

# The SCAnner

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### The SCAnner is YOUR Newsletter.

The SCAnner is published twice a year (in the summer and in the winter), by ISO, the International Service Organization of SCA. It is meant to serve as a forum for SCA members, who want to share their experience, strength and hope with other members, particularly those who may be isolated and can not reach a meeting easily or regularly. Your contributions and comments are greatly encouraged, and always sincerely invited. Please send your contributions to:

The SCAnner c/o SCA NY PO Box 1585  
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The opinions expressed in the SCAnner are those of the individuals who gave them and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of SCA as a whole.

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## Editor's Note

Welcome to another issue of the SCAnner. This issue of the SCAnner is a double issue. There are twice as many contributors as we have ever had before, a total of 25 in all. You can imagine all the headaches this brought me as I pursued some people for months trying to get that piece of writing out of them. In a couple of cases, it took from May to November to get the promised piece. But it was all worth it, I'm sure you will agree. In this issue, we have two interviews with people who served on the NY SCA Conference that took place the weekend of 21-23 May 1999. There is an interview with Co-Chair Steve D, Treasurer David N, and another interview with Chel, who directed the Conference Show. Chris W (NY) shares with us his experience, strength and hope of several years in SCA in My Story. Finally, there is a poem from Scott B called Phos Hilarion.

The rest of this issue is devoted to the Tools. I tried to get two people to write about each of the Tools so that we could get a diversified view of how people use the Tools of the program. In some cases, I didn't succeed, and in the case of the Steps and the Slogans, I was unable to get anyone at all, and so decided to write something myself in the eleventh hour. Jim M (St Louis) and Randy P (NY) write about Meetings; George C (NY) and Jeff Z (NY) express their views about the Telephone; Steven D' (NY) and Merle H (NY) give us their experience of Sponsorship; Paul N (Milwaukee) and Patrick C (Long Island) tells us all about Literature; David A-S (NY) gives us his version of working the Steps; Rob W (NY) and Bill B (NY) share with us their practices of Prayer and Meditation; Jerry J (LA) and Doug K (NY) explain the intricacies of the Sexual Recovery Plan; CS (NY) speaks about Abstention; Michael P (NY) fills us in on Socializing; CS (NY) and Alex W (SF) broaden our view of Dating; David A-S (NY) explores the Slogans; and Joe L (LA) and David B (NY) sing the praises of Service.

I'd like to thank Scott B, who did a wonderful job proof reading, at the very last moment. I hope you will find this issue of the SCAnner as informative and helpful to your recovery as it was for me in putting it together.

Happy Holiday to Everyone and a wonderful New Century and New Year to You All.

You can also find the SCAnner on the Web at: <http://www.sca-recovery.org/scanner>

Yours in Recovery,  
David A-S Editor

### The Serenity Prayer

*God grant me the Serenity to accept the things I can not change,  
Courage to change the things I can, and Wisdom to know the difference*

### NY SCA Conference, May, 1999

The Annual NY SCA Conference took place at the Gay and Lesbian Center in New York the weekend of May 21-23. I had the opportunity to interview Steve D, the Co-Chair of Program and David N, the Treasurer, as well as Chel S, the Director of this year's Show.

#### Interview with Steve D, Program Co-Chair and David N, Treasurer.

DAS: What was the theme of this year's Conference?

Steve D: The theme of the Conference was Honest, Open, Willing. We defined this by putting the workshops into four tracks: 1. How we Start, 2. How we Get Sober 3. How we stay Sober and 4. How we Expand Our Lives in Recovery. I did point out in the document I sent out to all the workshop leaders, that Honest, Open, Willing were analogous to Acceptance, Awareness, Action.

David N: I also joined the Conference Planning Committee after it had already under way for some time. The theme of the Conference had already been chosen and my first reaction was that it needed a by line. My take on it was that Honesty, Openness and Willingness are the doorway to Recovery. Without the Honesty, Openness and Willingness, it is essentially impossible to recover. I had wanted us to focus more on this in a graphic way, which did not happen. Awakening to Our Healthy Sexuality in 1993 was one of the biggest and better attended Conferences, because healthy sexuality is such a hot button topic for people. Newcomers may look at HOW and see jargon, see dogma, see program lingo. Whereas Awakening to Our Healthy Sexuality and Building a Bridge Together seemed to have a more relevance to program members.

The fact that we did not have a good graphic image meant that we did not do any Conference t-shirts. Part of it was cost consideration, but part of it was that I didn't think anyone would want a t-shirt that just said HOW, so we scaled it back. It was a scaled back effort.

DAS: What do you think makes a successful conference?

STEVE: I think David is right. A theme and a by line helps tremendously. And titles of workshops that will grab people's attention.

DAVID: I think getting a grass roots involvement is really important. Getting the volunteer enrolment sheet out early is vital. We never did have a volunteer co-ordinator, someone to actually contact people and find out how they wanted to help with the Conference. There wasn't that kind of grass roots involvement. As a result, the service commitments we got were relatively limited. The volunteer sheet should be available from the very first planning meeting and should be distributed widely to get people to start thinking about the Conference as early as December.

DAS: What would you say were the highlights of the Conference?

DAVID: The highlight for me was the opening meeting. Seeing a room full of people and seeing people doing service, and that sense of community that I get when I see a large group of sex addicts pursuing recovery, instead of being out in an acting out place, for me that was the highlight. And the Show, is of course, always an interesting experience. It varies. I think the show in some ways contributes to the success of the Conference. A lot of people in SCA are very colorful and creative, and people are attracted to that. And if there is a ground swell support for the show, people come for the show and stay for the Conference.

STEVE: The opening was a big highlight for me. I thought the speakers were terrific. The first meeting I came into I saw this share by throwing a beach ball to the next speaker, and it struck me as the thing to do with that meeting, and I was very happy with the way it turned out. The basic feeling I got from people was that they were very pleased with the workshops at the Conference. I went to six and I was really impressed with four. I saw people making really big efforts in workshops. "Dance Like No One is Watching", which was basically about the third column of your plan got tremendous response.

DAVID: There was one workshop about managing resentments and not turning them into depression and anger. I went to one workshop, "Dating One on One", which was very helpful. There was a workshop on co-dependency.

DAS: I believe there was some criticism about the workshops, in that there were no workshops about the Steps. What do you have to say about that?

STEVE: I certainly am concerned about the lack of focus on the Steps as a whole in the Program, but I think the purpose of the Conference in many ways is to explore areas that maybe we don't explore in meetings. Our feeling was that to create an exciting Conference we had to have as many workshops.....I mean they are not meetings, they are workshops...and we wanted to bring all these different aspects into people's lives. I don't know, maybe the workshop leaders could have been more Step focused....

DAVID: I would just offer that the Retreats focus on the Steps. One of the things we point out in the flier for the Retreat is that it is an opportunity to work the steps in a more focused environment, where you can go beyond what is available at meetings. Ultimately, it works out that the workshops that are presented are representative of what the Fellowship as a whole wants at that time.

STEVE: There are two retreats a year that focus on the Steps, so I think the Conference can afford to be something else.

DAS: How did the service you did at the Conference help you in your recovery?

DAVID: I think it enhances my sense of myself as a part of a greater whole. That's the antidote to the isolation and selfishness of my addiction. It is completely the antipathy of that. In my addiction, I cared about no one, nothing, except where I was going to get the next fix. I was totally out of my life! The thing about service is that it makes you feel a part of without feeling subsumed by the larger self. Service emphasizes to me that I don't

need to be the center of attention for it to have value. And it brings me to a place of greater humility, and greater acceptance of myself as a loving, caring child of God, here on this planet to do the next right thing. Service is a tool, because it enhances our feeling of connection to others, and takes us out of our self-centeredness.

STEVE: I learnt that when the support I want doesn't come instantly, my solution is to try and do it all by myself. And it's not that healthy for me, and I see that now. I substituted overworking (while unemployed) for acting out. It's better than acting out, but it's another kind of acting out. So I have to question how I relate to other people when I am doing service. When I am doing service and I am not getting the co-operation back from other people, I can't focus on how irritated I am with all these addicts. The question is what am I doing that is not bringing other people into service, how am I may be pushing people away by the way I am handling it. I'm looking at that a lot now. There's one more thing I'd like to say about the Conference. The Conference as it stands now is focused primarily on individual recovery. The Conference is an occasion for individuals to go to workshops. And we did have two workshops that were about program-wide issues. [The SCA Book and an Intergroup initiated survey about the State of the Fellowship in New York, Ed]. But I wonder, if it's time for this fellowship to grow in some way, so that an annual conference is not simply about workshops, but is a time when we all gather together and somehow have a structure for dealing with the issues of the whole program, how it's working, what it's doing and not doing for people. And I realize that that is a big task, but it appears to me that it's a mark of maturity in a program when it starts to do that. The two things have a relation, since individual recovery depends on SCA unity, and that unity is finding a form in which to deal with these things.

DAVID: We have a very unique position within the twelve step community. We are dealing with a topic and issue that is core in almost every psychoanalytic venue that you want to go to. The issues of sexual identity, sexual expression, love, romance, intimacy, anorexia are core to our being. We can compare it to food, in that we need to learn to eat in a healthy way, but sex and love and affection are, by far, more complicated and more central to our lives because they were shaped by our parents. So we have a very unique role and unique challenge as a twelve step fellowship. We are dealing with something that is incredibly painful for many people. People come into these rooms and they have broken lives, they have been arrested, they have lost relationships, they have declared bankruptcy, they have been driven to the brink, and they are crazy in a lot of ways, and damaged. We need to recognize that, and somehow acknowledge that we are going to be twenty years old in the year 2002. Where did AA stand after 20 years? How do we address the issue of integrating sex into our lives as a healthy element as a goal. AA's goal is much more simple, it's just a matter of not drinking. We have a lot of goals. We have integrating sex into our lives as a healthy element, and putting down unhealthy behaviors and recovering from romantic obsession, and perhaps dealing with some incest issues, and dealing with ourselves as a person of color, or as a person with HIV, a much more complicated set of issues. I think it's going to take us longer to come of age.

