

# ESSAY

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SEXAHOLICS ANONYMOUS

# Rigorous Honesty

DECEMBER 2025



# 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*

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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

## *Congratulations to Glenn P. for*

winning first place and to Yanif G. for winning second place in the Best Caption Contest. Both captions are featured in this edition.



## *rigorous honesty is the gateway*

to recovery in SA. At first, I thought that admitting the full extent of my problem and sharing my real history were impossible. What would others think? During Step Five, I confessed a long-held secret to my sponsor. I had expected an overly dramatic moment, but he didn't overreact, and I also didn't feel an overwhelming sense of relief. Instead,

I felt the simple peace that comes from straightforward, honest disclosure. Through consistently practicing rigorous honesty, I finally found lasting sobriety and peace.

John H., California, USA

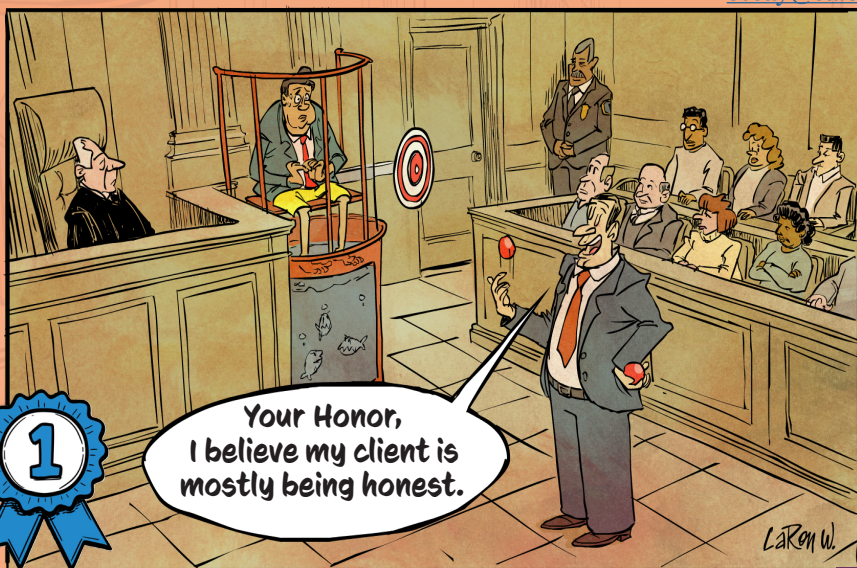
Assistant Editor



In this edition, members reflect on what rigorous honesty means in this Program of recovery, from the deep sense of camaraderie that honesty facilitates to how honesty is necessary for true amends. One member writes about how sitting down to write an honest letter to God was a turning point. Another member reflects how honesty during Step One was the first time he recognized events as they really happened, and not as he imagined. Throughout the issue, we'll see how SA members are "developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty" (AA 58).

In Fellowship,  
The Editorial Team

[essay@sa.org](mailto:essay@sa.org)



# December 2025

*There are those, too, who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest.*

*Alcoholics Anonymous, 58*

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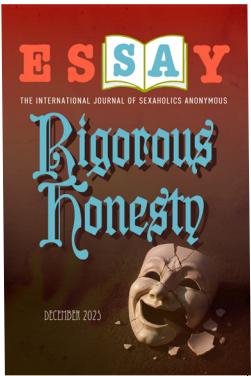
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ESSAY presents the experience, strength, and hope of SA members. Opinions expressed in ESSAY are not to be attributed to SA as a whole, nor does publication of any article imply endorsement by SA or by ESSAY.

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: Rigorous honesty shatters the false image that we want ourselves and others to see. It allows us to begin taking the Steps that will connect us to a Power who keeps us safe and protected from our addiction.*

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# Dear ESSAY

## WELL DONE!



### DEAR ESSAY,

I wanted to compliment you and your staff on the October Issue. Well

done!

The graphics are outstanding, and the composition of text and graphics is very impactful. The representation of our Fellowship with articles from mixed sources, women, men, and international contributors is impressive and encouraging. It really is an impressive magazine. Again, well done!

Kirt B., Trustee



## WE REALLY LOVE THE ESSAY!!

### DEAR ESSAY,

Working on the ESSAY has been great! Whether it's revising or translating, it's like needing to read something on that topic! Also, we really love the ESSAY!! Recently, we opened a meeting only for women to read articles written by female authors.

International Spanish  
Speaking Sisters



**La conexión verdadera**

Te invita a la  
lectura de la revista

**ESSAY**

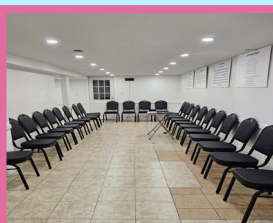
**Hoy Miércoles 7:30pm**

Reunion exclusiva para mujeres

Google Meet

## Worldwide Walls

### MEETINGS CAN BE HELD ANYWHERE



HAPPY DESTINY GROUP, WILLIAMSBURG, NY



# What's Going On In SA

Part Two

## OUTREACH TO PROFESSIONALS

*"He will show you how to create the Fellowship you crave."*

My sponsor suggested that I periodically follow up with the professionals to give them an update on how the Fellowship is doing. Sometimes, this meant calling them again to give them a verbal update, but often it meant sending them an email update. I use the BCC line for these group emails. Again, I give permission to share these emails with anyone who needs them. I have gotten calls from potential newcomers in other parts of the state who were referred by a professional who had my email forwarded to them.

Occasionally, I do the same kind of outreach in parts of my state where there are currently no SA meetings. In one case, I was reaching out to therapists and clergy in a town about 45 minutes away. By the time I got to the bottom of my list, they were expecting my call. One actually said, "I was wondering when you were going to call." When I do this outreach, I emphasize the availability of virtual options for participating in meetings. As I

mentioned in the previous article, many meetings in Nebraska had phone conference lines long before I made it to SA. These are a good way for loner newcomers to connect with the Fellowship.

Since 2017, our local fellowship has continued to grow. Others have seen that starting a meeting and working with newcomers has kept me sober, so they have started meetings as well. We now have five meetings a week.

**Others have seen  
that starting  
a meeting and  
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# so they have started meetings as well.

Recently, my sponsor has suggested following up with professionals who refer newcomers to us, to thank them for their ongoing support. Without breaking the anonymity of the newcomer, I would do this by sending an email that says, "We recently had a newcomer who said they were referred by you. We really appreciate this, because helping others is an indispensable part of our individual and group recovery."

Over the past year or so, I have done outreach with clergy members in my faith tradition within my region of the country, to try and help overcome any barriers individuals might have to trying a Twelve-Step program because it is not a part of our faith tradition. In these instances, I use my personal email address and town, in case they might want to follow up with my religious leader. I have also given my religious leader permission to discuss his perspective with his clergy friends. This outreach work got me invited to carry the SA message to a men's group within that faith tradition.

I am currently a delegate representing the North Midwest Region. Part of my delegate responsibilities is serving on two Trustee committees. I am serving on the Global Outreach Committee, which exists to serve meetings and intergroups outside

of the current service structure. Part of my role there is trying to network with individuals and groups across the Asia Pacific Rim.

