

ESSAY

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SEXAHOLICS ANONYMOUS

Rule 62

DON'T take
Yourself
too Damn
Seriously



APRIL 2025
SA.ORG

SA Purpose

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

Adapted with permission from AA Grapevine Inc.

RESPONSIBILITY DECLARATION

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

Sexaholics Anonymous

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLE

We have a solution. We don't claim it's for everybody, but for us, it works. If you identify with us and think you may share our problem, we'd like to share our solution with you (*Sexaholics Anonymous*, 2). In defining sobriety, we do not speak for those outside Sexaholics Anonymous.

We can only speak for ourselves. Thus, for the married sexaholic, sexual sobriety means having no form of sex with self or with persons other than the spouse. In SA's sobriety definition, the term "spouse" refers to one's partner in a marriage between a man and a woman. For the unmarried sexaholic, sexual sobriety means freedom from sex of any kind. And for all of us, single and married alike, sexual sobriety also includes progressive victory over lust (*Sexaholics Anonymous*, 191-192). (*Adopted 2010 by the General Delegate Assembly.*)

The only requirement for SA membership is a desire to stop lusting and become sexually sober according to the SA sobriety definition. Any two or more sexaholics gathered together for SA sobriety according to the SA sobriety definition may call themselves an SA group.

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

ESSAY is a publication of Sexaholics Anonymous

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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

Enjoy this April 2025 edition of the ESSAY and take a load off of yourself. Yes, you're still responsible for clearing away the wreckage of your past, but remind yourself that although Higher Power still lets you struggle in your character defects so you can grow and progress, you're not responsible for removing them. That's God's job! Surrender it all to Him.

And He'll only remove our defects if we surrender them and *ask* Him to take them!

So since it's not all up to you, why not take yourself a little less seriously?

In this Rule 62 issue, we've got broken chairs, bald sponsors, Best Actress Oscars, a hilarious business meeting, and an addict searching for one sock.

And that's just the theme articles!

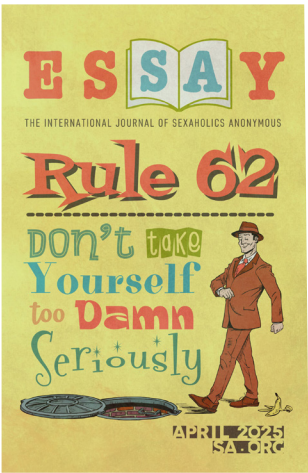
You'll also find inspiring SA Stories, Practical Tools, A Look into Step Four, an exclusive digital-only CFC piece (visit essay.sa.org to read it), and an exciting conference report from Bogotá, Colombia.



April 2025

...a single pungent sentence leaped to the eye: “Don’t take yourself too damn seriously.”

12&12, 149



On the cover:
Has anyone ever told you to lighten up? Would you take offence if they suggested it about your recovery work? This just may be the issue for you.

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ESSAY presents the experience, strength, and hope of SA members. ESSAY is aware that every SA member has an individual way of working the program. Opinions expressed in ESSAY are not to be attributed to SA as a whole, nor does publication of any article imply endorsement by SA or by ESSAY.

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Dear ESSAY



Dear ESSAY,

Thank you again for the contributions of this magazine to our fellowship. It is very important! So many of our members look forward to the next issue.

During the months that I spend in West Africa every year in fellowship with SA members, we download and distribute the current issue of the ESSAY. We don't have many hard copies of the White Book since the international mail and local mail is so untrustworthy. Having a free digital copy of the ESSAY is very important.

Twice a week, we have an hour-long SA meeting using WhatsApp. Periodically, in addition to reading and discussing the main SA books, we distribute the current issue of the ESSAY, read it together, and discuss how it relates to us individually. This free, current literature helps to keep our fellowship alive and growing.

Kwaku K., Ghana & USA



Offering Instead of Only Asking God for Help

In the Program, I've been building the muscle of asking God for help. "Help me be sober! Help me turn away from lust! Help me surrender! Help me! Help me! Help me!" As I strengthen this muscle—which sometimes requires an act of complete reliance—I'm also shifting my perspective to a gentler way.

First, I believe God has a plan for me—a plan to keep me sober one day at a time. So rather than asking God to help me, I ask, "How can I help You, God, accomplish Your plan for me?"

Next, I say out loud, "I quiet down my thoughts and emotions." Then, I say, "God, speak to me and invite me to do Your will." Then, I simply keep my mouth shut and listen.

At first, the silence is uncomfortable. My mind still wants to race, to negotiate, to seek reassurance. I catch myself wanting to fill the space with more words, more prayers, more requests. But I resist. Instead, I lean into the stillness.


In that quiet, something shifts. The desperate grasping eases. My heart softens. I begin to sense—not in a booming voice, but in a deep knowing—that God has already been leading me. His plan isn't hidden; it's unfolding. The steps aren't complicated; they're simple acts of faith.

Maybe it's a nudge to reach out to a friend in recovery. Maybe it's a reminder to stay present, breathe, and take things one moment at a time. Maybe it's the deep peace

of knowing I don't have to figure everything out—I just have to take the next right step.

I realize that asking, "How can I help you, God?" isn't about striving harder or doing more. It's about trusting more. It's about surrendering the battle and walking in the promise that's already been given to me.

So, I listen. And when the answer comes—whether in a whisper, a feeling, or a small opportunity—I take it. Because this is what true partnership with God looks like: not begging for help, but stepping into His plan with faith.

Thomas S., Georgia, USA 



In My Sober Life



Finding Strength in Higher Power and Self-Discovery

My name is Aaron M., and I'm a lust addict. One of the biggest parts of self-discovery in my recovery is the vast gulf that exists between who I am when I'm practicing sobriety and who I am when I'm in active addiction. They're almost (but not quite!) two different people, with their own personalities and motivations. My sober self goes completely out the window whenever I take that first lust drink and the "other guy" kicks in.

In my normal, sober life I'm Aaron Jekyll, but when I take that lust drink, I'm Aaron Hyde.

Normal Aaron Jekyll:

I see the people who trigger
me as human beings
I rely only on Higher Power and
am satisfied with my own worth
I want to share the joys of life
and to give to others
I view people as my equals
I'm an evolved, functional, and
sane human
I'm a responsible, content adult
I respect women

Addicted Aaron Hyde:

I see people as things I can
project my lust onto
I depend on lust objects to
validate me and feed my ego
I want to take the humanity
from my lust objects
I use and abuse people
I'm an animal reduced to base
urges, a helpless lust-junkie
I'm a stunted and insecure child
I degrade women

I let my higher power take the wheel and trust that I'll be steered towards peace

I trust God and surrender my lust

I'm humane

I respect

I'm motivated by love

I have Real Connection, the God-consciousness per Bill W.

