA

Literature: The Ship for Our Message

Literature is the lifeblood that pumps the problem and solution through our sexaholics veins, and contributions to SAICO make literature transfusion possible.

I remember receiving my first *Sexaholics Anonymous* White Book and beginning to read it. I felt an overwhelming sense of comfort and hope. For the first time, someone understood what I was experiencing and put words to feelings I had carried my whole life. I realized I was not alone or uniquely broken. Reading the White Book felt like coming home; my story was being told through the experience of another addict in recovery.

As I continued reading, Roy K.'s words gave me a vocabulary for recovery and a clearer understanding of addiction and healing. What had once felt like a cold stone wall became a path forward—one I could walk one day at a time and continue to follow on a Road of Happy Destiny. Without the White Book and the literature that came after it, I wonder where I would be today.

I also remember when our small, new meeting registered with SAICO

and received a starter package, free of charge, containing SA books and pamphlets. In those early days, we shared a few copies among ourselves because we could not yet afford enough literature for everyone.

Imagine if every group had to produce and print its own literature. The time, effort, and expense would be overwhelming. When I contribute financially to SAICO, I help make sure this lifesaving literature continues to reach SA groups around the world. Since "Our primary purpose is to stay sexually sober and help others to achieve sexual sobriety" (SA 201), making contributions to SAICO truly becomes a way of recovery. As a self-supporting Fellowship that declines outside contributions, SA depends on us. Please keep that in mind when you and your group have the opportunity to contribute.

To be continued...

Daniel K., SA Trustee





A Letter of Concern to Us All

This is a portion of the SA Trustees' letter to us all regarding the crisis of the Seventh Tradition.

June, 2026

Greetings SA Groups,

We give thanks for you, your Group, and for the hope of recovery from sexual addiction you represent in your community. We all unite around the Fifth Tradition: "Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the sexaholic who still suffers" (12 & 12 150).

The SA Board of Trustees presents a situation of concern to us all: the practice of the Seventh Tradition contributions.

SAICO service makes 12 Step work possible via Literature distribution, attending to newcomer and fellowship inquiries, facilitating the work of translation of SA Literature, the growth and development of SA in areas of the world where SA has little presence, creating Public Information projects for newcomers and women, and producing the ESSAY Magazine, among other projects. The Central Office and all these ongoing projects are dependent on contributions of SA individuals and Groups.

SAICO has established a prudent reserve of 6 months of operating

expenses. Over the past several months, the prudent reserve has been gradually falling further below this 6-month threshold. As of early June 2026, this prudent reserve dropped to below three months. This matter has become a matter of urgent concern to the SA Fellowship.

For reasons of longer-term SA fellowship stability, we encourage members and SA groups to consider ways to make increasing contributions an ongoing concern and practice. Additionally, in the spirit of Tradition Seven (long form) and the Twelfth Concept, the SA BoT urges that each local group and intergroup strongly consider making a Seventh Tradition contribution to SAICO of any funds beyond their prudent reserve in their treasuries that have accumulated which are not currently assigned for any specifically stated SA purpose.

Thank you for your practice of Seventh Tradition. Visit www.sa.org/contribute/ to make a contribution to SAICO. Seventh Tradition contributions can be sent via PayPal, Venmo, debit/credit card, or by calling SAICO at (615) 370-6062.

SA Board of Trustees

A SIMPLE REQUEST

I am Mirsha, a sexaholic. I have been in the Program for nine months, with three months of sobriety and two relapses.

A few days ago, I received a friend request on Facebook. I asked myself why I liked him and whether it was a good idea to add him, since I am committed to respecting and valuing him as a human being.

I was surprised by what this friend request stirred up in me. First, I realized that I was feeling euphoric (high). I remembered that high sometimes led me back to acting out, so I understood that I needed to be alert to this emotion. I also noticed that I was desperate to receive a message from him. I wondered if I wanted to be the first to write to him, but then I remembered that loneliness is one of my triggers. From there, I often turn to seduction, which leads me into romantic lust and

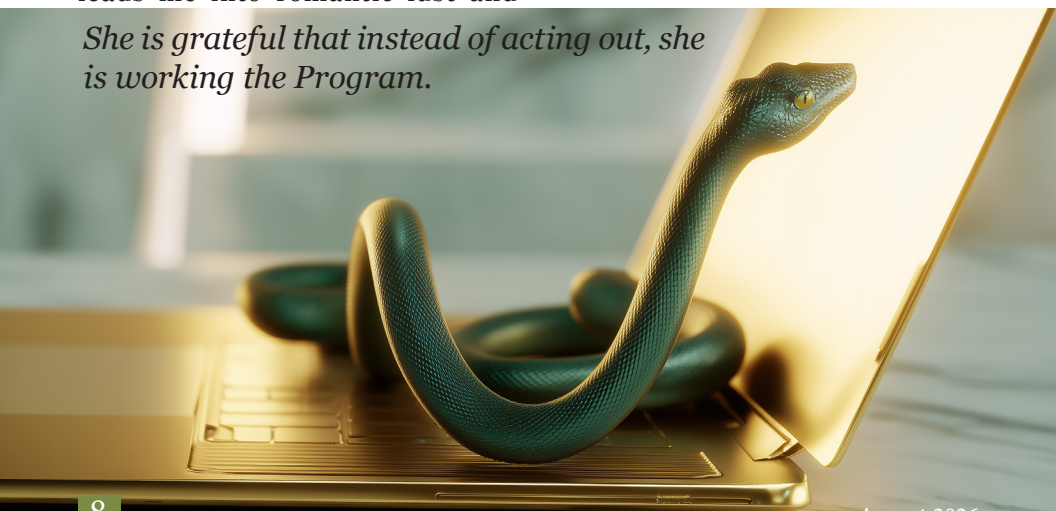
eventually into acting out—work I had done with my sponsor on Step Zero. Acting out only leaves me feeling bad, miserable, and unworthy.

I decided to turn inward and protect the most valuable thing I have today: my sobriety. I resolved not to act impulsively, yet the high remained. I could feel the adrenaline, just like before taking the first drink. Then I remembered that I could write. I decided to write to my Higher Power exactly how I was feeling:

God, I place this situation in Your hands. Help me to be an instrument of Your peace, respecting the people around me and no longer seeing men as objects of lust.

I felt better, but the relief was not complete. Since there is no in-person group where I live, I attended the online Veracruz meeting. I also decided to attend every meeting I could to avoid feeling

She is grateful that instead of acting out, she is working the Program.



lonely over the weekend.

I joined a meeting where I was the only woman present. The discussion centered on the tools of the Program, the importance of making phone calls, and building friendships within the Fellowship. During my share, I was honest: I find it difficult to make friends and to make those outreach calls that men seem to practice so naturally. After the meeting, I decided to use the tool and message a fellow member. She simply replied that I should leave it in the hands of my Higher Power.

Something wonderful happened. Reading her response, I realized that the situation was simple and did not require so much excitement. I felt grateful for having used a tool and for overcoming my fear of being judged. I listened to music while waiting for the 10:00 p.m. meeting, but then I became sleepy and went to bed.