I am writing this article as the Chair of the Support for Institutions and Professionals Committee. Our mission statement: "The mission of the Support for Institutions and Professionals Committee is to carry the message of recovery from sexaholism to hospitals, treatment centers, and helping professionals. We facilitate meetings, distribute SA-approved multimedia materials, and serve as a hub to connect local SA groups with the professional community." While my experience is mostly one-on-one contact with clergy, many members of this committee are experienced with outreach to professionals and institutions in a group setting. While many groups and intergroups use the mass letter or blast email approach to professionals, our committee's collective experience suggests that one-on-one works best, even when it comes to inviting them to a group setting, like a panel or group presentation.

Levi H., Nebraska, USA 



QR code to access an informational panel for professionals and other letters to professionals

## CROSSTALK



*This member shares how following the “no crosstalk” guidelines fosters real respect for all the members in the meeting.*



Over my 25 years in the Program, the opening of a meeting always includes a request that there be no crosstalk. I have learned that crosstalk is giving advice to others who have already shared.

I am reminded that I speak in the “I,” not “we” or “you”” (SA 186 ).

Instead of referring directly to another person’s share by name, I can simply say, “I can relate to a previous share,” and I can tell of one of my own experiences on the matter. Otherwise, I bring attention to the other person and distract from the share.

If crosstalk occurs, the chair can remind the person of this policy. Also, anyone can raise a hand acknowledging when crosstalk has occurred.

It has been suggested that if a person

is emotional in a share, rather than talking to the person, or placing a hand on the person for comfort, I let the person sit with those feelings. I can approach that person after the meeting. Although maybe trivial, if someone sneezes, I never acknowledge it with a “...” as it might also disrupt the flow of a member’s share.

## Ideally, nothing interferes with the flow of someone’s share.

Ideally, nothing interferes with the flow of someone’s share.

Brad G., New York, USA 

# THOUGHTS PRODUCE FEELINGS

*He practices trusting truth  
from an infinite and caring  
God rather than trusting in  
finite, lying fears.*

I get a thought.

The thought produces feelings.

I react to the feelings.

The thought was a lie.

Reflection:

Thoughts produce feelings. If I want to have positive feelings, I must direct my thoughts to truth, light, life, good, love—God. When I get false thoughts, I must give them to God in surrender: “God, I can’t handle this thought; I give it to you.” I don’t trust fear thoughts. I don’t trust selfish thoughts. I don’t trust angry thoughts. They don’t work for me. Focusing on God’s will is what works for me. God’s will is always love. Fear is the antithesis of love. All action is either motivated by fear or by love. What will my choice be today? What thoughts will I entertain? What will I dwell on today? Will I tell myself I can handle thoughts of fear, anger, and selfishness? Or will I give them to God and ask him what he wants me to be, and then get into action doing it?

Luke H., Oregon, USA





## Where is your Honesty?



*The Steps replace the addictive process with a Program of recovery.*

This happened almost 20 years ago, when I was just beginning this recovery Program. On my way to work, I was driving slowly when the vehicle behind me suddenly sped up and hit my car. It was a very minor collision, but I thought, "I can take advantage of this and get some money out of it. I'll just say that he damaged the entire rear part of my car. I knew that the other damages had been caused previously and were in no way the responsibility of that driver."

It turned out to be a young woman. She told me that she had accelerated accidentally, and that she couldn't have caused all that damage—it was clear her responsibility was limited to a small scratch. I kept insisting; we argued, and then my Higher Power enlightened me. I thought, "Something's not right here—I'll call my sponsor."

I told him what happened, and he said, "Nelson, where is your honesty?" I didn't like that question and replied that it had nothing to do with honesty. He helped me see that I was doing something wrong—charging that driver for damage that I knew my car already had. I asked, "What should I do?" He said, "Apologize and go to work." So, I did.

Later, as I practiced the Steps and examined that experience, I learned that I can't obey the first



thought that comes to my mind—it's often an addictive or negative thought. It helps me to apply the slogan, "Think, think, think". That addictive thinking is tied to self-deception—"I'll take advantage of this situation," or "It's not such a big deal; it's just a small fault." It helps me to pause between thought and action.

My sponsor used to tell me that to maintain lasting and quality sobriety, I had to be rigorously honest. Lies, insincerity, or dishonesty in any area can lead me to relapse, because as an addict in recovery, my stability depends on my spiritual condition. Just as I cannot allow myself to become intoxicated with lustful looks, memories, or thoughts, I must also be completely honest in my surrenders. I use the filter "lust-based decisions"—I ask myself: If this person were fat, old, and unattractive, would I still talk to them? Do I really have a non-sexual connection in this social exchange, or am I deceiving myself? Lust wears disguises. I cannot feed the negative connection; it does not help me to slowly drift back to hell instead of running joyfully toward heaven.

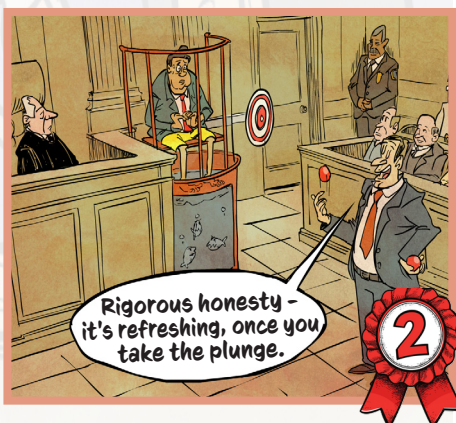
This experience led me to examine self-deception. At first, I did not realize my attitude was wrong—it seemed normal to take advantage of the situation. By practicing the Steps, I changed. Today, I can make a spot inventory to examine whether I am acting as God would have me act or following my sick ego. I cannot behave like an active addict, but as a recovering sexaholic. I am in a program of change, and it was very comforting when my wife told me that I had truly changed for the better.

The White Book says, "There is one sure way to get more than mere physical sobriety, and that is by coming out of denial, seeing our wrongs, and righting them under God—making Steps Four through Ten a way of life. The result is a new life." (SA 98)

In the 19 years of sobriety in SA that I recently celebrated, I have often found my sponsor's question useful: "Where is your honesty?" It has helped me return to the path when self-deception has tried to lead me astray. It has helped me avoid reckless behaviour. Other questions from my sponsor also help me when I feel the urge to act out: What are you running from? How are your resentments and fears? The Tenth Step inventory is very important; it keeps me alert and helps me confront the negative force within me. Self-examination allows me to replace the addictive process with one of recovery and growth.

Practicing the Steps allows me to live with hope, confidently awaiting God's blessings, aspiring to spiritual awakening, and living a happy and useful life.

Nelson, Venezuela



# Healing THE Wounds IN MY Life

*Her sponsor helped her admit deep  
resentment towards her adoptive mother.*



**R**igorous is “an adjective that means extremely thorough, exhaustive, or accurate.” Rigorous honesty is a commitment to complete truthfulness in all aspects of life, even when it's difficult or has consequences. Phew. To become rigorously honest is a process that develops through the recovery process. This addict had no clue how to be honest at the start of her journey, and to be rigorously honest seemed impossible.

I started being honest with small things, then I gradually moved on to significant areas of my life. Taking my Fourth and Fifth Steps moved my honesty into a new depth. For example, before my Fourth and Fifth Steps, I was unable to admit how angry I was at my adoptive mother for not protecting me from sexual abuse by my adoptive father and her brother (my uncle). The fact that she was in the hospital during the sexual abuse by my adoptive father never occurred to me as a good excuse for her not protecting me. She never knew it happened. I was told that if I told her the truth, it would kill her. At eight years old, that was a terrifying thought—that words could kill your mother, and I accepted it would really




happen. So instead, she received years of rage from me that was undeserved. I never stopped loving her, but at the point of the first sexual abuse, I began protecting her, and my childhood ended. It ended at eight years old. I grieve that loss still to this day.