I steer myself toward potential legal problems, disease, shame, and financial loss

I'm possessive and use my lust objects

I'm amoral—often immoral

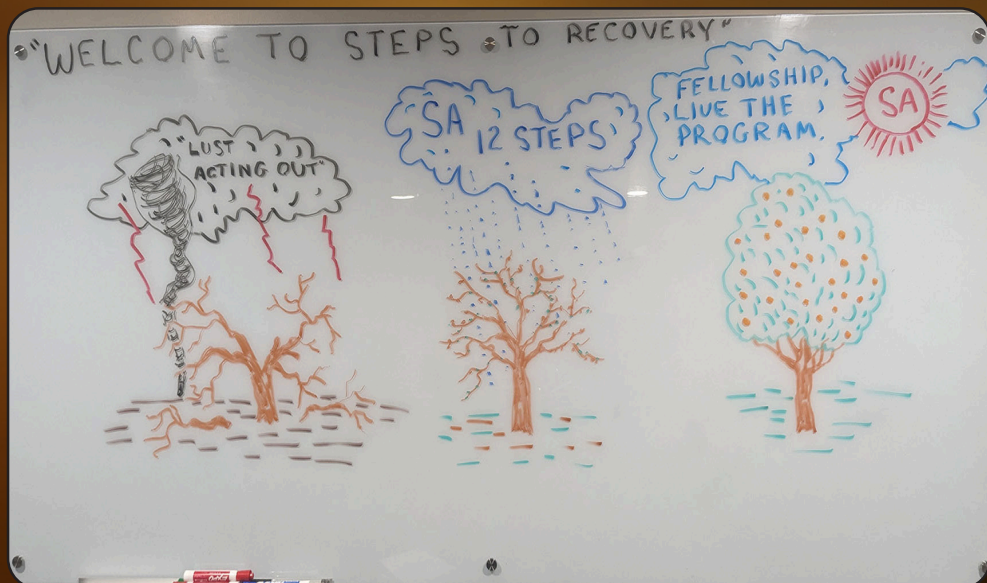
I violate

I'm motivated by lust

I'm disconnected from reality and from my own humanity

As long as I stay away from that drink of lust and call on Higher Power to guide me in times when the drink appeals to me so much, I can coexist with my fellow beings. I'm above no one, and I'm below no one. I can engage with others as people and not possessions. When I'm sober, I'm acting from my heart and not my ego. I can take actions of love and mean it. I can be there for my people, I can be supportive, I can be strong, I can do the things my Higher Power wants me to do, what I'm supposed to do. I can let go and let God and live in gratitude for the life I already live. I can trust that the rocky roads will be taken care of. I can trust that if I fall, Higher Power will, and does, give me the strength to get back up, and put the blessings in my path.

Aaron M., Dublin, Ireland



Whiteboard illustration, submitted by Ed S., Somers Point, New Jersey, USA



IMAGES OF RECOVERY



Making recovery artwork helps my own recovery.

This piece represents the journey of recovery as described in the Big Book. The figure in the center symbolizes a recovered individual with his own unique light and color. As each recovered member crosses through the gate of freedom, he carries his own colorful light, contributing to the collective glow of our souls.

The “gate of freedom” is constructed from twelve stones, representing the Twelve Steps as foundation (AA, 12, 97), cornerstone (AA, 47), and keystone (AA, 62). These stones are securely held together by cement (AA, 75), which symbolizes the bond between us (AA, 17). This bond arises from sharing the same problem and relying on the same solution. AA’s symbol—a circle and triangle—is placed on the foundation stone of the gate.

The torn pages scattered around the piece reflect the fragments of our lives—stories of trauma, pain, and lessons learned. These torn pages

include excerpts from the Big Book, which not only guides us through recovery but also helps us find meaning and healing in those broken pieces. The tools depicted in the artwork—such as the spade—remind us of the ongoing effort to “keep chopping,” to continue uncovering, digging, and freeing ourselves from the chains of our past, one link at a time.

Before I completed the Twelve Steps, I imagined spirituality as a blank, white space, free from emotions. But recovery revealed a much deeper reality—a life full of colors, like the vibrant hues of the sky, the sun, and the clouds. These colors symbolize the joy, peace, and unconditional love that come from living in harmony with my Higher Power, no matter what life brings. Nothing blocks me from the sunlight of the Spirit anymore.

Tasneem Y., Mansoura, Egypt



Rule 62

It Wasn't a Relapse

We were in our meeting, led by a local fellow. During a moment of silence, we heard a *crack*. We didn't know where the sound came from. Another *crack* followed, and then another.

Slowly, one fellow sank to the floor. One of the legs of his plastic chair had completely broken, and he was now on the floor.

We were all surprised, and then we burst out in laughter.

I told him, "Relax, fellow—that doesn't count as a relapse."

Oscar M., Bogota, Colombia



BALDING, SPONSORSHIP, AND RULE 62

Hi, I'm Eugene K., a sexaholic. I'm 22 years old and came to SA in September 2024. When I saw the theme about Rule 62 (don't take yourself too seriously), it reminded me of how I found my SA sponsor. Back when I was new, I had my eye on this one guy I thought would be a great sponsor. He'd been in the newcomers' breakout meeting, and I thought, "This is the guy." A few meetings later, I finally decided I should probably get a sponsor, so I started looking for him after the meeting.

In the parking lot, I saw someone who looked just like him—or so I thought because he had the same bald spot. So I walked right up, confidently called him by the name of the guy I'd met before, and...he corrected me.

Turns out, I had the wrong bald guy. But here's the kicker: I just rolled with it and asked this bald guy if he'd sponsor me. He's now my sponsor, and that's how I started working the Steps. A clear case of mistaken identity, but hey, it worked out!

Lately, I've been noticing that it's easy for me to fall into the mindset that SA is only about working the Steps and going to meetings. But it's more than just treatment for my disease—it's a place where I can make friends and connect with people. After meetings, we'll grab dinner, share some laughs, and just enjoy life. Rule 62 reminds me not to take myself too seriously, and I'm grateful for that. Thanks for letting me share.

Eugene K., Virginia, USA 





Not Taking Myself Too Seriously



How lightheartedness and a little perspective can turn self-pity into self-awareness.

A few days ago, one of my friends came up to me with good news. “I have a boyfriend!” she said. I was so happy for her. Then it struck me—I was (and still am) the only single girl among my various groups of friends.

So, into action—3, 2, 1, go! First, self-pity: “Nobody wants me. I’m too fat, too ugly, too stupid. I’ll forever be alone,” and so on. Then, resentment: “Why can’t I have what I want or what I think I need? I’m praying, I’m surrendering, attending meetings, doing my Step work! Why me?” I actually began to cry on my way home. Then I realized these were just crocodile tears. In my own silly, selfish, egomaniacal way, I was enjoying these pitiful emotions. And the Oscar for Best Actress goes to... ME, King Baby!

The next morning, I sent a message to my sponsor, sharing everything that had happened and how I was feeling about it. I was worried that I might relapse because those kinds of emotions have led me to fantasizing,

even if I don’t act out. Then I thought, Gosh, if I feel this low just thinking of my friend’s good news, what would I be like if a real tragedy occurred? What if my grandmother died? I love my grandmother so much! I was deeply upset just at the thought. And knowing me so well, my sponsor suggested, “Well, push her down the stairs, and let’s start the process of getting over it today.”

Instead of crying, I ended up laughing the rest of the morning. It was exactly what I needed to hear. I love the irony and sarcasm of recovery humor, and I especially admire those who can laugh at themselves. Laughing at my own skewed thinking really helps me.