At 4:00 a.m., I woke up with a different mindset. It was not something simple or ridiculous. The high I felt was because I now understand that the Program is giving me real benefits. For fifteen years, I used social media to act out, to find relationships through seduction and flirting. That is no longer necessary.

That day, I understood something important: a man I like had taken the initiative to send me a friend request. There was no need for me to be the hunter. Perhaps he will never write to me. Perhaps nothing will happen at all. I leave that to my Higher Power.

I understand that the Program works when:

1. I know my triggers and stop myself, with the help of

my sponsor and the work of the Program.

2. I write about what is troubling me, seeking to avoid acting out and placing my whole trust in my Higher Power.

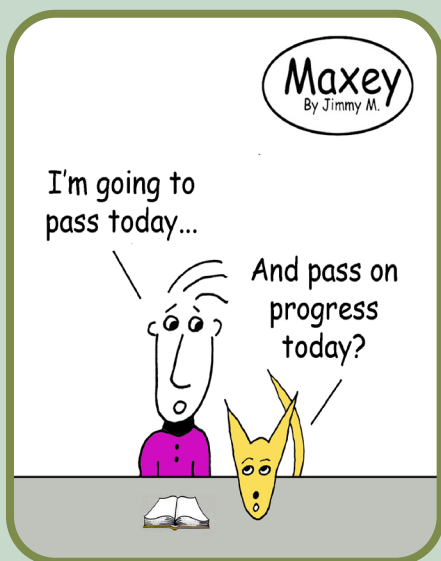
3. I attend meetings.

4. I am willing to practice the tools.

5. I get up at 4:00 a.m. to write, believing that perhaps this story may help someone else.

This is a wonderful Fellowship. This is a Program of action, and it is up to me to make sobriety lasting. The strategies are here, within my reach, but they require effort: getting to know myself, being honest, letting go of laziness, and recognizing that I depend on a Higher Power who guides my life when I choose to become aware and work the Twelve Steps. Thank You, God, for everything You have given me through a simple friend request. And if I may be honest, I am crying with gratitude as I write this.

Mirsha, Chihuahua, México





Never Like Normal People

Ninety days in Nashville for a breakthrough in recovery from lust.

Monday the 14th
Yesterday, I got in my apartment and spent my first night in my twin bed... a bit sleepless in the beginning.

My first thought when I saw the beautiful twin bed was, of course, “Who will I get in here?”

Morning meeting at 6:30 am with 25 men: sober, strong meeting. The morning meetings seem to be the strongest. People attending this daily early bird gathering are particularly motivated. Most of them seem to be professionals, coming in with their tie and Starbucks coffee. Today I have three more meetings. I planned to complete summarizing Step One in order to give it to the group one of the next days (tomorrow I will look it over with my sponsor).

I hear people who are sober for months or years...who express that they are (still) not (and will never be) like other non-addicted people. They are not able to manage their lives like “normal” people, but still need—one day at a time—to use the tools of the Program to stay emotionally sober and to handle the affairs of their life. This is

healing for me, because my life is, in all its areas, really unmanageable. I am not only powerless over lust, but also over my emotions, attitudes, professional life, finances, and my whole self. Hearing that I am not alone in this, but that these guys are also like me, is giving me a first glance of hope.

One guy told the following about “speaking up for myself or not”:

If it affects my well-being, I speak up!

If it affects my ego, I shut up!

If I don't know, it probably affects my ego, so I shut up!

If it affects my ego, I shut up!

He also said that the addict in us wants pleasure and excitement, but the real self wants peace and joy. So pleasure and excitement have to be replaced by peace and joy.

To be continued...

Anonymous



Raising Our Hands: Sharing in Meetings

STOPPED BEING A CARBUNCLE

Recovery was not something to observe on the sidelines of life, but rather something to be lived.

When I first came into the Fellowship, I was confounded and confused. I had no idea how to recover and definitely no recovery experience to share. So, I simply sat in meetings and absorbed the knowledge, information, and, most importantly, the experience, strength, and hope (ESH) that others had and shared. This continued for months.

Then a longtimer, my grand-sponsor, shared a suggestion in a meeting: "Why doesn't everybody in the meeting learn how to 12-Step a newcomer and stop being a carbuncle on the backside of SA?" After looking up the meaning of "carbun-

cle" (an abscess or boil), I decided to do just that and actually learn how to help others by focusing on my own recovery.

Longtimers in the Program with good recovery also shared that recovery is not a spectator sport to be viewed from the stands. One had to get down on the field and play! So, after working the 12 Steps and finding a solution to all my problems, not just lust, I began trying to carry the message to others, including by raising my hand and sharing in meetings.

My SA Sole Purpose group had guidelines around sharing. These included the use of clin-

ical language (e.g., acted out with self/others, viewed adult material/content, or used services of sex workers) rather than the graphic language of our disease. This has helped ensure the well-being of our group and the safety of our members, especially since our meetings are mixed.

Our SA Sole Purpose group has other guidelines, suggested formats, and best practices for meetings, Step work, and sponsorship. These tools have been extremely helpful to me and others in the group. I am extremely grateful for these guidelines, my recovery, and my HP.

Vince G, Canada 🇨🇦



The Program taught her how to embrace every healing aspect of Recovery, Unity, and Service.

What happened to you?" my grandmother asked. I was eight years old. Silence. I had been raped by my father. He told me if I told my mother, I would kill her; did that apply to my grandmother too? I took no chances and stayed silent. My fantasy world began, and I gained 30 pounds that year. The weight gain was protection from my father—maybe he would no longer find me attractive. I became very introverted and isolated. My peers called me the hermit. I was also sexually abused by an uncle and shut that incident out for 20 years. My mother continued to have health problems and was frequently in the hospital, leaving me alone with my father.

I escaped from pain by focusing on getting good grades and I escaped to college. My sexual acting out started then. During

my senior year, my mother died. My grief was very painful, and I didn't want to feel it, so I drank and partied.

In my 30s, I became very depressed—being suicidal. I signed myself into a psychiatric hospital, thinking I was in a safe place. When I told my psychiatrist about the abuse by my father, a psych nurse confronted him in front of me. He exploded with rage—knocked over chairs and left the room. My depression got worse with two more hospitalizations.

I was attracted to violent alcoholics most of all. I went to Al-Anon and a woman there said that I was a sexaholic. I denied it, but to shut her up, I agreed to go to six meetings. I was listening drunk when I listened to men qualify. Why is there a statement in the White Book about raising my hand in a meeting when triggered by another member? The purpose is to have safe boundaries and feel comfortable about sharing my secrets. Some issues should only be shared with my sponsor, and other topics can be

Motivation To

WALK THE TALK

shared in a meeting. Sometimes it becomes unclear when to share information and how. If in doubt about what and when to share, it is a good idea to talk to my sponsor or another member with a lot of sobriety.

Five women in the rooms helped me out of denial. I agreed to stay in SA, and felt a flicker of hope for the first time in many years. I got a sponsor and very slowly worked the Steps. I came kicking and screaming into service and did not like the saying, "service keeps you sober."

