

ES SAY

February 2019

A quarterly publication of
Sexaholics Anonymous featuring:

Sobriety & Relationships

Lessons from Buzzards

Overcoming Father Anger

We Shall Recover The Feeling of Joy

Member Stories

Finding Recovery that Fits

Washing the Dishes

I Was Exactly Where I Was Supposed To Be

Practical Tools

Dealing With Fear

Let Go of The Coins

A Good Sponsor



**sobriety
&
relationships**

SA Purpose

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

Adapted with permission from AA Grapevine Inc.

Responsibility Declaration

I am responsible. When anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, I want the hand of SA always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.

Sexaholics Anonymous Statement Of Principle

We have a solution. We don't claim it's for everybody, but for us, it works. If you identify with us and think you may share our problem, we'd like to share our solution with you (Sexaholics Anonymous, last sentence, page 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*)

The only requirement for SA membership is a desire to stop lusting and become sexually sober according to the SA sobriety definition.

Any two or more sexaholics gathered together for SA sobriety according to the SA sobriety definition may call themselves an SA group.

Meetings that do not adhere to and follow Sexaholics Anonymous' sobriety statement as set forth in the foregoing Statement of Principle adopted by the General Delegate Assembly in 2010 are not SA meetings and shall not call themselves SA meetings. (*Addendum to the Statement of Principle passed by the General Delegate Assembly on 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 Delegate Assembly in May, 2016

EDITORS' CORNER

February, 2019

Dear *Essay* readers:

This issue of *Essay* includes many stories on “*Sobriety and Relationships*.” Our next issue in May 2019 will focus on “*Open Mindedness*.” Please send in any stories or short articles on your experience with *Open Mindedness* in sobriety. Future topics are August, 2019: *SA At 40 Years!* October, 2019: *Prison Issue*. Let us hear from you at essay@sa.org

Our desire to be a global Meeting in Print continues. Translations of *Essay* in Spanish and Farsi and Hebrew are happening. There are new Regions and new intergroups forming worldwide. As of February the free downloads of *Essay* were 1,657 for the December 2018 issue and 2,219 for the October, 2018 issue. Articles in Posts were downloaded 2,756 times from *Essay* in January alone! The five 2018 issues February, May, August, October and December of *Essay en español* were downloaded hundreds of times. Each of these are at sa.org/essay

We encourage groups and individuals to order mailed subscriptions for those who find *Essay* easier to hand to newcomers and to use for meeting discussions. The print edition of SA has fewer pages than the electronic version due to mailing requirements. Print or electronic, each version of *Essay* can serve you as a Meeting in Print. Thank you for being readers of *Essay*!

The Editors (David, Kira, Kent, Kirsten)
Artists: (Christian M., Jimmy M.)

Subscribe to *Essay*!

The electronic worldwide *Essay* (pdf file) is now free. Download your current or back copy from www.sa.org/essay Mailed individual 5 issue print subscriptions are \$20 USD/year to addresses in the United States. Mailed five issue print subscriptions to Canada or outside North America are \$26 USD/year. Group rate (10+ copies sent to one address) for mailed copies is \$17.50 USD/year to USA addresses. Multiple year subscriptions are welcome. Visit www.sa.org to subscribe or for information.

Are you new to Sexaholics Anonymous?

Find out more about us:

* Contact our International Central Office * Visit the SA website at <https://www.sa.org> * Call us toll-free at 866-424-8777 or * E-mail us at saico@sa.org Outside of the USA call +1 615-370-6062



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Dear *Essay*

Dear Sir or Madam,

Many thanks for putting ESSAY on the internet for us to have free download.

My name is Mostafa and I am a member of SA in Tehran, Iran.

This is a real help When I read ESSAY and I have decided to translate some parts of it to Farsi so that my friends in Iran can read and enjoy too.

If there is no problem, I start translating it. I have done the last one of it. So I attach in in my E-mail.

I would be glad to have your suggestions.

Yours Sincerely, Mostafa A

Ed.: See the Farsi translation here or at the *Essay* posts section of sa.org.

Dear *Essay*,

From: Илья С. <sa_siberia@mail.ru>

Date: Wed, Feb 13, 2019 at 10:37 AM

Hi, there! I am sexoholic from Russia, Novosibirsk. Here is a photo of our group's place in Novosibirsk, Russia. [Ed.: 3360 km east of Moscow]]

I love the *Essay*. Thank you very much.

Sorry for my English.

Суважением, Илья С.

Sincerely, Ilya S

Ed.: See the meeting photo on page 5.

Dear *Essay*,

Here is an article for *Essay* on Sobriety And Distorted Relationships

Hello partners. I'm Rafael from Colombia. Sober from June 1, 2016 and just for today. I'm in step 12 with my sponsor.

Grateful for the fraternity and the service they provide in the magazine. Here I send a text of mine on **The Sobriety And The Distorted Relations**, in case you are interested in publishing it in the *Essay* magazine.

A fraternal greeting, Rafael

Un artículo para Ensayo sobre sobriedad y relaciones distorsionadas.

Hola compañeros. Soy Rafael de Colombia. sobrio desde el 1 de junio de 2016 y solo por hoy. Estoy en el paso 12 con mi padrino

Agradecido por la fraternidad y por el servicio que prestan en la revista. Aquí les copio un texto mío sobre LA SOBRIEDAD Y LAS RELACIONES DISTORSIONADAS, por si les interesa publicarlo en la revista ensay.

un saludo fraterno, Rafael

Ed.: The article is in the February electronic pdf edition of *Essay*.



Our Meeting in Print

Dear Essay

Anexo la traducción al Español Traducción Revista Ensayo diciembre de 2019, para que pueda ser publicada en las web de SA España y SAICO. Gracias por su servicio. En esta ocasión colaboraron 8 personas entre compañeros y compañeras. En Fraternidad, David Coordinador de Literatura y Traducciones.



ensayo en español

Descargue el *ensayo* en español en www.sa.org/essay

Download the five 2018 issues of *Essay* in Spanish at www.sa.org/essay

Member Stories



2007

LITERATURE CORNER

This collection of thirty-five recovery stories was written by members of Sexaholics Anonymous (SA) over a period of years beginning in the 1980s. Generally, they tell what it was like living in addiction to lust, what happened to change that course, and what it is like living in sobriety and recovery. Most stories appeared previously, either in *Member Stories* 1989 or in *Essay*. This volume reflects years of work by members of Sexaholics Anonymous. We offer it in gratitude to the fellowship and to all those seeking recovery from lust addiction.

Now available in paperback and electronic editions!

Order your copy at:

<https://www.sa.org/store/>

Now available from the SAICO Online Store!

Formerly obtained from SA Publications in California. Order here: SAICO store:

Beginnings—Origins and Growth of SA
Discovering the Principles
Does A Male Have To Have Sex?

First Step Inventory
The SA Brochure—Problem, Solution,
20 Questions

PRACTICAL TOOLS

Dealing with Fear

G-d handles what we cannot

I would like to share how the program has given me the gift of lowering the volume of my fears. I cannot say that they are totally gone, but today I can live with them. I used to wake up in the morning with a feeling of dread when facing the day. The day scared me: the responsibilities, the fear of disappointing, the fear of surprises. When the night would arrive I would start calming down. I would push off bedtime because I knew that once I fell asleep, I would wake up and the whole process will begin again. Before the program, porn and masturbation would help me cope with this. Once I gave that up, I felt every bit of fear and it was killing me. Today it doesn't.

I am so grateful to the program for teaching me how to bring in my Higher Power, whom I call G-d. When doing Step 4 with my sponsor, I didn't have a very long list of resentments. Now came the time to put down my fear list. I started writing. I stopped when I reached number 57.

My sponsor told me that a fear is either not getting something I want, or losing

My sponsor told me that a fear is either not getting something I want, or losing something I have.

something I have. I definitely saw how these fears were a constant in my life and how they dictated my every move. These fears were caused by self reliance failing me. I then wrote down what this fear would look like if I relied on G-d. Well, obviously I would be a lot calmer as my Higher Power could do a much better job than I could. Intellectually I

understood this. I said the prayer asking G-d to remove my fears and direct my attention to what He would have me be, and then focus on the next right action.

I did the actions. I meant them. I would feel slight relief, but the fear would come back very strong. There was one particular week which had a lot of projects, deadlines and complicated tasks. Then came a morning where the dread was too difficult to bear. I didn't know what to do. The problems at work were resolved but I was still left with the anxiety. I called and shared. A program member suggested I see a doctor and take medication to calm myself. That scared me. I put on an audio book of the Alcoholics Anonymous in the personal stories section. The story was not one I was familiar with. It was called The Fearful One. (I had the 1st edition. I did a bit of research afterwards and found out the title was updated and reprinted in the later editions under the title "The Man Who Mastered Fear.") He wrote:

Suddenly in this maelstrom I grasped at a straw. Maybe God would help me—just maybe, mind you. I was willing to give Him a chance, but with considerable doubt. I got down on my knees—something I hadn't done in thirty years. I asked Him if He would let me hand over all these fears and this panic to Him. I lay down on the bed and went to sleep like a baby (AA 334).