Another example: One of the people on my Fourth Step list is a boy from kindergarten. He used to spit his cherry pits onto my plate because I was always the last one eating—the only one still with a plate. I was mad at him for his behavior. Even now, twenty-five years later, I still get mad whenever I think of it. My

sponsor said, “Right. Next time you see him, I want you to run him over with your car and yell, ‘You shouldn’t spit cherry pits onto other people’s plates!’ Then drive away and leave it all behind. Or... you could let it go and forgive him now. Whichever.”

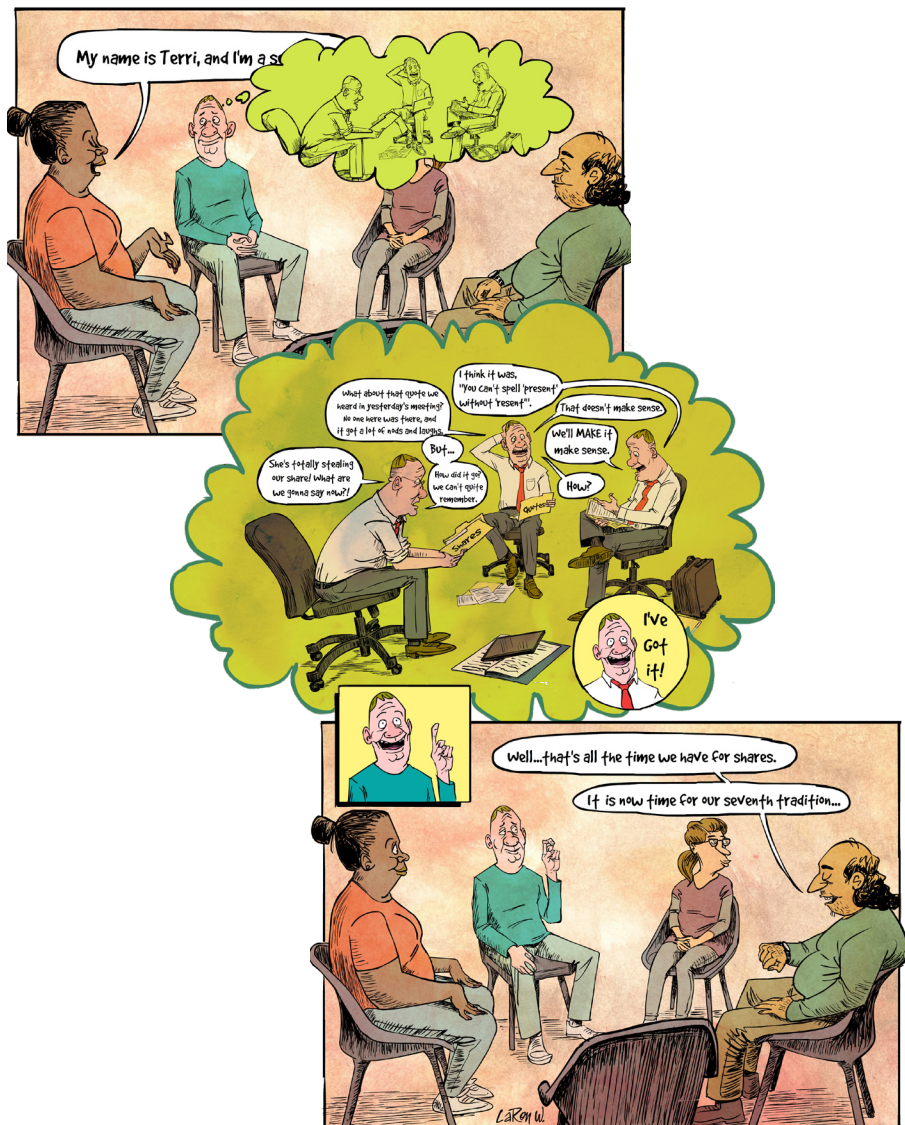
Irony, humor, laughing at it—not taking myself too seriously—is a great tool to disarm the tension, the

negativity, the dis-ease. It always cheers me up to read in the AA Big Book: “But we aren’t a glum lot... we think cheerfulness and laughter make for usefulness...why shouldn’t we laugh?” (AA, 132).



Chiara D., Bassano del Grappa, Italy

This article was reprinted from the December 2022 issue of the ESSAY.



Who Says You Can't Have Fun at a Business Meeting?!

A Fun Take on the Business of Local Meetings

If you've attended any business meetings at your local home group, you know they can be pretty dull and uninteresting as a few restless addicts monotonously dot all the *I*'s, cross all the *T*'s, and measure out the red tape. Sometimes, this can be downright annoying and frustrating as members debate unimportant nuances of every motion or haggle over whether a surplus of \$9 should be spent on tea or cookies.

But once in a while, when the stars and planets align just right, a business meeting can be downright hilarious. The laughter that ensues can be just as healing to the spirit as

any powerful share in a meeting.

The following is a short account of an actual business meeting that took place in our home group not so long ago. Some of the names have been changed—just for the fun of it. Andy, Bob, Craig, and Dennis were in attendance, and it went something like this:

Andy: Alright guys, I have a few motions I'd like to bring up tonight.

(audible groans are heard)

The first one involves deciding how many group members need to be present in order to pass motions at the business meeting. We never



really decided on that by group conscience.

Bob: I second that. That's a good idea. I know a majority is typically enough, but since we average around ten guys, motions really shouldn't be passed without a decent number of members present to represent the group conscience.

Craig: Yeah, I agree. Two or three people alone shouldn't be hijacking the meeting by making changes on the group level. There should be a more significant minimum number of people voting.

Dennis: So what do you suggest?

Andy: For a group of our size I would make a motion that we not be able to pass new motions without at least five people in attendance. What do you guys think?

Bob: Sounds good to me.

Craig: I'm on board.

Dennis: Works for me.

Andy: Okay, let's put it to a vote. All in favor of requiring a minimum of five members in attendance at a business meeting in order to pass new motions, raise your hand.

(all hands go up)

Great. Glad we got that cleared up so easily. Now on to my next motion...

Bob: *(interjecting)* Uh... Andy. We got a problem right there.

Andy: What is it?

Bob: Well, look around you. We've only got FOUR members present right now.

Andy: So?

Craig: So, we can't vote on any

new motions. You just froze us out with that first motion requiring a minimum of five attendees!

Andy: Oh no! Is that effective immediately? Maybe that only starts at the next meeting?

Bob: Afraid not. That wasn't in the motion that passed.

Andy: But I've got two more really, REALLY important motions that need to be settled RIGHT away!

Craig: Nothing we can do. *(eyes heavenward, hands outstretched)* God has spoken through the group conscience!

Dennis: Amen to that.

(laughter ensues)

(a moment later...)

Andy: Well, in that case, I make a motion to close the meeting.

Bob: Sorry brother, we can't do that. We don't have a minimum of five to make a motion to close the meeting!

Craig: So you're saying we can't leave? We just have to wait around here until the next business meeting ... in a month??

Dennis: Make yourselves comfortable boys. Maybe we could read the last pages of the White Book to pass the time!

(hysterical laughter)

THE END

“Rule #62 ... Don't take yourself too damn seriously.” (12&12, 149)

Daniel K., Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel



Be sure to listen to the audio of this at essay.sa.org!

