

ESSAY

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SEXAHOLICS ANONYMOUS

GRIEVING
IN
RECOVERY



FEATURING THE STORY OF SYLVIA J.

JUNE 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 lust and become sexually sober. There are no dues or fees for SA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. SA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization, or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sexually sober and help others to achieve sexual sobriety.

Adapted with permission from AA Grapevine Inc.

RESPONSIBILITY DECLARATION

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

Sexaholics Anonymous STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLE

We have a solution. We don't claim it's for everybody, but for us, it works. If you identify with us and think you may share our problem, we'd like to share our solution with you (*Sexaholics Anonymous*, 2). In defining sobriety, we do not speak for those outside Sexaholics Anonymous. We can only speak for ourselves. Thus, for the married sexaholic, sexual sobriety means having no form of sex with self or with persons other than the spouse. In SA's sobriety definition, the term "spouse" refers to one's partner in a marriage between a man and a woman. For the unmarried sexaholic, sexual sobriety means freedom from sex of any kind. And for all of us, single and married alike, sexual sobriety also includes progressive victory over lust (*Sexaholics Anonymous*, 191-192). (*Adopted 2010 by the General Delegate Assembly.*)

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

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

ESSAY is a publication of Sexaholics Anonymous

essay@sa.org

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RESOLUTION: "Since each issue of ESSAY cannot go through the SA Literature approval process, the Trustees and General Delegate Assembly recognize ESSAY as the International Journal of Sexaholics Anonymous and support the use of ESSAY materials in SA meetings."
Adopted by the Trustees and General Delegate Assembly in May 2016

Editor's Corner

Help Needed: ESSAY Proofreaders
to review the ESSAY drafts. If you're interested in this service, please contact us at essay@sa.org with the subject line, "ESSAY Service Opportunities."



While every ESSAY edition is special, carefully thought out, and filled with SA recovery, we would like to describe this edition as unique. The Fellowship has had many losses in the past year. Some experienced loss in recovery for the first time. Can the 12 Steps and the Fellowship of SA aid those who are grieving?

In this June 2025 edition, members share how the 12 Steps and outside help from professionals aided them in experiencing loss. Members share how the Fellowship set up opportunities for all who wanted to surrender, cry, and celebrate those who have passed.

Especially challenging was losing a beloved oldtimer, Sylvia J., who played a key role in SA's beginnings. In her memorial, we will hear from Sylvia's own words and learn from her sponsees and friends how the principles shaped her personality.

One member shares how the amends process helped him break through numbness. Another member discovers that every passing is a celebration of life. One oldtimer describes his journey as saying goodbye to everything until only God and he are left. Many members share on losing our dear member, Luc D., whose journey greatly impacted many members' recoveries.

In this edition, we surrender, celebrate, grieve, and grow together.

In Fellowship,
The Editorial Team
essay@sa.org



June 2025

Out of every season of grief or suffering, when the hand of God seemed heavy or even unjust, new lessons for living were learned, new resources of courage were uncovered, and that finally, inescapably, the conviction came that God does "move in a mysterious way His wonders to perform."

Twelve and Twelve, 105

Practical Tools

The Three As.....7

On The Cover: Grieving In Recovery

Bringing Us Together.....8
Opening Up to Grief.....9
Good Grief.....10
Acceptance Is the Answer to All My Problems.....12
Lifetime of Tears.....13
SA Is My Family, as Most People I love Are Dead...14

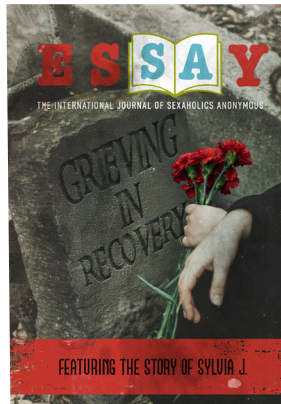
SA Stories

A Pillar in SA History.....15
In Sylvia's Own Words.....21
What She Freely Gave.....24

Steps & Traditions

Life is a Continuous Saying Goodbye.....29
Breaking Through Resentment and Numbness.....31

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



On the cover:
The Twelve Steps and the Fellowship help us find a Higher Power. That Higher Power allows us to face life on life's terms, including loss, to grieve, to grow, and to heal.

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.

SA CFC

Sponsorship in Prison.....33

World Wide News

His Focus on Fellowship.....34

ALSO IN THIS PRINTED ISSUE

SA Purpose.....2
Responsibility Declaration.....2
Statement of Principle.....2
Resolution.....2
Editor's Corner.....3
Dear ESSAY.....5
What's Going On in SA.....6
Discussion Topic.....11
Coming in August.....35

ALSO IN THE PDF OF THIS ISSUE

Worldwide Walls of SA.....E4
Captured on Film.....E12
The Principles for the Heartbroken.....E14
Tears of Gratitude.....E16
Remembering the Isms.....E17
The Best Caption Contest.....E32
SA Notice Board.....E33
The 2025 Truro, UK Recovery Day.....E34
NWR Spring Retreat Retrospective.....E35

Dear ESSAY

DEAR ESSAY, THANK YOU

for this topic on *Grieving in Recovery*. It has helped me reflect on how I cope with grief since being in recovery, compared to before.

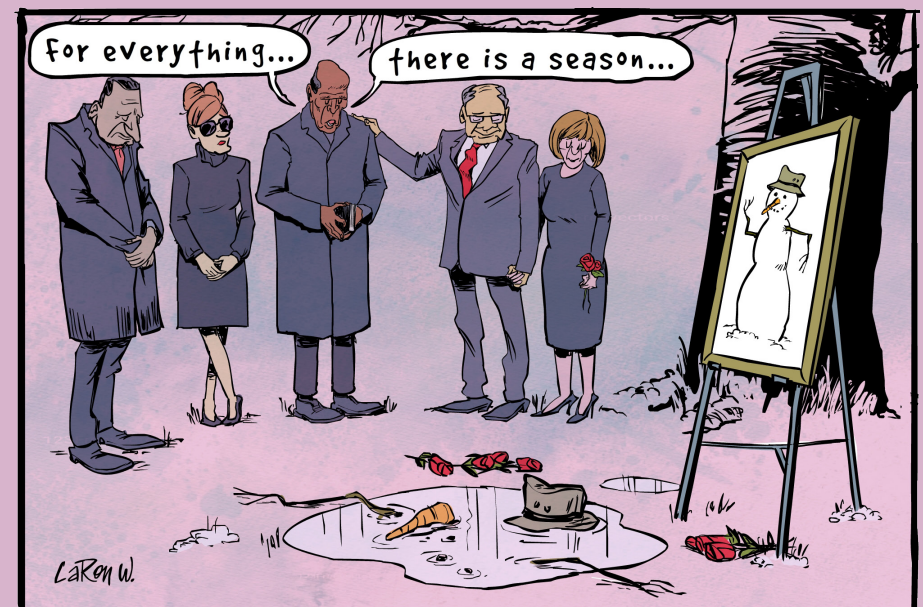
Before coming into SA and being recovered, I considered the death of a loved one, friend, pet, or notable person (in that order) as only negative. It was usually accompanied by sadness, depression, resentment, fear, loneliness, remorse, regret, and other negative emotions.

However, since coming into the SA program and practicing these new principles in all my affairs, I now view grieving over death differently. Rather than being sad that someone

is gone, I am extremely grateful that they lived, and happy I had the gift of meeting or knowing them. As a now-deceased friend once shared with my spouse, "Don't cry because it is over, smile because it happened."

I can now accept being sad and disappointed by the loss of someone, yet still be happy and grateful that they lived and that I knew them in the first place. I used to think that a "Celebration of Life" was a misnomer. What they really meant was a sad, mournful, depressing, and unpleasant event! Now, however, that is exactly my response to the loss of a loved one. To celebrate their life! This new attitude towards death and grief has also enabled me to overcome fear of my own death and, instead, to enjoy every moment I am alive, as God surely wants me to do.

Vince G., New Brunswick, Canada

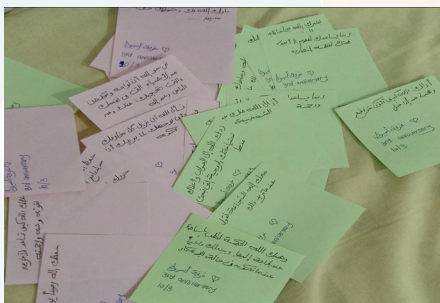


Worldwide Walls of SA

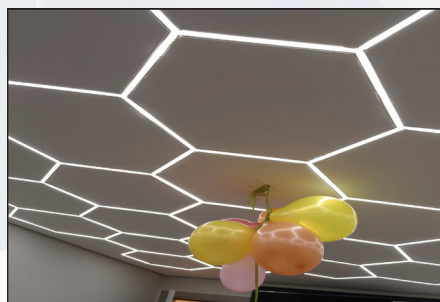
SA Meetings Can Be Held Just About Anywhere ...



On March 10, 2022, Assiut Room held its first face-to-face meeting, thanks to our fellow Ahmed M., who was a wonderful tool used by God to start this blessed journey.



The Room began with a few attendees and faced numerous challenges and difficulties, periods of stagnation, and times of growth.



Yet, it remained the first beacon that illuminated the path for establishing other rooms in neighboring provinces, spreading hope and inspiration among all.



Today, as we celebrate our recovery and the strength of God that carried us along the way, we feel His care and joy as He watches us gathered here. Every step we took was by His grace, and every success achieved was a testament to His love and constant guidance.



Assiut Room is not just a place but a symbol of new beginnings and faith that small starts can lead to great transformations.

Assiut Governorate, Egypt



June 2025



I am pleased and grateful to share with the Fellowship that there is now a second Sexaholics Anonymous meeting in Manassas, Virginia! While our original meeting has been running strong since 1997, we are excited to announce the launch of the Tuesday Night Manassas SA Group.

Our first meeting was a great success, with five members in attendance—all of whom stayed for the group conscience meeting afterward. We are deeply grateful for the guiding wisdom of our SA conference-approved literature and the strength of our Fellowship.

For any members visiting or living in the Capital Area of the U.S., we warmly invite you to join us at our weekly SA meeting on Tuesday nights.

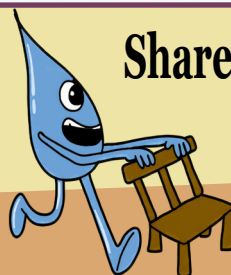
Hal C., Virginia, USA



Share Your New Meeting With ESSAY!

Share your photos & send your meeting place to essay@sa.org.

Remember to include your name, address, group name, and location of the meeting.



What's Going On In SA

SA has a set of Trustee Committees (see Concept 11) that provide advice and perform tasks on behalf of the Trustees. The Information Technology (IT) Committee is commissioned to develop and maintain the sa.org website. This website is often the first contact newcomers have with our fellowship and serves as a hub for providing information, literature, and services to all SA members. We would like to keep it in tip-top shape.

Several years ago, a major effort was invested to update the underlying technology of the website so that it reliably displays on screens of all sizes. This technology is called WordPress. Over the following years, the technology underlying particular components of the website, such as the Store and Conventions and Events, was also updated. We are now ready to circle back and continue improving the website as a whole. This is a large task that we need help with! Here are some of the projects we are working on:

- Deploying a map-based meeting finder
- Developing a time-based virtual meeting finder
- Updating the website's building technology
- Creating a new look and feel
- Reorganizing content
- Adding more content related to service
- Improving the meeting registration tool

On several of these projects, the IT Committee is working with the Public Information Committee (PIC), who have provided ideas for content and graphics. But we need more help from web designers, artists, writers, project managers, committee/subcommittee secretaries, etc. Please consider volunteering!

To be a formal, voting member of the IT Committee, two years of sobriety are required. To help with projects as a non-voting member, we recommend at least one year of sobriety. If you are interested in contributing, please contact SAICO at saico@sa.org for an application.

Jeff from Maine, USA, IT Committee Chair

The Hand of SA Reaches Out

HELP!

June 2025

Practical Tools

The Three A's

The January 29 reflection from *The Real Connection* has had a profound impact on my recovery.