I was now desperate. I couldn't live with this fear any more. I got down on my knees (something I also didn't really do until then) and told G-d that I couldn't live like this anymore. It was too difficult. I was powerless over my fears and I needed His help. I will tell you that the rest of the day was calm. The next day started with dread and I prayed again on my knees, giving my fear to G-d. It took some time but I started feeling better. Today, I scarcely have the dread

in the morning. On the occasion that I do, I go down on my knees and ask G-d to remove my fears.

A friend in the program gave a very good analogy of receiving letter post that isn't addressed to me. That is what I do with my thoughts when these fears and

I was powerless over my fears and I needed His help. I will tell you that the rest of the day was calm.

worries come to me during the day. Most are "posts" that are not addressed to me. They are addressed to G-d. He can deal with them, I cannot. I am no longer my Higher Power.

I am managing to go through the day with a lot more freedom. I am learning to live with a day that wasn't how I planned it that morning. I am learning to trust my Higher Power thanks to SA.

Dovi S

Let Go Of The Coins

Everybody gets to surrender

For me this is a Program of action. I use a handful of coins with newcomers as a tool to explain Steps 1 through 3.

To begin, I ask the person to pick up a coin if they came from a family of secrets. Then I take a coin, as that's part of my story. Then, pick up a coin if they were sexually abused or introduced to pornography at an early age. Pick up a coin if they learned about masturbation before puberty. If they masturbated more often than they thought was proper, pick up a coin. If there were other addicts in the family, pick up a coin.

Pick up a coin if they were doing things against their family's traditional religion or the family's values. If they started living in fantasy, anger, or resentment, pick another one. If they made boundaries and then crossed them, if they wasted an hour or more on the internet, if they married hoping to stop acting out, pick up a coin.

I ask if at any time in their life they decided they did not want these actions anymore and asked God to take them away, or if they swore not to engage in the behavior any more but did it anyway, or if they asked God to end their life because they could not stop, take a coin.

I tell them I asked God "Please take this away" and He never would. I talk about making a fist and pleading "I don't want this... I don't want this... I don't want this." I begged, I cried out, I bargained, and nothing happened. Then I found the SA Program.

I went to the Program and asked them to take these away. They said "No, you have to give them away. God is not going to take them away. You have to give them to Him. You have to turn it over to Him."

Then I turn my fist over still holding my coins. And I say "I have to let go to give them away" and I let go of my coins. They cause a clatter and noise and then I say "That's Steps 1, 2, and 3 in a nutshell. The key is DON'T PICK THEM UP!" I ask them to do the same. Sometimes we do this in a restaurant, sometimes in the parking lot after a meeting. They feel freedom no matter where we are as they experience their first surrender.

Dave T.

The Real Threat

Going to any lengths every day

As I sit here in meditation, it is dawning on me the biggest threat I have on me is it takes the cord of my soul and plugs it into myself, as the White Book suggests. It is absolutely impossible for me to be truly present for my wife, my kids, and real-life significant relationships. Yes, I can fake it for a spell, and all may seem well. But what is actually happening here is I am connecting to others out of my guilt and my “fight or flight” reserve. This

I must be willing to go to any lengths to get a single day free of seeing and thinking that my solution lies within myself.

always leads to a collision with those I claim to love. This is an inevitable fact. It always happens. So then, what is my only option?

My only option is to lean into the pain of the want and the deep longing to plug into myself. I must override every impulse that tells me the next look will not hurt this time, the Great Lie. I must be willing to go to any lengths to get a single day free of seeing and thinking that my solution lies within myself. I must plug into the very Source of life itself: Truth.

This is the base desperation lacking in those who fail to stop and stay stopped. Without such utter desperation, I cannot and will not stop. I will continue living my life from the position of guaranteed failure.

Frank G -- sober since 9-30-15
Maryland, USA

SA Opportunities

SAPIC

NEW VIDEO FOR WOMEN!

The Public Information Committee's newest video was recently approved unanimously by the General Delegate Assembly for worldwide distribution!

This video has been in production for over two years and we're grateful to share it with members and prospective members around the globe.

A HUGE “Thank you!” goes out to the women members around the fellowship who submitted video and audio clips for the project—together, we hope to save some lives!

The PI Committee is already working with SAICO and the IT Committee to post this on SA.org along with our other videos, but until then you can get a sneak peek by typing the following into your web browser:

<https://vimeo.com/sexaholicsanonymous/women>

Help us spread the word to sexaholics who are still suffering. If you have any suggestions for other videos or other ways to communicate our Solution for recovery, or if you'd like to volunteer to be a member of the Public Information Committee, please contact SAICO to apply.

Rage and Anger Issues in Sobriety

We are recovering SA members from different countries who admit we need extra help for our ongoing anger and rage issues. We started a WhatsApp group in order to share our experience, strength and hope on this character defect. If you have this problem, you are welcome to try out our solution-focused whatsapp forum. Please contact Luc D: luc4essay@gmail.com

A Good Sponsor...

Stepping in the river of hope

As with a lot of things in the Program, I grew into sponsorship. First, I had to learn to be a good sponsee and work my own program well. Then when I began sponsoring, I learned from my sponsees. Here is what I have learned so far.

A good sponsor ...

... **is a good listener.** Many times a sponsee just needs to talk, to get light into his/her thinking by letting things out. I don't need to rescue, load with advice, counsel or judge. I need to listen well.

... **doesn't judge the person but rather the behavior.** If I act out, I am not a bad person. I am acting in an unhealthy way. My behavior is a statement about my addiction and disease, not a statement about my morals.

... **is humble,** "This worked for me," "I suggest you try this." When my sponsee doesn't follow my advice, I let him/her learn from it. Experience is the best teacher. I didn't get sober the way I had planned it. What worked was God's plan.

... **walks the walk.** I must follow my own advice. I must be using the "tools of the program" and getting progressive victory over lust. I must be real. The sponsee should see honesty and results in my life.

... **sticks to the point of the program - sobriety.** I can't solve the marital problems of my sponsees, correct their political views or their personal habits. I can only address their desire to be sober.

... **is encouraging.** I made mistakes working my program. I have to let my sponsees make mistakes without discouraging them. My Higher Power was patient with me. I can also be patient and encouraging with my sponsees.

... **has his/her own sponsor.** There is a chain of sponsorship. What I learn from following my sponsor's suggestions, I can pass on to my sponsees. My sponsor helps me see things objectively, including my relationship with my sponsees.

... **prays.** Sobriety is a Grace. It doesn't come from my power; it comes from surrendering to my Higher Power. Praying helps maintain my sobriety. I help my sponsees and my sponsor as well by praying for them.

... **is healthy in mind, body and spirit.** Without some awareness of what is going on in my life, I could "project" onto my sponsees some of my own issues. I need to have a way of letting go of my own tendency to get things my own way. To be useful to my sponsees, I need to be healthy and take care of myself.

There is a flow of the Spirit from sponsor to sponsee to the person the sponsee sponsors. It is a river bringing health, hope, sobriety and victory over lust.

Anonymous, Missouri, USA



Sobriety and Relationships

Lessons From Buzzards

Cleaning up our messes daily

The last two weeks have been a huge opportunity for me to grow along spiritual lines. As always, if I just look, I can see how everything is interconnected, and teaching me new spiritual lessons.

It all started when I went kayaking with a friend in recovery. His sponsor



had told him to look for the spiritual. At one point during our trip, he spotted some birds in a tree and asked what they were. At first I thought they were crows. When they flew off we knew they were Turkey Vultures. We watched them take off and eventually catch the thermal currents and soar. It was actually a beautiful sight!

All of a sudden my friend said “have you ever thought about how nature takes care of its messes?” He explained how nature has a system. That no matter how big or small the mess, buzzards can find it and clean it up. From thousands of feet up in the air, buzzards somehow smell dead, rotting, decaying messes. They swoop down and clean it up. Then they are off to seek out the next mess to clean up. What a spiritual lesson. If God has created the buzzards to clean up nature’s messes, why can’t he do the same for me?

A few days later I get a text from my wife. She wanted to “talk.” The words that always bring fear into my gut. I asked her for a preview of what we were going to talk about. She told me that she wanted to talk about our emotional intimacy. She wanted more than I was giving. Still more fear! I don’t know how to do that.

But then I remembered the lesson of the buzzards. I am in awe at how God has taken the mess I have made of my marriage and is cleaning it up. After all the betrayals, all the affairs, lies and hurts I have caused my wife, she wants to connect with me again. After our conversation, she even texted and said she wanted to take divorce and separation off the table in any further conversations. What an amazing spiritual lesson. What an amazing thing recovery and the 12 steps have done in my life. I think my new spirit animal is going to be the buzzard!

Preston D, USA

3 Levels of Disturbance

No recovery without sobriety

I believe the SA newcomer has three levels of disturbance—temptation, obsession, and compulsion.