STEVE: I think people who are staying in the program are learning is that it's not enough to just stay sober. People don't stay sober unless they make progress in these other issues. Most people can't just stay on a plateau. And the other thing that comes into that is the

whole notion of having to do service and business meetings. Because people's individual needs are so great there is a tendency, in this program, in my experience, for people to be unwilling to do service.

#### Interview with Chel S, Director of the NY SCA Conference Show.

DAS: You were the Director of the Conference Show. Can you tell me a little bit about the theme of the show.

CHEL: The theme of the show was the Twelve Steps, perhaps that was missed by some viewers. What drove the show a lot was the interesting space that we worked in. We had a long, skinny room and we had some pieces that could not be performed on the rickety stage. So, instead of doing theatre in the round, we did a theatre with two stages, and put some of the action in the middle of the audience. So we had people turning their heads a lot. The other thing we did was we took everything people brought in. When we work on a show, in a lot of cases, it's by consensus, by contribution. We work in a collaborative effort with a committee that decides what is appropriate and doesn't reject anything that comes in, because we want to be open to Higher Power letting it unfold. We just asked people first what they wanted to do, and people brought stuff in. And we control-freaks who were running things, sat down and figured out that this could all fit together along this theme. It's great for people to come in and do their piece, but it's better if it's all strung together in some way. So we strung together the Twelve Steps. We had, in the beginning, someone completely powerless, and then someone accepting that there was a power greater than themselves that might help them, and then someone willing to turn it over. And then a little bit loose on someone taking a fourth step, and so on. It was set in a meeting. It was a good device, because you immediately have a lot of common understanding in the audience, and you can use that for humor.

DAS: I've seen you involved in a lot of SCA shows. What is it that makes you get involved in all these shows?

CHEL: A love for play. I love to play. My favorite way to play is to dress up. I want to be a writer, actor, singer, dancer all those things I am too chicken to do in life. Being part of the show hasn't kept me sober, but it's made sobriety more attractive, because sobriety can be fun. Sober doesn't equal somber. That's one of the reasons I like to do it. And two, recovery is about recovering my whole life and claiming, for example, creativity, and fun and play, and participation and working with others all the things that normal people (whoever they are!) do, and that I am finally picking up at 38 (or however old I am!). The collaborative effort and play is huge in my recovery. It's also probably the biggest way that I give back to the program.

DAS: Do you feel the show facilitates people's recovery?

CHEL: I think the main way it facilitates recovery is by providing fun and fellowship, and also by providing food for thought. A lot of the food for thought is around the steps or working program or issues that a lot of us seem to have in common. And so, by doing it theatrically, we give people some food, the same way that program literature would. It

also gives people an opportunity to participate in something. It's not quite as demanding as chairing a meeting for three months or running a business meeting. It's a fun way for people to come together. Every time I've worked on a show I've made deeper friendships and usually with one person whom before that I had not known. Then, from the audience point of view, I would hope that there is a sense of the magic of the community that we are in. There is so much talent in the room, and so much joy and sorrow, and just magic about what we are able to do, usually on no budget.

DAS: Does the bonding you spoke about contribute to your recovery?

CHEL: A lot of those people do, some of them just become friends. I've also worked with people I've hated in the shows....I'd like to name all of them by name ..... (laughs). Let's move on.

DAS: Some people think that the Conference should focus on workshops and that we shouldn't have a show. What do you think about that?

CHEL: I've also been on the Conference Planning Committee, and one of the biggest ticket sales (I'm sorry to put it in those terms!) has been the show. Some people come only for the show. And it's a big rallying point for our community, and it's so important for us to have a rallying point for our community. We are so lucky to have a community center, we are so lucky to have so many meetings. There's two meetings a week in San Francisco. There's nothing like this where people come together. The people who are not interested in the show don't come to the show. It's there for the people who want it. The show had a budget of \$300 this year. I think we spent that or maybe a little more. We spent nothing on sets, or costumes we never do because people provide their own costumes. So \$300 for the show I think if you divide that by the number of people in the room (200), I think it's pretty good value. So, people who don't want to come, don't come, people who do, you know poverty breeds creativity, so we can do a show anyway.

DAS: Anything else you want to say?

CHEL: Fuck the people who don't like the show. They need to work all of their recovery! I think the shows are an important part of our community. Anyone who is out there, shy, thinking "I might like to someday, if I only had the nerve", this is the safest place you'll ever find. When they start calling for help, come, come early, get involved. Besides, the people who are theatre queens, who want to be fabulous like me, it's a place where you can share all of our creativity, and you don't have to be perfect, you don't have to do drag. You don't have to do any of that stuff. Just come and play, and be creative. I think we should have six shows a year, and everyone should be involved in a show every six months. It should be mandatory, basically. No, I don't know....

DAS: That would be good.....forced recovery!!

CHEL: SQA: Show Queens Anonymous! You can use that for your head line.

DAS: That could be another way to do the Steps, by singing and dancing.

## My Story

**Chris W (NY)**

My first "S" meeting was in the late 1980's and I got sober, one day at a time, thanks to HP, in the fall of 1996...many years later. Which is not to say that I didn't have many stretches of ten day periods - or two weeks, or, less frequently: 30, 60, 90 or 180 days of sobriety (and, once, nine months!) - with program help, in between those two dates. I began in SA, now SRA A month or so of SA's plan of no masturbation (as I was single) helped me feel truly marvellous. Then I went running from the rooms as those constraints, and the added shame of not being able to live up to them, were too much for me at the time. Eventually, I found my way to SCA. Virtually from my first meeting, I felt dubious that I could continue to masturbate (as I could not avoid euphoric recall of past acting out experiences at such times, which, indeed, only acted to fuel more and other acting out). However, I was unwilling to give up what, at times, then seemed like my only "friend" or pleasure, and my hard earned gay sexuality. As compulsions are progressive diseases, not only did my previous AA, Al-Anon, and DA work allow me, positively, to realize that my core issue was sexual (for which knowledge I was often NOT grateful) but my acting out worsened (a lot) as I tried to get sexually sober. I was risking my life, my business, arrest, friendships, family and disease; at best, I was totally stressing myself out. Relationships became shorter and shorter, less and less complete, illusory, and then ceased totally. But, if I was failing at everything else, "at least I was good at sex...". A week long rehab in 1987, a five week rehab in 1994 (during which sexual abstinence for at least a year, which seemed impossible, was recommended strongly; and a week after the end of which I was acting in, i.e. trying to convince myself that I could have sober sex as I lied to myself that I was in sober relationships, then plain old acting out), several 90-and-90s, hundreds of meetings ( up to one or more a day when I was in real crisis), having sponsors (and firing sponsors when the interaction became un-sober), using the phone frequently (cellular if will help me or a friend stay sober), working the steps, SCA meetings with sex-offenders in prison, sexual recovery plans, therapy with sex abuse specialists (who also saw abstinence as necessary for me), ditching all pornography, blocking hotel TV movies, avoiding steam rooms and saunas...all helped, on and off, but not consistently. I could usually get two weeks of sobriety together, and then I'd fall off the wagon. I did begin to glimpse that it became easier "physiologically" for me to stay sober the longer I stayed sober: usually after 30 days, definitely after 60 or 90 days. Anniversaries, as program says, were ironically and "unfairly" difficult (30, 60, 90 days, etc.), however. Friends remind me it is easier, also, to stay sober than to get sober. Going to more and more meetings helped me to also be able to hear that I am simply not able to go into any public men's room (except with a sober friend) - and that it's possible not to! And that I could not travel for a while, then I could only travel with a friend and needed to go to meetings in other locales when I did, or at least call for meetings and numbers. And still, I could not stop acting out. I'd go to bed determined at least to not act out with anybody else, or outside my home, masturbate (or not) wake up fifteen minutes later, not bookend with anyone in program and, powerless, dress, leave the house and act out 'til ..... the next morning, or longer. And I'd wonder why I constantly had colds, and was angry and tired at work! And why the

homeless person on Thorazine, and living at a half-way house, I'd picked up at a toilet and asked to sleep over at my house was unwilling to become a boyfriend. I want to stay away from triggering details; the truth is that I was killing myself, and (A) I did not want to (B) if I had to, it seemed it would be better to not draw it out endlessly. I felt hopeless, desperate...suicidal. For me, ANY sex led to a sex slip, if not a sex binge. I was thrown out of my gym, legally, for trying to act out. I only *just* talked my way out of being arrested in a hotel by being indignant, and well-dressed. Why, I asked myself again and again, had years of effort not paid off? Was I stupid? I'd LEARNED that I couldn't do it alone. Counting the approximate number of my sex partners had helped put things in perspective. I'd BEEN able to come to see at least the "rooms" (people in meetings), as well as brief periods of sobriety, showed there WAS sometimes a higher power - despite my agnostic upbringing. Then it came to me, thank god: MY way simply did NOT work, and does not work. Only that, in a way, made room in my life for ANOTHER WAY, higher power's! The first three steps became real. I again remembered a favorite slogan: "half measures availed us naught". I surrendered...and simultaneously tried the only two things I'd been reluctant to keep to: sexual abstinence, and the new generation of serotonin effecting drugs (and I did NOT lose my personality...!). I had tried and tried to reach sobriety, and I had equally resisted it as well. Without abstinence, I can forget any hope for my life. My addict wants me dead, and wanted to scare me with the specter of "celibacy", I am not celibate, I am abstinent. I do not know when, and if, I will again be sexual. AND, for the first time in years, I don't need to know. Truly, anything ( and everything!) is better than acting out and the devastation it creates in my life. I now can face what I used sex to cover, one day at a time AND work with it. One day at a time, I miraculously have two and a half years of total abstinence today! Yet, may I never have "too many years of sobriety and not enough days of sobriety..." Equally miraculously, I have been able to date three men, consecutively and soberly, on and off, for the last year. Actually not even getting to the point where sex was appropriate, nurturing and wouldn't have been re-traumatizing! There have been times when I wanted to act out in the last two and a half years. I guess my sobriety muscles ARE toned: HP did not even bring acting out partners near me! Letting go is easier; life is more fun, and runs with more and more joyful synchronicity... I feel I actually may grow up after all!