The other five women left the Program after three years. The guys supported me, and I stayed. For years I was the only woman at my meetings, but I kept going and got another sponsor. She motivated me to walk the talk. I started to sponsor and do more service. In 1999, I co-chaired the SA Convention in Cleveland, Ohio.

We have a group of women now who attend meetings, which is a boost to my recovery—grateful to God for all of them. I was a general delegate from the Mid-Atlantic region to the General Delegate Assembly. I have co-chaired some local marathons. I give my lead when asked, with the prayer that it will help someone stay sober one more day. Currently, I am

a trustee, the bottom rung of the service pyramid. I am the only woman trustee, and I would love that to change! Any women who might be interested, contact me.

I must say that I have a wonderful therapist, a great sponsor, and sponsees. I still have character defects that rear their ugly heads. I still struggle with fears of not being enough as a friend, family member, and fellowship member. I am in three Twelve-Step programs, which is a great combination for me. I have had some recent healing in my relationship with my sister. It took lots of prayer to get to that point.

I am a precious and fallible child of God. I try to accept everyone I meet as a child of God. I am currently recovering from knee replacement surgery and am unable to drive or work. My true support system that God has blessed me with has really come through, including brothers and sisters in SA.

My hope and prayer for SA is that more women will come and stay in the Fellowship. Some fears on both sides of the gender line need to be realized, admitted, and then healed before that will happen.

Peg V., Cleveland, Ohio



Raising My Hand:



Swearing In Meetings

Recovery shows him the damage that swearing and sarcasm cause to others and to himself.

I most often raise my hand during SA meetings when a member's share includes successive instances of swearing. I feel and see the pain in the speaker, and that pain projected at others in the room. I hear their self-hate and feel the words burying into my similarly wounded soul. I raise my hand and often take the member aside after the meeting to explain that their swearing reminds me of how cruel and disre-

spectful I was to myself and inadvertently to others around me.

Swear words have a razor-sharp capacity that can instantly destroy my serenity. If I take swear words in, I soon find myself using them. For me, swearing is contagious and an explicit sign of my addiction. When new in Program, I was depressed, angry, and full of fear. I projected my anger with swear words and cutting sarcasm. Through much step work and sponsor-sponsee dialogue, I learned that swearing arises from shame, guilt, and my

sense of inadequacy. My addiction is self-destructive; one of the primary signs of that self-destruction was my swearing. I became aware that swearing was about belittling and disrespecting things, places, and people—even the other listeners in the room. Most importantly, I realized that I aimed a double dose inward at myself. Today, when I feel myself accepting swear words, I armour up to protect my serenity.

Today, my outward swearing is no longer as profuse.

I am powerless over my muttering—negative judgements; it is a learned and habitual defect and reflects a deep-seated destructive disposition. For me, self-flagellation is self-destructive, is dangerous to every member in the Fellowship, and is not a sign of re-

covery. Today, my outward swearing is no longer as profuse; however, swearing silently under my breath is still a challenge. I don't know where the words come from at times. When things don't go my way, swear words automatically arise. Learning to forgive and love myself is essential.

Learning to forgive and love myself is essential.

Today, thanks to my HP and recovery work, I notice and surrender the words and make amends, most often after the cursing and nashing of teeth have occurred. I keep asking my HP to help, and I keep coming back because I need the SA program to learn to live in the world positively, a way of loving self and others.

Jack H., Canada



DISCUSSION TOPIC

In his article, "Raising My Hand: Swearing in Meetings", Jack shares how swearing was a way to belittle himself and others. Has the language of shock been a part of your addiction? If so, did you use it as a way

to take the edge off or to add the edge?

Have you considered what the language of shock and, at times, cussing does to unexpected people around you? Do those around you have the right to not be caught off guard in those ways?

How might using lan-

guage that is considerate of others help establish the real connection? Have you experienced an environment of considerate language yourself?

Will you use this article for a discussion topic at your homegroup? Send a story of your own recovery journey to essay@sa.org.

HOLDING OTHERS HOSTAGE VS CONNECTION



She is so grateful that the Steps taught her how to connect using safe, healthy sharing.

When I built a wall between me and those I loved, I severed connection to God and others. I completely separated myself when I was four years old because I was raging at everyone.

"We find that spiritual isolation is intolerable for long. We can't just leave the plug of our soul dangling" (SA 50). Just as I will die if I don't have food and water, I will spiritually die without connection to God. My selfish attitudes separate me, spiritually killing me and causing unbearable hunger like a vacuum. Two things happen here: pain caused by my selfish attitudes, and unbearable hunger of separation caused by those same attitudes. If I just surrender my selfish attitudes but don't connect with actions of love and the language of recovery (Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve), the hunger intensifies. Without Connection (Power), the mental obsession returns, and I

take a drink of a substitute connection: lust. I can't stop once I start, and I am a dead woman. This is why negative sobriety will never work.

How do I connect with God and others? I connect by practicing the Steps and using the language of recovery. Actually, when I use the language of recovery, I am practicing the 12 Steps.

Surrendering lust as a lower power in Step One and God becoming my Higher Power in Steps Two, Three, and Eleven, I begin to connect with God. By practicing Steps Four, Six, and Eight, I connect with God and myself by knowing the truth about myself. By practicing Steps Five, Nine, Ten, and Twelve, I connect with God, others, and myself.

Recovery language is leading with my weakness. If I need to surrender lust in a group, I use safe and clinical language. I make a real and sincere effort to avoid graphic language. "We are careful

not to be a temptation to others in the way we talk about our sexual acting out” (SA 178). For example, I can surrender in meetings by saying, “I would like to surrender lust in dreams, second glances, acting out, fantasy, inappropriate content online, looking at others, or sex with self.” These phrases don’t give any details and use vocabulary not typically used when living in the disease. There is no memory tied to these words, which lowers the chances of associated lust feelings surfacing. However, it does give a general idea of how lust manifested. I get to surrender, newcomers get to identify, and others get to be safe and treated with dignity at the same time.

Several old timers shared that when I surrender graphically in meetings, I’m abusing members and holding them hostage. All members in the meeting would have to give me permission to share graphically; otherwise, I wouldn’t maintain my integrity and might be giving and getting “lust hits.” If I need to describe lust in more detail, I call my sponsor or ladies in recovery who won’t be triggered.

If the group intentionally practices graphic sharing, it’s a form of abuse—even if that group tells those disturbed to leave and come back. One time, I had to leave a meeting and come back so many times that I missed the whole meeting. This was at 15 years of sobriety! Leaving and coming back is an excellent tool if the group typically shares non-graphically, or if the problem only resides in me. However, if the group intentionally and consistently shares graphically, I’m responsible for leaving and

finding another meeting that shares with integrity.

Sharing in recovery language is always a type of Step Ten. I describe the situation long enough to identify the problem. Then, I can surrender my powerlessness and trust God will help. I decide to do God’s will in this situation. I share my resentments, fears, or harms. I identify the ideals or roles God wants for me in the situation, and acknowledge if amends are necessary. I can ask for identification or for experience, strength, and hope (ESH) from the person listening. This is the language of recovery and practicing the 12 Steps at the same time.