I realized that for me, each Step is a three A process: awareness, acceptance, and action. I'm very aware of Step One. The awareness is, "Oh, I guess I am addicted." Actually, in Step One, I'm admitting that I have this problem. I have to accept it and write out my sexual history, the way my life is unmanageable. That proves to me that yes, I do have this problem, and it helps me to accept it. Then it suggests that once I've done that, to take action. I take Step Two.

Every Step is the same thing. Each Step is a process of the three A's. I get a new awareness with each step. I get a new acceptance of my problem, acceptance of the solution, which is a daily reprieve.

That's what the three A's are about. Everything I process, I become new. I have new awareness of myself, aspects of my disease, and aspects of recovery. That's why the literature is

new and different every time I read it.


Life is a process of people coming into my life and of things coming to me: situations, resources, difficulties, and challenges. Then they leave: either I will leave or they will leave.

The process of grieving is a process of growing. It's a process of becoming aware that, "Oh, what I had, I'm losing, and I'm accepting that." Then, I am looking to the future.

So life is just a process of coming and going.

So life is just a process of coming and going. The going can be letting go rather than hanging on to anger, resentment, and pain.

Now I get to sponsor. What do I share as a sponsor? I share my process of pain, grief, and empathy that I can have with other people. I can have that because I have been through the process that you're going through now.

Tricia S., Pittsburgh, USA 

Grieving In Recovery

BRINGING US TOGETHER



How They Found Deeper Fellowship Working Together.

Have you worked the Steps on this issue?" Sylvia asked me that question regularly when she was my sponsor. The question stays in my head, and it comes to the surface when my Higher Power knows I need help. Seven women shared many wise suggestions from Sylvia as our sponsor or as our friend. We united in our grief to have an online memorial, a memorial on Zoom, and a memorial published in the June ESSAY magazine. Sylvia passed away in October 2024. One of the women interviewed me and Sylvia's former sponsees and friends to paint a picture of her gifts of experience, strength, and hope.

We bounced ideas around to reach the goal of articles that honored Sylvia as a pioneer in the fellowship.

One of the gifts I received in the process of memorializing her with my program sisters was how much love, kindness, and patience we showed towards each other. I felt so much prayer coming from all the women working together. Sylvia is smiling as she watches over all of us working the Steps regarding her passing. I wish we were all close enough to do a group hug.

I felt so much prayer coming from all the women working together.

There have been lots of miracles during this process; I'm grateful to say. I am honored to be with SA sisters who cherish Sylvia's legacy.

Peg V., Cleveland, USA 

I remember what my life was like when I was living wholly in my addiction. It was as though I were in a cave, deep inside, where the light was far off, and surrounding me were damp, cold walls of stone. Gratefully and finally, I moved toward the light and found fellowship in SA. I was isolated even though I was surrounded by people. In my lust, I saw people as objects, and I was alone.

As I started attending meetings, got a sponsor, and began to work a program of sobriety, I started to relate to people as persons. My self-centered existence began to change. Prayer and meditation drew me out. My Higher Power became more important to me than getting what I wanted all the time. I used to have warm relationships in my earlier years, but my addiction had drawn me away.

I grew to trust fellow SA members when I shared my shame, my sins, my powerlessness, and my secrets. Because of the love of the members of my home group, I became open to listening to the problems of others and having compassion for them. Finally, I was living in the light.

This openness to other members

came with a price. I became vulnerable by sharing their pain. Now, some of my friends share their family problems. Other members share financial challenges, loss of jobs, medical bills, and sicknesses. I pray for them. I share their suffering, and I feel for them. I suffer too. Is it worth it? Is this a bargain to exchange the pain of addiction for the pain of relationships?

I believe so. This is life. To share the pain of another is to live in love. Service is one of our three legacies. It is healthy for me to help others, to carry our message of SA to others so that the light that came into my life can shine into theirs. I help newcomers live in the light.

A gift of the Program is acceptance. "Acceptance Was the Answer" is a famous chapter in the fourth edition of the Big Book of AA, on page 407. I grieve for my friends' passing. One of my sponsors died six years ago. I remember him well and the peace and serenity he helped me find. With gratitude to my Higher Power, I remember all those who have helped me live in the light. I am open to life, and I am open to the grief that comes with it.

Anonymous, St. Louis, Missouri



Learning How to Live by Sharing Another's Pain.



OPENING UP TO GRIEF



His Sponsor Helped Him Find the Good in Grief.

In my memory, the expression “good grief” was a common expletive of the cartoon characters in Peanuts. For much of my life, I used “good grief” to express astonishment, dismay, and frustration, never considering the deeper truth hidden within the euphemism. Before I entered the SA program (10/21/1998), I lived with an accumulation of frozen grief. Only after a couple of journeys through the Steps did I begin to understand and embrace the benefits of grieving. I realized that journeying through grief was healing and good for me.

When I was 14, a close uncle committed suicide, a victim of unresolved WWII PTSD. At 16, my oldest brother, age 22, died unexpectedly from a brain aneurysm. Those close, unexpected deaths shocked me deeply—my first experiences of grief. I felt grief had ripped my young, aching heart wide open. With both occurrences, I emotionally lost control of myself. I was ashamed of my behavior, of being heartbroken and in tears. I resolved to better control my emotions around grief.

During the next fifteen-plus years, I lost several peers. I lost two of my closest friends, three other school friends, two cousins, and a younger neighbor, all to suicide. Another schoolmate died of a brain tumor, and five schoolmates died in vehicle-related accidents. Grief became something to suppress. I strove to minimize the pain and get through it as quickly as possible. I did not realize that the unmourned grief was retained, frozen in my body and my psyche, and that I was becoming increasingly cold-hearted. Before long, I felt nothing when I heard someone had died or had been killed. Worse, I was becoming progressively mean-hearted.

My mother died when I was 32; she was the first person I allowed myself to grieve for. During that time, I also grieved for my brother, who had died sixteen years earlier. I experienced relief; I allowed myself to feel the love and the pain of family loss. The experience of grieving set the stage for future 12 Step work. However, at the time, I did not allow myself to emotionally go near the past or other accumulating deaths.

Curiously, before entering SA,

every fall beginning around the last two weeks of October, sometimes lasting through November, I would experience what I called my dark month. A depression would come over me. It was about 15 years before I even recognized the repetitive pattern. The unmourned grief remained within for nearly 30 years. Needless to say, not grieving became a contributing factor to the progression of my sex addiction. Withdrawal into a fantasy life became my solace for escape.


Finally, about four years into SA recovery, one November I began talking about grief with my sponsor, my first close friend in many years. I began by relating the relief I had experienced in mourning for my mother. During weekly discussions, I began naming and afterward counting the suicides and the number of deaths. Of the sixteen peer deaths in fifteen years, thirteen of them were male; this deeply influenced my behavior, especially when it came to nurturing friendships with men. I withdrew from close relationships. I hid my feelings and withdrew inward, hiding from uncomfortable people, places, and things.

In recovery, I became aware that I had built what I now call a protective ceramic armor around myself; happily, it had cracks that allowed some emotions in. Nevertheless, locked within that self-made ceramic prison were “guilt, self-hatred,

remorse, emptiness, and pain,” and I retreated “ever inward, away from reality, away from love,” until I had become almost completely “lost inside” myself (SA 203).

In recovery, I practiced naming the individuals, fondly remembering them for who they were, sharing with others who were safe, and offering prayers for those departed. In grieving, I learned that the pain of loss slowly dissipates until only love remains. Grieving helped me release aspects of my addiction, as well as my survivor's guilt. I learned to be compassionate, and with continued Step work, I slowly became warm-hearted and risked friendships with other men.

In my experience, grieving has a beginning, a middle, and a soft open ending. I still pray for my friends and loved ones. In doing step work, I became more willing to surrender character defects. I have become increasingly grateful for my recovery and even for being a sexaholic. On a daily basis, I am now more “entirely ready” (Step Six) “to turn [my] will and [my life] over to” my Higher Power (Step Three), because I know that despite my fear and resistance, greater relationships, greater love, and greater freedom are the fruit (SA 208). “Good grief”: I can now “look the world in the eye and stand free” (SA 205).

Jack H., California, USA 

DISCUSSION TOPIC

Did you, like Jack, have a history of withdrawing from family and friends to avoid disappointments or loss?

Do you have a sponsor or professional help

that you trust who can listen to your experiences of loss? Have you considered writing a gratitude list for the people, places, and things in your life that have passed away?

Do you pray for the

family of loved ones who have passed away? Have you considered working Steps One, Two, and Three on those you have lost? Do you participate in the Fellowship and attend memorials of SA members?



ACCEPTANCE IS THE ANSWER TO ALL MY PROBLEMS

know, also went on to continue his SA service as editor of this very magazine, traveling internationally to give SA workshops, and as the sponsor of many, many others like me. He gave graciously and freely of his time, sitting with me for hours on a park bench to take me through SA's 12 Steps for the first time. I miss him dearly.

I also lost my second sponsor this past year, this time to a cancer that he and all of us knew would eventually end his life. David M. was a long-time sober member of SA (35 years) and, for me, an amazing example of selflessness, service, peace, serenity, and acceptance. "There you go, Daniel, making it all about yourself again!" and "What are the four worst words you can say to yourself? 'I can handle it!'" Amazingly, he continued to call me to check in on almost a daily basis until just two weeks or so before he passed away. I miss him dearly as well.

So, how do I deal with all this and maintain both my emotional and physical sobriety while in recovery? How have I dealt with it?

For me, the answer is in the first three steps: letting go, coming to believe, and then finding a Higher Power of some kind. Even though I tend toward agnosticism on the traditional religious spectrum, my

concept of a Higher Power does include the idea that there must be more to existence than this current, very imperfect, physical world. I have no idea what it might be, but I do believe it is there, waiting. Maybe my tombstone should read, "Off on the next adventure!"

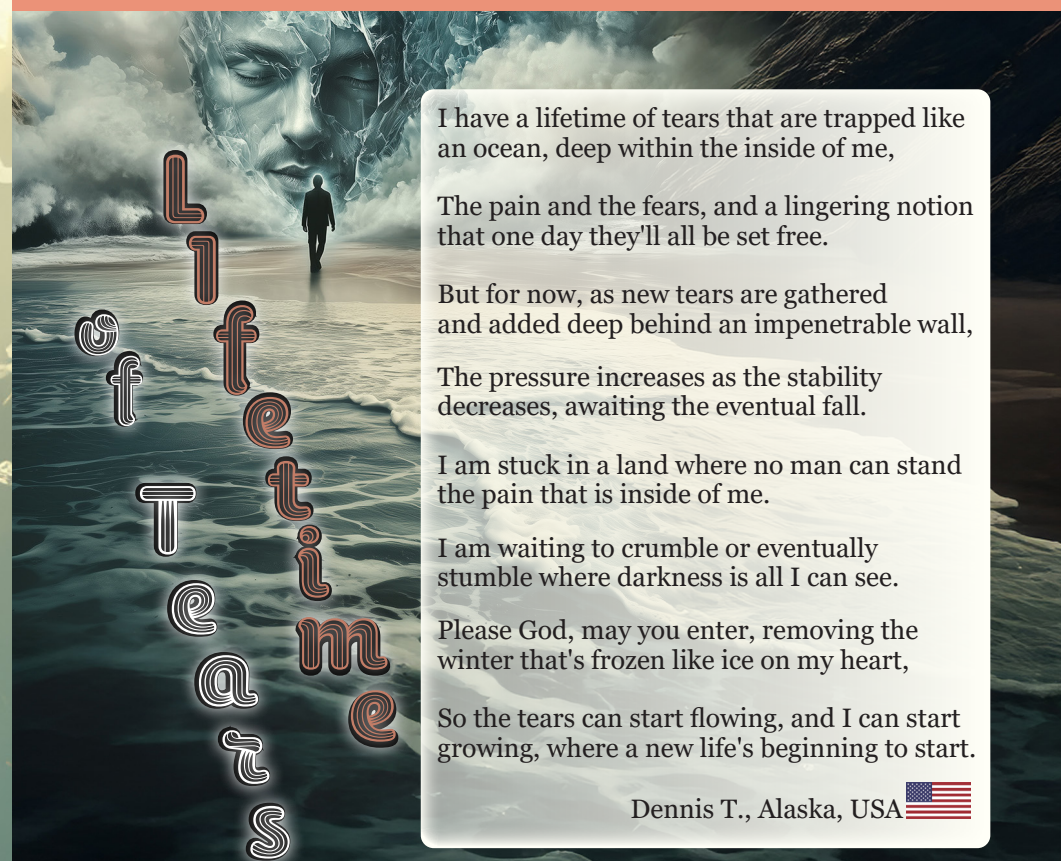
This makes it much easier for me to move into the realm of acceptance of loss. As it says on page 418 of the Big Book: "And acceptance is the answer to all my problems today."