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Phos Hilarion\*

by Scott B (NY)

When we look across the barred, softly blinded eyes  
Of other men in hope to see the whole, free sky  
And depth of joy, we die by idols,  
Who closet some of earth and some of heaven, but not all,  
Behind their windows and in their lives' own light.

The wind blows; and stirs a gentle fire and gladness  
Deep within the plain of night.

\* Name of a Third Century hymn, which is often translated as "gladdening light" or "gracious light".

## The Tools That Help Us Get Better

*Meetings are where we share our experience, strength and hope with each other to better understand our common problem and work together towards the solution.*

**Jim M (St Louis)**

The Tools of the SCA Fellowship are the *actions* we take to prepare ourselves for, and to maintain, the gift of sobriety. We believe that abstinence, or "being on our sexual recovery plan", is contingent upon our spiritual fitness, which is the result of the wondrous combination of the Grace of God and the regular use of the tools of our program. Addiction is a disease of denial and isolation: denial that we are powerless over our compulsive sexual behavior and isolation from a community that loves and supports us. The power of going to meetings is that, in hearing other sex addicts tell their experiences, a spiritual shift in perception takes place where it is no longer the *other* person, but the *listener* who becomes aware of his or her own powerlessness over sexual compulsion. It is at meetings where members realize they do not suffer alone, and that the love and compassion shared there is ultimately what heals us.

I started sexual recovery in November 1985 and had a spiritual awakening at my first meeting. I clearly remember realizing that my addiction was not all my fault, and this was a miracle in itself. Until my first meeting, I had led a life driven by guilt and shame. I felt completely hopeless after trying everything that I was aware of to stop my addictive behavior. Anonymous sexual encounters in public places were my drug of choice. I had been to therapists, tried various religions, read self-help books, made countless promises and deals with myself, etc., but always returned to the same old acting out patterns, which led to self-contempt and kept me from growing emotionally and spiritually. In the addictive cycle, there was no way for me to feel good about me. I had not identified the shame that was driving my compulsive behavior and continued acting it out unconsciously. It was during the first years of recovery that I received the grace to realize that I was born into an addictive family system, and that my acting out was a survival mechanism which had long outgrown its purpose and was out to destroy me. Today I know that addiction is a disease and not a moral issue. I am not a "bad" person, but someone with a disease, who can be abstinent and heal with the help of the Fellowship and the 12 Steps. Meetings reinforce my recovery on every level and provide the opportunities to practice and take the actions of love.

Today, I view sobriety as my link to my Higher Power. The way for me to maintain that link is to attend meetings on a regular basis, do service work, have a home group, talk to my sponsor or trusted recovering addicts daily, and use the tools of the program on a regular basis. It is at meetings where I can learn how to apply the 12 Steps by hearing the experiences of other recovering addicts. The miracle of the program has been that I can get out of a meeting today what I thought I needed when I was acting out. What was I really longing for in my addiction? Relief from the pain; acceptance, camaraderie, a feeling a connection, a sense of life and love. Today, God gives me these very things every time I go to a meeting. It's the cheapest miracle in town. Two favorite lines of mine are "People who stop going to meetings don't get to hear what happens to people who stop going to meetings" and "SLIP = Sobriety lost its priority".

**Randy P (NY)**

A trusted friend invited me to my first SCA meeting. Curious and willing, I sat down, which for me was a major feat. As a former volunteer in the ranks of commando sleaze, I was too busy anticipating my next sexual encounter to do something as simple as sit down and listen. The atmosphere of calm focus and predictability is always a refreshing change. I soon learned that within each meeting I could leave my ego demands at the door and absorb the spiritual nature of the fellowship.

After my first hurdle at that meeting, I was gently told I was in the right place. How did they know? Was my compulsion that obvious? I knew at a gut level that the gig was up. No more sleaze. It was suggested that I learn to listen and listen to learn.

I found that meetings provide a safe space where I can break my self-absorbed isolation, learn to trust myself and others while taking the opportunity to (as one member put it), "bare our souls". Early on, it was suggested that I make a meeting plan, deciding in advance which meeting I could attend each week. Like a sex plan, the meeting plan would help me to avoid making the spontaneous choice not to attend a meeting. The decision would have been made in advance. So using sober feet to walk to my meetings, my not-so-sober-thinking couldn't lure me back into isolation. I remember the suggestion about going to meetings: there are only two times when you should go to a meeting, when you want to and when you don't. I need these simple slogans as guide posts on the road to sobriety.

I entered SCA when the program was about one year old. Three weekly meetings existed. I started with the Saturday night meeting on St Mark's Place, in the East Village. Ten or so people gathered around a table in a brightly-lit storefront. No one had long term sobriety or even knew how to maintain sexual sobriety. Frequently, the participants reported recent sexual escapades, not realizing how triggering such descriptions could be. Our Literature consisted of one piece of paper listing the meetings, and what was to become the Characteristics. Our primary focus was abstention. How were we going to stay sober sexually? Most of us acknowledged these early meetings to be part of the answer to a killer disease, sexual addiction, which was enabling other physical diseases to ravage the gay and straight communities. We were alarmed for our fellows and ourselves.

Much of the wisdom and insight we now incorporate into our fellowship was not in place at that time. Recognizing our seemingly overwhelming feeling states, and our impulse to escape their apparent potency, was not a large part of our understanding. Topics like anger, romantic obsession, shame, and incest were yet to emerge. We just wanted to abstain from the destructive behaviour. Our tools became the sex plan and mutual support, within and outside our meetings.

The first time one of us shared anger in an intense way (it came out as a shriek, almost a scream or yell) it shook our collective perception as to the depth and intimacy that could be shared within a meeting. That moment helped me to remember forever the phrase that "there is nothing so large, or an emotion so heavy that the meeting can not absorb it".

At times, identifying with the feelings of fellow members and giving support would shift my focus from the need to share. I had to define what it is I need from this meeting for my sexual sobriety and sanity today. Often I find that the healing aspect of sharing doesn't depend on what I say or how articulate I am. Rather, it comes down to my practicing HOW, Honesty, Openness, Willingness, in order for me to dissipate some of those potent emotions that may, if unexpressed, fester and explode in an acting out scenario. When emotionally challenging times hit, I prescribe a meeting a day for myself. I have the self-diagnosed disease of sexual compulsion. My medication is meetings. If I don't receive my medication, it is likely the disease will become more active and my life will become unmanageable.

The suggestion of going to 90 meetings in 90 days originated with Bill Wilson, the co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous. Bill worked in the business world where 90 days contracts were common. AA also tells us that 90 days are required for the brain stem to be clear of alcohol.

Through many meeting, over time, I have observed that our meetings are self-supporting in more than just financial ways. We are also self-supporting emotionally and spiritually. We can give each other the kind of support only another addict can provide, because we "know", we have been there too.

*The Telephone is our meeting between meetings. By making contact with others, we begin to break out of the isolation that is so strongly a part of the disease.*

**George C (NY)**

The telephone was my first refuge as a would-be-adult. I spent hours in high school talking on the phone, and not just gabbing. It was there, in the dark safety of a private nook in my home, that I cried and complained about the imprisonment of being a teenager; schemed about where to score pot and how we'd secure a bottle of Jim Beam for an illicit afternoon; and dreamed aloud with my artist friends about the better world we were determined to make. There's something wonderfully anonymous about the phone, and (I remember disguising my voice when I'd call one woman in particular because I didn't want her mother to make something conventional out of my calling her daughter), I could also hide. Never particularly comfortable with my body or how I presented myself to the physical world, I loved being able to communicate invisibly. So, in short, the phone was a great starting place for me with my intimacy. It was, as I'm sure it is for so many people, where I started with my sponsor.

Over time, I've had difficulty with various tools of the program. I still take issue with the social aspect of meetings and with the amount of complaining I hear going on there. Meetings are not really the backbone of my program, and, over the seven years I've been really engaged in SCA, I've got to a place where I don't really have a formal sponsor. But the telephone and its ability to connect me with my old friends in program, those people who really watched me grow up in program and who have no need to instruct me or to re-arrange me, are my real program now.

When I first came into SCA in New York, it was very intense. Daily meetings, lots of meditation work, and constant telephone calls to my sponsor and those in my "class of '91". There was a group of us that used to meet at the Lamb's Club and we were putting most all else of our lives on hold for this aspect of sexual healing. So, I could always find someone available. Soon, though, I had to leave town to do a show. What to do? Wonderfully, I was given phone numbers by people in SCA in New York and told that I could call collect. What a boon! Although I did attend meetings in Florida (in fact, the fellowship is so powerful that SCA members actually drove to my door to pick me up and took me to meetings down there), the comfort and shared knowledge I had with my SCA friends in New York via telephone was invaluable and kept me grounded and sane.

Only recently, I was back in Florida again, back doing a show, and the demands of the work were such that I really couldn't get to meetings. I could pick up the phone. And, since nowadays there are such things as beepers and voicemails, people can be much more available. I was able to reach someone who knew me, knew my history (which involved getting deep, fun crushes on unavailable younger men, which can end up torturing me), and, in a financially sound manner (when someone knows you, they can help you out in a matter of moments so AT&T need not grow rich over your recovery), I was able to get the advice that I needed. And how? Simply put it was this: "you don't need to apologize for your feelings nor do you need to take responsibility for his feeling uncomfortable around you". Al-Anon and SCA (I usually find my program binds the two together) in a handy sentence. Then he had to ring off and I was able to recollect my personal power and move on with my work and my projects. It was invaluable. It is invaluable. That's my testimonial about the telephone. It is the handiest, safest, fastest tool I've got (with the possible exception of meditation, for which I need no interpersonal connection). It connects me INTIMATELY with all the rich warmth I remember from my adolescent Bye-Bye-Birdie time spent on the phone with those people, those golden people, who have come to represent the true, deep golden program I use for me.