The last level, compulsion, has to be broken first. This is done by the newcomer following every suggestion of the sponsor. When a sponsor suggests an action, I immediately face a decision: follow the sponsor’s suggestion or do what I want to do. One breaks down compulsion, the other leads back to what I have always had. I don’t have to want to follow suggestions. I get to

Sobriety and Relationships

do it if I want to progress in recovery.

The act of following the sponsor's suggestions creates the sponsor/sponsee relationship. If I choose not to follow the sponsor's suggestion, I am sponsoring myself. I am unable to get rid of the compulsion on my own because ego will never be satisfied and I have no control over ego. The resistance I feel at following my sponsor's suggestion IS the disease I am fighting. Constant surrender and

I can have sobriety without recovery, but I cannot have recovery without sobriety. Sobriety without recovery is a miserable place to live, a desert of pain and suffering.

following every suggestion breaks the compulsion.

Now the work begins on the obsession. I suggest sponsees go to their HP with every temptation (the alcoholic's "mental obsession.") When a lust temptation enters, it is at its weakest strength if I immediately go to my Higher Power and ask for HPs presence, which is my comfort. Then Love and Joy flood in, I feel relief and my "thinking" changes to "I really don't want that." Every time I surrender lust immediately, temptations get farther and farther apart and their power lessens. Eventually they weaken to such a point that the obsession is broken.

But if I pause and don't go immediately to my HP when temptation strikes, I will take a lust drink. Then the time between temptations will get closer, they strengthen in power and the mental obsession grows until it reaches compulsion again. I will act out without control - the alcoholic's "phenomenon of craving".

Once the obsession is broken, I experience recovery. Recovery is the freedom from obsession not the freedom from temptation. I keep surrendering every temptation immediately to maintain sobriety and thereby remain in recovery.

I can have sobriety without recovery, but I cannot have recovery without sobriety. Sobriety without recovery is a miserable place to live, a desert of pain and suffering. Without recovery I either live as a dry drunk (restless, irritable, and discontent) or return to my drug to relieve the suffering.

Recovery is the result of following sponsor's suggestions by working and practicing daily the 12 Steps. Recovery is living the principles of the program one moment at a time and only in the present. I cannot work my program for tomorrow or two hours in the future, I can only work it in the moment as it happens. I do not have to fear what's ahead because when I am working my program in the moment, I am connected to the most beautiful Power and it is everything.

Dennis T, Alaska USA



SOBRIEDAD Y RELACIONES DISTORSIONADAS

En mi experiencia, veo la sobriedad como un lago tranquilo que refleja un cielo azul, sin nubes, sin ansiedad. Recuerdo que cuando tenía una recaída era como si alguien (yo mismo) hubiera lanzado una inmensa roca y las aguas en la superficie del lago se agitaran, dejando a mi mente, mis sensaciones, confusas y alteradas, con ansiedad por consumir más y más. Había perdido la paz. Era como un enfermo cuando ingresa a cuidados intensivos. No debía tener nada al alcance que me detonara, por insignificante que fuera.

Es cierto que en el periodo de sobriedad debo cuidarme con igual empeño. Pero al haber recaído era más vulnerable, pues había despertado la compulsión que ahora pedía consumir y consumir. Al saber que no podía luchar contra la lujuria, me rendía. El mirar esos pensamientos, esas sensaciones, aceptando mi impotencia era como sacarlos a la luz o rendirme. El hecho de observarlos de esa manera les quitaba el poder que tenían de arrastrarme en su corriente caudalosa. Y poco a poco, al crecer esa distancia, con el pasar de los días o las semanas sin consumo, por la gracia de Dios el lago volvía a su quietud, a su paz.

Luego de la recaída me llenaba de enojo. Estaba atrapado en la culpa, el resentimiento hacia mí mismo y la ira por haber cedido a la tentación. En una ocasión, luego de una recaída, reaccioné de manera tan violenta ante algo insignificante que alguien hizo, que quedé asombrado. ¿Por qué me comportaba de esa manera, si suelo ser de ánimo más bien tranquilo e introvertido? Después descubrí la razón. Sentía odio hacia mí mismo por haber recaído, pero lo mantenía escondido. Como temía asumirlo pues eso significaba experimentar el dolor de la profunda decepción. La recaída siempre deja secuelas, no es algo que sucede y sigo la vida como si nada. No puedo dar

lo que no tengo, se dice en el libro blanco. Al no tener paz, ¿qué más podía dar?

Sin embargo, ello no justificaba mi comportamiento violento. Comprenderlo solo me ayuda a ser más responsable y consciente. A partir de estos episodios comencé a ver con claridad que mis relaciones con los demás dependen de la sobriedad y la recuperación que tengo. Si no estoy sobrio, es imposible que pueda haber paz en mis relaciones, es imposible contactar con lo real en mí y lo real en otro. Si mi sobriedad es negativa, lo más probable es que otros sufran las consecuencias y sean víctimas de mi descontrol. A veces

El programa me dice que no necesito recaer. Si no necesito recaer, no necesito odiarme a mí mismo y tampoco odiar a otros.

estas consecuencias aparecen disfrazadas de toda clase de sentimientos como: ansiedad, enojo, malgenio, inconformidad, intolerancia, etc. Ese es el poder de esta enfermedad (y mi irresponsabilidad) que lo distorsiona todo hasta el punto de no poder ver claro en mí mismo, y solo reaccionar a esas consecuencias sin darme cuenta de lo que me pasa.

Como se dice en muchas tradiciones espirituales, los otros son nuestros espejos, reflejan a veces con mayor nitidez nuestros defectos, y al hablar de ellos no nos damos cuenta que estamos hablando de nosotros mismos. Por eso el cambio en mis relaciones depende de mí... Comienza en mi actitud. Mi relación con los demás me muestra como un espejo el tipo de sobriedad que tengo.

El programa me dice que no necesito recaer. Si no necesito recaer, no necesito odiarme a mí mismo y tampoco odiar a otros. Si todos los días me ejercito en el programa como quien va al gimnasio y se mantiene en buena forma espiritual, ese lago tranquilo de la sobriedad positiva se va a reflejar, poco a poco. La sobriedad positiva afectará de manera positiva mis relaciones no por el conocimiento que tengo del programa, sino solo por mi entrega a él.

Rafael de Colombia.

SOBRIETY AND DISTORTED RELATIONS

In my experience, I see sobriety as a calm lake that reflects a blue sky, without clouds, without anxiety. I remember that when I had a relapse it was as if someone (myself) had thrown an immense rock and the waters on the surface of the lake were shaking, leaving my mind, my sensations, confused and altered, with anxiety to consume more and more. I had lost my peace. I was like a sick man when he entered intensive care. I should not have anything within reach that detonated me, however insignificant.

It is true that in the period of sobriety I must take care of myself with equal effort. But having relapsed was more vulnerable, because he had awakened the compulsion that now demanded to consume and consume. Knowing that I could not fight, I surrendered. Looking at those thoughts, those feelings, accepting my helplessness was like bringing them to light or surrendering. The fact of observing them in that way deprived them of the power they had to drag me into their current. And little by little, as that distance grew, with the passing of days or weeks without consumption, by the grace of God the lake returned to its stillness, to its peace.

After the relapse I was filled with anger. I was caught in guilt, resentment towards myself and anger at having yielded to temptation. On one occasion, after a relapse, I reacted so violently to something insignificant someone did, that I was amazed. Why did I behave in that way, if I tend to be rather calm and introverted? Then I discovered the reason. I felt hate towards myself for having relapsed, but I kept it hidden. As I was afraid to admit it because that meant experiencing the pain of deep disappointment. Relapse always leaves sequels. It is not something that happens and I follow life as if nothing happened. I can not give what I do not have, it is said in the white book. Having

no peace, what else could he give?

However, this did not justify my violent behavior. Understanding it only helps me be more responsible and aware. From these episodes I began to see clearly that my relationships with others depend on the sobriety and recovery I have. If I am not sober, it is impossible that there can be peace in my relationships, it is impossible to contact the real in me and the real in another. If my sobriety is negative, the most likely result is that others suffer the consequences

The program tells me that I do not need to relapse. If I do not need to relapse, I do not need to hate myself or hate others.

and are victims of my lack of control. Sometimes these consequences appear disguised as all kinds of feelings such as: anxiety, anger, foul moods, nonconformity, intolerance, etc. That is the power of this disease (and my irresponsibility) that distorts everything to the point of not being able to see clearly in myself, and only reacting to those consequences without realizing what is happening to me.

As it is said in many spiritual traditions, others are our mirrors, reflect our defects with greater clarity, and when we talk about them we do not realize that we are talking about ourselves. That is why the change in my relationships depends on me. It starts in my attitude. My relationship with others shows me as a mirror the kind of sobriety that I have.

The program tells me that I do not need to relapse. If I do not need to relapse, I do not need to hate myself or hate others. If every day I exercise in the program like someone who goes to the gym and stays in good spiritual shape, that calm lake of positive sobriety will reflect, little by little. Positive sobriety will positively affect my relationships, not because of the knowledge I have of the program, but only because of my commitment to it.