In his final days, David M. was a shining example to me of how this kind of complete surrender and "acceptance" ought to work—and he was facing the ultimate test. For that amazing life lesson, I will be forever

grateful.

Finally, bringing these things into the light with other SA fellows was key. Last October, a SA sister from Egypt shared in a Zoom meeting on the topic of grief and loss. Afterwards, in the virtual parking lot, one of those magic meetings of souls occurred as we all took turns sharing about the losses that we had all experienced, both recently and throughout our lives. We talked of loved ones. We talked of beloved family pets. We talked of abuse. We talked of our departed SA brothers and sisters. Although tearful to me, it was also beautiful, cathartic, and cleansing.

Daniel J., Barcelona, Spain 



I have a lifetime of tears that are trapped like an ocean, deep within the inside of me,

The pain and the fears, and a lingering notion that one day they'll all be set free.

But for now, as new tears are gathered and added deep behind an impenetrable wall,


The pressure increases as the stability decreases, awaiting the eventual fall.

I am stuck in a land where no man can stand the pain that is inside of me.

I am waiting to crumble or eventually stumble where darkness is all I can see.

Please God, may you enter, removing the winter that's frozen like ice on my heart,

So the tears can start flowing, and I can start growing, where a new life's beginning to start.

Dennis T., Alaska, USA 

Captured On Film

Sponsor: Cesar and I joined SA around the same time. After a few months, our relationship shifted from members to sponsee and sponsor.

At first, Cesar was hesitant to join virtual meetings with his camera off because he couldn't see the people he was sharing with. That was the first reason we started contacting each other. From then on, all our calls were with our cameras on. He would say,

Just for today. The present is the only thing I have to live in sobriety.

He worked tirelessly for his sobriety. He enjoyed it and shared it, and when he met his Higher Power, he was found living his sobriety to the fullest.

Cesar always listened to others, especially newcomers. He surrounded himself with old timers in the Program to learn from them. He did the same with those who had relapsed, always willing to listen with tenderness and lovingly extend his hand.

He left in silence, three days after

celebrating his birthday. Did he sense his departure? I don't know. This was his final message on this celebration:

Today I celebrated my accomplishments, and I'm grateful for everything I've been given. What happens to me and what has happened in my life is a gift that allowed me to grow and learn. I have a destiny toward which I'm traveling, and I know that in the end, what will matter is the journey. Thanks to the Love of Loves for allowing me to value more and more each day the joy of taking part in life, closer to heaven.

A great friend and brother. My daily surrender partner for twenty months. Thank you for everything. You leave behind a powerful legacy and a way of living that I learned with you. See you soon. -Andrés R., Mexico

Sponsee: Cesar welcomed me, and we talked over a video call for more than two hours. I was feeling anxious, scared, and lustful. He told me,

Calm down, kid. Lust is lust—it'll be with you until you die. Just take it 24 hours at a time.

He suggested attending meetings and making outreach calls. I asked him if he could be my sponsor, but he said he would check his schedule as he already had many sponsees. I had to wait a few months before I got a sponsor. That day, we were supposed to have a sponsorship meeting. He had just come from the doctor, and he told me he had been advised to rest—he had suffered a heart attack. Over the next few days, the news came that he had passed away.

I felt a lot of emotions. I cried over his passing. I cared for him deeply. I really wish that he could have been my sponsor from the beginning, and that I could have learned from his experiences and how he worked the Program.

Sponsor Cesar, I miss you. I'm sending you a fraternal hug, wherever you may be. Rest in peace. See you soon! -Alfonso R., Mexico

Fellow Member: Cesar was a man who lived alone. He always liked helping those most in need and never refused to lend a hand. He lived out the virtues in his daily life, especially charity. He enjoyed serving the Public Information Committee (PIC). He was a wonderful human being who was always at the service of others. -Daniel, Mexico

Fellow Member: I met Cesar in the morning virtual meetings. I listened to his shares and attended the presentation of his First Step. He

took the initiative to make videos for SA: daily meditations, passages from the ESSAY, and SA literature. He was a creative person and very willing to be of service.

When I saw the announcement in the ESSAY looking for a volunteer to create audiovisual pieces, I thought of Cesar. He accepted without hesitation. He loved SA and remained sober during the last months of his life. His passing was a heavy blow for SA Latin America. Thank you, Cesar, for being an example to SA. Thank you for your love and constant service! -Evelyn T., Bogota, Colombia

PIC Video Team Member: I was delighted to work with Cesar. Cesar, however, spoke Spanish, and I spoke English. We used Google Translate. He worked tirelessly, making one to two videos every week in Spanish. I translated the scripts, and he would remake the videos in English.

Because I worked with Cesar every weekend, he became a dear brother to me. When Evelyn told me that "our dear Cesar" had passed, I was devastated. I'm learning how to grieve his loss by celebrating how he lived, by giving away what he had, so he could keep it until the very end. -Laura W., Florida, USA

Cesar's videos can be viewed on the ESSAY website on the Video's Page at www.essay.sa.org/videos/.





The Principles For The Heartbroken

*She Learned How to
Practice these Principles in
All Her Affairs.*

When I came to SA at the beginning of January 2021, started working the Steps, and got to know my Higher Power, I thought life would no longer be difficult. As long as we are sober and with God, it can only be good, right?

Well, not really.

My dear grandmother was hospitalized in September 2024, and her condition deteriorated rapidly. My relationship with her had improved greatly in the last few years. In my active addiction, I had little time and attention for my grandparents. When my grandfather died in 2016, I was very upset, but I was unable to mourn. My addiction numbed me, and I was not present. When I started working the Steps in January 2021, I began to feel guilty that I had not been there for my grandfather, so my sponsor told me that I could make a living amends by spending a lot of time with my grandmother and taking care of her. I have done that in the last few years, and we have developed a warm, loving relationship.

When the hospital called to tell us we

had to come quickly to say goodbye, I experienced a lot of fear and sadness. The idea that she wouldn't be with us anymore was very painful. On the way to the hospital, I first prayed and then called a sister in the program. She suggested praying the Serenity Prayer together. Her love and support gave me strength when I was going through a hard time. God and the Fellowship were with me. When she passed away on October 13, I received a card from the men in my home group, wishing me much strength. I felt that I was not alone.

*God and the
Fellowship were with
me.*

Applying the principles of the Program helped me during those weeks to deal with my own emotions and those of my family members, as we all prepared for the funeral. It wasn't always easy. What helped me was to apply the Traditions (Tradition One: the unity of my family takes priority over my desires, and Tradition Two: God speaks through the group conscience, thus my family); to write resentment inventories; and to focus on the fact

that I could serve. Those tools helped me to stay serene and peaceful. The best part was that this time I could truly feel my grief. While I had only experienced the passing of my grandfather in a haze, now I could feel all my pain, and I knew that I was safe in God's arms. Together with Him, my sponsor, my sisters and brothers in the Program, and my family, I got through this difficult period safely and sober.

Three days after my grandmother's funeral—eight days after her death—I received a phone call that Luc, our Flemish fellow and friend, had been in a bike accident and had died instantly. He was incredibly important to me and truly a part of my life. His death caused a mix of emotions: disbelief, anger, guilt, and an incredible amount of pain and sadness. For the first time in my life, I was angry at God and doubted His goodness. I was numb and angry and sad. I don't think I have ever felt so many different emotions at the same time. What particularly got me through that period was the solidarity within SA. It was incredible, both within SA Flanders and worldwide.

I did what I always do and what has always helped me: I had a meeting every day (even on the day of the funeral), I made phone calls, I prayed and meditated, and I worked the Steps. I also took good care of myself every day by eating healthy, walking a lot, and getting enough sleep (or at least trying to, because I couldn't sleep much). Here too, the love of SA, and also my own family, got me through. For a while, I no longer believed in God, but He gave His love to my loved ones, and they passed it on to me.

Two deaths in eight days. That hit me hard. My therapist told me that I could count on at least a year to

recover somewhat from this. I am doing much better, but I am still not there yet. I still sometimes start crying out of the blue because Luc is no longer here. And I still talk to my deceased grandmother, because I miss her so much.

Even though they are no longer physically present, I feel that their souls are still with us. I am starting to resemble my grandmother more and more: I am more tolerant, softer, kinder, and more generous. And I feel that Luc's influence on my life is greater than ever: working a strong program, no matter what, and enduring pain and suffering with God. The latter was necessary recently, because after thirteen years of living together, my cat also passed away. The emptiness in my apartment was enormous, and so was the emptiness in my heart. This hurt too much, and for the first time, I didn't even want to try to pray it away. I endured it, hand in hand with my Higher Power.

*I am more tolerant,
softer, kinder, and
more generous.*

This year I am not expecting too much of myself, which is advice from my sponsor that I am following. I no longer drown myself in service, but give myself time, space and a lot of silence to recover. I am allowed to miss all three of them, and I am allowed to let all the pain in. God is holding me tight, and I know that I am safe with Him.

And my grandmother, Luc, and my cat Milton? I believe they are with Him now, and they are very happy there. One day we will see each other again, and that is something to look forward to.

Nathalie V., Mortsels, Belgium

I wept nearly every day in my first year in recovery. What a contrast with the previous 25 years, when I acted out sexually whenever I felt sad. In doing so, I had stuffed so much grief inside me that when the dam broke, I thought the flood would never end. There was a lot of pain down there. All those losses that I had never grieved: the death of my father when I was a teenager; many lost loves; two broken marriages; separation from my children; two failed careers; hard-won fame and fortune gone. There was a world of sadness here that I had never expressed naturally. I had just “moved on” to the next career or relationship, until one day I was 12-stepped.

Vee, the woman who 12-stepped me, told me that I had been out of my body for a long time. I had no idea what she meant. Later, when I saw myself being sexually abused as a child, but only from high up on the ceiling, I began to understand. Some things are just too shocking and painful to be survived, and thus, my soul had simply left my body at that moment. Before it could return home for good, my body needed to be washed clean with many tears.

Vee had told me that if anything ever came up about my childhood, I should call her. As I spoke to her on the phone that day and told her what had “come up,” I began to be

Feeling the sadness through tears collapsed his shame.

Tears of Gratitude

engulfed by a gigantic wave of shame and with a terror that this was going to kill me. Instantly, Vee said, “Get angry. Get really angry!” And I did. Three huge waves of rage followed over the next few months, and then it was all over, and the tears came. Anger and tears are necessary parts of grieving.

Rage probably saved my life that day, but as a way out of shame, it has its disadvantages. People can get hurt. My hands certainly hurt after I had finished smashing branches of trees on the ground. Years later, I realized that there is a much better way to deal with shame. Here is how I found out about it.

Anger and tears are necessary parts of grieving.

Around 1998, I was travelling with two SA buddies in Israel. (We'd been told there was an SA group somewhere in the country but had been unable to discover where, so we were just holding our own meetings privately.) In Galilee, we had found a kosher hotel and booked in for the night. I asked if I could borrow a bowl from the dining room in which to prepare my evening meal. They gave me a white bowl with a green band around the rim. I used this for supper in my room and brought it back to the dining room at breakfast time.