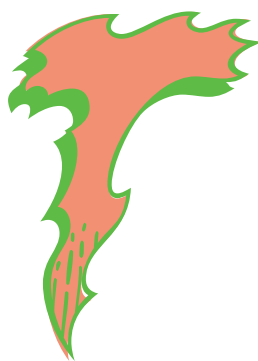
After listening to my share, the person identifies with me by sharing their experience and understanding, the Steps they applied, the promises received, and the lessons learned. Therefore, I connect through identification and the Steps with the problem turned over to God in the solution.

Anonymous



Message in Meetings: Mess to My Sponsor

He learned boundaries that allowed him to share safely and listen attentively.



There is a time to speak and a time to listen. I had to relearn how to talk and listen in the rooms in order to stay in the Fellowship and keep working the Steps. When I first came to the rooms, I was brash and egotistical. My unhelpful shares were full of platitudes of SA sayings and advice to think positively. Afterwards, I would wait for applause or a smiling emoji. When I failed to get any response, I would drift into self-pity and fear of rejection.

Alternatively, when I listened to others' shares, I judged them harshly. I would critique their share on how positive their message was, if there was a logical progression, or if it was funny. I was not open-minded, so I learned little and criticized even more as the years passed.

The following sayings helped me create healthy boundaries to share and listen more effectively.

“Experience, Strength and Hope (ESH).” In the beginning, my shares were primarily based on what I knew, but eventually, I learned to share what I lived: how I applied the Steps to the everyday challenges of life. I noticed



my shares related to people and my perspective became practical.

I find safety in confiding my very personal problems with just a few people.

“Bring the message to the meeting and the mess to my sponsor.” I find safety in confiding my very personal problems with just a few people. On a few occasions, I shared problems with the group and felt terrible afterwards. I was fearful of rejection and felt discouraged when I didn’t receive any advice. Now, when I feel vulnerable and my emotions are raw, I speak to my sponsor, who guides me towards acceptance and gives his practical advice (ESH) on how he faced a similar problem. Now, when I feel more comfortable discussing the issue with the group, I will briefly surrender the issue in vague terms, and I would continue to discuss the mess with my sponsor in full detail.

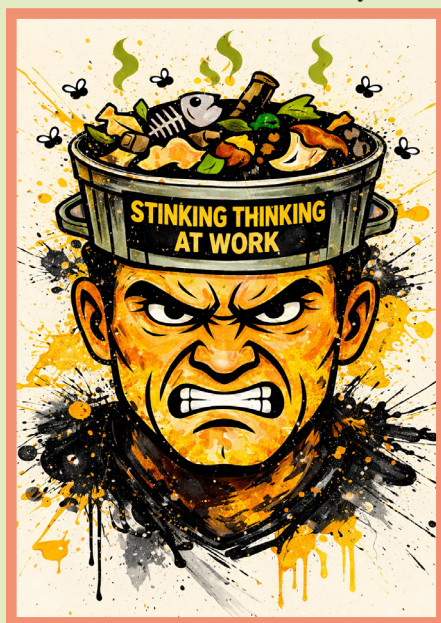
“As we came to see that we shared a common problem, we also came to see that for us, there is a common solution—the Twelve Steps of recovery practiced in a fellowship....” (SA 2). As I have heard from others, I am part of the “WE” (AA 17) of SA who are bound by a common problem and solution. I had to accept that everyone walks along this path of recovery with their own unique life experience and pace. Some have walked great distances while others are just beginning. I am learning to listen

to other people’s stories and find the common thread that links us together. I hear my story in their story, no matter the length of sobriety or gender. Now, I judge less and learn more.

I am so grateful to be part of the Fellowship.

I am so grateful to be part of the Fellowship. I have the opportunity to both receive and give support to others. The Fellowship helped me when I needed it most. They accepted me with all my character defects. They helped me to stand up on my own and change the man I was. Patient, tolerant, kind, and loving, they helped me become the man I am today. I am so grateful for their help, and I wish to offer the same compassion to those who enter the rooms for the first time.

Anonymous



Open-Hearted Sharing



Bringing the inside out has taught her how to connect with members in the Fellowship.

My name is Margot. I am a sexaholic. My sobriety date, through God's grace and the grace of the Program, is March 14, 1986. My history is that I acted out, first with myself and then with others, for about 30 years before I found this Program. The language of lust is wonderfully described in our White Book in the section called "The Problem." The language of lust lied to me over and over. It told me that acting out was connecting me with people, when in fact acting out was driving me more and more into disconnection from myself, others, and God. As the White Book says, "Conning ourselves time and again that the next one would save us, we were really losing our lives" (SA 203).

By contrast, the language of recovery tells the truth. Through

the Steps, Traditions, slogans, literature, meetings, and the Fellowship, it tells me the truth of my addiction, why my life wasn't working, the truth of my dependence on a loving Higher Power, and the truth of my place on earth among other human beings. The language of recovery has taught me that the key to connecting to other people is through sharing—"bringing the inside out," as the White Book says. In sharing my experience, my history, my vulnerabilities, my powerlessness, my weakness, and my unmanageability, I've learned that I'm not alone.

I've learned that other people have the same feelings and thoughts I do, even though their circumstances might be different. It's that identification with others that the AA Big Book and White Book talk about that is so powerful, both for my own recovery and for carrying the message to others. Before the Program, I didn't know that men had the



same kinds of feelings I did.

I grew up when families didn't talk about feelings. Listening to other people's open-hearted sharing within the boundaries of the language of recovery has brought me closer to both women and men, and closer to myself. I believe what our literature says: that the language of recovery must be spoken aloud, in fellowship with others. I need to speak it, and I need to hear you speak it. As an addict, I have a "built-in forgetter," so I must hear the language of recovery over and over from other people: through prayer and meditation, from the literature, and from my Higher Power when I say something to my sponsees that I need to hear myself. Sharing the language of recovery with others in the day-to-day working of the Program has created a feeling of community that, one day at a time, fills the spot in me I once thought was empty. Today, instead of acting out, I turn to my Higher Power and others in the Program. This is the real connection.

Here is some Program language that helps me connect with others:

- Take the actions of love and the feelings will follow,
- “Seek, listen, and follow” Higher Power's guidance ,
- Sobriety and recovery first in my life,
- Asking for help from Higher Power, my sponsor, and others,
- Asking to carry the vision of God's will into all my activities,
- Bookending and praying before and after phone calls, emails, and events,

- Restraint of tongue and pen,
- Praying for others, especially those I fear, resent, or lust after,
- Making amends promptly,
- Daily prayer, meditation, and regular inventory,
- Gratitude lists,
- Breathing,
- And listening.