**For many years after the sexual abuse, my goal in life was to protect myself, but I didn't know how.**

For many years after the sexual abuse, my goal in life was to protect myself, but I didn't know how. My paternal grandmother suspected that something had happened. It was the first time I ever lied to her, and it put up a fence between us. She had been the person I told everything to until then. Instead, I gained 30 pounds in a year as my first attempt to protect myself. I created fantasies of being rescued by an older brother. I withdrew into a world where fantasy and lust took

me away from all pain. It was a lonely world, but a safe one.

When I started my recovery journey in 1992, I only wanted to stay sober from acting out. My first sponsor helped me admit the depth of my anger towards my adoptive mother. Mom died in 1977 when I was 21. She is in heaven now, and I believe she knows about my sexual abuse. Has she wept about it? I think so, but I can't talk to her to be sure of that since I am not in heaven. I talk to her regularly, and I hope she hears me. I have forgiven her. Is she angry that I never told her while she was on earth? I pray we can talk about it when I get to heaven. We are both precious children of God. With time and with God's help, rigorous honesty has healed the wounds in my life.

Peg V., Ohio, USA 



# CAN'T LEAVE MY HEART OUT OF IT

*Honesty helps him take the Steps with sincerity of heart.*

**H**onesty starts with my heart. My head is going to think of all kinds of reasons to dodge the truth. When I was trapped in addiction, I listened to my head for reasons and excuses to continue to act out. I followed my head, but my heart was unsettled. With grace from my Higher Power, I found SA and began following my heart. My connection with my Higher Power is mostly through my heart.

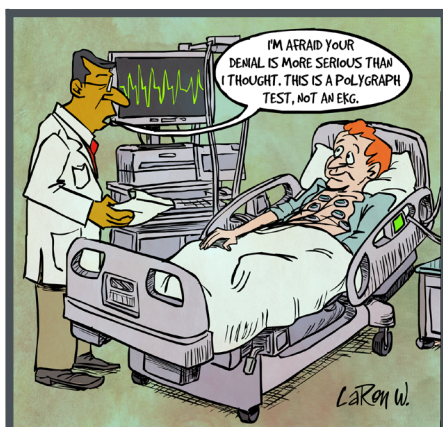
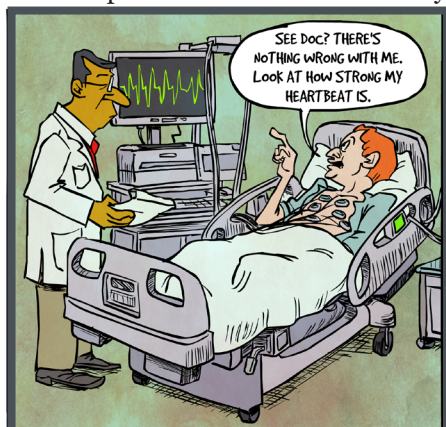
Willingness also has to do with the heart. Perhaps my heart is not entirely there yet. I admit to my Higher Power that I don't have it all together. My heart is unsettled. I want to do better, but it is not enough to be "kind of honest" or "honest most of the time." I need to be rigorously honest and admit that I cannot handle lust. Any time. All the time. My heart knows this is true. This is my Step One.

Steps Two and Three follow. If I am rigorously honest, my prayer for help will be sincere. Sincerity

speaks for the heart. "Help me," I sincerely pray, and my Higher Power always responds. Every time. This is rigorous honesty. I admit the truth, and I pray sincerely. My heart is serene. I have accepted what I cannot change, which is my powerlessness over lust. With rigorous honesty, I receive the gift of sobriety. Every time in each honest moment.

Last week, I was moving through a crowded urban area with temptations all around. When I got home, I realized that I had forgotten to surrender the temptations to my Higher Power. My rigorous honesty reminded me that I had made a mistake. I had leftover images spinning through my head, and my heart was not at peace. I made a phone call and shared it at a meeting. Sharing these things will help me remember and do better next time. My heart is restored to peace when I am rigorously honest.

Kwaku O., Ghana





A close-up profile of a lion's head on the right side of the page, looking towards the left. In the lower-left foreground, a small, white and tan dog stands on a sandy surface, looking up at the lion. The background is a soft-focus natural setting.

# a LOT OF COURAGE

*Higher Power gives her the courage to turn her whole life over to the will of God.*

**W**hen I hear the words “rigorous honesty,” all kinds of things go through my mind: bringing the inside out, sharing with others, writing Tenth Step inventories, making phone calls, and sharing honestly and sincerely in meetings. In my recovery, it has already become clear that this is absolutely necessary.

But you know what? Sharing honestly and sincerely with others has never been my problem. I have always opened up, even before recovery, because I sought attention. By God's grace, I no longer do that today and limit my sharing to SA members.

The challenge for me lies more in being rigorously honest with myself. I would deny that a house is on fire even if I were in it. It is much easier to wear blinders than to admit that something is not working and then leave it up to God. And I seem to want to avoid that at all costs.

For example, in SA recovery and sobriety, I was in love with someone for a long time. I wanted it to work. I suddenly had a lot of fear,

a lot of trauma that came up, and uncertainty. After about a year of a lot of suffering—for both of us—I had to admit that it wasn't working, follow God, and let go. My life has gotten much better since.

## I have to dare to give myself to Him

Rigorous honesty takes a lot of courage, and I don't have that. My Higher Power does, and He is not too shy to give it to me. I have to dare to give myself to Him, put my whole life in His hands, and trust Him. That is Step Three: “Made a decision to give our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.” (AA 59) Our will and our lives. I hereby commit that, just for today, I will place my life in His hands. I am taking the Third Step again today. I want to be rigorously honest, and I pray to God for the willingness and courage to do so.

Nathalie V., Belgium







# HOLDING NOTHING BACK

*He learned through the Program to be honest in every area of his life.*

**R**igorous honesty with myself is the best medicine for the disease because my disease comes out of denial—lying to myself and others. Before lust, I learned to fantasize and make up fun stories. I took that into my daily life when I discovered I could just lie to avoid trouble or to deal with uncomfortable things.

I remember one instance when I lied to myself about God. My parents had divorced, and my mom, sisters, and I had to move into my uncle's house. I was very angry to be at someone else's home. Neither my parents, other people, nor God were doing a good job, so moving forward, I was going to be in charge of taking care of "me". I was six years old. I believed that lie and started to fear the world; I needed to make myself feel good.

I felt entitled to lie, cheat, and manipulate to get my needs and wants met. These lies mixed up my needs and wants so badly that I lost the ability to see the difference between what I want-

ed and what I truly needed. This and many other attitudes went unchecked in my life for over 33 years. Excused by my fears and resentments, I never spoke with anyone about this.

After I came into the Program, I admitted I was an addict and a sexaholic (what a scary word for me at that time). I admitted that something was seriously wrong with me and that I was not in good shape to manage anything, especially my life or taking care of myself. I saw that there was help in SA for me, and I was hurting enough to be willing to stop lusting and to want to achieve sexual sobriety more than anything. It was life or death for me (and by the grace of God, it continues to be). I did the work that my sponsor suggested, made calls, went to meetings (leading with my weakness as my sponsor would say), did Step work, finished tasks at home that were pending, did my job, said prayers and meditations, did service, etc. All this was against my will. It was very painful, uncomfortable, and new.