I gave the bowl to a waiter. It was at that point that I noticed that all the crockery in the restaurant was white

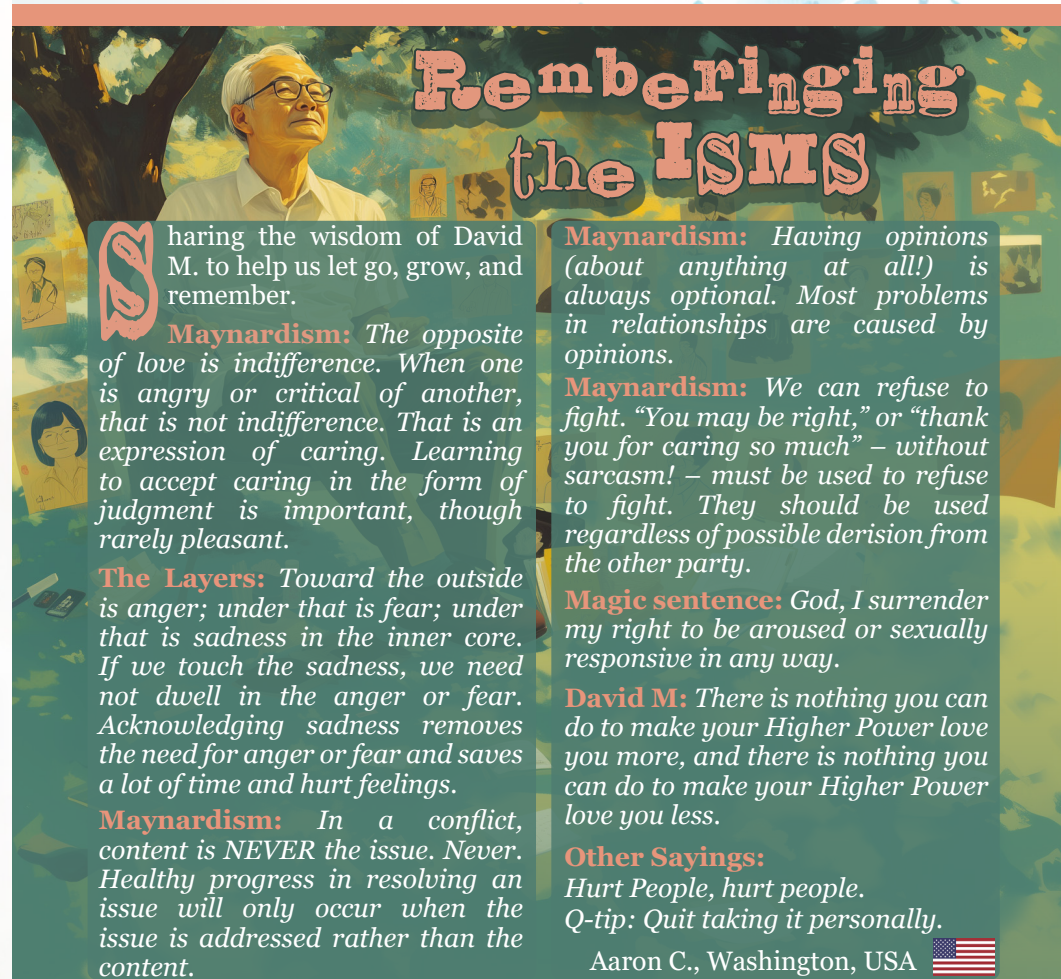
with a blue band around the rim. A great wave of shame arose inside me. Unwittingly, I had used the bowl I had been given the evening before for the wrong kind of food. I called back the waiter and told him of my mistake. He was not upset, but I still was. I so wanted not to offend the religious sensibilities of my hosts, or those of my buddies, who were both Jewish. I was so upset that I wept—and immediately the shame passed.

Thus, I discovered the functional way out of shame, which is still the worst feeling in the world. Tears collapse shame. Of course, as a child, I had

been told that big boys don't cry, so I had lost that functional way out. Instead, I discovered that acting out with rage, sex, or violence, got me out of shame temporarily. Or I could medicate my pain with alcohol, drugs, or food. Or I could just vacate the current reality by dissociating or disappearing into fantasy. But all of these escapes had bad consequences. Only tears do not.

Today, I am OK with tears—my own or others'—and I like to remind myself that a wet cheek is a sign of a healthy man.

Nicholas S., UK 



Remembering the ISMS

David M. Having the wisdom of David M. to help us let go, grow, and remember.

Maynardism: The opposite of love is indifference. When one is angry or critical of another, that is not indifference. That is an expression of caring. Learning to accept caring in the form of judgment is important, though rarely pleasant.

The Layers: Toward the outside is anger; under that is fear; under that is sadness in the inner core. If we touch the sadness, we need not dwell in the anger or fear. Acknowledging sadness removes the need for anger or fear and saves a lot of time and hurt feelings.

Maynardism: In a conflict, content is NEVER the issue. Never. Healthy progress in resolving an issue will only occur when the issue is addressed rather than the content.


Maynardism: Having opinions (about anything at all!) is always optional. Most problems in relationships are caused by opinions.

Maynardism: We can refuse to fight. “You may be right,” or “thank you for caring so much” – without sarcasm! – must be used to refuse to fight. They should be used regardless of possible derision from the other party.

Magic sentence: God, I surrender my right to be aroused or sexually responsive in any way.

David M: There is nothing you can do to make your Higher Power love you more, and there is nothing you can do to make your Higher Power love you less.

Other Sayings:
Hurt People, hurt people.
Q-tip: Quit taking it personally.

Aaron C., Washington, USA 



SA Is My Family.

as Most
People I Love Are Dead

Seeking Recovery led her to find a new life and family.

As this headline suggests, I have lived through the deaths of my large childhood extended family, where I lived and thrived. Then, in midlife, my beloved husband died tragically. My circle shrank to my parents and grandmother. Then in 2020, my cherished father and grandmother both died in lockdown, with all the severe trauma involved at the time. Even my former acting-out partner will be dead by now.

So, the first decision I ever made for myself after the loss of my father was to join Sexaholics Anonymous. He was the last of a lifetime of powerful men running my life. I joined in the desperate hope of finding the sexual sobriety I had been battling to achieve since the age of 13. So, I dared to hope for some serenity and peace. That was all I expected, and it would have been enough, I thought.

So, I dared to hope for some serenity and peace.

As will be evident, I arrived with diagnosed post-traumatic stress disorder from the tragic story above. My multiple close traumatic losses had naturally crushed me. Additionally, I had lived all my adult life with infertility, so I was still grieving the large family, like my

childhood one, that I had planned to enjoy. My life was effectively over, apart from my mother of advanced years.

I actually found, as it says, “a life beyond my wildest dreams.” I found solace, consolation, fulfillment on a human level, sisters, some sober brothers in just about every continent on the planet, a loving sponsor, and sponsees I love dearly.

This lonely, bereft widow is suddenly relishing undreamed happiness among people of all cultures and faith traditions, whom I get to call my brothers and sisters—the family I always craved, day and night.

The Step Eleven prayer and meditation are my lifeblood.

Moreover, a whole spiritual programme has connected me with God in a way never possible in addiction, from Whom, in the end, my real satisfaction derives. The Step Eleven prayer and meditation are my lifeblood. These and reading literature where God speaks are my foundation. Fellowship is the icing on top.

“In return for a bottle and a hangover, [I] have been given the Keys of the Kingdom” (AA 276).

Kathie S., Devon, UK 
June 2025

SA Stories



THE PRINCIPLES THAT SHAPED HER PERSONALITY

A Pillar In SA History



Sylvia participated in the early history of Sexaholics Anonymous (SA) and was a primary figure in the development of SA's current service structure.

Jesse L. Brings SA to Oklahoma City:

Sylvia joined SA in 1983. At that time, it was popular to be in a 12 Step program. She went to Al-Anon, Overeaters Anonymous, and many open AA meetings. She heard them talk about alcohol addiction and said, "I have the same problem with sex."

Jesse L. was in Oklahoma City at that time because a family member was in treatment, and he planned to stay as long as needed. He went to various meetings in other programs, said he was a sexaholic and planned to start an SA meeting there. He started it in his hotel room. Sylvia and five or six other women said, "Oh, I want to go to that." Jesse was a well-known author in 12 Step circles. Many people showed up for the meeting. There was now a group. However, when Jesse L. moved back to his home state, the meeting almost vanished.

They had moved the meeting from

the hotel room to a church. Only Sylvia and one man, Dan, stayed. Since there were no other members to sponsor them, Sylvia and Dan began co-sponsoring each other. She would often joke about that experience by saying, "I knew it was safe to co-sponsor each other because back then, there was a celebrity couple named Dale Evans and Roy Rogers. Well, I had a crush on Roy Rogers. Dan also had a crush on Roy Rogers. That's how I knew it was safe."

Other people came and went. Sylvia and Dan kept thinking, "If nobody shows up next week, we're gonna close the meeting." They did that for five years. It was just the two of them attending regularly. Eventually, the meeting grew. Having participated in the first SA meeting in Oklahoma, Sylvia helped keep the doors open for all those who followed.

A Postscript: Oklahoma 39 Years Later:

For her 39th sobriety birthday, Sylvia's Oklahoma City SA Home Group hosted a hybrid joint SA and S-Anon celebration, including a speaker meeting. In her humility, Sylvia declined to be the speaker

but invited her "sponsor-ee" as she called it, to speak. Here are Sylvia's comments that night:

I want to first start off with a disclaimer. When I asked about having a party, we started the party off for me, but the fact is, this is not my party. This is a party for Sexaholics Anonymous. This is the beginning group of Sexaholics Anonymous in Oklahoma City on May 10, 1983, and for that, we are never sufficiently grateful because it has been a wonderful, wonderful journey. I have a lot of people here who can verify that, and I am tremendously excited. I'm excited to have this many people all over the world to hear us, and I want you all to know that this program works. I can verify that. I've been around. I've been here, done this, and have the scars to prove it.

I've been around. I've been here, done this, and have the scars to prove it.

So I would like to introduce [one of my sponsor-ees]. What's important is that we have a connection that we received through this program, and it has been a wonderful connection. I couldn't ask for any more help than what she's been for me. It's supposed to be the other way around, but I can verify it works two ways because without her, I would forget what it's like to be a sexaholic. It is a hard journey, and it is a soft journey. It's a beautiful road and an ugly road sometimes. But we're all here and we're together and we know that this is a fellowship that loves God and that's the important thing. So

I want this fellowship to remember this date [May 10, 1983] as the sobriety birthday of Sexaholics Anonymous in Oklahoma City, and I believe S-Anon was founded at the same time in the City. So welcome to all of you.

International Conventions:

In December 1983, when she was six months sober, Sylvia went as a Delegate to her first Convention in Simi Valley. She participated in the decision to have Conventions for fellowship only, every six months. SA business would be separate.

Except for one Convention for emergency reasons, Sylvia attended every international Convention until the COVID pandemic. From December 1983 to January 2020, there were 73 conventions, and she was present for 72 of them. Attendance grew from 18 at her first Convention to 800 during her lifetime.

In addition to Conventions, Sylvia went to numerous regional SA events. She traveled all over the world with her husband, Gene. They planned their vacation travels around SA Conventions and other SA events. They went to Japan. They went to Russia. They went to Israel. They traveled all over Europe: England, Spain, Belgium, and Poland.

She frequently said the little slogan, "Join SA and see the world."

People could go to a Convention, and she was always there, always sober. Sylvia being there was important to her and to the fellowship. Her constant presence at every

Convention gave hope for women to keep coming back. She went to any lengths to attend Conventions. She frequently said the little slogan, "Join SA and see the world."

INITIATED WOMEN'S BREAKOUT ROOMS

Sylvia initiated women's breakout rooms at the Conventions, which provided a space for women to have fellowship and support each other. Typically, women rarely got to speak with other SA women face-to-face. Those were the days of long-distance phone calls with sponsees in multiple states. Conventions were where she and her sponsees could meet in person.

Sylvia always had a group of women around her. One-to-one time with her was in such demand that she had to set up a schedule for appointments during the Convention. Sometimes the women would sit together in a corner. Late in the day, her husband Gene would jokingly ask Sylvia, "Are you finished holding court now?"