Here are some prayers that help me connect with others:

- The Serenity Prayer*
- Please free me from my lust. I can't handle it. I give it to You, God.*
- Bless them, change me.*
- Please let me find in You what I'm looking for in this person, place, or situation.*
- Please show me what kind of relationship You want me to have with this person.*
- Please let me play the role You assign in this situation.*
- Please remove my fear (or lust, selfishness, controllingness, or any agenda I might have) and direct my attention to what You would have me be.*

My new way of living spills over into my life outside of Program—at church, at work, and with friends and family. My relationship with my sister has been transformed.

I'm close friends with a former roommate who was caught in the middle of my acting out years ago. I still have a lot to learn, but this Program gives me a chance to relate to women and men, in and out of the Program, with respect, understanding, acceptance, appropriate boundaries, and even love.

Margot, USA





Sharing responsibly allows him to thrive in healthy connections.

What is "Healthy"? For me, being healthy means letting go of the need to see everything as good or bad, right or wrong. Instead, it is about viewing life organically—focusing on functionality and balance, and asking, "Am I thriving?" It means being at peace with the tension between my weaknesses and strengths, my failures and accomplishments, and my clarity and confusion. It is a constant checking in with my internal state, an acceptance of reality as it is, and seeking God's will that remains open to the input of others.

What is "Sharing"? Sharing stems from the belief that my thoughts do not belong to me alone. It is the deliberate act of giving away the inner dialogue that no one else can see. This kind of honesty is the bedrock of relationships because it produces trust. A quote often comes to mind: "Where there is deception, there is no relationship. Truthfulness is everything." Now, when I find myself in uncomfortable situations where I instinctively want

to hide, I pause. That resistance is usually my cue to speak up, because it offers an opportunity to share exactly who I am in that vulnerable moment.

In a "Meeting"? This is where context and limits come into play; this is about boundaries. Recovery requires maintaining three core systems of connection: my connection to myself, to God, and to people. Meetings reside in the "people" category, but even within that sphere, there are different degrees of relationship—sponsors, family, coworkers, and the meeting group itself. Each has its own distinct boundaries that dictate how much to share and how to share it, ensuring I do not cause harm to myself or others. In the context of a meeting, this means adhering to foundational principles that work a lot like gravity—keeping the space grounded and safe for everyone. It means I avoid cross-talk, use safe and appropriate language, stick to "I" statements, and balance the "mess" of my current struggle with the "message" of hope. I respect the clock, and I leave outside issues at the door.

Josh G., Michigan, USA



The literature on sharing in meetings helped her apply boundaries to protect her sobriety.



One of the earliest pieces my sponsor recommended I read and journal my thoughts on was the section in the White Book called "Meetings—How They Work" (SA 185). In particular, the "Meeting Guidelines" (SA 188-189). These pages set me up wonderfully for a lifetime of appropriate sharing and listening in SA meetings.

My small home group is the only one in my county with all guys except myself. When I was fairly new to the group, we read another crucial section, "Mixed Meetings" (SA 178-179). We shared honestly about how it had been adjusting to a woman joining the group: no eye contact, no names, just honest sharing. I remember realizing what a shock my arrival had been, and just how committed my new family was to incorporating me as an equal member. That was almost six years ago, and we have all shared openly yet respectfully ever since. I owe this group my life for that.

The phrase "raise our hands" (SA 179) is about when someone shares too explicitly, leading me as a lust addict "into realms never before

imagined". That's a great use of the feature. I've never personally raised my hand, but there have been occasions when I've felt like it. There have been many times I've quietly left triggering meetings. I'm not in SA for nothing, and some triggers I just cannot handle. This is certainly not a character defect. If I could willpower my way happily through sobriety, I wouldn't even need to be in Sexaholics Anonymous, and I certainly wouldn't be writing for ESSAY!

I'm not in SA for nothing, and some triggers I just cannot handle.

What I believe and practice is the phrase "love and tolerance of others is our code" (AA 84). I'm prepared to listen to just about anything, provided I'm not too triggered. It's up to the chair to ensure people adhere to guidelines. My place is to listen and share in my turn, but when my sobriety is jeopardized, I will take immediate action. Always. I've been out there for over 40 years, and I'm not going back.

Kathie S., Devon, UK



The Great FACT

Sharing only what happened before and after sobriety, he lets God reveal the degree of happiness through his shine.

We carry the great message to all who have lost hope in coping with addiction to lust. There is the Great Fact for us, and

that is nothing more than a “deep and powerful experience” changing everything in our lives.

What does the “Great Fact” look like in my life? Earlier, when I talked about my First Step to a newcomer in the group, I tried to make him understand how I felt at the present time. There are several specific definitions for that in the Big Book of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, including ones like “happy, joyous, and free”. However, in real life, these are just

words, and it is hardly possible to describe what lies behind them. Now, I do not talk about how I feel today; instead, I share the story of what it felt like when I was acting out—the feelings of loss, fear, hopelessness, and shame. I tell them about what I have already done in SA and let God show others who I am now. The newcomer can judge for himself whether I am joyful, free, or calm. I simply list the events that occurred to me in sobriety, including multiple job changes, the third marriage, the passing of my father, yearly holidays, and occasional illnesses. All that happened while I was sober.

One day, an SA brother whom I had known for a while called me to ask for sponsorship. He talked emotionally about his relapses and complained that “his” God

had been cruel and humiliating for a long time. My initial reaction was to start persuading him that God was different—that He loved everyone and cared about us, and the challenges He gave us were within our strength. “God, help ME convince my suffering brother that he is wrong!” I had something like that in my mind while listening to him. I wanted to do what I thought was right, appear spiritual, and be the rescuer. Someone once explained to me that the power of prayer is not in what I say, but in Who hears it. Though my prayer was egoistic, I was sincere in it.

I wanted to do what I thought was right, appear spiritual, and be the rescuer.

The brother then asked what he should do if he was not ready and did not believe in all those things. I didn't expect myself to answer: “No readiness means that you will die.” The brother hung up on me, and I thought we were not going to talk again. Later that night, he sent me a message saying he was ready to try it “as if”. Since that night, more than 20 people in SA have asked me to help them work the Steps. Today, this brother is the only one who has worked through all the Steps. Recently, I became a “grandfather” when he

found his first sponsee.

I do not know which words are right to say to people, but I know well what to ask God.

I do not know which words are right to say to people, but I know well what to ask God. “God, guide my thoughts, actions and words, so that I can be useful indeed.”

Another story from my past came to mind. I attended my second meeting in AA. In the beginning, the meeting leader said that he could not imagine life without alcohol, that he had suicidal thoughts, and so on. Today, I am sure that no one, especially a trusted person, should talk that way in a meeting. But back then, as a newcomer, all I heard was that there was a kind of sobriety where you would rather die than go back to drinking. It was clear to me that I needed to be there!

“For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving GOD...” (12 & 12 132)As in all our affairs. Amen.

Maxim K., Moscow, Russia





Tradition Three allows her to stay in SA and receive a life of recovery and growth.