#### Jeff Z (NY)

In my six short years in recovery, one of the best tools I've found to help me break out of my addict's isolation has been the telephone. It hasn't been the easiest tool for me to use. Often I'm reluctant to reach out for help, thinking that I can do it on my own (I can't), or that the rest of the human race will be like my negligent family of origin (it isn't). I also think, sometimes, that my emotional wants and needs are not worth addressing. They really are important, and acknowledging them is often the first giant step to moving forward in recovery. Here are some of things that I've found to be helpful about using the telephone in program:

1. Exchange phone numbers with people whose recovery you respect. My first sponsor suggested that I go to as many meetings as possible and just listen. He was right. There are sure to be a few people who share the same problem you do (or some variation of it) who will understand what you are going through and the behaviors you are trying to change. Go to those people after the meeting and talk, and maybe do fellowship and exchange numbers.

2. Call someone if you think you are about to have a slip. This can undoubtedly be the hardest thing in the world to do, but each time I've done it I've reminded my self that there is life outside of my addiction, a world of loving, caring people who can, will, and do listen. I also carry a card in my wallet with program numbers, just for emergencies.
3. Be patient, as people will not always call back. I've learned that people can be very busy outside of the meetings, or that they really don't like to talk on the telephone or are wrapped up in their own problems. I've learned to turn it over. Making a phone call is a sign to my HP of my willingness to change, and sometimes that's all that's necessary.
- 4 If your sponsor doesn't return your calls in a timely manner, set up a time to talk about it face to face. After about three weeks of leaving numerous un-returned phone messages, I finally told my sponsor that I wasn't in this program to recreate the neglect of my childhood. He heard me. Once again, people can be busy, but if trying to reach a sponsor becomes an exercise in frustration, it's usually time to talk about it in person and decide if there is a future to the relationship. (In my case, there wasn't.)
- 5 Don't rely on the telephone as a substitute for fellowship. I know that I can enjoy a good telephone gabfest, but I also know that I can hide behind the telephone and never, ever get out into the world and really learn how to be with people. I try to find a balance and save the gab sessions for the folks I don't get a chance to see on a regular basis.
- 6 If you have something extremely painful to share, sometimes the telephone can be a good place to start. I recall the tremendous shame I had about my acting out behaviors at the beginning of my recovery. My sponsor was patient with me, and just listened when I called to talk. We eventually got to talk things out in person, but laying the ground-work via those initial phone conversations was a big help.
7. Get your phone blocked if phone sex lines are a problem for you. I'm blessed that this is not one of my acting out behaviours but I understand that the blocks are the most effective means of dealing with this issue.
8. Just because no one called back doesn't mean you're a zero. I used to pity myself because the one person to whom I gave my number took a long time to call back, so my answering machine would flash a big '0', day after day. It took me a while to learn I could always go to a meeting if I really wanted to talk.
9. People may call back at the most unexpected times or from the oddest places. I get calls from program friends from all over the world, at all different times. I have one guy who calls on his cell phone while taking a run and he may be anywhere in the world. He's hard to get time with and I enjoy our conversations, so I accept the uniqueness of the situation.
10. Go to meetings and get more numbers. I can't stress this enough. Reach out. There are people who I now love and trust who I never would know had I not taken that first step.

*Sponsorship is two people with the same problem helping each other to work the program. It can provide a framework for a sexual recovery plan and for doing the Twelve Steps, and can bring emotional support at difficult times.*

#### Steven D' (NY)

Sponsorship. Well, if you want to get technical about it, American Heritage Dictionary puts it this way: Spon-sor, n. 1. One who assumes responsibility for another person or "a group during a period of instruction, apprenticeship, or probation". Our trusted fourfold

defines it as two people with the same problem helping each other work the program. Hmm... could a little of both definitions apply? That word responsibility, as read in the dictionary's definition sends my red flags-a-flyin' ... and for good reasons. Responsibility is to my addiction as light is to the vampire. When I truly work with my sponsor, I take on a responsibility to keep contact with him/her, no matter what I have or haven't done. This particular tool has been the most difficult for me to pick up and use. As a sex addict, my main goal is "not" to be seen. Period, case closed, the end. Isolation and working the tool of sponsorship don't go hand in hand. If I am to derive any real benefit from the tool of sponsorship, I must become willing to let my sponsor see me intimately in order for my healing to progress.

That means presenting myself when I'm in a restful and serene space and also if I've just had a slip or done something of which I am not proud, or having a feeling of which I'm embarrassed to share. That also means sharing my written step work with him/her at the risk of critique or feedback. I am slowly learning to moor the broken vessel of me in the safety of sponsorship's harbor. This is why it is SO important to work with someone around whom I feel comfortable and at ease.

Agreeing to honesty with a sponsor is a major step toward healing my intimacy issues, a testing ground if you will. It is a good place to experiment and see how I react in a one on one relationship. It is important for me to work with someone who has more experience than I in recovery. I don't know about you, but the addict writing this page has character defects of thinking he knows all, can do all and needs no help whatsoever... especially from another recovering addict! That brings me back to the definition of sponsorship being like an apprenticeship. I become willing to admit in the action of working with a sponsor that someone knows more than I in certain areas of recovery, has more serenity than I now possess, and has been sober longer than me. Did I mention I'm very competitive? I also used to think I could write my own sex plan, work the steps alone, and get along without being accountable to someone else for my recovery. I need another person to work intimately with me on these things, to ask for their help, to once again admit that I fail time and time again when I do it alone.

Finally agreeing to commit (ugh, that word!) to sponsorship means that I must admit to myself that I'm worth someone paying extra attention to me in my life. I have also come to know that committing to working with a sponsor does not mean signing over my rights as a person. I am still allowed to have my opinions and feelings. I still have my own Higher Power. I am entitled to feel all my feelings, even those which I think will scare away others. A good sponsor will give me the room I need to grow in these areas and encourage my individual experience of recovery. He/she also keeps me in check with their feedback and observations. Some of the qualities I look for in a sponsor today are: good listening skills, familiarity in working the Steps; reads the Big Book, knows how to encourage me in my recovery, embraces gentleness and spirituality, has the ability to be frank with me (even when he/she knows I'm not going to want to necessarily hear it), and most importantly, that s/he is someone who has enough recovery to gently guide me back to the Steps and my Higher Power.

I am so grateful to have a sponsor today who has these qualities and many more than I've listed above. If it's true what they say about the people in our lives acting as our mirrors, then I am truly looking A-okay, as I witness my reflection through this gift of sponsorship. Thank you God.

#### Merle H (NY)

A pertinent moment in the great musical play *The Kind And I* occurs in Act One, when Mrs. Leonowens, as teacher to the Royal Court of Siam, tells her class of eager to learn children; "It's a very ancient saying, but a true and honest thought, that if you become a teacher, by your pupils you'll be taught...". And this maxim is one of the enduring strengths of my continuing relationships with those I am fortunate enough to sponsor in our program. Sponsees constantly remind me of many truths I have learned and have passed on to them, (that's Talking the Talk), and more than once have had mirrored back to remind me and show me the way (that's Walking the Walk). One could say the blind are leading the blind, but I find that in program there are no losers and no blindness to the utter simplicity that is inherent in walking in kindness and compassion to and from another suffering human.

Walking the Walk is the route of the Twelve Steps, but perhaps the first and most difficult step a person can take is that first walk into the rooms; that first admission of one's need for help; that first assumption of a seat in a circle of love and growth that will go well beyond any conceivable desire to be sober; that first realization that you are not alone and that there are others like you.

At any beginner's meeting you attend, be it your first or your thousandth, someone will call to your attention that we have an Interim Sponsorship Program, and that you can sign up to be matched to someone with more experience in program who has sufficient time and inclination to lead you through the process – a process in itself as revealing as any you will come across on your journey into healthy sexuality and self knowledge.

I was particularly willful when I entered in July of 1990, convinced from my first meeting that I was intelligent and willing enough to master the necessary tools to maintain that sobriety I so dearly wanted in record time. My first meeting was the Saturday 6:00 p.m. Beginner's Step One meeting, a meeting I still attend regularly, as I remain to this day a beginner in the art of living and staying sober. It took me two years before I acknowledged the need for a sponsor, such was the desperate quality of my conceit and belief that I could do this all alone. But in those two years, I learned for the first time how to listen, and was finally able to understand the safety that encircled me and the trust that engulfed me. Only then was I able to ask for the simple help of sponsorship. And I picked a friend in program who could both Talk the Talk and Walk the Walk, and miraculously was willing to help me along the way. It is hard for an addict to admit needing help, much less ask for it, and our program is clear that we are committed to healing and helping each other.

How does it work? It works if you work it! You and your sponsor meet and discuss the terms by which you agree to live in recovery (how to use the tools of recovery, how to

safeguard against delusory thinking), and in time, how to approach sex and to integrate it into your life as a healthy element.

How do you find the right sponsor? By listening for someone who has the recovery that you want, and by then asking that person to share his or her journey with you. This program is for the realization of individual needs arrived at by following the gentle path of the Twelve Steps, with the help of friends, strangers, other suffering addicts, people in recovery, all in the safety of the rooms, where healthy sexuality is born, bred and nurtured in communal good will.

Does this sound too good to be true? Indeed yes; and it is even more than that. I heard when I first came in, filled with self-loathing and low self esteem, that the program would love me until I could love myself, and now, almost ten years into my recovery, I find it remains a simple truth. And thanks to those who have sponsored me, and even more to the many I have sponsored, I feel I have accepted the challenge to change, and look to the promises to come true as they invariably do if we Walk the Walk with heart and mind wide open to the miracle of the Twelve Steps.