How vital were those face-to-face meetings to connect with women and to encourage them to keep going. Sylvia stressed the Steps and the Fellowship, "You have to have both."

Convention tradition included Sylvia giving each willing SA member a sobriety medallion and a big hug at the birthday celebrations. The medallions and hugs brought an atmosphere of joy to these events.

The White Book's Journey During Sylvia's Lifetime:

During her first six years in SA, Sylvia saw the entire transformation from single typewritten pages to the now familiar soft-bound 6 X 9-inch White Book.

At first, SA had loose-leaf typewritten 8 1/2 X 11-inch papers that they would hand out at meetings. In 1984, those loose-leaf papers were published as an 8 1/2 X 11-inch book with a flesh-colored cover. They called it the SA Manual (not to be confused with the current SA Service Manual).

Lawrence M., SA member since 1985 and first ESSAY editor after Roy K., remembers, "It caught Roy's attention that the AA Big Book was grape-colored, the OA book was chocolate-colored, and the SA Manual was flesh-colored." Some wonder if Roy changed the cover to white after noticing this.

In May 1986, the 8 1/2 X 11-inch SA Manual was reprinted with a white cover. Sylvia kept one of these white-cover copies until she passed away.



In July 1989, a new and revised edition was published as a 6 X 9-inch book with the artistic symbol and the title *Sexaholics Anonymous* on the cover. Then the majority of members said, "We do not need to advertise the name of our Fellowship on our book cover." So, the 1989 edition was reprinted with a plain white soft cover. It became known as the SA White Book.

Service Structure:

In 1994, SA Central Office moved from Simi Valley, CA, to Nashville, TN. The Fellowship was growing and needed a better service structure. They voted to have business meetings every six months, held at the Convention site for two days before each Convention. Sylvia faithfully attended all business meetings.

The outline of SA's Service Structure was approved in 1995. The Regions and Intergroups had elected their very first SA Delegates for the 1996 Convention in Phoenix. It was kind of chaotic because the development of the SA Service Structure was in process. The General Delegate Assembly didn't even have a name until a year later.

The First Chair of the Board of Trustees:

Phoenix was the organizing Convention where they elected the first Trustees. It was determined that a Trustee should not simultaneously serve as a Delegate. Sylvia was unanimously elected the first Chair of the Board of Trustees. She resigned her position as Delegate to serve as Chair. The votes were overwhelmingly supportive. They knew the role was essential. They knew Sylvia had a habit of never saying no if someone asked her to serve. And she had experience running other nonprofit organizations in her personal life. Sylvia seemed perfectly suited for the job.

Sylvia became a self-appointed chief recruiting officer, encouraging sober SA members to participate in the Fellowship's business. She recruited her sponsees and many others to become SA trusted servants. She envisioned and guided

the development of the current service structure, with its groups, intergroups, regions, the General Delegate Assembly (GDA), and the Board of Trustees.

Bringing Unity and Joy to the Cleveland Clarification:

Sylvia made the passing of the Cleveland Clarification Statement more unifying than it would have been. In July 1999, when the SA Trustees finished their meeting, it was time for the Delegates to meet. The Trustees were present as observers and supporters to lend their wisdom and perspective when needed.

The Delegates were considering a motion about the sobriety definition. There were hours of discussion. It was intense. The motion was about to pass with substantial unanimity, but with two "no" votes. They decided to take a short break while the "minority" worked on it and put together what we call The Cleveland Clarification. The Cleveland Clarification refers to the asterisk on page 192 of the *Sexaholics Anonymous* book that explains the meaning of the word "spouse." The members who drafted it said that this was the way they had always understood it. The GDA voted, and it passed unanimously.

Sylvia was very impressed by what had happened among the Delegates.

Sylvia, as Trustee Chair, was very impressed by what had happened among the Delegates. She wanted to show the unanimity that was there. She sensed that it would be a

unanimous vote with the Trustees as well. She was right. She spoke up and requested that the Trustees also vote with the Delegates. They took another vote. Again, it passed unanimously.

There was joy in the room where Sylvia was, where the Trustees and the Delegates had just taken the vote. Kay, office manager for SA Central Office at the time, said, "This was a memorable moment. One of those frozen-in-time moments. I was sitting on the sidelines of history, just taking it in."

A Historical Letter of Gratitude:

A thank-you letter was written shortly after the Cleveland Clarification was passed. It took a while to collect all the signatures because, in those days, it had to be sent around by mail. There were 66 signatures by members from Canada, Australia, Singapore, Spain, Brazil, USA, Canada, and El Salvador.

The letter was addressed to the Trustees and Delegates, but it was mailed to Sylvia.

This was an affirmation and a confirmation that meant a lot to her. The letter reads:

To: SA Trustees and Delegates

We write as SA members for whom same-sex lust and/or behavior has been a major part of our sexaholism. Your actions in Cleveland to clarify SA sobriety in unambiguous terms have provided comfort and security to many of us.

Some of us could find little support for our goal of sobriety until we came into SA. Some of us joined SA because it ruled out same-sex behavior as sober. Some of us have boundaries which mean we could

not be part of a fellowship where same-sex behaviour is considered sober.

Some of us initially approached SA sobriety with resistance or reluctance, only later to appreciate its value. All of us thank you for your clear affirmation of SA sobriety. We thank you for saying that SA will remain the safe haven it has become for us.

Sylvia kept the letter in her possession until her death.

Step Into Action:

Sylvia knew what she wanted. She didn't always know how to get there, but she always knew what the end goal was.



Then she would talk to Kay, who was the office manager at Sexaholics Anonymous International Central Office (SAICO). They would talk about creating a letter, or a piece of paperwork, or a motion she wanted. Sylvia insisted on, initiated, and crafted the motion to have an SA Twelve and Twelve book by SA members. That was back in 2000. As a result, SA now has Step into Action.

After 2000, it took four years to approve the book outline. Sylvia wasn't a writer, but she knew writers. She would suggest they get on the writing team. The book was published in three "work in progress" sections between 2005-2008. In 2013, the sections were combined, and the final *Step Into Action* book was published soon thereafter. The Literature Committee is currently writing the book of the Twelve Traditions.

Sponsees, Grandponsees,
& Friends of Sylvia J.

FLIRTING WAS A REAL HIGH FOR ME

BY SYLVIA J. (AT SIX YEARS SA SOBER) WITH THE ORIGINAL 1989 TITLE REPRINTED IN
MEMBER STORIES 2007, PAGES 120-123 WITH THE TITLE "THE ONLY WAY I KNEW"

When I was a little girl, about five years old, I remember sitting on my grandfather's lap and combing his hair. It gave me such happy, good feelings. My grandfather died when I was seven. From that time on, I had trouble in school. I couldn't concentrate, I would daydream, and I had headaches. I was a lonely child after I lost that special relationship. I didn't know how to get love like that from anyone else. So, I comforted myself in my fantasies where I was a fairy princess. My Prince Charming would come and carry me off. We would live in the land of happiness forever doing wonderful deeds and sharing our love.

I was a middle child. My older sister did well in school and was very dependable. My younger sister was very pretty and precocious, so people always gave her a lot of attention. I set out to be all those things my sisters were. I worried about how I looked, and I tried to make lots of friends. I never fit in with the really popular people, but I found I could always have a group of friends by going with the 16 less popular ones. I became very social. When I reached my teens, I found that if I flirted, I could also have lots of boyfriends. The feelings I found from all this attention were like the feelings I remembered from the days I spent with my grandfather.

Flirting was the only way I knew to communicate with the males in my world. I felt guilty and ashamed for flirting the way I did, but I didn't think I was smart enough to talk

about anything that might interest them. I was torn between wanting the attention and feeling guilty about the way I was getting it. I had a secret place between the church and my house where the clover was high. I would sit there and cry for hours. I felt so inadequate and lonely. The more inadequate and lonely I felt, the more my need for attention. The high I got from flirting kept growing. I found that flirting led to petting. Even though I felt high from the sexual feelings and the attention, I would feel even more guilt from my behavior. I would go to my spot and cry from loneliness and guilt. Looking back, I see that I was becoming trapped in a painful downward spiral

When I was seventeen, I met a guy who drank. I had never been out with a guy who drank in front of me. He got drunk on our second date, and I decided then and there that he needed a nice girl like me to help him not to drink so much. He was the first man I had sex with, and I got pregnant. We got married in a big church wedding. He came late and was drunk. I swore I would get a divorce after the baby came, but I didn't.

He was always gone with his drinking buddies. I felt angry and lonely much of the time. I tried to search for the God of my childhood to comfort me, but I didn't know how to find Him. I started flirting again and found I felt better. Flirting became my drug whenever I felt bad.

As the flirting progressed, again I started thinking that there was a Prince Charming out there who would make me feel whole. I progressed from flirting to having affairs. Every time I had an affair, I would fall madly in love. The excitement of the chase was followed by the heartbreak of being used and by obsessing about a person I couldn't have. Guilt, shame, and remorse were feelings I had to cope with every day. I would promise myself I would stop what I was doing, but I couldn't. I was searching constantly for the love I needed, and hating myself for the men, the sex, and, not being able to stop, I would pray, and then I would curse God because I couldn't stop; I thought God wasn't listening to me. I felt so hopeless I wanted to die.

I tried taking tranquilizers to stop the pain I was in, but it didn't help. I quit drugs and went to a psychiatrist, who helped me look at my behavior objectively. He said many people were doing what I was doing. If so many people were having affairs, it must be normal. I took permission from this rationalization to start searching again for my Prince. Just before coming into recovery, I became obsessed with one man.

I hated being so obsessed and constantly fought for control. This man and I were in a constant battle for supremacy. I could not get enough of him. Lust was so strong it was destroying me. I hated him. I loved him. I needed to please him, but it was never enough. I felt like a junkie ready to come out of my skin when I didn't get a call from him. I hated the way I was living, but I could not stop. I felt so inadequate and alone. I thought I knew what hell would be like. Finally God answered my prayers by showing me a solution. I knew when I first heard about Al-

Anon that it held an answer for me. My family situation had become really crazy. I had a daughter who was a drug addict, and my husband was an alcoholic. We went for help; all of us wound up in different treatment centers. The counselors told me I was going to treatment because I was codependent, but I knew my problem was men and sex. I had tried to stop my sexual behavior most of my life, but I couldn't control it. My problem controlled me.

I worked the Al-Anon program one day at a time in an attempt to control my lust. I continued to flirt with other men. I thought flirting was alright, and my life did seem to get better. I didn't have the highs anymore, but I also didn't have the lows. However, I was still having problems with my feelings.

Then I heard about Sexaholics Anonymous. Right away, I knew that I needed this program, but I was afraid of what I would have to surrender. I was on an emotional roller coaster the week before the meeting. At my first Sexaholics Anonymous meeting, I found that my flirting was a high. I would need to stop it if I was to be sexually sober. I learned that flirting and masturbation, followed by guilt, had kept me emotionally stirred up and had prevented me from knowing true recovery. When I became willing to let go, God did his part by relieving me of the obsession. He has given me relief from obsession and spiritual growth since my first day of sobriety in 1983.

God has worked miracles in my life through the Twelve Step programs of recovery. My husband and I are still married. We understand the balance between taking care of ourselves for our marriage and giving of ourselves to the marriage. We have

a relationship with God first because that relationship fills the emptiness that we were so frightened of and searching to fill. With the freedom we've found comes the ability to love each other in a new and exciting way. My relationships with my husband, son, and daughter are warm and different and growing all the time.

My husband and I went into business to help recovering people. We put everything we had into that venture, both financially and physically. We trusted God to replenish our resources. We both believed in the recovery process offered by Twelve Step programs. We were dedicated to helping others find their way to these programs. Our daughter was also in recovery and involved in our business. We were able to help others for many years until retirement.