Rafael from Colombia

Overcoming Father Anger

Restoring damaged relationships

My disease destroyed the relationship between my father and me. He was a dominant alcoholic, disapproving of everything I did. Phone calls with my father ended with me throwing my phone to pieces against the wall. I believed this was a reasonable reaction for someone with a father like I had. I always acted out after calling him. My resentment against my father was fuel for my sexaholism.

Just before I entered SA, I broke off all contact with him. I had pushed him more and more away, judging him bitterly. I even “fired” him and declared that he was no longer my father. I was blinded by my anger. After I joined SA, I worked through all the Steps, including Step 9. I made all my amends except this one, which neither my sponsor nor I mentioned. I found happiness, joy and freedom in my sobriety and recovery as I continued working my program.

After about 3 years, my sponsor asked me a simple question. Is there still an amend you haven’t made? I immediately knew, “Yes, my father.” Carefully and slowly I worked with my sponsor to re-establish contact with him. Things wouldn’t be the same because I was standing on new, solid ground. I had prayer and meditation, contact with my sponsor, a fellowship, a new outlook upon life, trust in my Higher Power, SOBRIETY. The first few conversations with him went fine. My only direct amend to him was: “I am sorry that I have been a bad son to you. I want to try to be a good son from now on.” My phone

remained quietly in my hand, and so did the chairs in the room. After the conversation, I didn’t have to look at porn and masturbate. I called my sponsor instead.

Over time our contact increased, the conversations lasted longer. I visited him and introduced my fiancée to him. He was very courteous. Later he came to our wedding. What a gift! I continued to visit him together with my wife once a year and that felt safe. Slowly trust started to grow.

Two weeks ago I visited him alone for the first time in 10 years and stayed for three days. I was nervous but my wife said, “You only have to be there.” That was it; I only needed to be there with him.

My father talked a lot. After just the first day, I was getting uncomfortable by all the things he said. I wanted to respond. Then I remembered that I only needed to be there. That’s it. So I just listened. I surrendered the urge to argue, debate, walk away, do something. I just sat, listened, and kept my mouth shut. He talked a lot about his life, and I even learned some things about him.

I played his piano, and he asked me to play softer and more gently. I don’t know where it came from. I just did as he said. Instead of hearing his “disapproval,” I played softer and more gently. He said that it must have been the first time that I had listened to him. Connection!

I came home, and I felt I had the best and most wonderful time ever with my father. He called me the next day to tell me how much he had enjoyed my visit. How much he appreciated the effort that I took to come over, and leave my family alone. I told him how

much I also had enjoyed it. I suddenly realized that we'd had our first father-son weekend. Something I had always longed for!

All of my life I had a loving and caring father, and I couldn't see it. Yes, he is still an active alcoholic. He introduced me to drinking and prostitution when I was 14 years old, and always had loud and drunken friends around him. But he always welcomed me, bought me presents, took me on holidays, helped me through my studies and forgave me my behaviors as a bad son for decades. He wanted the best for me, and he did the best he could.

I truly feel love towards my father today, something very unusual for a love cripple like me. I am so grateful that I had the chance to restore the relationship with him while we are both still alive. I have become completely at peace with him, and for the remaining time that he lives, I hope to continue this, one day at a time.

Daan L., The Netherlands

Overhaul Of The Self

Spiritual maintenance matters

In my last home there was a sump pump in my crawl space to remove excess storm water. It was a real piece of work - the wrong type of pipe was used to install it, the backflow prevention device didn't work, several supports were missing causing the pipe to sag in places, and somebody had wrapped a broken

90 degree fitting with electric tape to try and stop a leak. The pump still worked, although inefficiently. I was an apprentice plumber at the time, and these glaring issues irked me to no end. When it came time to sell the house, I finally got to fix it. I tore it all out - every bit of pipe and support - and installed a new system with the correct pipe and fittings.

This experience taught me a valuable lesson about my own recovery - My "self," after getting initial sobriety, was, for all intents and purposes, just like the old piping of the sump pump. Being sober helps me better see the reality of my spiritual state. With the help of my Higher Power and other recovered addicts, I've begun to discover which of my inner parts are functioning inefficiently, and which need a total overhaul. Diseased attitudes and beliefs need to be replaced by healthy ones. And when they are, my spiritual system will work like it's supposed to.

Alex C., Texas, USA

We Shall Recover the Feeling of Joy

HP shows up at Christmas

For many years in my adult life, even after coming to SA, I did not enjoy the year end holiday season. Even after celebrating Christmas seasons with my son and my ex-wife, I have struggled with a sour and grumpy attitude about the whole experience. During the last five to ten years of my "sober" marriage with my current wife, my dark holiday cloud at times brought her to tears. And I just didn't care. This

was not a bright spot in our marriage relationship.

This past holiday season before Christmas, in my men's group I did some emotional work about the holidays. I had fear of becoming my father, a pedophilic minister, who molested his daughter and abused his two oldest sons. My fear is that I will convert to his religious faith and be a hypocrite just like my old man. From that place of fear, I still carry an anger

This past holiday season before Christmas, in my men's group I did some emotional work about the holidays.

inside that wants to fight and resist my parents and their betrayal of me. Any joy from my childhood memories connected to the happy part of the Christmas celebration (the lights, decorations, music, food, being safe and connected with family and others) is tangled up with my fear of giving in to my parents' religious beliefs.

One of the men in my group who witnessed my work suggested that I separate or untangle my joyful Christmas connection from the fear about my parents. I made a two-part commitment that night. First, I would ask my wife if she wanted to put up Christmas lights at our house and offer to help her. That is a living amends for my sour, grumpy attitude about Christmas. Second, I would share with my wife my fear and anger about becoming my Dad and converting to his religious faith.

The next morning during my morning meditation I had a Step 11 experience. I had a visualization of Christmas lights leading to my heart chakra. I was headed home to myself and at peace with myself. My experience was a pure,

inner experience which reminded me of Bill W.'s hospital "mountain top" experience. My work in the group the night before prepared me to receive this special gift from Spirit.

My wife and I went to have Christmas time with our two young grandkids. We enjoyed hearing them singing at school and we took them and their mom to see a new family movie. After the movie, as I was holding my four-year old grandson's hand, I heard him quietly singing Jingle Bells to himself. Precious moment!

Before Christmas Day, my adult son texted me to ask if I had any idea where his Christmas stocking from childhood was? When I called him, he reminded me that his grandmother (my mother) had made it for him when he was eight or nine years old and even put his name on it. I had forgotten about that.

I had a visualization of Christmas lights leading to my heart chakra.

Finally, the day after New Year's Day, I was doing some yard work and I found myself singing "I'll Be Home for Christmas." As I was singing, I realized I was singing it to that little boy who still lives inside of me and just wants to be happy and safe in the world.

Looks like my process of thawing out around the Christmas holiday is continuing. It seems to be having a positive effect on my family and close friends, as well. I am grateful for the gifts of recovery that keep showing up, as I trust my Higher Power and keep doing my recovery work. Sometimes I say in meetings, "Joy is my friend."

Marshal M., California USA

MEDITATIONS

True Value

Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions [. . .] (12 & 12 13).

I used to be convinced that only status and money would bring me happiness. If only I had more “stuff,” life would be good, I reasoned. So, when I first came to SA, I wanted a quick fix for my addiction. Then I could be free to indulge my desire for status and money.

SA, I discovered, has a different set of values. Members leave their outside identities at the door of the meeting room. Inside, the only value is an individual’s desire to stop lusting and become sexually sober. Anonymity enables us to do that because we are all in the same boat, no matter who we are in the outside world. Anonymity teaches me humility because it asks only that I accept others and myself as we are right now. It lets me see the real value in people as they share their struggles with lust and their victories in recovery, not in their deeds or wealth in the outside world.

As I connected to my Higher Power, experienced the fellowship in SA meetings, and worked the Steps, I recognized that genuine happiness does not come from material things, but from a sober life lived free from lust.

Thank you, God, for the gift of anonymity that enables me to see the true value in others and in myself.

TRC Meditations 8

Fellowship

Motivation is fleeting,
Despair is seeping,
Slowly I’m sinking into myself.

Connections lost,
My world’s been tossed,
Alone with no one else.

I don’t reach out,
I sit and I pout,
Deeper and deeper I go.

Until the phone rings,
We talk about things,
And I see I’m not alone.

The shining light,
It seems so bright,
We only can do our best.

So let’s keep in mind,
In our darkest time,
The fellowship we possess.

Mose T, Utah, USA

Inclusion

This feeling of being at one with God and man, this emerging from isolation through the open and honest sharing of our terrible burden of guilt, brings us to a resting place where we may prepare ourselves for the following Steps toward a full and meaningful sobriety (12 & 12 62).

From an early age, I felt apart from family, friends, and society in general—a “them” and “me” perception. That false perception made it possible emotionally to detach from the effects my words, thoughts, and actions had on others. But the more I harmed others—whether through lust, resentment, or deceit—the more guilt and shame battered my way of looking at things. This truth brought shame and pain. My actions had always affected those around me. My denial of my connectedness to my fellow human beings had to change.