I didn't know it at the time, but



as I was working the SA program continuously, I was growing in honesty and all my other God-given virtues.

I was giving my everything, all my attention and energy, because I knew I had lost my right to life, my family, my money, and everything else. My honesty, guided by my sponsor and inventories, showed me that I had failed in all my endeavors.

## I am busy living my life and doing God's work, and I no longer need to lie to live.

Through not holding back, I let my sponsor and brothers in SA into every aspect of my life. I shared and they shared. I became a member. That is the basis on which, through God's grace, there is growth in all aspects of my life. I am busy living my life and doing God's work, and I no longer need to lie to live. I have honest conversations inside and outside of me. This Program has me traveling to conventions, and for some of those, my wife has started joining me.

My kids have their own life and their own Higher Power, and it's guiding them just fine without me lecturing or putting my fears, insecurities, and failures into them, "to help them." My wife has found her own place in recovery.

These last few months, we have had to face difficulties as a family. My wife has been away for over six months, taking care of our son dealing with cancer at a hospital on the other side of the country. She has had back surgery, as well as the expenses, traveling, and other things that come with life. Through all this, I am sober and growing in honesty. Relapse, lusting, self-pity, resentment, and lying were never options but rather working the Program, staying sober, telling the truth, and living "thy will be done"—what is the next right thing? Calls to my sponsor and others for help and asking "how can I grow in understanding and efficiency" are my options.

I am a sexaholic who is thoroughly enjoying our path. It does work when I work it!

My heart is FULL of gratitude and love for SA, life, God, reality, Higher Power, and whatever the word is that takes me to that wholeness in me and around me.

Anonymous





# Looking At The SUN

*Completely exposed before God with a willingness for Him to take away her defects gave her a vital spiritual experience.*



have been in SA for five years, and am three years sober. I have been working through the 12 Steps with my sponsor, from the *Step Into Action* book. I am well aware that there are other methods in practice in SA, but I can only relate my own story (which I guess is rigorous honesty). It is a very detailed, painstaking method, and very deeply soul-searching, often quite painful, but extremely rewarding and beautiful nevertheless, and highly literature-based. This article is about my most recent, and extremely intense, Step work on beginning with Step Seven. The title reflects the almost white light experience Bill W. experienced, but which had never happened to me, until now.

Let me unpack this in the context of this edition's theme of "Rigorous Honesty". I gave my life to the God of my understanding when I was nine or ten years old. I have been in recovery a long time in another fellowship, in which I took Steps Six and Seven many years ago, and I have recited the Step Seven prayer the majority of



mornings ever since. But I said it without sexual sobriety, and without the rigorous honesty that is an essential part of SA sobriety. I can sincerely assert that I was always doing my best with what light I then had. It was like standing in a dim room, with my back to the window. There would be some light. Then I turned around and stood looking at the sun! That is how I feel now.

## Then I turned around and stood looking at the sun! That is how I feel now.

What I did, in good SA style, was to make myself ready to receive this gift from the God of my understanding through painstaking Step work over time. Step Four was fairly easy. I already knew I was resentful, dishonest, selfish, and afraid. Step Five was painful and necessary. It was the beginning of rigorous honesty: as it says, “We must be entirely honest with somebody if we expect to live long or happily in this world” (AA 73-74). But it didn’t change me. I learned well and truly in Steps Four and Five the famous line, “It’s Not Them.” It impressed me more deeply than ever as to who I am and what urgently needed removing. It convinced me that “it is truly awful to admit that, glass in hand, we have warped ourselves into such an obsession for destructive drinking that only

an act of Providence can remove it from us” (12&12 21).

This was cemented for me in my Step Six work, which rubbed in deeply what needed removing, and strengthened my absolute willingness to have it removed, but only at an initial stage, largely theoretically. It gave me a list of the prayers we wrote together to have the defects removed, which was the beginning of actual change, rather than study and reflection.

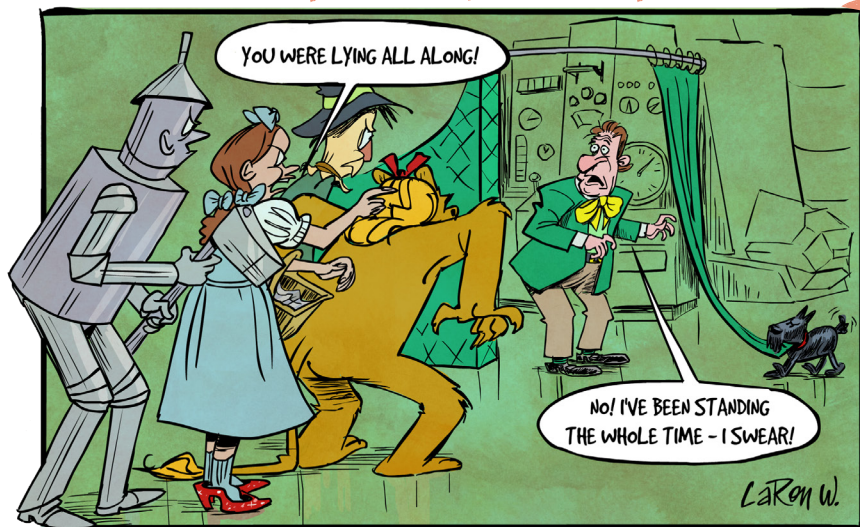
This week, I did my initial work on Step Seven: I read the introductory part in *Step Into Action*, and, as far as I could, members’ shares. I managed the first two. It was the most galvanising, real, profound, spiritual experience of my entire life! And I have been doing my best to have a relationship with God since I was nine or ten! But this was when the penny dropped. I underlined almost every single word in those sections.

This passage was the very epitome of rigorous honesty: every little trick, cogwheel, and rationalisation I have used to get by in life was laid bare in glorious technicolour. Nowhere to hide or excuse myself, I stood in front of God, totally exposed, with the two questions burning: Is this really me? and Am I now willing for my Newfound Friend to take it all away, root and branch?

Truly, truly, “when the pupil is ready, the Master appears.” My “roots grasp a new soil.” Indeed, “when I have nothing left but God, I find that God is enough.”

Kathie S., Devon, UK 

# THE STARK REALITY



*His Step One was seeing reality for the first time without the lies and admitting to himself that he was addicted.*



igorous honesty means the ability to share a feeling or situation with another person in a truly unbiased statement of fact. Addicts like to gloss over and shade the truth of events and characterize them from their point of view without consideration for the other party or the reality of the event.

For years, we have lied to ourselves and to others about our own actions, our own attitudes, and our own beliefs. Our whole life is one of delusion and deception.

When we come to the stark reality of our addiction and are forced to admit that we are addicted (Step One), we realize that we can no longer lie and deceive ourselves or other people. We had to learn to change our behavior and be truthful to ourselves and others. This was not easy and in fact, is very difficult for us. We could only do it with the guidance of a Twelve-Step group and our sponsor. It was a slow process that sometimes took weeks and months. In the last analysis, it was the reality that finally came through to our understanding (Step Four). When we looked at ourselves as we really were and then (Step Five) admitted them to our sponsor.

Rigorous honesty means that we must recognize the reality of the situation, as it truly was, and not as we would like or hope that it was. We must recognize the truth and be honest with ourselves and with others about what happened and what our part in it was. Then, we must face the other party and make amends to them, acknowledging our faults and apologizing for our wrong behavior. We must acknowledge the truth and be able to recognize the events as they really happened and not as we imagined that they happened.