We have three wonderful grandchildren whom we see often. I continue to operate my hairdressing business, perhaps in honor of my grandfather. Our only son used to hate me for what I had done. Today he calls me and tells me his problems. I can say that the Promises have come true for me. My family has grown and developed. Fear of economic insecurity has left me. We have grown spiritually. What used to be a life of mistrust has fallen away. I have no regrets and look forward to what each day brings. God has removed much of my selfishness. He has given me peace in my belief that I will be taken care of and be given exactly what I need for my spiritual growth. My prayers have been answered because I am taking the steps that allow God to work in my life. I feel that my hopes for finding love and doing good things for others are being fulfilled—one day at a time.

Sylvia J., Oklahoma, USA
Member Stories 2007, page 120

From Hitman to Honey

by Sylvia J., as told in later years at various speaker meetings.

This is Sylvia's story of her healed relationship with her husband, Gene.

I was really angry when my husband showed up late and drunk for our wedding. I will divorce him as soon as our baby is born, I told myself. But we stayed together while our children grew up.

Twenty-five years later, we were still married. Our family was in crisis. My daughter was an addict. My husband was an alcoholic. I was a sexaholic, but I didn't know it yet. I blamed my husband. You know, if he didn't drink all the time, I wouldn't have to run around.

I was saving money to hire a hitman to kill my husband. My daughter was stealing my money for her cocaine. We were looking for treatment for our daughter. Instead, we all three entered separate treatment programs, partly paid for with my hitman money.

Gene and I started to work on our marriage. We agreed to stay married for six more months. Then we agreed to six more months. Then six more months. After several years, we didn't need to make contracts anymore. For both of us, it took a lot of meetings, a lot of work, a lot of therapy, a lot of patience, and a lot of phone calls to our sponsors.

Today, my husband is a kind, thoughtful man. He is dedicated to his AA and S-Anon programs. He is dedicated to helping others. One day at a time, we have been married for more than 65 years. It has been a joyous time. I'm so glad I didn't get him killed. I'm grateful that he's still here. I'm grateful that God has given me a kind, understanding mate.

What She Freely Gave

A LEGACY OF RECOVERY THROUGH THE EYES OF THOSE SHE HELPED

Working the Steps:

First, we discussed the Steps. Second, Sylvia asked, "Are you reading the White Book or have you read the Twelve and Twelve?" This was before *Step Into Action* was written. I read the White Book to get the essence of the Steps and read the Twelve and Twelve to work the Steps. Third, I wrote about how I worked that particular step and read what I wrote to her. Lastly, Sylvia gave feedback to determine whether or not I needed to go into more depth on the step. When I was disturbed, she asked what step I should be working on. She said, "You need to pray and write." -Peg V., Ohio, USA

Making Amends:

Sylvia suggested that I not make direct amends to the men I acted out with because that could harm them and trigger me. -Tricia S., Pennsylvania, USA

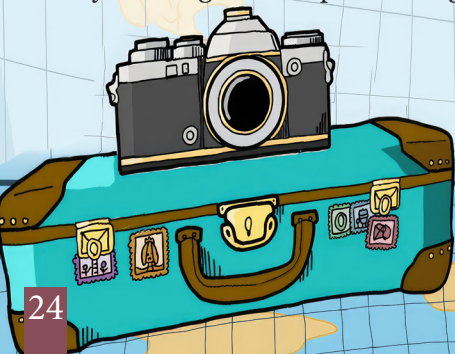
Three Types of Meetings:

My sponsor, Sylvia, suggested that I was to go to three meetings a week. She said, "You go to a Big Book meeting every week. You go to a step meeting every week, and then you can go to a topic meeting

every week." I've tried to follow that guideline. -Tricia S., Pennsylvania, USA

Go to Regionals and International Conventions: She encouraged me to go to SA International Conventions. However, travel was too expensive for me. But I could go to Regional SA meetings. Sylvia met with women at Internationals and brought back the message and information to share with us at the Regionals. -Tricia S., Pennsylvania, USA

Sylvia missed one Convention between the years 1983-2008. She arrived at the Cleveland airport in 2008, received word that her son was at the hospital with a heart attack, and immediately flew back home. From 2009 until the pandemic in 2020, Sylvia attended every Convention. No other person that we are aware of in SA history has attended that number of Conventions. -Peg V., Ohio, USA



No Form of Sex with Self:

Sylvia directed me to focus on what the White Book says at the bottom of page 191. She helped me to see that the words are deliberately broad and unspecified. They are not: "no sex with self." The words are: "no form of sex with self." Sylvia walked alongside me as I slowly began to identify my forms of sex with self. As a result, I was able to experience the joy of sexual sobriety for the very first time. -Nancy S., Ohio, USA

Anonymity:

When Sylvia corrected me, it was in the most gentle way. I sometimes didn't notice she was correcting me until later. One day, I was telling her my opinion that anonymity was meant to be at the level of press, radio, and film. I quoted Dr. Bob and some oldtimers. She listened patiently until I was finished. Then she shared that the disease of sexaholism has a stigma, unlike any other addiction. The White Book suggests not disclosing our disease to our family members. She said, "I think about how it would affect my grandchildren if they found out their grandmother was a sexaholic. How would that affect them?" It opened my eyes to the delicacy of anonymity for SA members. - Laura W., Florida, USA

Service and SA's Service Manual:

Sylvia encouraged people to get involved in SA service outside the group. "When are you going to do it?" she asked me persistently. When I finally joined the Trustee Board, it was composed of five women. Three of us were Sylvia's sponsees. With Sylvia's encouragement, in 2001, we formed a committee and wrote the first SA Service Manual. - Tricia S., Pennsylvania, USA.

Sylvia was on the Nomination

Committee for years. She recruited at Conventions and was wonderfully persuasive. People often said, "I never really thought about that." Sylvia would say, "Well, you should think about it!" - Kay, SAICO Office Manager, USA

Sex Was Indeed Optional:

I asked Sylvia, "How do you deal with sex as a married sexaholic?" She said, "We don't." That was a relief for me, and it has worked for me. I'm still married after many years, and sex isn't a part of my marriage. That may sound odd to some people, but it was what I needed to hear when I needed to hear it. -Shirley S., California, USA

Keep Coming Back:

Both Sylvia and her husband used CPAP machines, and they would bring them into their hotel room. It encourages me with my CPAP machine. It's ok to get old, to keep going, and to pass the torch to the younger generation. Sylvia stuck with the Program and showed up to things even as she got older. That is encouraging to me. - Shirley S., California, USA

Surrendering Lust:

Sylvia said, "Surrender lust as fast as you can, journal about it, get on the phone with other members. Most importantly ... get it out of your head and connect with someone in the Program." Peg V., Ohio, USA

Sylvia shared with me that she had an experience with lust at a Convention in Vancouver. A small group of women went to Victoria Island for the day to walk around.

There was a new male member in the Program, and all of the women were lusting. They looked for a place that was set apart from the other people. They made a circle and had an SA meeting right there in the middle of Victoria Garden. There in the group, everybody surrendered the lust that was going on. After the meeting, the lust was gone, and they had a great time together for the rest of the weekend. Sylvia said, "That came about because lust no longer was a secret. If you keep it a secret, it stays there. But don't just share about lust one-on-one. Do it in a group, surrender in a general way, with other people who are going to be supportive of it." - Laura W., Florida, USA

Having Fun:

Sylvia enjoyed having fun. I remember a Convention in Detroit. She said, "Join SA and see the world." I had never taken time before or after a Convention to do any sightseeing. But in Detroit, Sylvia, Gene, and I took side trips. She had fun. We weren't talking about SA the whole time. We were just enjoying each other. - Nancy S., Ohio, USA

Sylvia loved the saying, "We are not a glum lot." She occasionally reminded me not to take myself too seriously. -Susie B., Idaho, USA

Sylvia had a great sense of humor. I was going through a difficult time with the loss of my mother. I missed her terribly. Sylvia said, "Do you want me to jump on a plane and be your mom for today?" -Peg V., Ohio, USA

Using the Check Meeting Tool:

About 25 years ago, Sylvia knew I had been complaining about my marriage, and she called a check meeting at a Convention. Several women suggested that I consider the possibility of leaving my marriage.

Sylvia was concerned about how my marriage was impacting my recovery. She used the tools of the program. They are not just theories. She lived the lifestyle of recovery. - Nancy S., Ohio, USA

Encouraging Women in Mixed Settings:

By the time I met Sylvia, I was the only woman in Cleveland in 1998. ... She tried to encourage me to trust the men in my meeting. I am an abuse survivor. Both my perpetrators were men. I had a really hard time trusting the men. I was either lusting after them or scared to death of them at the beginning. But she kept encouraging me to trust the oldtimers there. I was grateful that Sylvia kept telling me, "You need to persevere, you need to keep trying. God is in your corner." I really needed this encouragement because I was the only woman in my area for years. Eventually, the women started coming back. She was definitely my life raft. -Peg V., Ohio, USA

I asked Sylvia if she was ever scared like I was when I first came to SA. She said, "You know, it never occurred to me that I didn't belong." Sylvia was naturally outgoing. Her example of courage and confidence helped women enter and thrive in a predominantly male fellowship. -Dorene S., Washington, USA

Asking for Help:

I was told I needed to ask permission to ask for help in a meeting. Sylvia taught me that I never need to ask permission to ask for help. That is the place I go for help. I simply ask for help when it's my turn to speak,

whether or not it is inconvenient. I may be told "no," "not now," or guided elsewhere, but as a sexaholic, no one can stop me from asking for help in a meeting. - Laura W., Florida, USA

A Way of Life:

Her relationship with God, her relationship with her family, and with the SA Program: that was her life. It was her calling. - Nancy S., Ohio, USA

Personality:

Sylvia was always larger than life when I knew her. She was a presence in the room and a force of nature to be dealt with. People with large personalities tend to go after life and don't mind making mistakes. The whole purpose of sharing a life story full of colorful mistakes is in hopes that someone will get the message and think, "Maybe I don't have to do that." - Kay, SAICO Office Manager, USA

Sponsoree:

Sylvia is one of the few people I know who used the word "sponsoree" instead of "sponsee." Although we never talked specifically about why, I have a theory. She thought her sponsees helped her as much as she helped us. Keeping the whole word sponsor as the main part of the word supports the concept that she believed: "God doesn't put two people together just to help one of them." -Susie B., Idaho, USA

Modest Femininity:

I had the experience of living in two extremes: either dressing like a bum to avoid being lusted after or dressing provocatively to be lusted after. Both extremes were painful. I felt less than others in one extreme and greater than others in the other extreme. Sylvia reassured me that as long as I am dressing modestly and for my Higher Power and myself, "I am allowed to look like a girl." I was allowed to have my hair done and to

wear some makeup. I was so relieved. Her experience, strength, and hope (ESH) made me feel not less than, not greater than, but equal to, with this aspect of responsible femininity.

-Laura W., Florida, USA

Sylvia's Plan for Homicide: She was the first and probably only member that I ever met who was going to hire someone to kill her husband. Then at the last minute, she took the money and went into rehab instead. Good for her. It completely changed the dynamic of her life and her whole family. It was a wonderful thing to behold. -Kay, SAICO Office Manager, USA

Sylvia and Gene's Decline:

Sylvia and Gene died within one year of each other. They were a powerful couple who served many years in their fellowships. When they started to decline, it became hard for Sylvia to remember how to use her cell phone and things like that. She became more vulnerable. She was more subdued at the end of her life. Yet she maintained a grace and a strength that I will always admire. When word got out that Sylvia was in hospice, her sponsees tried to call her, hoping they might have one last time to speak with her. Sylvia continued to take calls while on her deathbed. Although her voice was weak, Sylvia continued to take calls from sponsees and prayed with them. -Dorene S., Washington, USA

The Last Days:

I was driving Sylvia home from a meeting two weeks before she passed. I said to her, "You have

41 years of sobriety and you are 80-something years old. You don't have to come to meetings anymore. Why do you still go to meetings?" She said, "I am still powerless over lust. I can still go back out. That's why I have to go to meetings."- Anonymous Sponsee

As Sylvia grew older, she experienced painful losses. During and after her husband Gene's final illness, a grieving Sylvia chose to end our conversations with a special prayer of blessing. I prayed this prayer with her two days before she passed. It was as if Sylvia were taking her final Step Three (receiving God's blessing) and her final Step Twelve (passing

God's blessing to others). It was a bittersweet moment, one of sadness mixed with joy. It still brings tears to my eyes.