I Always Find What I'm Looking For



He kept relapsing until he changed what he was looking for.

I'm a low-bottom drunk. I was in active addiction for almost forty years. I was finally dragged into the Program fourteen years ago. Now, I've been sober for two years and three months. You do the math.

Why in the world did it take me so long in the Program to get sober and into real recovery? I had the same information I did years ago. I had the same support. I had the same sponsor for years before I got sober (God bless that man's patience).

During the last three years of addiction, I threw up for days every time after I acted out—dry heaving, spitting up blood, waking up in the middle of the night with night terrors, and not being able to think clearly. And yet, I kept going back out there. (Remember the whole low-bottom drunk thing?)

I told myself I wanted to stop. I couldn't do this anymore. I loved my wife and my family. I was, and will continue to be, completely and totally powerless over lust forever. So what changed? Well, first, I had to get discovered. Again. It was devastating and horribly painful. The pain I caused my wife was, and is, unacceptable. I'd been caught two times before. I'd been threatened with divorce before. Anyone in S-Anon learns pretty quickly that they can't control the addict (and if you think you can, good luck with that).

After almost eighteen months of sobriety, it hit me—at its core, getting sober boils down to one simple thing: I changed what I was looking for.

I'm going to geek out for a minute. There's



a part of the brain called the reticular activating system. We go through the world bombarded by millions of stimuli every day. If our brain didn't filter out most of it, we'd be completely overwhelmed and unable to function—much like me before my morning coffee.

Let's say you want to buy a new car and you've settled your dear old heart on a particular black SUV. Suddenly, you start seeing that black SUV everywhere. And no, the manufacturer didn't suddenly flood the market with them. It's because—trumpets, please—you found what you were looking for.

Now translate that into just about everything. If I look for a reason why everyone I deal with is an idiot, I'll find it. If I look for how everyone seems to have a better life, house, car, spouse, or clothes than me, I'll find that. And, of course—an all-time favorite—if I look for a reason to resent my spouse and take no responsibility for myself, I will most definitely find that.

Looking back with rigorous honesty—when I couldn't get sober in the Program—I was looking for a way to get the benefits of recovery but still hold on to lust. (In other words, I was totally bonkers.) When I was

desperate to get rid of lust (during the last few years), I was trying to get sober in secret, not coming out with the truth in the rooms because I was desperately afraid that somehow my wife would find out. (Bonkers again.) The results speak for themselves.

So when I hit a huge bottom and was determined to get sober, I first looked for every way to heal my brain from my addiction. Whatever time and energy I had put into looking for a reason to act out one last time or notice someone who triggered me (because, hey, I can handle that), I instead put more time and energy looking for the message of recovery and sobriety. If I wasn't at a meeting or working my Step work, asking my sponsor what I should do next, or calling up an oldtimer, I was listening to a recovery talk. I fell asleep every night to a recovery talk for at least the first 90 days of recovery to reprogram my brain.

What's more important for me is that all along I wasn't just looking for sobriety. I've been looking for recovery.

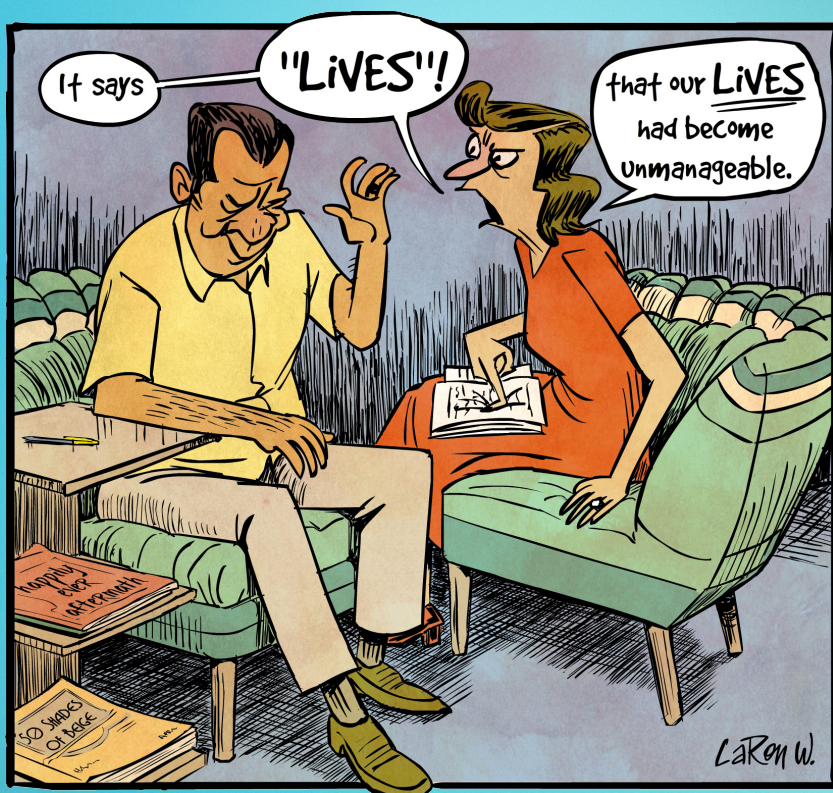
I've said it until I'm blue in the face—I'm not interested in just avoiding acting out today. That's not why I'm in this program. I'm here because I'm looking to live a life of integrity, love, connection, joy, and service. The basic requirement, just like the foundation of a dream house, is

sobriety. And if I spend all day looking for the things that help my recovery, it's a lot less likely that I'm going to lust today.

So now when I go to the grocery store, I look for groceries. And I find them. (Except for that one obscure thing my wife always puts on the list that is impossible to find. There's always that one darn thing.) Do I still get triggered by certain images of women? Of course—I'm a sex addict and always will be. But if I'm looking for recovery, then I'll use one of my tools and be able to move on.

Based on all I've written, if you think everything is smooth sailing for me, you'd be wrong. I'm incredibly flawed. Way too often, I look for excuses for why I did or didn't do something that was my responsibility. Too often, I look for how I'm right and someone else is wrong. The list can go on and on. The point is that as long as I keep working to shift what I'm looking for—one little thing at a time—then hopefully, I'll get better one little thing at a time. And that's just it: if I keep looking for the right things, eventually, I'll find them. Except for that one darn sock I lose in every load of laundry. If someone has some ESH for how to find that, I'm all ears.

Jeff M., Long Island, New York, USA



April 2025

Is it Lust or Love?

Lust was always a part of me, long before I knew its name. It had claimed me as one of its own in the darkness that would become my sexaholism—a universe-sized prison of my own making. My disease was quietly progressive. Some might argue that I haven't hit my real rock bottom since my life has never been completely upended by my many relapses.

If my addiction were a physical disease, it would be one that starts at the cellular level, killing me slowly. Maybe my life hasn't been totally rocked—yet. But inside, I've lived in a wasteland of loneliness, ego, self-pity, toxic shame, and a completely disfigured understanding of love. Even when everything on the surface looked fine, my interior world told a different story.