The Twelve Steps, I found, are more than a set of instructions. Carried out with my old way of thinking, they would have had little effect. Thankfully, with my Fourth and Fifth Steps, I turned away from my imaginary isolation and felt the reality of my connection with my Higher Power and other human beings. Now I can let go of the past, see the possibility of making amends, and be mindful of my daily motives. The truth for me is this: I have never had the option of choosing unity or disunity; I have always been tied to others and always will be. My only choice is whether I am bound to others in bitterness or compassion. Today I choose compassion.

God, help me to remember my connection to you and to the peace and freedom this program brings. May I act today as a member of the great whole of existence.

TRC Meditations 124

The Art of Kintsugi

The ancient Japanese art of Kintsugi incorporates mixing of gold or silver dust with lacquer to join broken pieces of pottery or ceramics together. Not only is there no attempt to hide the damage, but the repaired object becomes more valuable than the original. The cracks represent an event in the life of an object rather than a problem to be discarded. The problems humans are subject to, such as breaks, the knocks, and the shattering to which ceramic ware also is subject. We are all shattered and scarred by life events, but God can take our broken pieces and turn them into a source of strength and beauty.



SA STORIES

Finding Recovery that Fits

Amazement and Gratitude

I have been acting out sexually since I was fourteen, having discovered masturbation while trying to steal sex from my sister in her sleep. My pursuit of sex caused a split in my relations with God, my family, and my peers. It's either God or masturbation, my religion seemed to say, and I chose masturbation.

When I moved from home, instead of becoming self-sufficient as I had planned, I began to drink heavily. People sometimes told me I should

rationalizing or making excuses when it came to talking about drinking. It was true I had the problem, but now I had the solution, too. I had something concrete I could work on. For the first time in a long time I didn't feel crazy. I had a primary purpose, something I could live up to. I stopped feeling lonely. I learned I could abstain from drinking for one day. As a drinker I was no stranger to the day-at-a-time way of life, telling myself for years, "I'll quit tomorrow." Now I could apply the same formula to the solution.

Before AA, I didn't believe in powerlessness and consequently had

The AA fellowship had an immediate, profound effect on me. It was the first time ever that I had sat among a group of people who helped each other to solve a common problem that they couldn't solve alone.

watch my drinking. When I got a job that gave me security and a future, I tried to stop drinking. I decided the real problem was the anxiety I felt when I wasn't drinking, and I resolved to address that. Eventually my health gave out, and I decided to give up drinking on my doctor's recommendation. This lasted for nine months, at which time I decided to try some controlled drinking. I tried to set limits on myself, but it wasn't long before the old patterns came back. One morning I woke up sick and decided to take my doctor's advice and go to AA.

The AA fellowship had an immediate, profound effect on me. It was the first time ever that I had sat among a group of people who helped each other to solve a common problem that they couldn't solve alone. No last names and no keeping tabs on attendance. No authority figures monitoring the proceedings. No

the concept of recovery back to front. I wanted to solve my problems so that I could try controlled drinking. AA brushed my sick thinking aside and said that the alcoholic must first put away the drink, then work the program in sobriety. I got a sponsor, and worked the Steps.

All of this time, my sexaholism was progressing. I was still masturbating, and I always had my eye out for harder forms of pornography. Sexual relations with my partner weren't right. Talk of marriage made me uncomfortable.

One evening at an open AA meeting a man beside me introduced himself as a sexaholic. I heard that a group that called themselves Sexaholics Anonymous met on the premises. At an information meeting two SA members told their stories briefly, but I found it hard to identify with either. Sexual escapades I would rather forget were in the past, I told myself. I still

went to “men’s magazines” for escape, but didn’t figure I needed a program to stop. As for masturbation, that was just a physical outlet that relieved tension. I was still practicing denial.

Then an SA member told me that the key to the thing was lust. For him, he said, it started with sexual fantasies which affected his metabolism. Lust acted like a narcotic in his bloodstream. Once under the influence of lust, he acted out. I could easily relate to this. I could be intoxicated on lust without acting out. It would only be a question of time before I needed stronger forms of lust. The bottom line was, I couldn’t lust safely. I was struck by the fact that this Fellowship had identified the “first drink” and declared its powerlessness over that.

As soon as I could admit I was a sexaholic, I was free not to act out.

with him. This felt uncomfortable in the beginning, but the benefits to my serenity were immediate.

I date my sexual sobriety to 1987, two years after I came into SA. I worked the program a day at a time, setting myself priorities I could handle. Getting to SA meetings, wherever available, took preference over everything else. My partner and I discovered we really didn’t miss sex. I was free to be honest with her and not manipulate her for sex or other favors. After two years of recovery, we married. Sex was an option now, but we found we needed recovery as a couple in order to be able to have sex. This took progressive willingness to be honest with each other, and time.

I started to enjoy life in a deeper way, made possible by a new and more honest relationship with God. The

I started to enjoy life in a deeper way, made possible by a new and more honest relationship with God. The recovery I had in SA was deeper than the one I had experienced previously.

A line in *Sexaholics Anonymous* sums up this First Step experience perfectly: “We were free to see and admit what we really were inside because we were finally free from having to act out what we were” (84). Immediately I saw the need to quit masturbating and give up all forms of media that could trigger my addiction. Since I wasn’t married, it meant giving up sex with my partner. I also threw out phone numbers and addresses of women I’d met at meetings and in other fellowships.

I got an SA sponsor and started working the Steps anew, this time with the focus on sex, lust, and dependency. I called my sponsor and others every day, and we got current with temptations. Usually my sponsor would suggest we pray, as his sponsor had prayed

recovery I had in SA was deeper than the one I had experienced previously. I wouldn’t trade it for what I had before.

SA is a program of repetition. If I keep coming to meetings, working the Steps, and surrendering my will, I experience change. “What used to be the hunch or the occasional inspiration gradually becomes a working part of the mind” AA 87. I’m amazed that this is increasingly true for me. I’m grateful for the intimacy I have with my wife today. I’m grateful for the growing ability to be honest with others.

Member Stories 2007 83; edited



Washing The Dishes

Doing the next right thing works!

My first meeting in SA was in Jacksonville, FL Monday night at 7 pm. I was more of an outsider looking in at that time. I would come in, say a few words maybe, and mostly keep to myself. I saw people successfully working a program and doing what was suggested to them by their sponsors and in the literature.

At the time I was willing to do a version of what they were doing but

I was willing to do a version of what they were doing but it had to be “my” way of doing it.

it had to be “my” way of doing it. I was going to pick and choose things I like and use them as I see fit. This didn’t work. I continued to use half measures and kept acting out, I just felt worse about it. This would happen with employers, relationships, and even paperwork I was filling out! I was going to do it my way and not the suggested way even when I made it harder on myself by doing so. To this day, when someone suggests something to me, my immediate reaction is always negative or in opposition to what was suggested.

Over the recent holidays I was at my parents house for Christmas with my wife. My wife and mother had been cooking for hours and had made a great dinner for everyone to enjoy. After dinner my wife looked at me straight in the eyes and suggested I do the dishes. If she had done this years ago I would have taken it as a threat or her trying to start a fight with me.

This time around I actually took pause and thought about what she had suggested. I felt the options of throwing a fit and starting a fight over her suggestion start to stir inside

This program has given me tools to make better decisions.

of me. I continued to pause for what seemed like an unnatural eternity until I had enough time to consider that maybe her idea was a good idea. I told her she was right, and I went in the kitchen and did the dishes along with my brother and father. It ended up being the most rewarding and fun experience I had that day. This would not have happened if I used my old ways of doing things. This program has given me tools to make better decisions. The decisions give me a better and more fulfilling life.

-Peter O. Mount Pleasant, SC



I Was Exactly Where I Was Supposed To Be

Harvey was in the right place

My wife and I were asked to give a SA/S-Anon workshop in Toronto. We planned a vacation around this trip, including driving to St. Louis from Nashville and then continue the drive to Toronto via Niagara Falls. This was a bit optimistic for a 79 year old man, but sanity has not been one of my stronger qualities!

It was a 1 1/2 day drive from St. Louis to Toronto. We checked into the hotel in Toronto and contacted the SA workshop representative. I sat down to meditate and realized I was having chest pain. How could this be happening to me?? God had sent me to Toronto to help suffering sexaholics. I knew what chest pain meant medically since I have gone through this before. How could I disappoint so many people? The pain persisted. Finally I said, "Nancy, we have to leave Toronto immediate and go to Buffalo. Our health insurance will only cover costs in the USA." She had just unpacked our suitcases while I was meditating. Within minutes she repacked and we went to Buffalo.

In the car I called Dave H from the Nashville area. "Dave, do you have a passport ready?" "Yes," he said. "Can you take Friday off from work?" "Yes," he said again. "I am heading to a hospital in Buffalo. Please fly to Toronto to substitute for me." Thank goodness, his response was "OK." What a relief to know the Canadians would still have a workshop given by a person with over 30 years of sobriety.