I believe Sylvia would pray this special prayer of blessing for all of SA:

"May the Lord bless you and protect you. May the Lord smile on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord show you his favor and give you his peace."

- Dorene S., Washington, USA



SYLVIA QUOTES

Having lust is like having cancer. You can be in remission, but you can never be cured. Be grateful for every day of the remission you have.

You're new to recovery. A newcomer's disease is stronger than your recovery. Take another sober member with you to 12 Step a newcomer so your recoveries overwhelm her disease.



SHAME:

Without shame, we wouldn't be here. Shame is what brings us to this [SA] meeting in the beginning.

GRATITUDE:

Once we get to this meeting, we don't need to have shame. It's time to be grateful. I'm grateful that I had shame in the beginning and got to this program.

JOY:

Life in recovery is so different. There's no guilt. There's no shame. There's just joy at the meeting. It's a different atmosphere. If you keep coming back, you will see and begin to feel that atmosphere change. It's kind of a gradual feeling, but it happens.



Steps & Traditions

LIFE IS A CONTINUOUS SAYING GOODBYE

Until Only God and I Are Left

I started this 12 Step Program from the bottom after committing adultery. What was left was me saying, "I know a solution. I'm going to commit suicide, and I'll blame everybody else. It's all their fault."

Somebody pointed me towards the 12 Steps in 1992. I knew nothing about the process, the 12 Traditions, or the 12 Concepts. It took me another four years to destroy all the false gods that I had addictions to: food, being a victim, fear, my SA issues ... the list is long.

What is grieving all about?

Normal grief is a process of growing up and facing reality. It usually starts with shock, anger, bargaining, sadness, acceptance, and eventually growing and integrating whatever I've learned. Or it can happen all at once, and that can be quite overwhelming.

Grieving is never finished.

It's always modified. It always makes me grow, and it gives me better maturity. Pain and suffering are the absence of wanting to grieve. Why? Because I would buck reality. Facing the reality of life was the thing that I was taught to avoid the most. When I avoid grief, I suffer instead. I remember saying to my sponsors, "No, I'm not going to make amends. They have to make amends to

THE STAGES OF GRIEF (SA STYLE)

1st Stage: DENIAL
(Pride-blindness)

I KNEW I HAD TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT MY ADDICTION, SO I DECIDED TO ACT OUT ONLY WHEN I WAS AWAKE... PROBLEM WAS I BEGAN STAYING UP FOR DAYS AT A TIME.

2nd Stage: ANGER
(Resentment)

GO AHEAD SPONSOR, MAKE MY DAY...

3rd Stage: BARGAINING
(Half-measures)

IF I KEEP SWITCHING SPONSORS, MAYBE I'LL FIND SOMEONE WHO WILL LET ME MAKE AMENDS IN MY HEAD.

4th Stage: DEPRESSION
(Self-pity)

IT'S NOT ONE AND DONE!

5th Stage: ACCEPTANCE
(Surrender)

WHEN I WANT TO STOP I CAN'T. WHEN I CAN, I DON'T WANT TO.

me before I make amends to them.” One of my sponsors told me, “What would you rather have? Would you rather be right or would you rather be at peace?” I was taught not to be at peace with change. Doing grief work is about accepting change.

How important is grieving for sobriety?

Anything that I used to replace God was a hindrance to any kind of sobriety and recovery that I needed—in other words, growing up. A lack of sobriety was my maturity level because I was facing life on my terms, and I was god.

Anything that I used to replace God was a hindrance to any kind of sobriety and recovery that I needed—in other words, growing up.

The only consistent things, for example, are birth, death, and taxes—in other words, change. That's what I was taught to avoid. That's what I didn't like. That's what I avoided because I wanted stability, no problems, only happiness. Every time I resisted grieving, I was unhappy. Expecting continual happiness and joy was an illusion.

The only thing I am left with is facing reality. I started facing reality. It was very painful, but pain became my friend. Every time I faced my pain and my suffering, I was getting closer and closer to gratitude. However, I had to fake gratitude in the beginning, and pretend I was grateful. In time, I saw a change, and that was important. Pain became my friend. It was showing me what I needed to work

on. I found out that even good things needed to be grieved. I didn't want it to end.

Joy is living in reality and acceptance. Joy is in integrating and growing up.

Facing grief is the key.

As I face reality, I can move through emotions quite quickly. Joy is living in reality and acceptance. Joy is in integrating and growing up. I can get happiness and joy much quicker, and joy is in facing the next lesson. The Steps helped me do that. Every time I did inventory, especially Steps Four, Five, Eight, and made amends in Step Nine, I was handing over my life one step at a time.

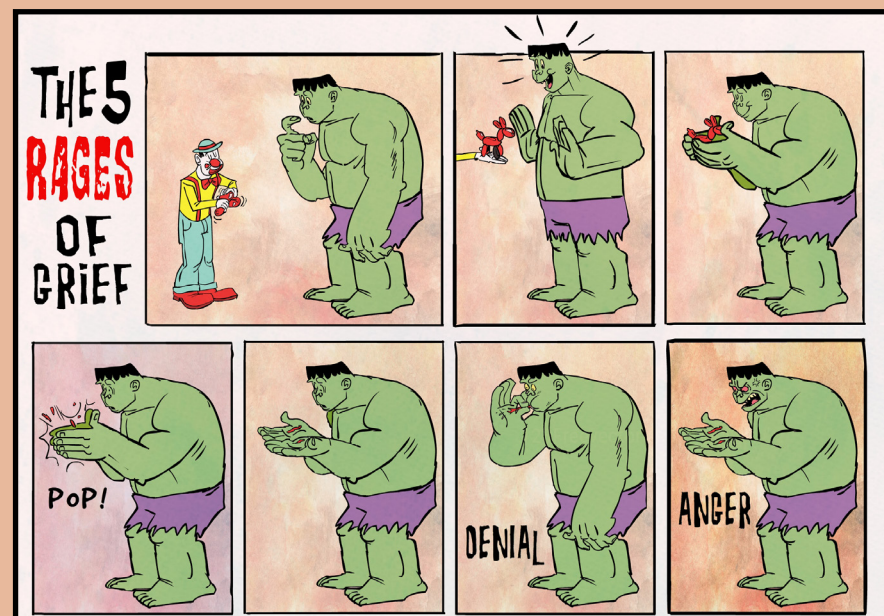
After many years, my sponsees and I experimented. How long does it take to work the Steps on an issue that's bothering us today? Thirty seconds. They found out that it doesn't take long to work these Steps. What takes long is me resisting working the Steps.

I remember being in a SA/S-Anon Conference in Newark in 1998. That's when the miracle happened. I was in the middle of a lobby, and I was sharing my SA and S-Anon inventory with a group of five men. Many people were coming and going in the lobby, and I didn't care who heard. That's where the miracle happened. That's when God removed my desire to entertain resentments and lust. From that point on, I had no desire whatsoever to entertain any kind of anger, impatience, or intolerance. I went straight to God, and I said, “Ok, I've got to work the Steps.”

By: God Did All of This



BREAKING THROUGH RESENTMENT AND NUMBNESS



The Steps Moved Him Through the Stages of Grief.

I didn't know what grief was or what it felt like before recovery. Lust numbed all my emotions, positive and negative. I rarely had feelings when pets passed away. It felt like it was just part of life.

My grandma passed away when I was 16. I ended up sitting beside my grandpa and holding his hand through the funeral. I was numb and kept asking in my head, “Where are the adults? This isn't my job.” I asked my parents why I didn't feel anything. I would later learn that this shock (numbness) is how I initially respond to grief, but I was told that if I had invested more in my relationship with my grandma, I would have felt more. What a setup for dependency issues! I concluded I was defective and that all relationships are 100 percent dependent on me. I think my

lust became worse due to this.

I ended up resenting my grandparents because they didn't make enough time for me, or so I was told by my parents. This separated me from them. I also did not have tolerance for the emotions of others.

In recovery, I thought I had come to escape lust, but I experienced many other gifts.

In recovery, I thought I had come to escape lust, but I experienced many other gifts. My Higher Power set me free from my resentment towards my grandparents through the Step Four Resentment Inventory, praying the Sick Man Prayer, and taking Step Five. A lot of my resentments melted away. I also realized I was powerless over many character defects like self-pity, judgmentalism, perfectionism,

dishonesty, intolerance, fear, and dependency (Steps Six and Seven).

I made Step Nine amends to my grandparents by visiting their graves for the first time after they passed away. I didn't think anything would happen. I read my amends and asked God the three follow-up questions that I usually ask: "How did this affect you? "Did I miss anything?", and "How can I make it right?"

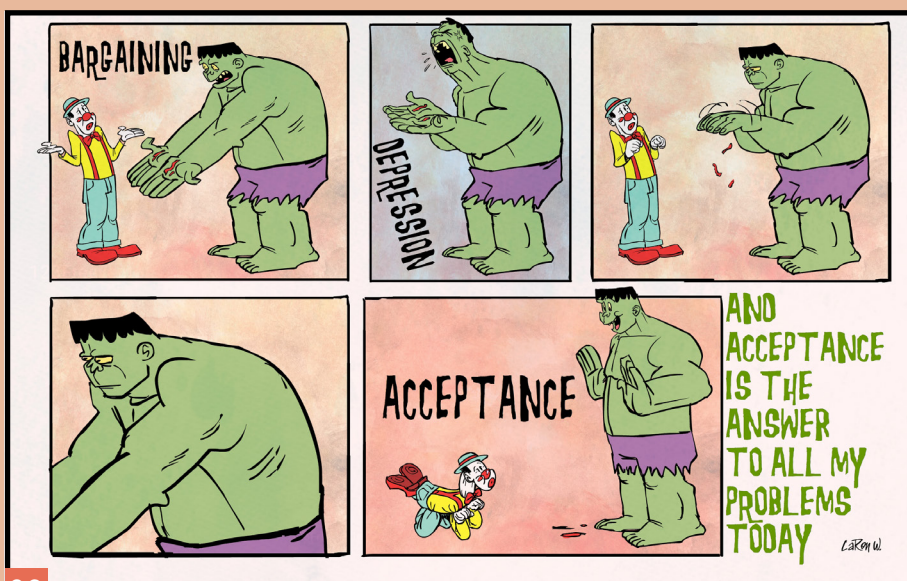
Most importantly, I was able to be present for his family and share positive memories at the memorial service.

I had a flood of really positive memories come back into my mind, particularly one of the last memories of my grandpa when I was around 20. He greeted me at the door and put his hands on my shoulders, saying, "Boy, you look great!" I took that as his way of saying he loved me. I also remembered my grandma showing my siblings and me how to make paper mache. My Higher Power showed me that my grandparents

loved me, and that I loved them. The old lies and distortions were finally gone.

I've experienced grief more fully in recovery. My neighbor and friend was killed in the line of duty as he served as a police officer. My Higher Power kept me sober as I questioned Him in anger, cried, and mourned with my community (Steps Ten and Eleven). My Higher Power kept me sober through the waves of grief that popped up spontaneously in the months ahead—sometimes numbness, sometimes anger, sometimes sadness, sometimes acceptance. Most importantly, I was able to be present for his family and share positive memories at the memorial service. Most importantly, I have been able to share the gift of grieving with my children. They saw me cry at various times when the grief hit. I could affirm their feelings and walk them through the natural process of grief (Step Twelve). As many say, "I'm insufficiently grateful" for this and the many other gifts of recovery.

Brock J., Sudbury, Canada 



SA CFC

SPONSORSHIP IN PRISON

My name is Blue, and I am an incarcerated person serving a life sentence in the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation for the crimes of sexual assault. This is the bad news. The good news is that coming to prison was the best thing that could have happened for me, because it forced me to take an honest look at myself and what I needed to do to transform and be healed.