I don't claim to have all the answers, and thank God I don't. But through recovery, I've come to recognize some simple ways to check myself—to discern whether I'm acting by lust or by love. These questions have become essential guideposts for me:

- Am I concerned about the good of the other person or just myself?
- Why am I performing any act of service? Is it for attention or from a genuine desire to help?
- Who is running the show—God or me?
- Am I being patient and kind?
- What is my true motive behind any plans or intentions?

For years, I thought love and lust were intertwined, often indistinguishable. But recovery has shown me that love is not about taking, but giving. It's not about consuming, but serving. Love is not a prison—it expands freedom. And when I surrender to God, I begin to glimpse what real love can be.

So I keep asking myself the questions above, not because I've fully arrived, but because this way I continue to learn. And that's what recovery really is for me—a daily practice of choosing love over lust, faith over fear, and truth over the lies my addiction once told me.

Adria K., Washington, USA 

essay@sa.org



COURAGE TO CHANGE

*Overcoming Addiction and Betrayal
to Rebuild Love, Trust, and Purpose.*

When I attended my first SA meeting in May 2021, I was totally immersed in lust and had already lost almost everything.

The problem began when my father abandoned us. My mother had to go out to work, leaving me alone with my little brother. Then, my mother married an alcoholic and violent man, twice her age, but with a good job. My childhood was hell. I suffered humiliation, violence, hunger, abandonment, economic deprivation, and sexual abuse by my stepfather. I dreamed that a charming

prince would come to rescue me one day. While I isolated myself from the world, I discovered masturbation to escape my reality.

Then during my adolescence, I discovered I enjoyed male attention—I felt pretty, accepted, and loved. I also preferred to be at school studying in the library rather than at home. I was ashamed of the life I had because of my stepfather's alcoholism.

When I was 15 years old, my stepfather died, and it was another leap to “freedom.” I got my first boyfriend. He was much older than me and always asked me for “proof of love,” but I was afraid of getting pregnant. During this relationship, I met another man, more handsome and kinder. We became a couple, but I felt bad for having two boyfriends. When I ended the first relationship, I confessed to him that I had another boyfriend. He got very angry and slapped me hard. It hurt my soul because no one had ever hit me quite like that.

At 20, I secretly married this second boyfriend, whom I thought was my charming prince. I fell deeply in love, but I continued flirting with other men and even ended up acting out with some of them. When I was still in college, my first daughter was born, and my husband had a near-fatal accident. Neither stopped me from my active acting out. At 28, my second child was born and became seriously ill. I thought God was punishing me for being unfaithful. That was the first time I promised to change, but I couldn't keep that promise. I didn't know how to stop.

My husband caught me being unfaithful several times, but I asked for forgiveness and promised not to do it again. One time, he became so

angry that he beat me, kicked me out of the house, and told the whole family what kind of woman I was. I was left on the street, without my family, money, or a job, and all I could think about was acting out with my lover at the time. However, I also felt deep sadness.

I went to a psychologist, and he told me that my acting-out behavior was normal and that he would only support me with the losses I had endured. Then, I went to a psychiatrist, who prescribed medication, but that didn't help me. Finally, I found SA on the Internet and attended my first meeting. There were only men, but they treated me with respect, didn't judge me, and understood me. I identified with many fellows, attended many meetings, but I still couldn't stop.

Then one day, I heard a song about a father abandoning his daughter, and it made me cry. I felt like I was trading my children for lust, and I wanted to change my heart. I found a compassionate sponsor and started working the Steps. The first thing she suggested was to change my phone number and delete the numbers of the people I acted out with. She also suggested I delete dating apps and get rid of my provocative clothes. Giving up the things I liked was the most painful thing I went through. I even cried many nights for the people I wouldn't see again and for the clothes I would never wear again.

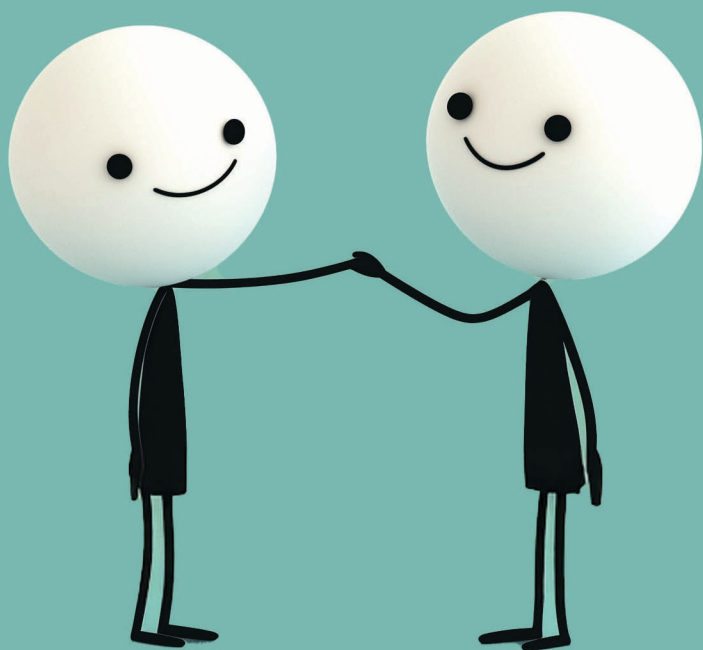
I returned home still resentful against my husband for hitting me, while he faced criticism and the fury of his family, who told him not

to forgive me. My children rejected me—I could feel the hatred in their eyes. My sponsor told me that I had to take loving actions with my husband, my children, and my in-laws. I had to recognize their virtues and kneel to ask God to help me see them as His beloved children. It was very difficult for me, but I did it. My husband joined S-Anon and started working his program.

Everything changed. Now, I can see my husband as a wonderful person who loves me, supports me in everything, and respects me. I accept people with their flaws and appreciate their virtues. It hurt me a lot to know how much damage I caused with my sexaholism. I had exchanged everything for nothing. Now, with the Program, I can be tolerant and patient with all people. I'm working to re-establish true connection with God and with the people around me. I no longer want to continue with lust. I respect my body as a sacred temple of God. There are days when temptation appears, and I think about the disappointment it would cause to my children, my husband, my sisters in SA, and myself. It also helps me a lot to re-read my list of reasons to give up lust. I think about God and ask Him to help me because I can't do it alone. I know that sex is optional and that men are not objects that I can use when I feel like it. They are human beings and deserve respect.

I thank God for guiding me to this Fellowship of the Spirit. And I thank all my fellows for teaching me a different way of life, free from lust.

Adriana C., Mexico 



The Gift of Desperation

*Surrendering to God led me to
the miracle of true sobriety.*

Hello, my name is Amr R. from Egypt. At age 10, I started touching myself but stopped because my mother told me I would go to hell for doing that. I discovered pornography at age 18 and soon became an addict, unable to stop masturbating for even one week. I came to SA at age 19, only a year ago. My first meeting was on Zoom. I joined SA because I was masturbating compulsively while watching pornography. When I first

came to SA, I was able to stop acting out for 14 days because of the people here—they encouraged, affirmed, and loved me!