On the drive to Buffalo I kept moaning how I could be so wrong to think God was keeping me well and healthy so I could pass the message of SA to people in Toronto? I was disappointed in myself and in God that He was not extending my health so that I could help others.

We arrived at the hospital and the next day I had three stents placed in my carotid artery. After the procedure, an employee of the hospital told my wife and me that perhaps their spouse was having an internet affair with someone from their past.

Naturally, the employee told us this only after we had shared that we had been on our way to an SA/S-Anon workshop. The employee said that with their spouse's permission they were checking their spouse's email and FaceBook page.

The next day, as I was being discharged, the employee came by my room to say goodbye. I said, with my wife in the room, "I am going to say something that is probably inappropriate—stop checking your spouse's personal pages. You will know if your spouse is having an affair eventually, but checking will only cause more division between you two. I have a feeling that this has been a pattern of yours since childhood." The employee appeared shocked and amazed and then shared the trauma being experienced in the family.

At that point, my wife and I had a SA/S-Anon 12 step mini-meeting with the employee. During this time while we all were speaking my phone rang. A member in Iran was asking me to do a Skype workshop for their group in Iran. The employee left and I took the call.

Then my awakening happened. I had it all wrong! God's will for me to do SA service work was not in Toronto. I was to be in Buffalo to help this employee in such pain. God's will was not for me to help a predominantly Christian and Jewish group of people in Toronto. God's will was to help a group of Muslims on the other side of the world.

I realized that I had used my teacup sized brain to figure out such an awesome power. How humble I felt at that moment. Yes, I thought I should be in Toronto and I really was exactly where I was supposed to be in Buffalo, NY. Where ever we go, there we are bringing the joy of our SA recovery to others. We will always be taken to the exact place where we are supposed to be.

Harvey A., Tennessee, USA

Group Discussion Topics

Harvey and his wife had a destination planned for an SA event. God had other plans.

Have you had situations where your plans suddenly changed?

How did you handle such a situation when you were drunk on lust?

How do you soberly handle those situations today?

How does your "teacup size brain" handle God's will for you today?

What opportunities have you had to 12 Step someone? Did you reach out at those times?

Are you planning on attending your next regional SA gathering?

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STEPS

I Walked Through the Doors: Steps 4, 5, 6

Choosing to stay changes everything

When I walked through these doors, all I knew was that I had screwed up, got caught, and wanted to get out of my predicament. My wife was ready to end 38 years of marriage and be rid of me—and my mood swings, impatience and insatiable demands for sex. I got a sponsor and began the Steps. I had difficulty trying to understand what my sponsor was telling me. The one thing I could see were the people who had longevity in the program looked genuinely happy. So I kept coming back.

I was staying sober and I was not feeling so happy. At times I thought it was the Steps that were tripping me up. Other times I felt as if my sponsor was trying to drag me into the open so that I would be exposed for observation and critique. Was this a battle of wills? Who would give up first?

I knew I cannot do this myself. God can. Are there character defects I want to cling to for comfort, security or familiarity?

While I could walk away anytime I wanted, if there was hope, then it was in SA. Somewhere inside me I knew there would be a happy destiny if I would have faith and trust in my Higher Power.

Later I realized that God spoke through the SA writings, the fellowship in the rooms and my sponsor.

With a sigh I plodded onward through the Steps. I began to notice that something had changed about me and I could not put my finger on it. The mood swings had begun to lose strength. I could actually talk to my wife without wondering what the heck she was concerned about. At church I understood what my pastor was talking about. I discovered I could go for days without sex with my wife. My sponsor stopped sounding like a cocky know-it-all to me. He was actually a really kind man. Yet I still felt I was carrying around the same old burdens.

Step 4. I figured this should be easy enough. I could list a boat load of stuff that's wrong. But it wasn't long before I realized the searching and fearless moral inventory was about me. This Step turned painful. It could not happen quickly for me in a few hours, days, or even weeks. I had never, ever attempted to look deeply into the driving force behind who I am. In the past, there were often caring, misguided attempts by counselors, pastors, friends, coworkers, family and a psychiatrist to help: "You need more confidence. You should try harder. Don't give up. You just need to believe in yourself!" What they may not have known, and what became apparent because of this program, was that I was a man suffering from the bondage of self.

With patient reassuring guidance from my sponsor, each resentment and defect of character was revealed and placed on paper. One by one their effect on me, my emotions and perceptions of myself were brought out by revelation from God, my

Steps

highest power. Without realizing that I was doing it, I absolved God on his throne. And then it happened. I saw the driving force that ruled me nearly my entire life. My defects of character pointed to that one thing that I had unwittingly allowed to corner me into the bondage of self, which was Fear.

As I looked over my Step 4 work I saw myself as a pitiful man crushed by the unrelenting force of his own fears. I was afraid I would not measure up, not be good enough, afraid I could never be the person I knew I never was. I was afraid of not being accepted, and if I was accepted I was afraid they would find out that I am who I fantasize myself to be. I hid in fear behind impatience, anger, sexual pleasure and day dreams of victory over those who kept me from the success I felt I deserved. Yes, I know there will be other character defects to deal with. And, at this crossroads of my life, I discovered in my Fourth Step my big ugly character defect is fear. Seeing this lifted a huge load from my shoulders but still I realized I was not yet free because knowing of this is not the same as learning how to deal with it. There was more that I had to do, here and now in this program.

Step 5 sounded daunting, but knowing what the Fourth Step inventory had revealed to me made it liberating to admit the exact nature of my wrongs. God heard me out and I now know He is listening to me. My sponsor warmly received my Fifth Step. He became the person in whom I know I can place my most intimate trust.

Step 6. My sponsor asked me if I thought I was entirely ready to have God remove these shortcomings? I said, "Absolutely!" Then he asked me why I thought I was ready. I looked

at him and thought, "Oh crap." I had read all the major texts concerning Step 6 and had written out some of my answers. What was I afraid of?

I could hear the raging fear river building in intensity. "Hold on Pat, you are standing at the river." I knew I cannot do this myself. I never could and never would. God can. Are there character defects I want to cling to for comfort, security or familiarity? If there are any, as long as I remain willing, God will bring them out. I don't want to know how life would be without them, I want to BE without them.

Only now am I starting to find out who I really am. Surrendering my will and my perceived right to sit on the throne of self-will will likely bring me back to my defects. God provides the strength and courage for me to have come this far. I do not doubt he will continue to do so. This is what I see ahead of me: God, having removed these character defects, teaching me how to live without the character defects I am yet to discover.

Pat M, California, USA

A New Life Versus Another Problem

Making a right connection

The reason why lust and sexual acting out are so attractive to me is because they are so very powerful at what they do in me. Initially they were my "solution" to other problems. Eventually I became addicted to them, and they failed to be solutions and became their own problems. But I didn't have an alternative "solution" that would work

and not enslave me just as lust and sexual acting out had done.

The reason there is such a variety of 12 Step groups for a variety of addictions is because all of those “alternate solutions” are also addictive. I’m quite sure I would very quickly be enslaved by anything I used to “substitute” for lust and sexual acting out. That of course is my natural tendency, so I have had to find a real solution instead of a substitute that would also become my next problem.

That real solution is the “spiritual awakening” that Step 12 refers to. It is the right connection with God and others. It is a new way of life. It is living life on life’s terms. It is accepting reality that includes hardship and pain instead of believing I should escape into a fantasy world of my own making. And the amazing thing about God is that he is a master that doesn’t enslave me. He only accepts what I willingly give to him. I am free to take my will and life back at any time that I might foolishly decide to make that insane decision.

That new life was the result of surrendering to God and working the Steps under the direction of a sponsor. The program works when I work it. And I believe it will work for others as well.

SA in Taichung, Taiwan
(A personal member post)



Our Meeting in Print

SA Step Three Helps Me Learn How To Be Of Help To Others

Trying my sponsor’s way

At first, Step Three for me was just the trigger surrender that I heard talked about in Sexaholics Anonymous meetings. I soon learned that it is the day-to-day real surrender--in which I make a decision to do things in accordance with God’s will (as I understand Him), instead of my own will that helps me stay sober. This is greater than just saying, “I surrender this (lust hit/temptation/anger/resentment/whatever).” It is doing something differently, even when the thing I am doing seems contrary to my own thinking.

An example of Step Three in action is how I learned to share in SA meetings. I found that there are two kinds of shares. The first kind is sharing my pain. I unloaded myself onto the SA group every time that life felt intolerable. I would share, “I can’t stand how much I hurt!” I felt better, well kind-of, for a while, until my pain built up again.

Less than a month into SA recovery, my sponsor pointed out what I was doing wrong. He told me that I should change how I share. I resented him for saying so. I didn’t like being told that I was wrong. And besides, my way of sharing pain made me feel good.