Paul Z., Georgia, USA



**H**i guys, I'm Abhinav, a grateful recovering lust addict and sexaholic, sober today one day at a time (ODAAT) from August 15 of this year by the grace of God.

I started my journey with SA in April 2023, when a close person in my faith tradition suggested I attend a Twelve-Step program for my compulsive masturbation problem.

I have been a chronic relapser from the time I started working the Program, with my longest length of sobriety being 37 days. If I look at myself, I was never rigorously honest with anybody, even after coming to SA and working the Steps. That doesn't mean I was completely dishonest. No, I was honest but only partially, making half-measures. As the AA Big Book says, "Half measures availed [me] nothing" (AA 59). After going through many relapses, troubles, depression, and suicidal ideations, something changed in my attitude this year. I sat down with my God and I wrote down an honest, teary letter to him describing my situation and begging for his mercy. I was never honest to that extent in my life, and in that process

of writing, God changed something inside me.

God brought about in me a change in my character that I could never have brought about in myself. I started to be more honest in my shares. Most importantly, I started to be completely honest with God, myself, and my sponsor.

## I started to be completely honest with God, myself, and my sponsor.

Around the same time, I was working on Step Six again with my sponsor, and he suggested I take an in-depth inventory this time. While writing that inventory slowly and gradually, I started to become more honest with myself and the God of my life.

If you ask me about my life now, it's no less than a miracle, and who's doing that miracle: My loving God. God did for me what I couldn't do for myself. Thank you so much, God. Thank you for letting me share.

Abhinav, India



## AN HONEST TEARY LETTER



*He stood at the turning point of his inventory and abandoned himself to God through complete honesty.*





# The Pursuit

*Practicing rigorous honesty has enabled him to grow in integrity in every area of his life.*

When I was in a treatment centre to deal with my addictions, they asked me to write down three words I would want to be written on my tombstone. I wrote Honest, Courageous, and Loyal. In writing this, I realized that honesty was at the root of all three. When I pledged to be rigorously honest, it meant I pledged to avoid even the smallest distortions, whether those were exaggerations, omissions, or self-serving tweaks to reality. Particularly, this is true with all matters relating to my wife and is the cornerstone of my loyalty to her. Shortly after getting into recovery and losing a career of 20 years due to my deceit and dishonesty, I had finally restarted a new career with a new boss. I had made an expensive mistake and could have ignored it, as I had caught the error and fixed it. However, rigorous honesty had me walk into my new boss's office and own the er-

ror without minimizing or laying the blame on anyone else. He simply asked me what I planned to do about it. I told him what I had done, and he was grateful I had told him. The world did not end as I had predicted in my head. When trust is present, relationships deepen, and communication becomes more open and fruitful. This was true for my relationship with my boss, who continued to trust me more over the 13 years I worked for him, each time I showed up in truth. He did not want to see me go when I finally decided to retire this year.

Humility does not come easily to me. I am often reminded of the man in SA whose home group decided to give him a pin for being the humblest member they knew. When he wore the pin to the meeting the following week, they took it away. Humility is tricky like that. A member in one of the groups I attend often says, "Don't worry about finding humility; humility will find you."

I also must balance honesty with




compassion and tact. Rigorous honesty does not mean bluntness or insensitivity. I must convey the truth in a way that respects the dignity and feelings of others. When dealing with my wife or kids, for example, this might mean choosing the right moment, the right words, or the right context to share difficult truths, and always maintaining a spirit of kindness and empathy. It is not unlike when I wrote Step Four. My sponsor asked me not to stay on the self-flagellation, but also to be honest about my assets and to name what I had hidden, denied, or rationalized. He asked me to do a truth-telling of my patterns, fears, resentments, and behaviors.

The pursuit of rigorous honesty sometimes feels lonely, especially in contexts where dishonesty is normalized or rewarded. Yet, for me, every act of truth-telling is a small act of courage—a concerted effort to regain the trust I had lost from my wife. The rewards of such courage are many: deeper relationships with my family, greater self-awareness, and the

satisfaction of living in alignment with my values. I truly can “look the world in the eyes and stand free.” While the challenges persist, they are far outweighed by the benefits.

For me, rigorous honesty is far more than an ideal—it is an essential practice for me, as someone who is seeking to live a life of meaning and loyalty. It asks me for ongoing reflection, unwavering courage, and a willingness to face whatever truths emerge. And in a world around me that often prizes convenience over principle, rigorous honesty stands out as a source of hope and renewal. By committing myself to this demanding, yet deeply rewarding, standard, I help build a family rooted in trust, fairness, and mutual respect—a family in which the truth is not just spoken but lived each and every day. Now, to be clear, I am not saying I practice rigorous honesty perfectly. I have many flaws and fall short on many occasions. I simply want to be on my way to being “flawesome!”

Roland R., BC, Canada 

## DISCUSSION TOPIC

Roland mentions in his article, “The Pursuit,” how honesty was vital in his new relationship with his wife. How important has honesty been in your recovery? Have you needed help in identifying when you have been dishonest?

How have you dealt with the

fear that can come up with needing to tell a difficult truth?

Has the amends process helped you become more honest in your life?

Have you ever “balked” on honesty, and if so, what was the outcome?

Roland also shares how he told the truth to his employer and what happened as a result. Have you experienced

a situation where you told the truth at work, and if so, did a major consequence occur? Did you lean on your HP to see you through it?

Lastly, do you find that honesty produces courage? How so?

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](mailto:essay@sa.org).

# THE SURE FOUNDATION



*He found he could give himself entirely to this program on a solid foundation of honesty.*

**W**hen we read “How it Works” from the AA Big Book, I am encouraged by how little stands between me and recovery! Even being gravely emotionally and mentally disordered is not an obstacle (whew!). The one condition? To give myself to “this simple program” of the Steps.

A riddle: On August 10, 2020, I relapsed within the same 48 hours of calling into meetings, working with a new sponsee, calling my sponsor, and recently making amends! What happened?

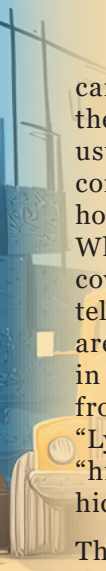
Short answer: what I did NOT do was ask my sponsor if what I was planning to do was a good idea. I did not admit to myself that (a) this activity opened a path to deliberate self-stimulation, and (b) that was why I was drawn by it (the “tease, intrigue, and forbidden”). Instead,

I thought of the addict’s four most dangerous words: I. Can. Handle. This.

Something had to change. I needed a sobriety that rested on a strong and sure foundation, not one that lived under the shadow of the possibility of acting out. I already had around 15 years of the white knuckling two step program of relapse (Step One: I’m the worst! Step Two: God, fix me! Relapse and repeat.). I was tired of “my program” that only worked some of the time, frightened by how easily I had returned to the powerful and isolating darkness of this disease, and I had no effective defense!

Where was the answer? What do I need to give for this Program to work? Hours of writing? Calls? Daily actions? These help to the extent they are occasions for what I truly need to give: myself. “Those who do not recover are people who





cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves” (AA 58). What stands between me and recovery? Lying. (Joke: “How do you tell if an addict is lying? His lips are moving!”). I learned to cope in the world by hiding from you, from God, and most of all, myself! “Lying” is just another way to spell “hiding.” How can I give what I hide?