*Literature is our portable program. We also make use of AA's and OA's and other Twelve Step programs' conference-approved literature, as well as other appropriate materials.*

#### **Paul N (Milwaukee)**

When I first entered into recovery 4 years ago, I worked a second shift job. The hours I worked were from 2:30 p.m. to 12:40 a.m. I did not live in a large city, so the only meeting I could get to was on Sunday nights. Then, I would have a long week until my next meeting. To further complicate matters, the part of the city I worked in was the heart of the cruise area of town. It was a struggle to just make it out of the parking lot without picking someone up to act out with. I tried to call members of the program before I left work and commit on a nightly basis to not act out. Many group members needed to be asleep by the time that I left work. Some were able and willing to take my calls, and I am grateful, but most were not. Even when they could it was hard to hear and speak because of the machinery in the factory I worked in. I knew that I had to find a way to stay close to my program each night, or else have a full blown relapse. At the suggestion of another member of my Sunday night meeting, I began to read literature at work. I would often hide it in a folder or binder so that others could not see what I was reading. Many times I would read a story so that I could feel close to another recovering person. As time went on, I would read and reread the steps and try to think about how I was or was not applying them in my life. It got to the point that I was carrying a book bag every day to work and many people assumed that I attended school. I guess I am a slow learner, because I had to read many things over and over again just to make it through the night. The words I read made so much sense. I was amazed that someone else could write so accurately about the things that I felt and experienced. Slowly it got easier to get home each night. In one story I read about a man who had to drive miles out of his way to get to work and avoid old acting out areas. I started to do the same thing. I would drive quickly out of the area near my work even though it was in the opposite direction of my house,

and then circle back. It took a little longer, but it worked. That was when I realized that I did not have to make every mistake myself, but could learn from those who went before me. Those who had written down their experience, strength, and hope.

Later, I got a first shift job and could get to more meetings. However, now I felt stressed because of the change in my schedule and new job duties. Acting out once again seemed compelling. I went back to my literature; this time I took a meditation book with me to work every morning. I would wait until I got to the parking lot at work and read the day's meditation. It was incredible how on many occasions, the reading of the day was just what I needed to read. Throughout the day, I would think of the reading. If I was having a particularly hard day, I would make a photocopy and tape it to my computer to remind me of that day's message. Literature became a tool to help me bring recovery into all areas of my life and get out of the compartmentalization that had been my life.

I still use literature and the other tools of recovery. The written work of other addicts has been a powerful tool in my recovery and life. Today, I mail literature all over the country to those in need for ISO/SCA. Some may never get to a meeting, but they will know they are not alone.

#### **Patrick C. (Long Island)**

Literature has been key to my sexual recovery. I live somewhat remote to meetings and also did a lot of travel for work. Making a phone call or getting to a meeting isn't always that easy. Over the 19 months I have been in this program and my 13 months of sobriety, I have used literature to help me get through everything from the real slippery situations to simply setting focus for the start of another day. Literature has helped me get past denial, release shame and progress in my sobriety.

Just after entering the program I was very compulsive over the breakup with my ex-lover. While flying to San Francisco one morning, I thought I was going to head for the door and jump. Luckily, I had gotten some SCA literature the previous night at a meeting and had put it in my carryon. As I started to read the softbound Blue Book I started to gain back strength and some level of serenity. That whole experience was my meeting at 33,000 feet.

There are so many different types of literature that I have gotten my hands on over the time I've been in program. In some cases I'll read to help me stay sober at that moment, while sitting in an airport, in a hotel room, or while at home. It is a healthy alternative to getting on the phone line, lusting after the cute guy who just walked by, reading where the gay hot spots are in this new city I'm in, or heading for some other opportunity to act out.

Other times I read literature specific to understanding sex addiction or addictive compulsive behaviour. When I realized my life was unmanageable, I sought professional help. I interviewed three therapists. The last one I thought was a bit rough on me in the interview. He told me go home and read Patrick Carnes' book *Out of the Shadows*. Did I

ever recognize myself in that book! It was academic at that point to me that I needed help, which led me back to him and ultimately to SCA.

I read books I find in the self help section of the bookstore, books that are recommended to me by someone who heard my share at a meeting, and books on how 12-step program work. I also read on other addictions and literature from other programs to help understand my cross addictions.

A huge part of my success in this program is taking a day at a time and turning my will over to my Higher Power, keeping the focus on now, not what has been or what will be. Each day I start with a reading from *Answers in the Heart*, a book of daily meditations on recovery from sexual addictions. It takes 3 minutes each morning and renews my commitment that day to my sobriety and in turning my will over to my God. Back in my days at Catholic high school I remember having brought to my attention that typically, we pray to "The God of Need" rather than "The God of Love." Instead of praying to my God and asking for what I want, this book of meditations helps me keep my focus on trusting my Higher Power, therefore praying to that God of Love that His will be done knowing I will be okay in His hands.

No mention of literature would be complete without including *Hope and Recovery* or *The Fourfold*. I look at the *Fourfold* as the pocket guide to recovery, or the SCA first aid kit. It's small, pretty inclusive and can be within reach. I keep one in my desk at work, in my car and in my night table. It keeps me reminded I am a sex addict as well as what it means to be one, and has the makings of a mini-meeting if I need one. *Hope and Recovery* has everything I need outside a meeting to do step work, have a meeting between meetings, meditate, and ultimately helps me stay sober.

The Twelve Steps are a suggested program of recovery, based on the Twelve Steps of A.A.

David A-S (NY)

The Twelve Steps are the backbone of our recovery program. They provide us with a series of suggested actions that completely transform our lives. Working the Steps has provided me with a structure and rhythm that I always longed for, but did not even know how to verbalize before I came into Twelve Step programs. My life is so different as a result of working the Steps that I can barely believe it is my life. I always see the Steps as a rope that I use to drag myself out of the quicksand of my addiction. Though the rope is attached to my Higher Power, only I can grab hold of that rope and drag myself out of the quicksand. No one else can do that for me. It's a do-it-yourself program, and thank goodness.

Step One. I've heard a lot of people struggle with the concept of "powerlessness". I did too, when I first came into sexual recovery 11 years ago. However, there is a very simple exercise that makes it very easy to understand and experience powerlessness. First of all, you have to get a Magical Hat. The hat must have moving parts or this won't work at all. Tassels are great but other moving parts like propellers are also okay. Then you put the

hat on your head. Once you have the hat on your head, you close your eyes and you describe in great detail the last time you acted out and describing how really desperate you felt. And while you all think about that time, I will go ahead and show you how you do the exercise since I already have my Magical Hat on.

It was about 5 years ago. I was in a back room, with video booths and long dark corridors. There were not many people there and Mr Right had definitely stayed home that night. It was getting later and later and I was getting more and more desperate and frustrated because there was no one around who I really wanted to have sex with or who wanted to have sex with me. Suddenly, I noticed a guy who seemed to have appeared out of nowhere, who was old enough to be my father, someone I wouldn't normally be interested in. But within no time at all, before I could even realize what was going on, I was running my hands all over him trying to "make him" have sex with me. "Make him" have sex with me, is the key here. Soon I was doing things that I never wanted to do, but could not stop myself nevertheless. That, is powerlessness: when I am trying to "make you do something" and when I am doing something I do want to do but am doing it all the same. That shows me the crippling nature of this disease and my inability to make it do what I want it to do for me. That's my powerlessness.

I can feel you all shaking your heads. This is where the moving parts of your hat come in handy. As the moving parts move about, they remind you that when it comes down to it, we are just tassels in the wind. We are powerless over the feelings that come to us. And though, they can be pleasant, like tassels against the skin, they can also make our lives unmanageable. But we are also bigger and more than our feelings!

When I recognize my powerlessness I have only one choice. I have to disengage. I have to put down that thing that is making my life unmanageable. Otherwise, my life goes on being unmanageable ..... and that is stupid, n'est-ce pas? Yet, that's where most of us have trouble with powerlessness. We imagine that if we try just one more time, just one more, we'll get it licked and get just what we wanted. Meanwhile, we are just getting weaker and weaker and not more powerful at all, as we like to imagine.

Once I disengage, I can look at my feelings and see if I can take any actions to deal with my feelings directly. Am I hungry, angry, lonely, tired, or serious (HALT)?

Step Two. Once you really, experientially get powerlessness, it's like getting a sex change. There really is no going back. There is only one choice then and that is to go on to Step two. You can take off your Magical Hat for this Step. The key to Step Two is the word sanity. What does that mean? If you look it up in the dictionary, you will find that it says that sanity means avoiding extreme views and treading the middle path. Treading the middle path does not mean being mediocre and middle of the road. No it means considering the extremes and then finding a path that goes through the middle. Mediocre is when you haven't considered any choices and have just stayed in the middle all the time. Taking the middle path is quite different and involves a conscious choice after considering the options. This is where that promise comes into view..... "we will be grateful for our past". It is the middle ground that is the most fertile. The middle path is centred, balanced and least compromising. Sanity therefore comes from being able to

stand back and consider options. This is often not possible if our lives are completely unmanageable, and insane from living on the edge.

Step Three. Step Three asks us to make a decision first of all, and then to give over our whole lives to a power greater than ourselves. If I've disengaged from harmful behaviour and found sanity in the middle path, why would I want to give my life over to someone else, albeit a power greater than myself? Making a decision is one of the most difficult things anyone can do. We all avoid making decisions, all the time. If you don't believe me, just think of how often you wait for someone else to make the first move, or make the first comment, and you will see what I mean. As addicts, we would always rather go and act out that make a decision about the rent or the television or whatever.

I've heard people often ask, "How do I hand my life over to God? What do I do to let go?" How do I make a decision, basically. To let go and let God, we have to put on our Magical Hats again. Believe it or not it, surrendering our will and life to God doesn't actually involve prayer, though it can. It doesn't mean throwing yourself out the window either. No, it's not a giving up of anything. No, rather it's a matter of putting on our Magical Hats! When we do this, we bring the focus back on ourselves, which is to say that we let go off all the things that are annoying and bothering us. We disengage from everything, except, of course, our Magical Hats. Once we are alone with our Magical Hats and ourselves, we are soon able tap into to the clarity and serenity of being in the safety of our own Magical Space. Once there, we can contemplate our situation and work towards making a decision about whatever situation is annoying us. Making a decision immediately places us in the hands of our Higher Power. We surrender the safety of thinking we know, the safety of not taking any action, the safety of being alone with our pain, and throw ourselves out into the "cloud of unknowing" that is our Higher Power. The moment we make a decision almost without knowing it, we begin moving along the middle path. By making a decision we have let go, we have moved out of holding onto to a particular result or insisting on staying in a particular state. By making a decision and therefore throwing ourselves in the arms of our Higher Power, we know that we are disengaged, connected to a power greater than ourselves and are ready to take a sane and sensible action. The moving parts on our Magical Hats here help us to enjoy the dancing with which we now spontaneously proceed.