I have been in SA for over eight years now. SA is my home. I've been told that I'm not a sexaholic and I don't need this program. But I'm back today because I decided that Tradition Three states that the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop lusting and become sexually sober—and for that, I qualify. I decided I need constant support to live, and I love the strength and commitment I find in SA meetings. I am in a few Twelve-Step Fellowships, too. But the level of honesty I get to hear and share in SA is what keeps me coming back. As a survivor of ongoing emotional and sexual abuse in childhood and adulthood, I need a robust recovery support network to keep me sane. In SA, I find my people who are committed to personal growth and are willing to go to any length to get it. I can't do life alone. I need others who are doing the same, so I can share with them and listen to them as they work their program.

Thank you, SA, for giving me life!

I've been struggling with almost every step of my life. Yes, that is my definition of life. Life is a struggle for a person like me. I'm learning that it is the result of trauma, but I don't want to be a victim anymore. So, I work on my program and therapy. I am committed to working because I want to live. I've been told, "How do we stop struggling? By surrendering." God, I can't; You could; please help me.

I've been struggling for a long time to sit in synagogue. Now, as a woman, according to my religion, I don't have to go at all. But I choose to. I want to. I began attending a few years ago, in recovery. But it's a very slow process. The past two years, I've been complaining that although I choose to go, I can't tolerate sitting through the prayers. I've brought it up multiple times, saying I know I don't have to be there, but I want to.

I had a breakthrough one weekend. I was able to realize my mus-

cles were tight, release them, and I was able to tolerate sitting in synagogue. Yesterday, sitting there, I noticed my distorted sexual fantasies coming up! I felt pain. I cried in pain from having these distorted feelings! What a gift! Later that afternoon, I realized what had happened. I was running from the synagogue because of these painful, distorted fantasies that used to come up there. I wasn't aware of them before; all my body did was want to run. Now, as I'm shedding more layers, I can finally be mindful of the thoughts that cause me so much pain! What a gift!

I'm learning that next time these thoughts come up, I can welcome them.

Yesterday I cried in pain. But now I'm learning that next time these thoughts come up, I can welcome them: Hi, oh, you are here. Welcome. And then surrender them to G-d: G-d, I can't handle these thoughts, please take them away. What a gift. Time takes time. Recovery is a slow, long, imperfect process. It does not happen overnight. What I learned is that there is nothing to be ashamed of in my thoughts and feelings. They are just thoughts and feelings. I didn't create them; they are involuntary. I can recognize them and give them over to G-d. He made them, and He can take them away if I ask Him to.

Another gift of the Program is to share with another human being

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my shameful, crazy thoughts, questions, and feelings. Shedding light on it kills them. What a powerful tool. It's painful and hard to disclose my truth, but after sharing it, I get such liberation and freedom. I recently spoke at another Twelve-Step Fellowship, and people were saying, "Wow, such honesty." And I'm thinking, little do people know the level of honesty I need and have at my SA program. That's the gift of SA I cherish and appreciate.

That's the gift of SA I cherish and appreciate.

Thank you to everyone who has paved the way ahead of me, whoever is trudging the road alongside me, and all newcomers... I cannot do this program without all of you!

Esty K, USA



Steps, Traditions, & Concepts

Catching recovery occurs when seeking continuous service and rather than seeking self-gratification.



Recovery Is Contagious

While attending May's Pittsburgh retreat, I saw many forms of service essential to the SA Program.

Service, one of SA's Three Legacies, was the first opportunity the Fellowship gave me to put others before myself without self-centered motives. It remains one of the primary ways I use the tools of the Program and my Higher Power to contribute to the greater good rather than seeking self-gratification.

At the retreat, service took many forms. One speaker shared his experience of helping meetings grow into strong groups, while another spoke about developing a deeper understanding of the principles of the Twelve-Step program. Others contributed by planning and organizing the retreat, while many offered support to first-timers and those seeking additional recovery tools through one-on-one conversations.

I don't believe addiction is contagious, but recovery can be. One way to catch it is through simple, consistent service. One friend at the retreat has been in the Program since 1989; his service is something anyone can do—HE SHOWS UP. He rarely misses a meeting. Over the years, he has

served as treasurer, literature chair, and intergroup representative. He often stays after meetings when needed. His steady presence reflects a foundational form of service in recovery—being a “meeting maker.”

The last speaker spoke with passion about the many ways his life has been blessed by both receiving support from and offering support to others in the Fellowship. He, along with others who demonstrate strong recovery, seemed to have a glow on their faces—what Jess L. referred to as the “Sober Shine.” To me, this reflects those who work the Steps and practice the principles in their daily lives; they seem to radiate genuine happiness.

For me, expanding recovery through service means sharing our primary purpose: to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. It means staying sober and helping others achieve sobriety. It also means living out the SA Responsibility Statement: “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.”

Roger K., FL /Jim C., 
Pittsburgh, USA

Electing leaders allows the Fellowship to keep authority, while elements of the service structure can decide according to informed conscience.

Concept 2

"The leadership of SA, as represented by the General Delegate Assembly and the Board of Trustees, has become for nearly every practical purpose the active voice and the effective conscience of our whole society in its service matters" (SIA 213).

Even though the Fellowship has ultimate authority, it is not practical to poll the entire Fellowship on the conduct of SA's business affairs. Therefore, the Fellowship elects leaders through their groups, intergroups, and regions to represent them in the General Delegate Assembly (GDA). On matters of policy, the GDA is the group conscience of the Fellowship. The Trustees are elected by the GDA to execute the policies determined by the GDA. In essence, the Board of Trustees (BOT) is the service board of the GDA, directly responsible to the GDA. Delegated authority allows the Fellowship to function in its daily affairs while retaining ultimate authority of the individual and collective membership.

Concept 3

"To ensure effective leadership, we should endow each element of SA's service structure, the General Delegate Assembly and the Board of Trustees and its staffs and Committees with a traditional "Right of Decision" (SIA 213).

The GDA, Trustees, and Committees are generally very deliberative in their decision-making process. It is not uncommon for an important item of business to be postponed to a future meeting so that information about the impact of the decision can be gathered and considered. This allows for an informed group conscience. There have also been some issues that have been postponed so that the will of the Fellowship can be polled.

However, the trusted servants have the authority to decide how specific decisions should proceed. The "instructed" Delegate who cannot act on his own conscience in a final [Assembly] vote is not a "trusted servant" at all; he is just a messenger. Without this "Right of Decision," the business of SA would quickly grind to a halt.