The path to freedom lay in simple, direct honesty. First, I invited God to lead this whole process. I decided to accept whatever He revealed. I just wanted peace. Then I read “What is Sex with Self?” (*Practical Recovery Tools* 13) and asked myself that question. “Technical sobriety” gave no peace. Once I admitted I had relapsed, peace flooded back, and I became aware of God’s loving presence in and around me. Everything was going to be OK. I could feel the path to a new, clean life open up.

## When I’m in His Presence, God communicates Higher Power, and I don’t desire to lust.

When I’m in His Presence, God communicates Higher Power, and I don’t desire to lust. There really can be a daily reprieve from the obsession. But I cannot receive this if I’m blocking the HP channel

with lust/ego noise. “There could be no relief from the obsession of lust while still practicing the acts of lust” (SA 158). Where was I lust-drinking? Was I ready to be done, and turn them over in action to my sponsor and HP for direction? I began again from Step One, committed to honesty (with myself, sponsor, and God) and willingness (to take action).

I knew what I had to stop. Some obvious: browsing media in hopes of “stumbling” across something. I needed to be done with that attitude (the “right” to browse) and action (getting on specific sites/times I don’t need to). Some less obvious: getting ego hits by condemning others to avoid fears.

Once I accepted these things, I needed help at this drastic level (to be relieved of the obsession before the first drink of lust/resentment!) I became open and started getting help. Today, my recovery rests on a strong, peaceful foundation—His care.

The work of the Steps is a work of honesty. Even at its most intense, I’ve found it carries a deep, quiet joy because it turns out that I am made to live in the truth, not a lie. (Proof: It is harder work to keep convincing myself that my lies are true!). And happily for this otherwise hopeless sexaholic, the promise of “How it Works” is not a lie: “God could and would [relieve my sexaholism] if He were sought” (AA 60). Thank You, God.

Angelo A., Kansas, USA



**T**o every brother in SA who has treated me with respect and kindness, who notices the discomfort of being the only woman in an SA meeting or event, to those who strive every day to make SA a safe place for us, to those who have treated me like their daughter or sister, to the loving brothers who welcomed me in SA—thank you!

You helped me heal the negative image I had of men. I've been able to make amends with my father and forgive him. I no longer feel uncomfortable interacting with men, nor do I see them as my enemies. You have taught me how to become and act sober.

I've seen you cry, be vulnerable and honest, and, on several occasions, heard your apologies to the women you've hurt. Hearing those apologies filled me with joy, but honestly, I used to believe I would never have to apologize to any of my past acting-out partners—after all, they hurt me, and I was the victim.

Today I know that lust is like a mirror—it reflects what you project onto it. I used to attract sexaholics because I was constantly sending out signals of lust myself. Today, men treat me very differently, both inside and outside of SA. I no longer

believe men are monsters only seeking sex. Now I can see them as sons of God, divinely imperfect beings just like me.

I am not going to contact the men I acted out with in the past to make amends, so I wrote this list instead.

**I am truly sorry for:**

Saying that all men are the same and that none of them are worth it. Valuing only your physical attractiveness or financial status.

Disregarding your feelings and mocking your vulnerability—saying things like “men don't cry” or “man up.”

Being unfaithful.

Being dishonest, manipulative, controlling, violent, and jealous.

Pressuring romantic or sexual encounters, even when I could sense your discomfort.

Stalking you, and checking emails and phones.

For never appreciating your efforts—I always wanted more attention, more love, more calls, more dates... nothing was ever enough for me!

My living amends are being a decent, sober woman, respectful of the men I interact with. I love you all.

Evelyn T., Colombia



*This member embodies the honesty necessary to make this amends from the heart.*

FROM  
MONSTERS  
TO  
BROTHERS

# MELTING THE ICE INSIDE

*This member is living life on a spiritual plane as a result of practicing the Program, with deep love for sponsorship.*

In my early childhood, I dreamed that something great was going to happen in my life. These were childish fantasies—on the level of a big castle, beautiful nature all around, a "prince," and a rich, heavenly life. As a child, I believed in my beautiful fairy tale. But life has its own adjustments to make...I grew up, and my fantasies changed beyond recognition; I began to crave debauchery more and more. And there it was—the great power of lust! Lust killed everything: my childhood faith, naivety, curiosity, and interest in life.

I came to SA at the age of 45, feeling completely alone, with a long-term marriage and five children behind me. Any hope for happiness and freedom from lust had slipped away. I was resigned to moving toward my sad end, completely unable to understand how to feel warmth or see the light. The cold held me not only from the outside but also from within. Gradually, the ice began to melt,

though I periodically slipped back into illusions of a beautiful life. But every time I came back to SA, I would gulp in the fresh air again.

I now have seven months of sobriety according to the SA definition. I have finally reached the spiritual level of the SA Twelve-Step Program. And the main engine driving me is my sponsee. She pushes me to move forward, for which I am grateful.

Thinking back to those childhood dreams, I want to say that the Great Event is what is happening now. The great fact is that when I wake up in the morning, I thank my Higher Power for my being at home, in my own bed, and for being sober. I have clarity in my head and serenity in my soul. And in moments when lust attacks, I thank my Higher Power even more for not abandoning me, for keeping me safe, and for loving me.

Anonymous Sister, Russia





## God uses him to carry the message of recovery through his musical gifts.

**M**y name is Winfried, and I come from Germany. I have been sober since February 14, 2013, thanks to God's grace.

I am an "amateur musician." I always enjoyed improvising because there were no rules. I could play and press the keys that God showed me. Above all, it calmed me because there are no mistakes when I improvise. My playing cannot be controlled because there is no sheet music. That made me feel very free.

Two years ago, I was on vacation in the mountains, sitting by a lake. I had the text of the Serenity Prayer in my head and hummed a melody to it. It was just there. I was able to remember the melody because of the intervals between the notes. That was the start of setting four steps of prayers that are very close to my heart to music. They are the 2nd, 3rd, 7th, and 11th Steps.

This is how God gives me music. I sit down at the piano, look at the words of a prayer, and am given a melody to go with it, which I then write down. It usually just flows. Sometimes it takes one, two, or

three attempts.

For a long time, I was unsure whether these pieces should be for the "public," at least for the public in our community, because I struggle so much with my desire to please.

Last week, I visited a sponsee whose wife is also in our program. There, I received feedback from her: "Winfried, you have been given this gift from God, and it does not belong to you, so share it with the community."

I understood this as a clear sign from my dear Higher Power and wrote to SAICO. Now I am grateful that I can pass on what God has given me, and I ask God to protect me from all the expectations and character flaws that come with it.

Winfried, Germany



Listen Here:



Sheet Music:



# IMPROVISING



# WHERE GOD FOUND ME

*By presenting himself as he truly is, God meets him there with His love that transforms.*

**I**t wasn't on the mountaintop where God found me, but in the dust. Not in the polished image I tried to uphold, but in the disorder of my soul. Over these past three months of sobriety, I've come to understand something I once feared: that my weakness is not an obstacle to the sacred—it is the doorway to it.

I've grown, for example, in my ability to ask for help without shame. Before, I used to hide behind a forced smile or silence, afraid to be seen in my struggles. Now I know that opening my heart in vulnerability doesn't make me weak—it sets me free.