Step Three says to turn my will and my life over to the care of a Higher Power. At that moment my sponsor was my Higher Power. If I kept doing things my way, then I was going to get the same results I had gotten for decades: pain and danger. So I started

practicing sharing in a new way: I would share in a way to help others through my personal experience, strength, and hope. With helping others in my mind, I would still share my pain, but now I added what I was doing that helped ease that pain. My sponsor also gradually guided me to sharing about working the Steps and how the Steps helped me.

I was surprised at the results. Now I felt grateful knowing that I was also helping others. Most of the time, I had no clear idea of who or how I might be helping others, other than knowing that someone might get something out of one of my shares. Sometimes, members would come up to me after

the meeting and thank me for sharing something that struck a chord with them. And then I felt grateful that I was able to be of help to someone else.

In some ways, my real Sexaholics Anonymous recovery started with this shift in my sharing. I was becoming less selfish, and I was able to help others by God's grace. Then I began to feel better about myself, and not so "inadequate, unworthy, alone, and afraid" all the time. I would never have thought of this on my own. It took my sponsor and my Step Three surrender of trying it his way, for me to discover how well it worked.

<https://sexaholicsanonymous.eu/>

WORLD WIDE NEWS

More SIM 2018 Comments From the Post-SIM Survey

Liked?:

I really appreciated being able to go from channel A to Channel B without leaving the page. I loved the Channel B slot with the Polish fellowship, especially the song.

It was very easy to join using the link. I was amazed to find out how many members are in India. I am very pleased it was recorded and we can listen to the recordings. It was wonderful to hear the voices and see the faces of the members from all over the world.

What I liked the most about SIM 2018 was to be able to meet people with my illness throughout the world, and to hear that they have great sobriety.

Suggestions?:

I would suggest an option of being part of a live meeting. Meaning, that there should be a live meeting that should also have an option to participate on the Web. I would also suggest that one meeting should be Yiddish speaking. It might be helpful to ask speakers to prepare their speech or other share and keep notes with them so they do not flounder. Next time there will much more time to prepare.

From: "mohammad.safarkhani70" *Hi! This picture is related to an SA gathering in one of the areas of Iran with the topic of unity and empathy. September, 2018*



Madrid International Convention Stories

My First Convention

A fellow Spanish speaker asked, "Will you come to the International Convention?" With sadness I answered, "I can't go, I don't have enough money to travel from Colombia, South America to Spain." He told me, "but it is the first Convention that will be translated into Spanish and English and you are the delegate of the Latin American Region ..." I prayed to my Higher Power to put myself in Its hands. My friend told me to ask for help. To my surprise the help arrived!

Meeting face-to-face many SAs from Spain was wonderful. I provided a small service at the welcome table. I was an observer in the face-to-face meeting of the Trustees. I saw a lot of love in their actions. As they worked I saw a lot of humility and I felt welcome.

Thursday and Friday I was honored to watch the EMER meeting in person. I still have a lot to learn. Service saves me from locking myself in my egocentric mind.

During the convention there were 299 people doing meditations and simultaneous meetings, (to which one am I going?) We were eating together as people who fight to be a better version of themselves every day.

One day one SA met and shook my hand. I wondered why? Later I had the opportunity to see him, very calm and smiling with a great period of sexual sobriety. I asked him, "Why do you wanted to meet me?" I was excited when he told me because someone I already know is his sponsee.

Flying home I wrote to my brothers in Spain that I was surprised my luggage had not been overweight since I was carrying them so full of gratitude, learning, desire to stay sober and a lot of love. Thanks Ivonne, Luc, Pedro and all my brothers and sisters from Spain, for being the engines of this beautiful Convention.

Oscar, Delegate, Latin
American Region.

After Party Of The Madrid International Convention

After the Madrid Convention some remaining members gathered at the Prado Museum. The Prado is such an amazing museum, so much fantastic art that it can be overwhelming.

Two of us were ready for a break and we bumped into a few more. A few more started to arrive, out of the woodwork. Someone said why don't we have a meeting? We found the SA meeting format available on the EMER website, so we pulled the tables together. There were about 10 of us. We chose to have a meeting about just getting current, what is going on for people. There were SAs from Vienna, Ireland, Columbia, the USA, and from Slovakia! (I am sorry if I forgot anyone.)

At first a couple sat near us, but the sounds of the cafeteria was enough of a buffer that we were not afraid. Everyone shared, and we laughed. One member was translated. And we concluded with a prayer. Powerful. What a beautiful thing SA fellowship can be.

Next time you are at the Prado, watch out - there could be a meeting happening... or anywhere for that matter!!! Best wishes. See you in Seattle, God willing !!!

Keith from Ireland

Edinburgh-Madrid Gratitudes

I am sitting here on a Madrid to Edinburgh flight waiting to take off. Last Friday I walked to the convention centre. I knew I had not registered. Having emailed two of the core committee I knew the important thing was that I got to the centre. Soon after entering I offered to help the registration team with the influx of 300+ members wanting to register. I became the person who gave out the gift coffee mug to guests. A privilege to do service. The convergence of over three hundred

sexaholics brought our joy of living to life. Connections, old and new friends, and the harmony of our Higher Power worked through us all.

My life circumstances led towards the meetings about marriage, intimacy—and connection with God. On the second day my wife called saying she is pregnant. Being shook into an adult with parenthood responsibilities afoot, I asked at an old timers meeting “I am going to be a dad what do I do?” Answers were to have unconditional love for my dear wife. To have single focused attention with baby. Then, on a practical note, to get used to soap and hot water.

The love support gratitude people expressed made me purely buoyantly joyous. Being arm in arm with the man, first sponsor and friend who gave me a white book six years ago brought me full circle. From a lonely masturbator to a worthy sober person. I somehow changed.

Evidently I am not free from my defects or outside issues. All the emotions were stalking my already temperamental mind. Age old 12-Steps teachings were available. Such as, “does it really matter?” How many times a day do I get frazzled about stuff that is not important? Other slogans reminded me that self-knowledge does not help me. Knowledge generally is not safe in my hands.

By Sunday and Monday our recovered friendships moved into love. True laughter—songs and fun. The Convention was over. As I landed, text and calls went out to my wife and SA friend meeting me at airport.

I am tired and also recharged. Due to a recent relocation, we live in the Highlands of Scotland, getting to a SA meeting, these days at least, is normally a remote online mission. The next couple of years will be with wife and child. With providence I pray I can attend the next Scottish convention with my expectant wife. Please say prayers for my wife and child.

Michael S, Moray, Scotland



Madrid From A USA View

I have gratitude for the wonderful SA International Conference just completed in Madrid, Spain and want to share a HP moment. I came home believing I could go most anywhere in the world today and find an understanding SA friend to welcome and listen to me.

Roc O. and I, stayed to visit the renowned Prado Museum. On the third level of this huge museum, we turned a corner and bumped into Roman & Gayla from Ukraine. They met while sober in the program, married, and traveled together to the conference.

Gayla said through her Google translator that she had a picture for me. She reached into her bag and tore from her sketch book a pen drawing she had made of Nicholas and I leading a panel session in the auditorium. There was no reason to believe we would ever see each other again—and yet she found the person she had sketched.

Gayla and Roman wanted to also see the Reina Sofia museum, so we did. There we met other members of the local SA group. They invited us to attend the Monday night regular SA meeting. We found our way there and entered an old church. Nearly every sexaholic there was from a different country! We felt the hand of God guided us to the meeting so we could each return to our respective countries knowing we had program friends wherever we travel.

Below is Gayla’s drawing. It’s on the wall where I meditate and grow in my program. It will help me remember how precious my sobriety is. Thank you HP.

Dennis W., Wisconsin USA



Madrid Convention News



SA in Madrid Celebrates 25 Years!

The excellent SA International Convention in El Escorial outside Madrid was a great success with over 300 SAs and regional S-Anons in attendance. The facility and the global audio streaming (with up to 50 SA listeners for each session) and the major talks were inspiring. Translations were provided by hard-working volunteers. Part of SA history is the willingness of a member in Madrid to translate the White Book into Spanish twenty-one years ago.

In celebration of their 25 years of SA meetings eight special events are planned including workshops, a summer retreat in June, and the Spain SA convention from December 6-8.

Madrid Participant Nations

Country of Origin	Total SA members	Total S-Anon member
ARMENIA	1	
AUSTRIA	6	
BELGIUM	10	
CANADA	1	
COLOMBIA	3	
CROATIA	1	
ESPAÑA	62	2
FRANCE	1	
GERMANY	24	
GREAT BRITAIN	25	
GREECE	3	
IRELAND	7	
ISRAEL	15	
ITALIA	4	1
LITHUANIA	1	
LUXEMBOURG	1	
MEXICO	3	
NETHERLANDS	16	
NORTHERN IRELAND	1	
POLAND	15	
RUSSIA	2	
SLOVAKIA	8	
SWEDEN	1	
TCHECH REPUBLIC		
UKRAINE	2	
UNKNOWN		
USA	43	1
Total general	256	7

NEW SA GROUPS FEBRUARY 2019

Europe and Asia

Forres, Scotland, United Kingdom

Fort Collins, Colorado, USA

Mendocino County, California, USA

Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Riverside, California, USA

North, Central, & South America

Colton, California, USA

SAICO Finances

The SA Fellowship continues to grow in multiple dimensions. While this growth may be challenging to the budgeting process, it is welcome as a result of the Fellowship's on-going services to carry the message to those who still suffer.