This led me to reach out to find a sponsor, who has helped me understand why I did some of the things I've done. He has also given me suggestions on how to change myself for the better by working through the 12 Steps and Traditions, and on how to apply them to my life. I sometimes (often) forget that God's will is my number one priority. How am I going to accomplish His will in my life and share my message that He is key?

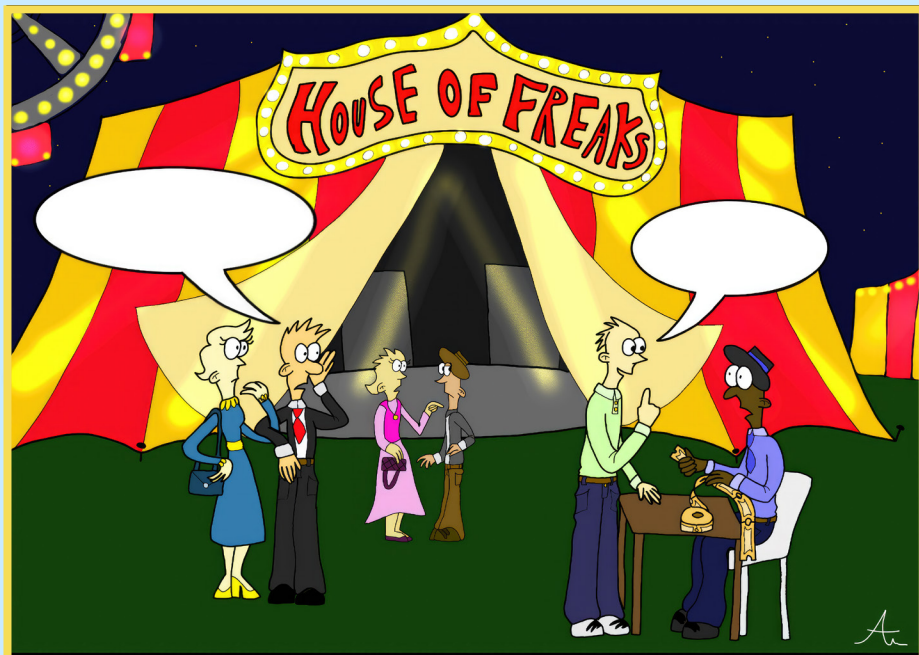
I consider myself blessed to have found the man who is my sponsor. I never thought that I would ever have a sponsor to whom I could talk openly and honestly about my most shameful thoughts and behaviors. I know that without his help, support, and guidance, I would never be where I am today, living my life for the first time with joy and purpose.

To be honest, I almost gave up on ever getting a sponsor, because when I wrote to SA, it took a couple of years to hear back. So, I started thinking, "No one cares. I don't even know why I even wrote them." It wasn't because they didn't care, because they do! The problem is that the need for sponsors is so great, and there are simply not enough sponsors to meet the demands of people in prison. But SA is doing everything they can to get people to sponsor us. If you are reading this and can be of service by sponsoring, I encourage you to do so, to pay it forward. If you are incarcerated, I encourage you to seek out a sponsor. It will be a life-changing decision.

I went back to court after being in prison for 19 years. I was resentenced, and the judge and the district attorney took 26 years off my original sentence. I will be going to my Parole Suitability hearing in about one year from now. I can honestly say that without my sponsor's help, I never would have gotten resentenced. I say this because I want people to know the benefits that the 12 Steps of Sexaholics Anonymous sponsor-by-mail program offers to those of us who are in prisons.

Anonymous,
a prison in California, USA 

JOIN OUR CONTEST AND CRAFT THE BEST CAPTION



For this June 2025 edition we welcome our newest amateur illustrator An. She has created this issue's Best Caption Contest Cartoon with August's theme: "Happy, Joyous, and ... Single."

HERE'S YOUR MISSION, SHOULD YOU CHOOSE TO ACCEPT IT:

Brainstorm the perfect caption for An's newest creation and shoot it over to us at essay@sa.org. If your caption captures our hearts (and chuckles), it will grace the pages of our August ESSAY edition. Plus, you'll snag a complimentary print copy of the issue, courtesy of SAICO, delivered straight to your doorstep. Mark your calendars: the deadline for submissions is July 15. Let the creativity flow and may the funniest caption win!

Our in-house illustrator, LaRon has been breathing life into our covers and peppering our pages with laughter through his cartoons for the past three years. We are grateful to him for sharing his talent through creating light-hearted, recovery themed cartoons for ESSAY. In August, 2025, he will resume his caption contest cartoons in need of your creative captions.



SA EVENTS CALENDAR

- July 25-27, 2025 *Dallas, TX, USA*
SA/S-Anon Summer Convention DallasHeart2025.org
- July 2026 *Denver, Colorado, USA*
SA/S-Anon Summer Convention
- July 2027 *New Orleans, LA, USA*
SA/S-Anon Summer Convention



Ross Point Camp
& Conference Center, Idaho

www.rosspoint.org

Workshops on the Steps and
Recovering Together in SA



THE 2025 TRURO, UK RECOVERY DAY

*This little group makes
a big impact on their SA
community.*



My name is Kathie S., of the Exeter, Devon, England, SA group. The next county to Devon is Cornwall, including one of the smallest SA groups in the country: the Truro group. This dedicated group has hosted again this year one of the most awesome events on my calendar: the Truro Recovery Day (which was in early April 2025). Truro is a Cathedral city, accessible by railway and by main roads.

It was a smaller group with around nine fellows in attendance, staying in the locality for the weekend. Many fellows around the world know our keynote speaker from his Steps workshops. By an amazing God-incidence, he was 30 years sober in SA on that very day. The Truro group had ordered him a special 30-year chip, which visibly moved him when presented in the last session.

We checked in, then our speaker shared his experience, strength, and hope of his recovery for a while. He led two sessions focused on the Steps. At one point, he led us through the exercise, which many fellows might know: we all stood in line, then took a step forward if we could answer “yes” to the question. If “no”, we stayed still. The only question with multiple steps forward for a “yes” was, “Have you taken another member/s through all 12 Steps?”.

We made the Recovery Day into a weekend event, enjoying extended fellowship and fun. We went out for a meal together as a group, to a venue where we could book one large table. My mobility is poor, and the fellows walked at my pace, with frequent stops, without hesitation, and in good humour and unity. This was inclusion at its best. We enjoyed a very deep discussion, bearing anonymity in mind, which I enjoyed immensely. I said I had not had such enjoyment since my student days!

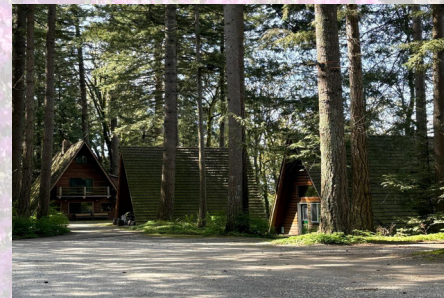
On Sunday morning, some fellows went to a religious service of their choice, and others went home. A fellow dropped me off at the station. I arrived home today, full of joyful memories to take forward—and, yes, to pass on!

Kathie S., Devon, UK 

The NWR Spring Retreat 2025 Retrospective

It never seems to get old, even though I’ve been driving to these regional conferences for over a quarter century. I’m appreciating these special times the more since they were interrupted for a couple of years by the pandemic.

This was the first year in a few years that I had not volunteered for anything



at a retreat. That felt disappointing for a moment, knowing how important service is to the Fellowship and for my own sobriety and growth. I let it go and decided to relax into the program and accept the service of my trusted friends. How many times over the years, after all, had my sponsor reminded me that my sober presence is, itself, being of service to others.

Comfortable lodging, great food, and good company for a whole weekend, I knew, would be a given. Warm April sunshine was a big bonus. I knew I could depend on our Canadian hosts to bring some big-time sobriety and recovery to the podium. My part was simply to show up and to keep it simple. For me, that meant “simply” showing up for the early bird meeting, meditation meetings, and climbing




the hill to the Forest Lodge for Step meetings. I didn’t forget to reserve at least one hour on Saturday for my own rest and reflection while other meetings were going on. I didn’t need to carefully plan the whole weekend. I knew it would all be good. I just needed to be open to the next right thing.

As always, the big bonus for me, was sitting down at each meal around a table with a different group of joyfully recovering sexaholics and s-anons, or strolling the grounds between meetings in close conversation with friends I have known for years, some



for decades, and some I had just met, but who all seem to understand my pains and my joys from first-hand experience.

Most of all, I enjoyed a weekend of warm hugs and laughs. That has been my long experience in this precious Fellowship. The more we gather, we are absolutely not a glum lot.

Ned, Washington, USA 

Worldwide News

His Focus on Fellowship

A few years after the beginning of the Flemish IG, Luc D. brought up the idea of organizing a larger workshop or convention. A few years ago, a tradition emerged of an annual Dutch-language convention, alternately organized by the Dutch and the Flemish IG.

In between the conventions, Recovery Days are held also—together, they fulfill the shared desire of fellows in Belgium and the Netherlands to regularly meet in person with larger groups. SA is growing in our regions, because these gatherings offer unique opportunities to share our message with participants who are relatively new to SA.

At one point, Luc proposed a motion to bid for the organization of an International Convention! He participated in the IC in Madrid in 2019. This motion did not succeed in our then still very small intergroup. However, when a new motion was voted on a few months later to nominate us for the EMER convention in 2025, a majority was achieved. This instantly infused extra enthusiasm into the Flemish fellowship.

The road to a convention is like a pilgrimage, where our personal recovery becomes even more intertwined with that of others—this is a “we-program,” “the greatest adventure of our lives.” Luc had undertaken several long pilgrimages in his life, both alone and with fellow pilgrims. He walked in the scorching heat, through and over wild rivers,

across dangerous ice on a mountain pass, and in a region where wolves roamed. He slept in an abandoned stable after a long, steep climb. The next day, one saving angel after another appeared to him. Through these varied experiences, his trust in God grew strong.

“We couldn’t see the path ahead, except that others had gone that way before.” The road became difficult when Luc suddenly disappeared from our sight. In the journey from the previous to the next convention, we lost in him a trusted servant—an engaging friend who understood us like no one else. It was a shocking occurrence which requires time to process. This is the miracle of the Twelve Step Program, that with the help of sponsors and others, we are able to gradually understand that both the beautiful vista and the dense fog have meaning and purpose in our lives. Moreover, we do not have to face this journey alone. Luc’s legacy, his focus on fellowship, is alive and well in the loving hands of God.

-Tom B, Jean V and Merlijn M, EMER Region

SA EMER Convention 2025
Fri 5th to Sun 7th December
with S-Anon Participation
Sanctuary of Our Lady of Banneux,
Belgium



For more information contact
emer.conventie.2025@gmail.com
or
bit.ly/emer2025

COMING IN AUGUST



NEXT EDITION

Our next edition’s theme is “Happy, Joyous, and ... Single.” We look forward to exploring the joys of recovery while single. Is that even possible? Absolutely. Numerous members who are single for some time or for the rest of their lives live “happy, joyous, and free.” However, ESSAY is your magazine and it is your experience, strength, and hope that carries the message of recovery to the still suffering sexaholic. Please consider sharing your experience with the fellowship by submitting an article to essay@sa.org.

While we provide all articles in English, as well as six selected articles in 9 other languages, on our website at no charge, ESSAY is not free to produce. To support the ESSAY magazine in carrying the SA message worldwide, please make a contribution on essay.sa.org.

SUBMIT YOUR STORY

August 2025 edition: Happy, Joyous, and ... Single (Stories due July 1) Single members share how they enjoy a happy and fulfilling life in sobriety beyond their wildest dreams.

October 2025 edition: Surrendering Shame (Stories due September 1) What helped you learn to let go of your shame and surrender it to your Higher Power?

December 2025 edition: The Great Fact (Stories due November 1) What does this Fact of a deep and effective experience look like in your recovery?

February 2026 edition: Humility and Surrender (Stories due January 1) How has being right-sized and letting go opened you up to receive the promises of sobriety and recovery?

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.

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.