I've also learned to forgive myself. For years I punished myself for not living up to the ideal of holiness I had created in my mind. I believed I had to be perfect to deserve God's love. But the spirituality of imperfection has taught me that God is not waiting for my perfection, but for my honesty. His mercy reaches me not when I prove myself worthy, but when I admit I cannot be.

Another area of growth has been in the way I pray. I no longer try to impress God with the "right" words or a polished devotion. I simply show up—as I am. Tired. Sometimes con-

fused. Sometimes at peace. And I'm discovering that God prefers my truth over my performance.

## The spirituality of imperfection is making me more compassionate.

Even the way I look at others is changing. The spirituality of imperfection is making me more compassionate. I used to judge others quickly, from a silent pedestal of false strength. Now, from within my own wounds, I can look at a struggling brother and say, "I've been there too... and I'm still walking."

My soul, once hardened by shame, is softening. Not because of anything I've achieved, but because of a tenderness that doesn't demand I change to be loved—but loves me so that I can change.

I am not perfect. But I am growing. And in that wounded, honest growth, God finds me every day.

Hugo M., Boston, USA





# Steps & Traditions

Down

Surrender

Steps 10-12

*He learned the difference between white-knuckling (reliance on self) and true surrender (reliance on God).*

**W**hen I was still deep in my addiction, I thought I knew how to interact with women: I performed, I craved, I hunted for the thrill of being wanted. I called it “romance” and “connection,” but really, I just wanted to be needed and admired. Lust, in every form, ran the show.

In those days—the practicing sexaholic stage—I didn’t know how to have an honest friendship with a woman. Every conversation hid a twist: “How can I get something from her?” I might have claimed I wanted love, but the Big Book says it plainly:

“Selfishness—self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles.” (AA 62)

That was me, always taking, never giving.

Then came the crash. The pain. The admission: I can’t do this alone. So I walked into a Fellowship and found people like me, who didn’t laugh when I said I couldn’t trust my mind, my eyes, or my ears.

Early in recovery—the recovering sexaholic—I swung to the other extreme. I was so terrified of my triggers that I hid from women altogether. I turned off incoming video on calls, turned on closed captions so I didn’t have to hear certain voices, and avoided any deeper one-on-one chats with women.

It felt “safe,” but it also felt empty. And over time, I found myself angry at recovery itself; am I doomed to fear half the human race forev-



er? The Big Book showed me this was not freedom yet: "In our belief any [plan of fighting sexaholism] which proposes to shield the sick man from temptation is doomed to failure." (AA 101–102) I couldn't bubble-wrap my eyes and ears forever. So what then?

That's when I did the real work: take the Steps. I dug deep, with a sponsor, into where my so-called "love" was really lust and fear. I learned to tell God the truth: I don't know how to love rightly. Please teach me. I cleaned up my old messes. I practiced daily surrender: Steps 10–12.

Slowly, my motives changed. I didn't want what I had before—secret messages, hidden flirts, selfish emotional entanglements. I wanted clean honesty, usefulness, and respect. And when I drifted, I asked God to remove my selfishness.

I remembered the Big Book again:

"We are like men who have lost their legs; they never grow new ones. Neither does there appear to be any kind of treatment which will make alcoholics like other men." (AA 30)

I can't regrow my "legs". I can't dabble with lust like normal men. But I can walk on new legs: God's power, honest motives, and daily maintenance.

Today, at the recovered sexaholic stage, do I still avoid women? No. I don't wear ear muffs and a blindfold anymore. I can be where triggers used to live—at work, at social events, in deep conversations, because now my reasons have changed. I check my motives: Am

I here to give or get? Am I hiding a secret thrill? If my heart is crooked, I pause. If I'm shaky, I work with another sexaholic instead.

So for me:

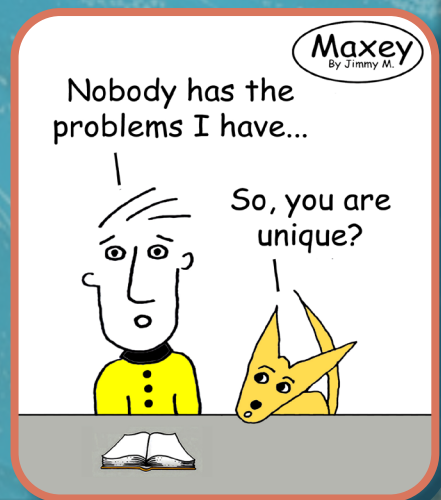
- As a practicing sexaholic, I was driven by lust, with no real control.
- As a recovering sexaholic, I hid from triggers, but no freedom either.
- As a recovered sexaholic, I live among men and women freely—not because I'm strong, but because God keeps me honest and sane when I stay spiritually fit.

I don't fear women anymore. I fear selfish motives more than I fear temptation. And I trust the daily Steps and God to keep my legs steady, one day at a time.

And as the Big Book promises:

"We are not a glum lot... we absolutely insist on enjoying life... We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous and free." (AA 132–133)

Bachan, India



An illustration at the top of the page features two men. On the left, an older man with a long white beard and hair, wearing an orange jacket, is shown from the chest up, holding a black mobile phone to his ear. He has a serious expression. On the right, a younger man with glasses and a blue shirt is also shown from the chest up, holding a black mobile phone to his ear and smiling broadly. The background is split: the left side is orange with a faint, stylized flame or smoke pattern, and the right side is blue with a faint, stylized cloud pattern. The overall style is a vibrant, comic-book-like illustration.

SA CFC

# It Changed Us Both

*Step Five had a lasting impact on both sponsor and sponsee through the Sponsor-by-Mail program.*

**S**A members in prison are encouraged through the CFC Sponsor-by-Mail program. We let them know that people “on the outside” care about them. We all have dignity as human beings, and sometimes life in prison strips that dignity from those who live there. For no reason at all, COs (Correctional Officers) can be mean and arrogant. If the COs lack self-esteem, they may think that abusing incarcerated people raises their self-esteem. Despite such trials, when we members of SA work the 12 Steps, we are reminded that our Higher Power cares for us and accepts us as we are (Step Two). We remind those incarcerated that we have a common bond in our powerlessness and a common solution to our addiction.

Through the CFC Sponsor-by-Mail program, those incarcerated learn about SA from the prison chaplain or other prison officials. They can request a free White Book, a subscription to ESSAY magazine, and sponsorship by an SA member. Many prisons allow

incarcerated individuals to own tablets and speak or text to their families and friends. This is a great help to us who are sponsors, for sometimes it allows immediate communication. Rather than waiting several weeks between letters, a phone call, or text, this offers sponsorship in “real time.”

Several months ago, I was speaking to my sponsee on the phone. He was sharing as we worked Step Five. A prison official could monitor our conversation at any time, so he was speaking in generalities to protect himself. As he shared his Step Four, he realized his responsibility for his acting out. He explained that for many years he had been blaming members of his family or other people for the way he behaved. Now, in sharing Step Five, he recognized his part. It was a very touching moment. What a communication; it changed both of us.

Service is an essential part of my recovery. Such moments as I have described above bring life to my recovery.