Anonymous



**Concepts
Two and
Three:**

**The Active
Voice
and
Right of
Decision**

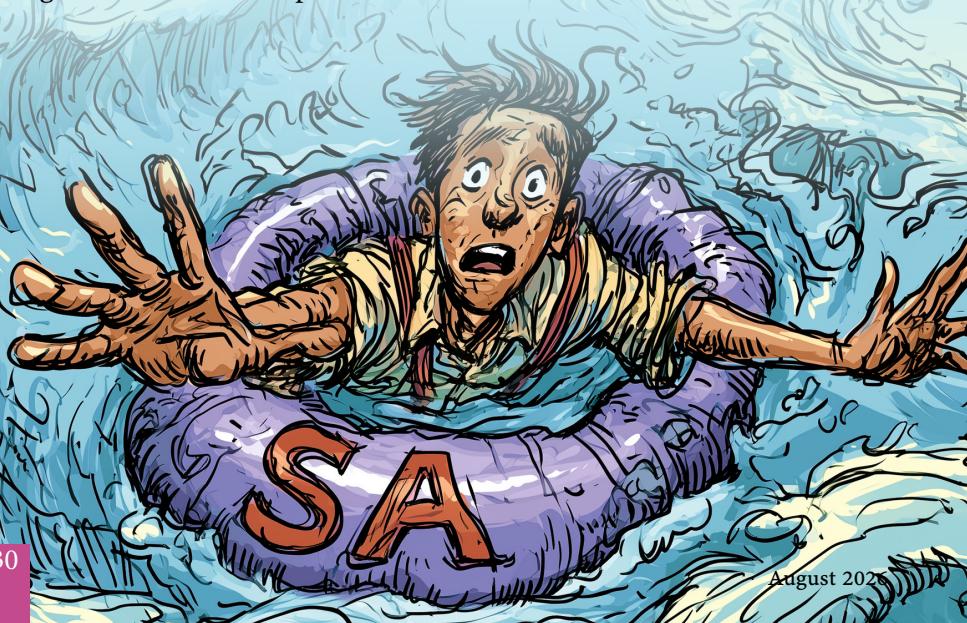
Sponsor by mail helped him to address what was buried and oozing out.

All my life, I looked like I had it together—married, seven children, active in serving others, and a belief in a Higher Power. But for 27 years, I lived a double life, trapped in pornography and secrets.

I also carried pain I didn't know how to name. As a child, I was abused multiple times by different men. I never learned how to process that trauma; instead, I buried it. And what we bury doesn't disappear—it leaks out sideways. For me, it leaked into compulsive sexual behavior, isolation, and a growing hunger for escape. Over time, my addiction escalated into actions that cost me everything and landed me in prison for

four years. Strange as it sounds, prison became a “time out” that saved my life. It forced me to stop running. I decided that if I was going to get out, I wanted to come out different. I attended every program I could, did therapy, and started doing the hard work of change.

That's when someone told me about Sexaholics Anonymous. SA meetings were held in the same building as AA. In prison, the stigma was intense. Sometimes we even had to leave early because of threats and hostility. But inside that room, something happened that I didn't expect: I felt safe. I felt understood. I felt the kind of care that doesn't excuse the past—but also doesn't condemn you to repeat it forever. SA was non-denominational, and



it gave me a place to tell the truth and begin working the Steps.

There was just one problem: I couldn't find a sponsor in prison. Everyone needed one. Then I heard about Sponsor by Mail.

I wrote a letter asking for help, not sure if anyone would respond. When a letter came back, it felt like someone had reached through the walls and said, "You're not alone." My sponsor didn't just send encouragement—he gave me direction: assignments, steps, and questions that made me stop hiding, even from myself.

My Sponsor and that mail became a lifeline. Working the Twelve Steps with him changed me in ways I didn't think were possible. I learned that secrets are fuel for addiction—and that bringing things into the light with safe people breaks the spell. I learned practical tools: honesty, accountability, amends, and daily surrender to my Higher Power. My sponsor shared his own experience—real stories of staying sober when it was hard. That gave me hope, because hope isn't a slogan. Hope is seeing someone else live free and realizing you might be able to, too.

Later, with permission, I started calling him every other week to check in. Those conversations helped me stay grounded and catch myself early, before small slips became a full return to old thinking. My sponsor was as vital to my recovery as the therapy I was receiving. He helped me build a new way of living, one decision at a time.

When I was released, I got a lo-

cal sponsor, but I kept checking in with my mail sponsor (with his permission). I still do. That steady connection has helped me stay honest, stay humble, and stay aware of when I'm drifting.

Today, my life is different. My marriage has been given a chance to heal. My wife—who waited through the hardest years—now has a husband who is present, accountable, and committed to recovery. My children have seen change that I once thought was impossible. I don't say that proudly; I say it gratefully. I know where I came from, and I know what it costs to keep living in the dark.

If you're reading this and you feel stuck, I want you to hear one thing: change is possible. You are not beyond help. You are not too far gone. But you cannot do it alone. Go to a meeting. Keep coming back. Tell the truth. Get a sponsor. Work the Steps. Let your Higher Power and this Fellowship do what they're designed to do—restore sanity and build a new life.

And if you're sober and stable, please consider becoming a Sponsor by Mail for someone incarcerated. A letter may seem small, but I'm living proof it can ripple outward into marriages, children, and entire families. One sponsor's willingness can become someone else's turning point.

I'm grateful for Sexaholics Anonymous. I'm grateful for my sponsors. It really works if you work it.

Mike, Utah, USA



Worldwide News

Gratitude Celebration

Celebrating our founder was a celebration of everyone.

Remembering our founder, Roy K., and his courageous effort to establish Sexaholics Anonymous, we recall with immense gratitude the first SA meeting on February 4, 1979.

This was a great reason to celebrate and give thanks. Our group, La Liberación, organized the Gratitude Celebration on Saturday, February 28. Each of us shared what we were grateful for, and by the end, we felt the energy and the presence of the Higher Power.

We shared a cake that reminded us that, in recovery, life is a celebration. At the end of the meeting, the smiles and joyful expressions on our faces were like a seal upon us.

The money collected during that meeting through our Seventh Tradition was donated to SAICO. **Thank you, dear Roy K.**

La Liberación, 
Bogotá, Colombia





A day to have as much fun as possible.

AUSTRALIA DAY WEEKEND

We had our first SA conference in a long time. It was different from most conferences because we tried something different. We had only a few meetings. A member from Melbourne spoke about how to build a strong Fellowship. A woman from Perth spoke about fear and resentment, and another told a powerful story of redemption in the SA prison space. A long-timer spoke about having fun in recovery.

The main focus of the conference was to have as much fun as possible.

The main focus of the conference was to have as much fun as possible. We sang together.

We went go-karting and swam together in the famous Boogey hole. We had so much fun together and laughed so much it hurt.

We had so much fun together and laughed so much it hurt.

We had international visitors from Florida and Singapore who can't wait to come back again. Watch this space, because we will be having a regional conference somewhere in Australia to celebrate becoming a region. So start planning to come to Australia for the Australia Day weekend 2027!

To register or for more information, email newcastlesagroup@gmail.com.

Jason C.,
Jesmond, Australia 

THE BEST CAPTION

ARE YOU READY FOR ANOTHER CAPTION CHALLENGE?

We invite you to craft the perfect recovery caption for the cartoon below, centered on October's theme, "Made A Decision-Giving Our Lives to God". If your caption wins, you will receive a free print copy of the October edition. Don't miss out—the submission deadline is September 15. Send your entry to essay@sa.org. Unleash your creativity, and may the cleverest caption win!