We are grateful to the Fellowship members for their continued financial and service support. You helped maintain a strong SAICO staff, upgrade the SA website and office phone system, expand International participation and representation, and sustain our progress developing new literature and e-book formats.

Our preliminary 2018 results:

Revenues	\$322,439
Expenses	\$330,665
Revenues - Exp	<\$8,236>
Prudent Reserve	\$123,890

The 2019 budget is in place and our 2020 budget goal is to start bringing the budget back in balance so that revenues support the service expenses of the Fellowship. We welcome your thoughts about increasing revenue to support our mission.

2020 BUDGET CALL

The Finance Committee invites the SA Fellowship's Service Committees to participate in building the proposed 2020 SAICO budget. Information provided by your committees will be the foundation to construct a budget reflecting the Fellowship's service needs.

This call to the Service Committees for their budget proposals begins the 2020 SAICO budget preparation process. Our goal is to have the budget ready for the Trustee review and approval in June 2019 and the Assembly's approval at their meeting in July 2019, at the Seattle, Washington, USA convention.

Please provide a narrative program statement describing your service committee's goals and the benefits to the Fellowship to complete its 2020 goals. Some committees may not require any resources to fulfill their goals; still, we would like to hear about how they serve the Fellowship. Some committees may envision new or expanded program initiatives that would significantly change their current service levels. These program expansions will require GDA approval prior to receiving funding. Program approval is a prerequisite to receive final budget approval.

While service committee requests generally affect the expense side of the budget, any thoughts you may wish to share for generating new or increased revenue sources are greatly appreciated. The Finance Committee is requesting your proposals be submitted to SAICO by April 1, 2019.

Finance Committee Carlton B., chair

EVENTS CALENDAR

Upcoming International Conventions

July 12 - 14, 2019 Seattle, Washington, USA SA/S-Anon International Convention: Surrender, Serenity, Miracles. Info at www.serenityinSeattle2019.com

January 9-12, 2020 Nashville Tennessee USA SA/S-Anon International Convention: A Design For Living <https://www.designforliving2020.com/>

Local Regional Events 2018

March 2, Atlanta, Georgia, USA SA Atlanta Marathon. Info at: www.atlantathejourneycontinues.org

March 16, Sarasota, Florida, USA Open Meeting: Information for Those who Want to Know about Recovery. Info at: <https://www.sa.org/events/>

March 22 - 24, Galway, Ireland SA/S-Anon Ireland Convention: Surrender: Steps 1, 2, & 3. Email: robessay@gmail.com

March 29 - 31, Sumas, Washington, USA SA/S-Anon Regional Retreat: The Road To Recovery. Info at: www.savancouver.org/events

April 12 - 14, Perth, Scotland, United Kingdom SA/S-Anon Scottish Convention 2019: We Are No Longer Alone. Info at: <https://www.sauk.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/SC2019-ALL-IN-ONE-DOCUMENT.pdf>

April 26 - 28, Mansfield, Ontario, Canada SA Ontario Annual Retreat: The Real Connection. Info at: <http://saretreat.org>

April 26 - 28, Wichita, Kansas, USA SA/S-Anon Family Spring Reunion: Surprised! Email: mecphd06@att.net

May 3 - 5, Covington, Georgia, USA SASERA 2019 Spiritual Retreat: Improving our Conscious Contact. Info at: www.sasera.org/spiritual-retreat/

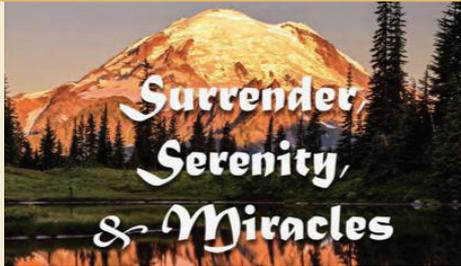
May 17 - 19, Gdansk, Poland 12 Step Workshop. Email: ninepinesshine@yahoo.com

SA CONVENTIONS

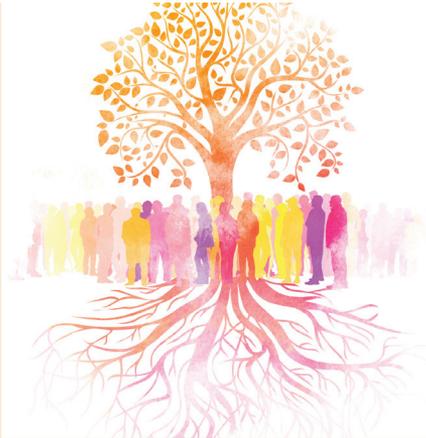
SEATTLE 2019

Surrender, Serenity and Miracles SA S-Anon S-ateen International Conventions Seattle, Washington USA July 12-14 2019

Surrender, Serenity and Miracles is an opportunity for SA, S-Anon, and S-Ateen members to celebrate recovery, deepen their connections, and integrate program tools into their lives. Fellowship members will attend from around the world. Register now for three of the brightest days of your life in sunny Seattle and soak up some “vitamins” F and R: Fellowship and Recovery! Register at <http://serenityinseattle2019.com/>



NASHVILLE 2020



A DESIGN FOR LIVING

2020 INTERNATIONAL SA/S-ANON CONFERENCE

January 9-12, 2020 | Nashville, Tennessee Sheraton Music City Hotel

(full website & details coming soon)

<https://www.designforliving2020.com/>

Essay Purpose And Themes

Essay presents the experience, strength, and hope of SA members. *Essay* is aware that every SA member has an individual way of working the program. In submitting articles, please remember SA's sobriety definition is not debated, since it distinguishes SA from other sex addiction fellowships. Opinions expressed in *Essay* are not to be attributed to SA as a whole, nor does publication of any article imply endorsement by SA or by *Essay*.

The theme this issue February, 2019: *Sobriety and Relationships*: Future themes: May, 2019: *Open-mindedness*. August, 2019: *SA at 40 Years!*. October 2019: *Prison Issue*. December 2019: TBA. Closing date for articles is approximately four weeks prior to publication dates in February, May, August, October, and December.

Submissions To *Essay*

Your writings and art are invited, although no payment can be made. All articles and letters submitted are assumed intended for publication and will be edited. Articles are edited to maintain their essence and meet *Essay* word length and content limits. Materials submitted become the property of *Essay* for copyright purposes. Please do not reference unadjudicated illegal activities.

The *Essay* welcomes meeting room photos, artwork and humor. Graphic art and funny stories enhance each issue. For graphics, please remember *Essay* is printed in black ink. 300 dpi is preferred.

We invite articles of different lengths, from 200-400 word anecdotes or memories, to 400-600 word Practical Tools or Meditations, to 1000–1500 word Member stories. We prefer electronically submitted manuscripts sent to Essay@sa.org. Articles may be sent by postal mail to SAICO, PO Box 3565, Brentwood, TN 37024 USA. Handwritten items should be written clearly on only one side of each sheet.

Articles are invited in the original language with an English translation. Whenever possible we use the original language and the translation. Please include an author name, address, telephone number, and/or e-mail address so that authenticity can be verified. This information will remain confidential.

Permission to Copy

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SA CFC

SA CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES COMMITTEE

A brief SA CFC report:

I visited with the Israeli CFC committee (ICFC) and discussed utilizing SA for released prisoners. While there is some support, the rules of the Israeli prison structure condone only officially sanctioned offender programs. SA is not one of them. ICFC is determined to continue identifying potential allies who might be able to bring SA's message to the bureaucracy.

I suggested they might look into asking a prison advocate apply as an ad-hoc committee member for the SACFC. The ICFC is internally and externally doing the will of the Higher Power, and the SACFC will continue to help provide its support and experience.

We foster hope in prison service. We can't control outcome, of course, but we are blessed to carry the message to the under served. And through our work, we may get to witness the day when SA recovery arrives within Israel's prison system.

Humbly yours, Eric S, SACFC Chair

Should I go out with him, or have coffee with my sponsor?

Misery
Covery



Humor For SA



DONATE
TO SA INTERNATIONAL
USE PAYPAL OR CREDIT
CARD IN 7 CURRENCIES
www.sa.org/donate/

The Polish SA Fellowship is always looking for new ways to serve those still suffering!

The Twelve Steps

1. We admitted that we were powerless over lust—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to sexaholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

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

Sexaholics Anonymous is a recovery program based on the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous and received permission from AA to use its Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions in 1979.

The Twelve Traditions

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon SA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop lusting and become sexually sober.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or Sexaholics Anonymous as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the sexaholic who still suffers.
6. An SA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the SA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every SA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Sexaholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. SA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Sexaholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the SA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films and TV.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

GOD

grant me the

SERENITY

to accept the things
I cannot change

COURAGE

to change the
things I can and

WISDOM

to know the
difference.