This is how I work the first three steps everyday: I disengage myself from whatever is driving me crazy, I make a decision with my Higher Power that locates me on a middle path, and then I take an action along the middle path. This helps me to cope much better with whatever comes along in my life.

I have a prayer that I wrote some years ago that helps to remind me of this process. In the prayer, I ask God to help me to be grateful for whatever comes each day. Gratitude is so important in the process of recovery. Whenever I want to make things other than they are I know that I am in trouble, and I need to return to being grateful for the way things are. I remember that I am powerless. I can't make anything other than what it is, and when I can experience gratitude for everything exactly as it is, only then can I experience it changing. Everything is, after all changing; but oddly enough, it doesn't seem to be changing if I want it to change.



SCA Convention 2000  
FRIDAY – SATURDAY – SUNDAY  
February 18, 19, 20 2000

The Village at Ed Gould Plaza  
1125 N. McCadden Place  
Los Angeles, CA

*The village is located one block East of Highland Avenue and ½ block North of Santa Monica Boulevard. Parking will be available in selected lots across from the Village. Please remember to observe all posted parking advisories.*

## Sunday Brunch

Please join us for Sunday Brunch at 1:00 p.m. in the Courtyard of the Village directly after the closing meeting. It is a great way to unwind after the weekend's activities and to have fellowship with your program friends. The cost is \$10 per ticket.

## Volunteer opportunities

Service is an important tool of the program, and the convention committee is happy to receive help in the following areas. To volunteer, check the line on the registration form or call any of the committee chairs listed below.

Dan H., Chairman	818-890-4498
Clay C., Co-Chairman	818-766-8288
Andrew S., Treasurer	323-939-5499
Travis S., Secretary	310-530-2073
Richard C. Fundraising	323-850-5155
Steve K., Workshops	818-623-7118
Scott D., Entertainment	323-467-7486
Roland O., Publicity	310-399-8930
Rob R., Registration	323-653-3650
Joel S., Hospitality	323-912-1986

## Hotel Information

A block of rooms has been reserved at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel, located at 7000 Hollywood Boulevard, which is less than one mile from the Village. The discount rate is \$99 + tax (usually \$139 + tax) per night for single or double occupancy. To reserve a room, call 323-466-7000 and ask for the SCA Convention room rate. Reservations must be made before January 28, 2000 to guarantee this rate.

When completed, detach this portion of the brochure. Place in an envelope along with a check or money order for the full amount indicated on the brochure. (sorry, no cash or credit cards) and mail it to:

SCA Convention 2000  
PO Box 69914  
West Hollywood, CA 90069

## Introduction

Our program's message is simple: Working the 12 steps is the foundation for a satisfying life. There is no right way to do this, as we all learn from each other how to do this for ourselves.

This year's convention has chosen to focus on **faith**, overcoming the obstacle to having faith (**fear**), and what **actions** are necessary in order to experience renewal (freedom from addictive behavior).

Our motto for confronting fears that run our lives is consciousness-action-faith: -**Consciousness** that our addiction and its consequences are not what we ultimately want;

-**Action** (utilizing the steps and other tools) to honestly confront our lives' problems; and

-**Faith** that what we are doing, no matter how difficult in the short term, will reap long term benefits in all areas of our lives.

Please join us as we consciously embrace the 12 steps, taking the action to journey through fear into a faith-filled life in sobriety.

## Workshops

The convention will offer a series of 12 creative and wonderfully helpful workshops led by members of the program selected by the workshop committee. The workshops will cover a spectrum of important topics to help us enhance our individual programs while working the 12 steps and using the tools of recovery. Watch for some surprises as well.

## Registration

There is a discount for early registration (\$30), when mailed in and postmarked by February 1. After that the cost is \$40. Everyone who pre-registers by February 1 will receive a confirmation letter in the mail if requested. No mailed-in registrations postmarked after February 7 will be accepted. Complete and mail the registration portion of this brochure. On-site registration at the Village begins at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, February 18. The cost is \$40. Call the registration Chair listed below if you have any questions.

## Hospitality Suite

The Hospitality Suite will be in room 225. Please join us throughout the weekend for fellowship, refreshments and fun. Program literature will be available for purchase.

## Saturday Evening Show

One ticket for the show is included in the cost of registration. Additional tickets may be purchased in advance or at the door for \$10.

# SCA Convention 2000 Registration Form

First name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Please send me a confirmation letter -OR-

I prefer NOT to receive confirmation in the mail.

I would like to pre-register for Convention 2001 in the mail if that option is available next year.

Please contact me about volunteer opportunities. I am interested in

\_\_\_\_\_

Registration - \$30 ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Add \$10 after Jan 15 ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Donation to scholarship fund ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Sunday Brunch tickets \_\_\_ @ \$10 ea. .... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

One Saturday evening show ticket included

Additional show tickets \_\_\_ @ \$10 ea. .... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL ENCLOSED ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

-OR-  I would like consideration for a scholarship

Note: There is a discount for early registration (\$30), when mailed in and postmarked by January 15. After that the cost is \$40. Everyone who pre-registers by February 1, will receive a confirmation letter in the mail, if requested.

Pope John XXIII wrote a prayer that very much summarizes the first three steps. It says: "God, help me to see everything, [admit my powerlessness, see the whole picture, step out of denial] to overlook a lot [seek out the middle path by ignoring the petty stuff] and to change a little myself [take an action that might effect a change on myself first]".

Step Four. This steps asks us to put all of our hats on the table, and if you are like me, a person of many hats, this can seem like an overwhelming and exposing process. However, taking stock is ultimately a very sane and decisive step. How many times in my addict mode have I run through the night on an empty tank, never once considering (seriously) how this would affect me later. Step Four provides me with the opportunity of taking stock of my life, thus allowing me to make better decisions, it also allows me to look at my whole life and consider what my options are with regard to my whole life. It's definitely a step that can't be done quickly and ought not to be attempted till the first three steps are well and truly in place. I found sorting through my many hats both exciting and annoying. There were so many hats I didn't know I had, and so many that didn't fit me any more. Even more annoying I discovered that there were so many that I didn't have because I had been acting out instead. But, I was onto myself now!

Step Five. This is another step where we have to take off our hats. However this time it's in acknowledgement of all the things we have done that ultimately hurt us. All our actions ultimately come back to us. So while this step seems to want to make us "small" by making us admit our wrong doings, it actually frees us into realizing that there are certain actions we need never take again in order to feel strong and powerful. We learn through the Steps that admitting what is true and real and right will always make us stronger than taking revenge or hitting back at others. Interestingly this step says that we "admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being". I believe this means that we ought not to dump all our emotional garbage onto people in meetings, and use them as a dumping ground. Instead we ought to just tell our sponsor, (ie one other human being) who may be able to give us some much needed and sought feedback.

Step Six. To do this step, we have to put on our Magical Hats, one after the other. Indeed we have to even acquire many new ones! If we are entirely ready to do anything, then we must have everything ready to go, no? Well, I know a lot of people think that this is a Step where you have to do nothing, but in fact it is one of the most active steps there is. If I am "entirely" ready to go to work, then it means that I have got out of bed, had a shower, got dressed, meditated and done yoga, had breakfast, made my lunch, worked for an hour on the Great Global Novel, etc. This is hardly doing nothing. If I want to have my defects of character removed, then I better start taking some actions that are the exact opposite of the defects of character. For example, if I am shy, I better start going to social skill classes (put on another Magical Hat), go to parties, make myself stay after meetings and talk to people. I'm never going to be entirely ready if I just sit around waiting for someone to do it for me.

Step Seven. Step Seven indicates that we should ask to have our shortcomings removed. Well, "asking" is just as difficult as making a decision, and if you don't believe that just consider how much easier it is to go to a back room than to ask someone on a date. Of course as an addict I believed I didn't have any shortcomings, which of course is a major

shortcoming. None of us is perfect. If anyone of us were perfect we would never need anyone else. So to have our shortcomings removed we have to ask others for help, most specifically our Higher Power. In order for me to develop the humility to do this I was willing to wear a lot of new hats that allowed me to experience myself to be just like everyone else, something the addict in me said was just not true. I volunteered to scrub toilets, to feed the homeless and gave away some of my possession. I stripped myself naked emotionally. It helped immensely to experience myself at the level of everyone else. It made me very aware of some of my shortcomings, arrogance was first on my list.

Step Eight. It's amazing what clarity can be obtained while scrubbing toilets, and doing service that takes me outside of myself. Step Eight asks us to make a list of the people we had harmed. My immediate response to this was: "But, I was the one that had been harmed, that's why I was acting out, to make up for the love I had lost or never got in the first place". Scrubbing toilets, and cleaning up after homeless people soon taught me that I am only as hurt as I choose to be and that the more hurt I think I am the less I can contribute to heal others. In healing others, I also heal myself. My list came together spontaneously from the Fourth Step and from the clarity I got while scrubbing toilets. I also learnt how wonderful it is to get things on paper and out of my head. While I carry things in my head, I can't have clarity and peace in there. The moment I put it on paper, there is room for peace and quiet to enter into my head.

Step Nine. The worst thing about Step Nine is the expectations that making amends builds up in me. I always expect to be praised for making amends, to be given something wonderful in return. The sad reality is that often the people to I've made amends, just did not want to know. They didn't want to be reminded, couldn't remember what I was referring to, or simply made out that it didn't matter to them. I thought that amends making was another opportunity to put on my many different hats and do a song and dance, but this was not the case at all. I have found that making amends in an anonymous way has helped me the most. I've done the restitution work but without bringing any attention to myself. Working for charities also helped me to give back to anonymous people I had harmed by helping other people whom once again I did not know.