REGISTRATION OPEN

A Vision
For You
SA CONVENTION
2026
=INDIA=



NOVEMBER
27 – 29
2026



REGISTER HERE

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AUSSIE CONFERENCE

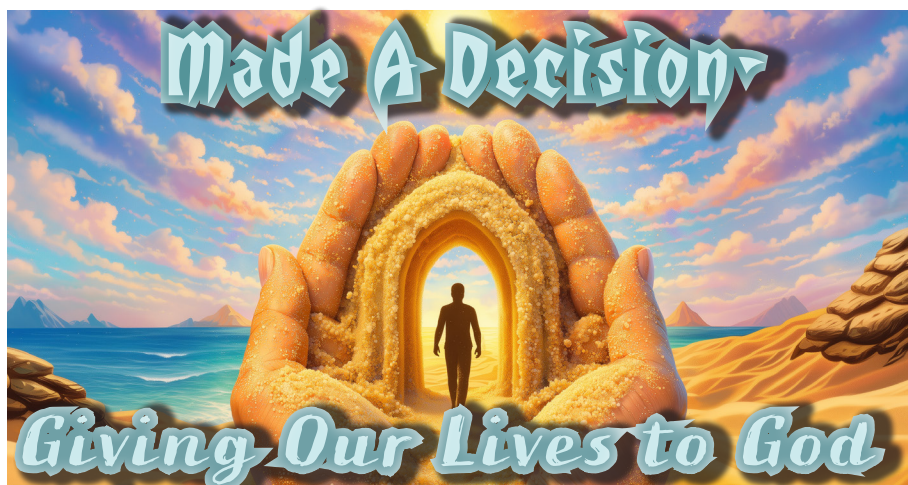
AN INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE



6TH & 7TH OF MARCH 2027

Contact: Jason C
newcastlesagroup@gmail.com

COMING IN OCTOBER



NEXT EDITION

Our next edition's theme is "Made A Decision-Giving Our Lives to God." The whole purpose of the Steps is to enable us to give our lives to the "One who has all power." Admitting our powerlessness over our addiction and lives moves me into hope, Step Two, and into decision-making time, Step Three. This decision to let God be the Director of our lives is the game changer where great things come to pass. The rest of the Steps are the way we live out that decision. Every time we are disturbed, we have the opportunity to decide again that God will run the show and not our selfishness. How do we celebrate this decision? Our SA shine is merely the joy for what God has done and is doing as a result of that decision.

ESSAY is your magazine. It is your experience, strength, and hope that carries the message of recovery to the still-suffering sexaholic. Please consider sharing your experience with the Fellowship by submitting an article to essay@sa.org.

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

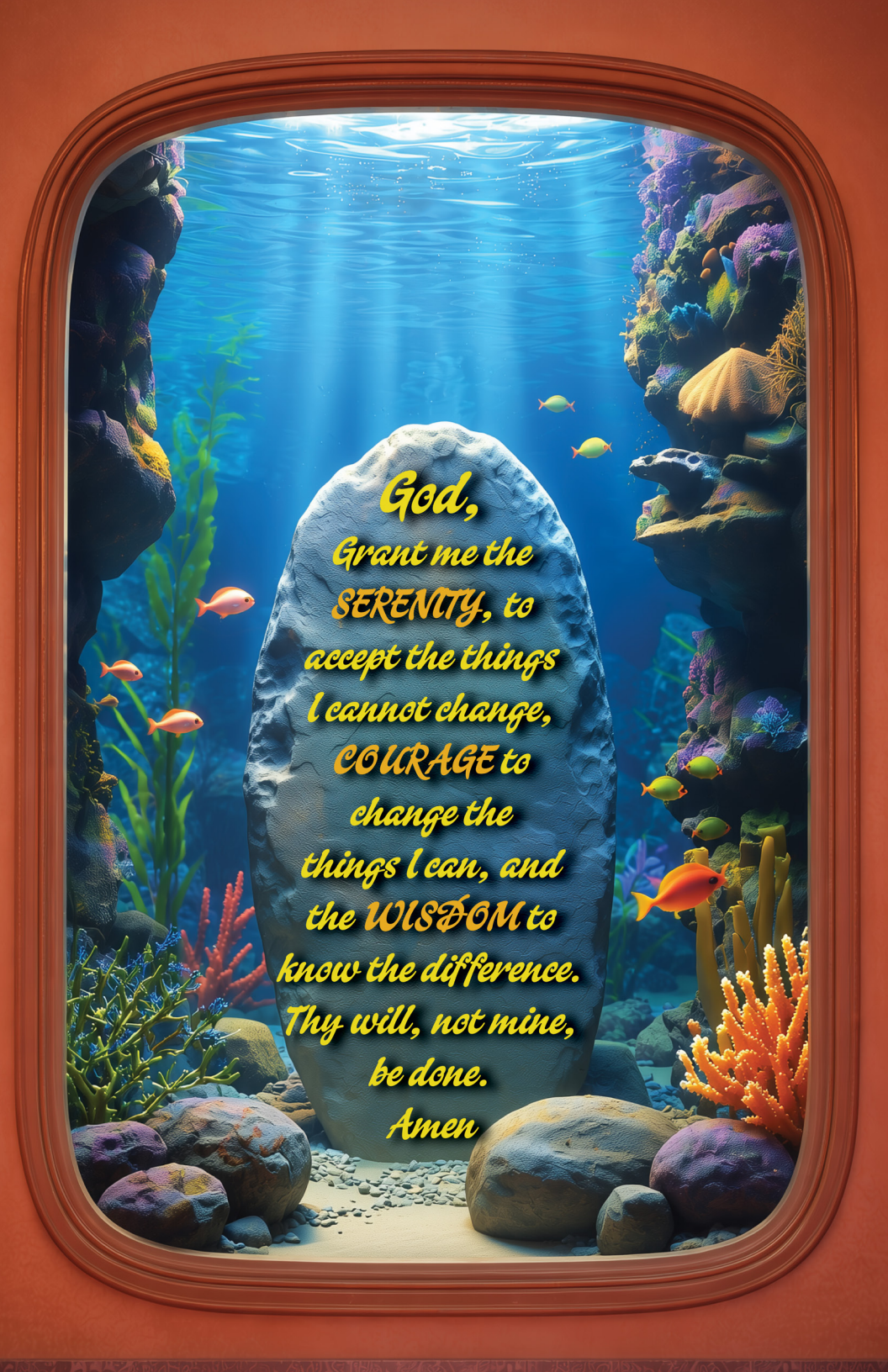
SUBMIT YOUR STORY

October 2026 edition: Made A Decision-Giving Our Lives to God (Stories due September 1) What does turning one's life over to God look like in your journey? Can this decision be made half-heartedly?

December 2026 edition: Amends: Straightening Out the Past (Stories due November 1) What is your experience with giving amends? How has Step Nine impacted your life in recovery?

February 2027 edition: Rocketed Into A Fourth Dimension (Stories due March 1) How has this deep spiritual experience revolutionized your whole attitude toward life?

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



*God,
Grant me the
SERENITY, to
accept the things
I cannot change,
COURAGE to
change the
things I can, and
the WISDOM to
know the difference.
Thy will, not mine,
be done.
Amen*