But after a while, I began to feel worse because my problem was not a lack of love, encouragement, or affirmation. I had an allergy and a mental obsession. Still, I kept trying to do things on my own. I went to lots of SA meetings, shared a lot, and got involved in service work. But I did not work the Steps, and so these tools were not enough. I started relapsing, and that lasted seven months. Looking back, I'd say my problem was that I was only *around* the Program but not *in* the Program. I asked God to help me be honest. I was making an effort. After each relapse, I kept saying, "I will go to more meetings, make more Program calls, do more Step work. I will... I will... I will..." But after seven months of relapses, I

realized I had not even surrendered once or honestly admitted that I was powerless over lust—that lust was my master.

Then I heard someone in a meeting say, “Ask God to give you the gift of desperation.” He told me that if I prayed this way, I would receive a miracle. So, I prayed for desperation every morning and evening—but I still relapsed. Even so, I kept praying for this desperation. I told God, “I failed. I can’t get sober. But I will do everything I can to show You that I am willing, God.”

As I worked on Step Eight with my sponsor, I began giving him all my reasons why I kept relapsing. He then told me, “Go and start making your Step Eight and Nine amends.” I was three days sober when I made my first amends, and from that day until now, I have remained sober.

The first amends I made destroyed my ego (but that was a good thing). I began to feel the serenity that people in the Program talked about. I felt how strong

God’s power was. I can only say that the gift of desperation was what allowed me to make amends because I could not do it on my own. The gift of desperation also helped me start doing SA service work. I took on two service positions on the same day—one for an in-person meeting and one for a Zoom meeting. My mind was telling me, “What are you doing? You’re not worthy to do service! You’ve been in

the Program for only seven months and have been relapsing the whole time!” The difference this time was that I worked the Steps and used the

tools of recovery I had been learning about. The miracle is that I’m still sober, and doing service is still crucial to my recovery!

The first amends I made destroyed my ego—but that was a good thing.

I started sponsoring when I was only three weeks sober. I’ve now sponsored about 15 people. I really don’t know how I did these things—sponsoring and doing service. If you had asked me three months ago if I could sponsor and get sober, I would have said no. I was very fearful—in my addiction, I was afraid of everything.

Recently, I even helped find a new location for an in-person meeting and have been learning about the Twelve Traditions. What I like about in-person meetings is that there are sober, experienced people whom I respect and learn from. I’ve made some true friends there. I have really found in SA something so much better than lust. I found God.

Amr R., Mansoura, Egypt



BEYOND THE PENDULUM SWING



Step into Action (p. 67) tells us that “There are many good ways to do a Fourth Step inventory.” It recommends listing and describing our resentments, fears, and the selfish nature of our sexual behavior, but it also mentions identifying our positive attributes and recognizing what “God would have us be.” This can also be found in our personal history of other, more positive, behaviors—especially in actions that stand in direct contrast to our defects, like opposite ends of a pendulum’s swing.

As I stood in the patio of a police station, I looked around at the dozens of fellow detainees, milling about in twos and threes, talking quietly. We had been detained after participating in a brief public demonstration.

It wasn’t my first time in a police station, though. A previous experience had nothing to do with standing up for a cause. I had been acting out in a park at two in the morning when I was rounded up with several other offenders after several days of uncontrollable behavior in a variety of places. That time, I spent a few hours in a holding cell before being released without charges.

Nowhere were the two extremes of my life more evident than here, in a police station: on one hand, a person trying to live by their principles; on the other, someone engaging in self-destructive behavior in the middle of

the night.

As the hours went by during my second visit to a police station, I occasionally stood by myself on the bare cement patio, gazing over the wall at the snow-covered mountain range in the distance. It towered like a white-crested tsunami of granite rising from the horizon, about to crash onto the city below.

A passage I had once memorized came to mind as I stood there, looking at the majestic peaks. It spoke of finding strength by looking to something greater than myself.

The words gave me peace and a sense of being loved and accompanied by my Higher Power in that moment.

Years later, those same words of assurance and encouragement gave me the key to a new life of sobriety and integrity. Sexaholics Anonymous has helped me wake up to the uncontrollable nature of the pendulum swing in my life. Those remembered words provided me with an unexpected escape from that endless, wild ride, revealing that God would also help me on the positive side of that pendulum swing—in the firm mountains of the SA program, with my fellow recovering addicts, and through the snow-white attitude of radical dependence on my Higher Power to live a life of sobriety and service to others.

Colm S., Rhode Island, USA



Whose Victory Is It?

Letting God Win Over Lust

Courage isn't fighting lust—it's surrendering it to God.

My name is Steve, and I'm a recovering sexaholic. By God's grace, sponsorship, and the Program, I've been sober since August 20, 2013. I haven't had sex with myself or with anyone other than my spouse for over 11 years. I've also experienced some progressive victory over lust.

At times in my recovery, I have “aha!” moments when the God of my understanding enlightens my own self-interest (see SA, 202). One of these moments happened recently while I was working out at the local recreation center. The room I was in overlooks the pool, where the high school swim team practices. As I was leaving, I noticed them practicing, and my focus immediately went to the girls in their swimsuits.

In the Program, I've heard that the first look is on God, but the second look is on me. I badly wanted to take that second look, but instead, I turned around and looked at the wall. I prayed for God to remove my lust. I was able to walk toward the exit without taking that second look.

I felt pretty proud of myself for doing the right thing. I thought, *Now that's progressive victory over lust!* But

then, an enlightened thought came to me: *That's not my victory—it's Higher Power's victory.* I'm powerless over lust. I was enlightened to realize the victory belongs to Higher Power, not to me. My pride and ego want to step in and take credit, but the only thing I can truly take credit for is saying yes to my Higher Power instead of to lust. Everything else that happens after that is God's victory.

I'm reminded of what it says in chapter five of the White Book: “Remember that we deal with lust—cunning, baffling, and powerful! Without help, it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power—that one is God. May you find Him now.” (SA, 206)

I'm grateful to have a choice today when it comes to victory over lust. I can humble myself and say yes to Higher Power, or I can start drinking in the images of lust.

Today, when I'm tempted by lust, I ask for the courage to change the things I can. And that means saying yes to God and no to lust.

Steve R., Nebraska, USA



Desensitized to Destruction



How the Steps, Higher Power, and the Fellowship helped this member find his path to recovery, one day at a time.

Tonight, a tragic plane crash dominates every news network. The world is in shock. Why? Because plane crashes are rare—they don't happen often, so when they do, it's overwhelming.

But what about a car accident on the Belt Parkway? I barely react. I see crashes all the time—they blend into the background of daily life. The first time I witnessed one up close, I was shaken. But the more I saw, the less I felt.

That's just what happened in my addiction.

At first, acting out felt like a plane crash—something rare I swore I'd never do again. But when life became stressful and those same emotions resurfaced, the thought of doing it one more time didn't seem as extreme. The second time was easier. The third, even easier. Eventually, what once felt catastrophic became

normal. Like passing another wreck on the highway, I stopped noticing the destruction. At some point, my addiction became the only way I knew to cope.

And this is the insanity of my addiction. No matter how much pain it caused me, my mind convinced me that this time would be different. Left untreated, my disease took full control. Any willpower I had faded, and I became completely powerless.

This is why I need the Twelve Steps. If willpower were enough, I would have stopped long ago. The only way I can stay sober is by letting my Higher Power take the wheel. My recovery isn't about fighting harder—it's about admitting, surrendering, and trusting God to guide me one day at a time.