Step Ten. This step brings me into the present. If I have done all the previous nine Steps I am in a pretty good place to deal effectively and honestly with anything that may come my way on a daily basis. Now I can really use all my hats, effectively, appropriately and spontaneously. I can be whoever I need to be when I need to be it. No longer afraid or victim to my emotions I can admit when I am wrong and move on immediately. It's like a game of juggling hats. One minute a Dunce's Hat the next a Crown, and then a Beret. Life is rich and varied (as it should be) once we can fully live in Step Ten.

Step Eleven. Once life has become a game we love to play, in the Eleventh Step we are asked to sit quietly and contemplate what we can do that will benefit all of those we come into contact with. Prayer and meditation is for me an opportunity to hook up to the Universal Principle. I always have wonderful moments of deep peace and serenity that make me feel I can do anything at all. Once I come out of meditation, however I am confronted with the sweeping, the dirty dishes and I recognize that in order to do the

greater things I have to take steps to accomplish the small stuff first. "Before Enlightenment carry water and chop wood, after Enlightenment, carry water and chop wood".

Step Twelve. The most difficult part of Step Twelve is not so much having a spiritual awakening. We've all had those, even if we don't realize it. The difficult part is continuing to stay awake after we've had a spiritual awakening. For me this has meant going back to the First Step. Admitting that I am powerless over people, places and things helps to remind me that whatever happens All is in the hands of my Higher Power. All I have to do is show up and Give Love. This keeps me calm in the storm and acts a powerful example to others. At last, in working this Step I am at home and at peace with all my Hats, and I know when and how to use them best.

*Prayer and Meditation are means of establishing conscious contact with a Power greater than ourselves.*

#### Rob W (NY)

Prayer and meditation are the only tools mentioned by name in the 12 Steps. To me, this means that prayer and meditation are, apart from the Steps themselves, the most important tools of recovery.

Prayer and meditation are also among the most personal tools, because we usually use them alone, although they're also very flexible tools, because we can use them almost anywhere. We don't need a phone, or a book, or a pen and paper. We don't need any religious training or upbringing either. Someone once told me that I could get down on my knees and pray anywhere, even on a busy sidewalk: all I had to do was pretend my shoelace needed to be tied. That would give me the perfect excuse to drop to the ground, bow my head and start praying.

Of course, you don't have to be on your knees to pray. Sometimes I talk out loud to my higher power when I'm driving in my car. If you overheard me, it would sound as if I was having a conversation with an invisible friend. I've found this to be a very helpful form of prayer, especially when driving to work in the morning. Talking to my higher power that way helps me figure out what I'm feeling (no easy task most mornings). I can also turn over secrets and resentments, and also ask my higher power for help staying sexually sober.

The 11th Step explains that through prayer and meditation we can "improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood God". I think this means that prayer and meditation help us cultivate a relationship with God. This is extremely important since God, or a higher power, plays such a large role in so many of the Steps.

Oddly enough, I had no clear conception of my higher power when I started praying. I was an atheist and had never prayed before in my life; and yet the prayers worked! They helped me stay sober. And gradually, I developed a belief in a higher power.

The 11th Step also says we pray "only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out". I understand this to mean that we don't pray for a new car or a new job; we pray for guidance and the strength to stay sober and do the right thing. But I also use the other Steps as a guideline for my prayers. For instance, when I "take personal inventory" (10th Step) aloud or by writing it down in my journal, I consider it a communication with my higher power, and therefore a form of prayer. Or when I admit to God "the exact nature of [my] wrongs", I consider that a form of prayer, also.

As for the relationship between prayer and meditation, I've heard it said that during prayer we talk to God, and during meditation, God talks to us. There are countless ways to meditate. Using a how-to book as a guide, I tried to meditate every morning; I felt tremendously calm and worry-free after a couple weeks, and I did, in fact, feel closer to God.

Lately, I combine prayer and meditation by writing in a journal every morning. My words are directed toward God: I ask for advice, share my thoughts and take personal inventory. Sometimes I write down slogans that I want to use that day. I also write down my dreams and try to interpret them because I believe dreams are communications from God.

If you don't know what to say in your prayers to God, my advice is to just say anything. Once you start, the words come naturally. You can also look in the literature. The Big Book and The Twelve and Twelve suggest a number of specific prayers.

Sometimes I feel as if I don't have time to pray, but if I choose not to pray on a certain day, I pay the price in lost serenity and sexually compulsive feelings. I've heard it said that if I'm is too busy to pray more than 15 minutes a day, then I should pray a half an hour a day. The serenity I pick up from the extra effort helps me survive the rest of my busy day. If my goal is to stay sober and grow spiritually, prayer is the tool for me.

#### Bill B (NY)

When I was a child, my family used to pray together every night. The prayers were simply, thanks for mommy, thanks for daddy, thanks for each of my siblings and myself by name. My family also prayed together in church. Being raised in the Roman Catholic Church, that might have included singing a simple song, saying the rosary or praying sorrowfully for forgiveness, possibly on my knees, feeling unworthy.

Over time, my opinion of prayer became conflicted. Sometimes prayer was offering a beautiful song to a joyful God. Other times, it was with much guilt and self-loathing that I begged an angry God not to abandon me, when I truly felt I deserved to be abandoned. In the past few years, I have come to realize that as an addict, some of those really dark periods of distance from God were a combination of Roman Catholic upbringing and guilt about acting out sexually.

During most of the time that I was an active addict, I did not believe I had any feelings and meaningful prayer was too painful. I was good at praying for others, but avoided praying for myself. Sure, there were those times, as I mentioned, that I bargained with

God that I would not get caught cheating on my partner, or fired from my job, but it was only in rare moments when I realized my powerlessness and asked for God's help.

The past few years, after some good therapy, I have dared to pray again. I usually start each day, before I even get out of bed, reminding God and myself that this is our day and asking for God's will. Then I usually spend some time in prayer before work. Throughout the day, I reflect and give thanks or ask God for guidance. Songs and exercise and even a productive day at work are prayers now.

I recently had a powerful experience while on a pilgrimage to a tiny village on a hill in France. There I spent one hour three times a day in church with other seekers. We sang, we prayed and for a period of each service, we sat silently. We sat silently. And I learned something amazing, that God speaks if I am willing to wait and listen.

Since I came home, I have incorporated this new discipline of prayer and meditation into my daily routine. Prayer has changed me, but just like everything else, prayer is work. I simply must choose every single day, sometimes every single minute, to foster a relationship with my higher power. And in my experience, it is well worth the work.

*A Sexual Recovery Plan is a predetermined way of expressing our sexuality consistent with our values, so that even when confused, we will have a written guideline to help us.*

#### Jerry J. (Los Angeles)

The sexual recovery plan has been one of the most beneficial tools of the SCA program, and at times, one of the most difficult concepts of the program for me to understand. Before coming to SCA about 3 1/2 years ago, I had been sober in another 12 Step program that measured sobriety by total abstinence from certain substances. There were no gray areas as far as my sobriety was concerned there. Upon entering SCA, I was given the task of determining which of my sexual behaviors were addictive and creating a plan that limited or omitted these behaviors. At the same time, I was encouraged to create a sex life for myself that was healthy and nurturing. What a task! Being encouraged to be sexual again felt like being asked to drink again in moderation.

What helped me was comparing my sexual recovery with Overeaters Anonymous, where recovery didn't mean eliminating but rather tempering a very necessary human process. Instead, it was meant to create boundaries that eliminated a feeling of shame and created a measurable commitment to the program.

Through the help of a sponsor and by attending a weekly meeting that was in the format of a "plan workshop", I developed a plan that felt to me, at the time, to be one that incorporated these concepts. The meeting stressed the formula referred to by the acronym S A F E, that Patrick Carnes outlines in *Out of the Shadows*.

1. Secret. Anything that cannot pass public scrutiny will create the shame of double life.
2. Abusive. Anything that is exploitative or harmful to others, or degrades oneself.
3. Feelings. Anything used to avoid or is a source of painful feelings.

#### 4. Empty. Anything empty of a caring, committed relationship.

Now that I had come up with a plan that addressed my addictive behaviors, I was encouraged to list "those acts, people, places and things I wanted to reward myself with and add to my new life of recovery". I was told that once I omitted my compulsive behaviors I would be left with a lot of free time that I had used to act out in the past. As easy as this sounded, I found it difficult not only to think of nurturing caring things to do, but also I found it hard to remember to do these things when I had the time. What I have listed on the right side of my plan are things that I have neglected for a long time while practicing my addiction.

My sex plan has changed in the past few years. What seemed necessary at one point in my sobriety changed after gaining some clarity by working the 12 steps. I also recently bought a computer that required some experimentation and then some restrictions. The toughest part has been for me to come from a place of only having anonymous sex in dark places, to being sexual with people as a result of actually caring for them. A lot of my acting out was by myself (pornography, voyeurism, masturbation), so my plan addresses those areas on the left side of my plan, and encourages me on the right side of my plan to date, be social, and interact with people in a more healthy way. For every restriction on the left side of my plan, there is a positive action on the right. In all honesty, I have found the right side of the plan the most difficult to stick to most of the time.

In retrospect, I think that my plan was a little unrealistic in the beginning, but sobriety is an ongoing process and more is constantly being revealed to me. I keep close contact with my sponsor and go to lots of meetings. This keeps me honest and connected. When I am in a situation that I have to make a sexual decision, I know exactly what my plan says. There are no vague rules. It is clear and concise. It is important for me to always remember that my sex plan has two sides. I measure my sobriety by the left side, but I measure my recovery by the right side.

#### Doug K (NY)

I was introduced to the concept of a Recovery Plan soon after coming into SCA. However, I did not develop a plan on my own. This, in some way, was to set the tone of how the plan began to work for me. Instead of forging ahead, trying to do it all alone, I waited until I had an interim sponsor who helped me in very concrete, non-judgmental ways to formulate a plan. This helped me break down the isolation that is so familiar to many of us who are sexually compulsive: "You don't have to go it alone!"