K. B., St Louis, USA





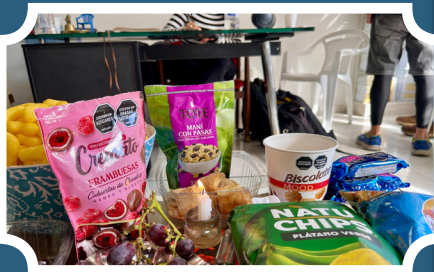
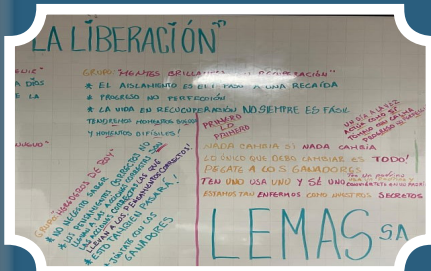
# Worldwide News



## Marathon of LOVE

Last Saturday, September 20, the Group LA LIBERACIÓN from Bogotá, Colombia, held a nine-hour marathon meeting—a space to share, laugh, and enjoy time together as a group.

During the event, we read several articles from the ESSAY magazine, shared food and drinks brought by the fellows (including the delicious dates brought by our Egyptian fellow). We even welcomed TWO NEWCOMERS!!!



We also held a short workshop on recovery slogans, using a tape from our beloved fellow member Luc D, recorded in 2018. We remembered how he spoke wonderful Spanish and left a mark on all our hearts!

We chose that date because on that same day, in Colombia, the Day of Love and Friendship (“Día del Amor y la Amistad”) was celebrated, like Valentine’s Day. It’s also a day to celebrate love in friendship, and people often exchange gifts, flowers, chocolates, and cards. We have tons of fraternal love and friendship in our group, LA LIBERACIÓN!

LA LIBERACIÓN, Bogotá, Colombia



# LET GO AND LET GOD—

## Recap Post Falls Retreat

Retreats are my favorite part of the SA program and a great way to meet fellows that I don't normally see. This was my second retreat, and I enjoyed playing basketball, foosball, pool, ping pong, and cards until midnight (oh, and getting to grow deeper in my relationships with others and God).

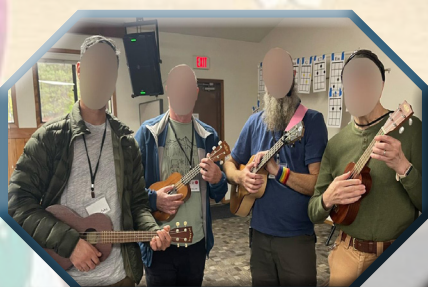
I want to highlight something important: that is, men and women working together in recovery. Standing out to me was the abundance of women speakers in the meetings and a strong showing of SA women. This spurred a very important question: How can we be more inclusive to women and make them feel a part of our Fellowship that is dominated by men? Women SA members highlighted that at the beginning of their SA journey, when they walked into the room, a handful of guys would walk out of the room, either by their choice or because their wives didn't feel comfortable with this. I have witnessed this firsthand at some of our meetings in the Seattle area, but I never got to talk to

women members in our Program about it. I was blessed with the opportunity to hear how it has affected them and the hurdles they had to overcome. They shared the fear they overcame and the uncomfortable feeling that they didn't belong, despite knowing their experience qualified them.

One member shared that while it still happens to her sometimes, it doesn't bother her as much. It is only because she is desperate for recovery. If she weren't, she might have considered leaving the Program, feeling she wasn't welcome. Another member shared a solution. She serves as the contact for all SA women members in her group who are new to the Program or need another woman to work with. She has made a QR code for all the meetings in her area, and the guys make sure all new women members are made aware of that resource.

It is safe to say that at our next business meetings, this will be a topic of discussion.

Thomas P., WA, USA





I attended the SA/S-Anon NW Regional Retreat in Post Falls, Idaho. Gratefully, this was my fourth NW regional retreat, and as someone who lives on the opposite side of the country, each one has been a blessing. It was five years ago, at the suggestion of my then sponsor, that I got involved with SA meetings in Portland, OR, and I will be forever grateful for all the recovering sexaholics I have met there.

Retreats seem to breathe something new into me and my program every time. This time, I felt a deep sense of camaraderie and acceptance in my experience over the weekend. As a sexaholic, my magic magnifying mind is always trying to focus my attention on all the problems in my life. But being around so many other sexaholics at the retreat was a welcome shift of focus. The speakers, the break-outs, the pick-up basketball, the hanging out in the evening; my HP knew I needed it all. It's a gift to now have an SA community on both coasts that I can call home.

Another highlight of the retreat was the SA and S-Anon speakers. Hearing the S-Anons tell their stories reminded me of the damage I did to others when I was acting out and the damage I can do again, if I go back out there. My lust fantasies try to tell me that it's all about me, it's only in my head, and I'm not hurting anyone. I benefit from being around recovering S-Anons, as it helps me see through those lies in my head.

Recovering in mixed meetings was one of the themes of the retreat, so most SA speakers were women. I am very grateful for their stories of experience, strength, and hope. I got the opportunity to look for the similarities (of which there are many!) instead of the differences in our stories, and that only adds to the depth and breadth of my recovery.

And lastly, I'm grateful that I got the opportunity to see my sponsor and grandsponsor in person again. I've spent my entire life trying to be a part of something. Now I've found my people.

Scott H., Washington, DC



## *A Deep Sense of Camaraderie*



# JOIN OUR CONTEST AND CRAFT THE BEST CAPTION

**ARE YOU READY FOR  
ANOTHER  
CAPTION CHALLENGE?**

We invite you to craft the perfect recovery caption for the cartoon on the right, centered on February's theme, "A Great Caution is Advised". If your caption wins, you will receive a print copy of the February edition. Don't miss out—the submission deadline is January 15. Send your entry to [essay@sa.org](mailto:essay@sa.org). Unleash your creativity, and may the cleverest caption win!



## NEW SA MEETINGS

### EUROPE & ASIA

Findhorn, Moray, Scotland,  
United Kingdom  
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

### NORTH, CENTRAL, AND SOUTH AMERICA

North, Central, and South  
America  
Chico, California USA  
Lancaster, Ohio, USA

## STEPPING INTO THE SOLUTION

### SA Retreat

MAY 22-24, 2026



Where: 4H CLUB BATTLE LAKE  
Westerose, Alberta, Canada

For more information visit:  
<http://2026springretreat.ddnsfree.com/>

To register contact:  
[steppingintothesolution2026@gmail.com](mailto:steppingintothesolution2026@gmail.com)



# COMING IN FEBRUARY



## NEXT EDITION

Our next edition's theme is "A Great Caution is Advised." This caution is in the White Book on page three, "We suggest that newcomers...not reveal their sexual past to a spouse or family member who does not already know of it, without careful consideration..." Similar caution is in the Big Book. Page 81 says, "If we are sure our wife does not know, should we tell her? Not always, we think." These cautions introduce the idea that there is a difference between relaying information that helps build up or that which can harm a loved one. Pausing and taking the necessary time while taking the Steps helps prepare one to be in a better place to decide such matters and therefore truly help that individual.

*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](mailto: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.sa.org](http://essay.sa.org).

## SUBMIT YOUR STORY

**February 2026 edition: A Great Caution is Advised ( Stories due January 1)** How has considering the White Book's caution on disclosure helped those we love outside and inside SA?

**April 2026 edition: The Positive Sobriety (Stories due March 1)** How has taking the actions of love changed the way you see service in your program?

**June 2026 edition: The Three Legacies: Recovery, Unity, Service (Stories due March 1)** What is your experience and what were the promises you have received by practicing the principles in one, two, or all three of the legacies

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 WISDOM TO  
KNOW THE DIFFERENCE.  
THY WILL, NOT MINE,  
BE DONE.