I won't pretend this is easy. Every day is a struggle. I've come so close to acting out many times this past month. Some days, I feel like I can't

hold on. But when I'm at a meeting, I'm in a good place. I find strength in the people who understand me, in my loving wife's support, in the Steps, and in knowing I'm not alone. I recently got a sponsor and started the work. I don't know what tomorrow will bring, but I'm grateful for today. And today, I'm sober.

For those who have never experienced

addiction, this is how it happened to me. It's not that I didn't want to stop—it's that my addiction numbed me to the very thing that was destroying me. But as someone in recovery, this is my reminder: no matter how powerless I may feel, I'm never hopeless. With God's help, I can stay sober one day at a time.

Shlomo R., New York, USA



The only way I can stay sober is by letting Higher Power take the wheel.



LaRon W.

A Look into Step Four

Seeing My Part Without Taking Blame

Step Four was eye-opening for me. It was also hard to look at, written on paper, what I had done and who I was. I just didn't want to be that person anymore.

I hadn't really considered or wanted to look at myself like this. I had spent so much time focusing on what everyone else had done wrong to me. That's all I had been able to see for a very long time.

But when I read Step Four with my sponsor and followed his wise direction to write out all of my resentments, I started to see things differently. I also wrote out the cause of each resentment and how I had been affected.

My sponsor's next instruction caught me by surprise. He told me to go back, look at every single resentment, and find my dishonesty in it. *What?* I really thought I had been completely truthful in what I had written.

But as I looked at them one by one, I became truly amazed. I had played my own part in every one of them in some way.

Here's one example. When I was a boy, I was sexually assaulted by a married couple who used me over many years. I carried shame and anger all my life and never told a soul until I was 48 years old. *They* did this to *me*. I did nothing wrong!

As I looked at it more carefully, I saw that though I was by no means in the wrong, I had still played a part. For example, I didn't have to keep going back to their house (I worked for them, cutting their grass). That's when my eyes opened. I wasn't to blame; it was just my part in it. Although I was wrong in many instances, recognizing my part in something didn't have to mean I was automatically at fault.

For each resentment on my list, I began looking for where I was responsible. For instances where I had committed no wrong, I merely identified any part I had played. By doing this all the way down my list, I realized that much of the anger, blaming, and resentment I



had toward people on my list was misplaced.

It wasn't about them. It was about me and what I needed to do to cut it loose. This issue of who was at fault simply didn't fit into this equation.

Then my sponsor had me move on to my fears. As we talked about them one by one, I realized I had nothing to fear at all. It was all in my head—just another excuse my disease used to keep me acting out.

Next, we looked at my sexual conduct. So many women and men on this list! And I was emotionally attached to most of them.

It was amazing to me how often I had used others simply for my own benefit.

I became aware of where I actually *was* at fault—my dishonesty, my hurtful actions, my selfish behaviors. But I also became aware of what I could have done differently. That was a big deal for me.

I had always been right—never wrong about anything. Or so I thought.

My wife used to say I always came at her like a dirty old man. I never understood what she meant. In fact, I got very angry when she said this. But after I got sober and worked Step Four, I finally saw it. My thinking

had been all wrong. This was another instance where the problem was me—not someone else.

By the end of Step Four, I understood more about myself than ever before.

I wrote out a prayer that I keep with me and say every morning: “God, help me be a better person today than yesterday.

Show me how I can be of service to someone.” This prayer helps me every time I ask it sincerely.

The truth still hurts me at times, but it always sets me free from the prison my addiction wants me to stay in.

Lloyd A., West Virginia, USA 

*Recognizing
my part in
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automatically
at fault.*

*By
the end
of Step Four,
I understood
myself better
than ever
before.*



The Hand of Fellowship

A few years ago, I wrote an article about my experience sponsoring incarcerated fellows by mail. How different it is now to be one of them! As if I needed further proof that I'm just another "bozo on the bus!"

My recovery journey started five years ago. I was arrested for my acting-out behaviors and illegal acts of voyeurism. That day, my life shattered, but a new one began not long after.

The Big Book states, "The delusion that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed" (AA, 30). I had deluded myself to such an extent that I believed I could do as I was doing and still operate as a contributing, church-going, and successful member of society. Insanity, indeed! The day my life shattered, my delusion was also smashed. I had reached that point of willingness—that terrifying rock bottom and, subsequently, that blessed window of opportunity.

I was bailed out of the state jail just as the pandemic reared its ugly head and the world seemed to shut down. Quarantined in my apartment, I told my Higher Power that I was really, truly done (for I'd prayed

similar prayers in the past) and that whatever doors He opened for me, I would walk through—no questions asked.

Over the next few months, several opportunities presented themselves. The most significant was a phone call from a pastor I knew back home (it had been many years since I'd lived in my home state). At the time, I was not taking calls. My case had been made public and torn its way through all my contacts and networks. Ashamed and humiliated, I was one of those who embraced the isolation of social distancing.

I was skeptical about receiving the call. I certainly welcomed prayers, but I'd offered many in the past to what I felt was no avail. I didn't realize that "faith must be accompanied by self-sacrifice, and unselfish, constructive action" (AA, 93). But I'd made a commitment to walk through any door.

Our phone call was short and simple. There was prayer, but he also offered to introduce me to someone who could help me. I agreed, and not long after, I received a phone call from a fellow in SA. As he told me his story, I felt like he was telling me

about myself. I agreed to phone into a meeting that week.

That meeting was the first of hundreds more I would phone and Zoom into over the next few years. From the moment I heard the Solution and the Problem, I knew I was where I needed to be. I got a sponsor and began working the Steps. A year and a half later, I would begin taking men through the Steps as well—including our incarcerated fellows.

After a lifetime of only holding on to three weeks of sobriety at most, I was finally free. I didn't struggle. When I faced temptation, I had people I could call, and the obsession would vanish. I had a renewal partner I could speak candidly with. During one of the most difficult moments in my life, the Fellowship was there.

During that time, my bail was exonerated and no charges were filed. I worked my program and worked on my family, gratefully hoping that I'd been ignored by the justice system. I was wrong.

In 2023 I was rearrested for the same offense from 2020. I was able to bond out, but once again, I watched my life shatter. And again, the Fellowship was there. My sponsor sent out messages asking for experience, strength, and hope (ESH) from any fellows who'd been through the system. Within days, several fellows responded with more ESH than I could even digest! For a full year, unable to attend in-person meetings, I leaned on these connections, along with regular phone and Zoom meetings, to keep me grounded in the Program and focused on HP.

After a year, I accepted a plea offer and was remanded into custody. I

was devastated. Even worse, I was placed in "the hole" for my safety due to some threats from other inmates. Once again, I was alone, and this time, no one could contact me. I was completely cut off from friends, family, and the Fellowship—no one knew where I'd been taken. I was afraid, and self-pity threatened to consume me.

When afraid, "[w]e ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be" (AA, 68). I determined that He would have me be of service and keep working the Program. So, I encouraged the other men I bunked with and told them about recovery from addiction. I spent a month in the hole before being moved to the main floor. Like a man in need of water, I immediately started trying to get phone numbers and let people know where I was.

Before I'd even been able to reconnect, I started receiving letters from SA members. That entire month, while I'd felt alone and worried, several members had been searching for me and had already started reaching out. Yet again, the Fellowship was there.

As I write this, I'm a week away from sentencing and facing many years of incarceration. That's a terrifying thought. But I know what to do with fear: ask Higher Power to remove it and turn my attention to what He would have me be—in this case, another hand of fellowship that's always there.

Note: If anyone would like to connect with me, they can reach out to CFC for my information. I'm always happy to connect with fellows, both in the system, and out.

Matt J., Texas, USA 



A Lifeline in Lockup

How a sponsor changed my life

All my life I went to church, served others, and believed in a Higher Power. I am married with seven children. However, I lived a secret life of pornography addiction for 27 years. I had a lot of trauma I didn't know how to deal with after being abused as a child several times by four different men while growing up. My pornography use eventually led to a crime that put me in prison for four years.

I am grateful for the “time out” of prison in my life. During my prison term, I attended everything possible to change so that when I got out, I could be a new person with no addiction. A friend of mine in prison told me about Sexaholics Anonymous. It was held in the same building as AA, but we had to leave early so the AA people would not beat us up, knowing we

had committed sexual crimes (it seemed like those attending SA in prison were only those that had committed sexual crimes—that is not the case of course outside of prison). I loved the fact that SA was non-denominational and there was a true open feeling of love and care from the facilitators. It was a safe place for me to work on the Steps and myself. However, I could not get a sponsor in prison—everyone there I knew needed a sponsor. I found out about the Sponsor By Mail program and got excited. I wrote a letter and asked for a sponsor. I received a letter back and was introduced to my sponsor.

Not only was it fun getting mail in prison, but I looked forward to the information from my sponsor about my assignments and the new assignments he would give me to

work through the Steps. My sponsor was and is wonderful and had a lot of experience with Step work. He was just as important in my recovery as was the therapy I was receiving in prison. My sponsor was an answer to my prayers! I worked all 12 Steps via mail with my sponsor, and learned many life-changing tools (like the importance of not keeping secrets and bringing things to light with people I trust). I applied them. I love the fact that my sponsor told me personal experiences of his success in sobriety. It gave me hope. The Sponsor by Mail was so life-changing for me that I asked my sponsor if he would mind if I called him from prison to check in every other week while I was in prison. Although this is not done that often, I was able to do it and greatly benefited from further help after doing the Step work.

After I got out of prison, I got a local sponsor, but still maintained contact with my original sponsor with his permission, and I still check in every other week with him. My SA sponsor has changed my life—has helped me connect with Higher Power, given me hope, and helped me to know when I was going off track before it became a problem. I would not be where I am now without him. Thank you, sponsor! I love him!

My wife is so grateful for my sponsor

as well—he helped me change so my wife (who waited for me) has a wonderful relationship with me. My children are grateful I went to prison to change, and I give credit to my SA sponsor for most of my change. I encourage everyone struggling with any sexual lust to attend SA meetings and enjoy the journey of recovery.

I ask that people in SA who are sober consider being a Sponsor By Mail for those inmates in prison to help change their lives, which will make a positive ripple effect in so many lives that they can touch. May God bless my sponsor and all other sponsors for how much they do for their sponsees. I am grateful for my sponsor and for Sexaholics Anonymous. It works if you work it!

Anonymous, Utah, USA 

Sponsor by Mail continues to get requests from SA friends in prison. Currently there are 12 men in prison seeking sponsorship. If you have worked the Steps through Step Five, have at least 6 months of sobriety, and a green light from your sponsor, then email(cfcasponsor@gmail.com) to connect with the Correctional Facilities Committee.

Recovering Together: Strength in Fellowship

A Step Toward Healing at the Bogotá Conference

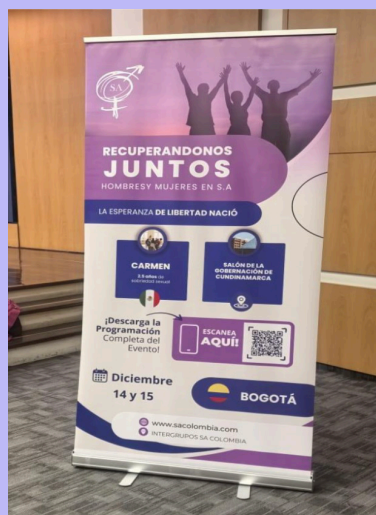
On December 14–15, 2024, Bogotá, Colombia hosted SA members under the inspiring slogan: “*Recovering Together, Men and Women in SA.*” The event brought together 39 participants—31 men and 8 women—united in their journey of recovery.

Carmen from Mexico, the featured speaker, shared powerful insights that set the tone for the weekend. One of the highlights was a Step One workshop, where attendees reflected deeply on their experiences.

By the end of the workshop, the room was filled with a renewed sense of hope and joy—a reminder of the strength found in fellowship.



What Did Lust Steal from Me?	What Has Recovery Given Me?
<p>Ability to give and receive love Healthy relationships with opposite sex Connection with Higher Power / Sanity Peace of mind, self-love My family Healthy sexuality Health: physical, mental, & emotional Hope Professional and career prospects Time Trust from spouse and children A positive image of the opposite sex Trust in the opposite sex Reputation / “a good name” Self-care Youth Money Joy Freedom and dignity Tolerance & compassion for others Principles and values A sense of worthiness A sense of connection with the world Friendships Dreams Self-esteem Faith Spirituality A desire to live Focus Boundary-setting skills</p>	<p>Peaceful sleep Sobriety Freedom Restoration of my family Connection with God Dignity Compassion (for self & others) Understanding of others Clarity in decision-making Honesty / Sincerity Hope Humility Ability to connect with others Responsibility for my actions Purpose in life Ability to enjoy my own company Fellowship Seeing others as children of HP Generosity Discipline Obedience Willingness to serve Financial stability Compassion & Empathy An international support network Better time management Respect for my body Dependence on God (Humility) Meditation Joy Reconciliation Unity & Love Daily emotional & spiritual inventory Forgiveness Safe space for recovery where I feel loved & respected A sponsor Friends FAITH The Twelve Steps Awareness</p>



“Lust stole from me my sanity and the possibility of any connection with Higher Power. Recovery has given me a comfortable dependence on God, which feels like humility to me.”

Evelyn & Oscar M., Colombia



COMING IN JUNE



Grieving In Recovery

Last year was a year of great loss for SA as a number of beloved members passed away. Many people found themselves in deep pain, some for the very first time in sobriety. This brought the Fellowship together, which allowed members to surrender and process their anger or sorrow. Grieving is a vital part of recovery and an opportunity for growth. We'd love to hear your ESH on how you 'let go and let God' during times of loss. Please send your submissions to essay@sa.org. We look forward to hearing from you.

SUBMIT YOUR STORY

June 2025 edition: Grieving In Recovery (Stories due May 1) How has grieving played a role in your recovery?

August 2025 edition: Surrendering Shame (Stories due July 1) How has shame blocked your recovery? What helped you learn to let go of your shame and let HP handle it for you?

October 2025 edition: The Great Fact (Submissions due September 1) The Big Book mentions the great fact twice. It's best defined in "A Vision for You" (AA, 164). What is the Great Fact's impact on you?

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.

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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.