My then sponsor explained to me the idea of a recovery plan, with three columns. This seemed an awkward construction to me, but I went with it. I was told to list in the first column, on the left, the people, places, and things that were problematic for me and that I wanted removed from my life. Well, I could have gone on and on with that one, but my sponsor helped me see that it might be helpful for me to narrow these down to a core. So this column mainly came to address sex outside of a committed relationship with my lover, which I was in at the time. Why so narrow? Because the other, specific behaviors

all revolved around this issue, and besides, what was making my life unmanageable, and what brought me into the program, was being unfaithful to my lover.

The second (center) column was harder. It asks you to list the times these compulsive behaviors most frequently occur. My sponsor put it as follows: "what are you feeling when you get involved in these activities?" Well, he couldn't have put his finger on "my" issue any quicker. As an addict, I often have NO CLUE as to what I am feeling. Even after almost two years in program, I must struggle to figure out what feelings I am going through at a given moment. So I put down several of the standard "states of mind" from AA and SCA, especially Hungry, Angry, Lonely and Tired. Those four really can get me. Also, when I am feeling somehow constricted or trapped. When I am struggling with those kind of feelings, fenced in, tied down, etc., The program has so often helped to remind me that I have choices, choices that can be made every day anew. I can choose to stay in a relationship. I can choose not to go certain places that trigger me. And yes, there is room for places that trigger in that second column. Often I forget that aspect, because my triggers are usually people and situations, more than particular places.

The third column is like a list of promises or goals I made to myself. It's hard, as an addict, to ask for good things. We are used to taking whatever comes to us (at least I am) and throwing up our hands, avoiding the responsibility for improving our lives. Well, I am very good at complaining about how my life stinks. So this part of the plan is really important for people like me; it contains things that I want to add to my life in recovery. These can be specific, tangible things, or more "spiritual" things like prayer and meditation, a better self-image. I am so quick to forget this part of my plan, and when I go back and look, I realize that so many of the things I wanted to add to my life in recovery are part of my life now. And others, like "more creative work" are being fulfilled in doing service in SCA. So many gifts have been given to me, especially the clarity of mind that sobriety has given me, that I can actually sometimes work to improve my life. What a thing to be grateful for!

It's always been good for me to look at my plan from time to time and see how it is working for me. It's been particularly helpful to do that in the Sexual Recovery Plan Workshop, which I have attended several times. In fact, I probably need to visit that meeting again, because as I write this, there has been a change in my life (the ending of my romantic relationship with my lover), which will necessitate changes in my plan.

So, our sexual plan develops and changes to meet our needs over time. Thank goodness, I had a chance to write about it. I have to remind myself to talk to someone else before I change anything on my plan ALONE!

*Abstinence (partial or total). We get support in SCA by abstaining from people, places or things that we consider harmful.*

#### CS (NY)

Abstinence. What the heck is it? And why bother? Abstinence takes many forms in this program. The tool is described in the fourfold as "Abstinence, partial or total". Some

people DO abstain from ALL sex (including masturbation) for a period of time to "clear things up." But the program ISN'T about having no sex. We aren't here to repress our God-given sexuality.

For me, abstinence means avoiding behaviors that harm me. We each define our own Sexual Recovery Plan. Our plans should be clear and understandable. They should spell out exactly the things from which we want to abstain.

At some point, hopefully in a calm, sane, thoughtful state, we sit and write our Plan. For some of us, it takes a number of drafts. But we end up with a document about the CORE of our problem. Any Plan is valid that's written down and shared with another recovering addict.

Having a well-defined plan is very important. I need to be clear about what I want and don't want. Later, if I get a little "loopy," I can refer to the plan.

Most of us have one or more things from which we need to abstain. Within our ranks, this may range from the "no sex for 90 days" version to the "I gotta know his name before we do it" variety. As long as the Plan is written clearly, you can tell what the person is choosing not to do. And that's the deal.

I CHOOSE to abstain from pornography. I'm not happy about it, but I can't use it without getting hooked. Porno is like heroin to me. I've binged with it and I've "Jones-ed" for it. I've stolen porno and spent my food money on porno. I've risked my job and I've damaged relationships with the people I loved. Using porno HURTS me. So I put it on my Plan. Now, the challenge is to abstain.

Tony R, a brilliant self-help guru with big teeth, says we are driven *to* pleasure and *away from* pain. This model helps me understand my behavior. Early in life, when things were horrible, I went to fantasy and masturbation to kill the pain. And it felt good to masturbate. Unfortunately, I got deeper and deeper into it, especially once I discovered porno, and it became a big, painful problem in its own right.

But I still associate porno with pleasure. No wonder I still want to go there! Now, I can't lie to myself and say I don't enjoy looking at porno. I love it! But, when I'm clear about the COSTS of using porno, I connect with the massive pain it's caused me. This way, I can associate porno (correctly) with more pain than pleasure. And I'll move away from it *organically*. Doing a written First Step or hearing a newcomer in a meeting helps me reconnect to the TRUTH about acting out.

To complete the "Tony R model," I have to have something to move *towards*. The right-hand column of my Plan holds the things I want to move towards. By having a strong desire to do something (pleasurable), I can reduce further the pull that porno has on me.

A therapist looked at my Plan and said, "Oh, this is great. In the right column you list the things you'll do to meet the needs you were trying to meet with sex."

I did? An "aha moment." "Acting out" for me means using sex to meet needs that aren't sexual. You know: feed-a-fever, feed-a-cold, feed-boredom, feed-depression, feed, feed, feed!

This distinction helps me to further refine the model. Now I associate PAIN with acting out. I associate pleasure with the things that I want to do. And I rightly attempt to meet needs with appropriate responses. Often my needs are met without touching porno!

If this sounds like a lot of work, it is. And it's difficult. I keep falling down on the job! But, by living in the moment, I'm able to move forward each day anew. And I'm so grateful that I'm able to live fully when I abstain from a life of active addiction. Acting out with porno was robbing me of life. Now I'm reclaiming life, and I owe it to this program. There are a couple of slogans that give me some comfort when I'm really struggling to maintain abstinence.

First things first. Abstain from the stuff that's really going to harm me. If I need comfort and so overeat a little, that's cool. Food isn't going to kill me today. If I try to be perfect, I always end up a failure. Just focus on the first things first!

Easy does it. Proceed gently and bite off only reasonable amounts. I usually choke if I bite off more than I can chew. This is difficult work. When I fall off the horse, I just get back on. That's all there is to do.

*Socializing is a way of breaking down our isolation and getting to know other people in a nonsexual context: at fellowship after meetings; in supportive organizations and groups; and in the community at large.*

#### Michael P (NY)

*Sociability is as much a law of nature as mutual struggle . . . mutual aid is as much a law of animal life as mutual struggle.* Prince Pyotr Alekseevich Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid* 1902

Oh, poor David A-S, our tenacious SCAnner editor. That boy [Boy? Ed], has been patiently prodding me to meet my deadline and commitment to write this piece on socialization for oh-so-long. If I weren't sooooo busy socializing, I would have had it written by now. I'm really taking this tool seriously. How's that for addict rationale?

I've been using socializing as a third-column tool for a while now, and mind you, I won't be placed in the annals of SCA sobriety sainthood real soon. But when I do focus on fellowship and spending time with friends, my compulsion seems to fade; I'm too exhausted or having too much fun to engage it. I've been out of a committed relationship for about 15 months now, and I use "committed" loosely, because my addiction continued to rage some when my boyfriend and I were together. I'm sure it contributed to the other issues, which ultimately ended our relationship. I continue to yearn for the good things in that relationship, and there were many; but I know that the only way I can have the relationship I want is to get sober, and socializing is helping.

Case in point. Two days after my boyfriend and I split up, I adopted a dog. Of course, there are other ways to socialization (and boyfriend replacement), but it added to my responsibilities, subtracted from the time I had to act out and brought me closer to people. It also made the streets of New York a friendlier place to be. I rarely get down the street without a smile or friendly comment about my dog from some passerby. Granted, Mickey's the world's smartest, most beautiful and well behaved dog! I've also made a lot of friends at the dog run and began a dog therapy training program so Mickey can comfort hospice patients. These activities helped to create a new life with more people (and dog) interaction than I ever would risk before. I expanded my social circle exponentially. I guess the point here is that by getting involved with something I love, my dog, I engaged in a new culture with people of similar interests who compelled me to act and react, rather than act out.

I've also grown more assertive with my SCA buddies inviting those I'd like to get to know better to fellowship. This has helped me to be more comfortable in social situations, and also has resulted in dates, travel partners and companionship when loneliness sets in. SCA buddies offer a great laboratory to test out your latest, evolving personality. During my eight years in SCA, I've met many friends with similar interests and have incorporated them into my life outside of SCA. The benefit of them knowing my "stuff" and being able to go to that deep place very quickly when necessary, is something for which I'm very grateful.

Socializing has warmed me up to other people and them to me. I've become less shy about asking for help or favors from friends when I need them, and more accepting when it's not available. One of my SCA frustrations has been getting close to people that sometimes fade inexplicably out of my life, but it's not stopping me from continuing to try. I'm learning that we're all addicts and that SCA is a selfish program where I get what I need if I ask for it. If it's not available from the first person I ask, I move on to support my recovery. I'm also learning to appreciate whatever I've received from a particular person, and I've received a lot, regardless of what direction that relationship takes. I'm becoming more grateful, forgiving and less resentful. So take some risks. Socialize, don't fantasize!

*Dating is a way of changing the instant gratification habit and getting to know more about ourselves and another person, before committing to any sexual decisions.*

#### CS (NY)

*Dating is a way of getting to know just how impatient we are as we plot to take a victim hostage. No, that's not it. Dating is what we do when we're trying to convince our sponsor that we can handle sex. Shoot! It still doesn't sound quite right. Dating is that thing I saw on a Donna Reed re-run where a guy in a letterman's jacket gives a girl in a hoopskirt a wrist corsage. God I wanted that skirt. I wanted the letterman's jacket, too. (And the guy!) But I digress.*

I don't know how the drafting sessions went for the loving and generous souls who came up with the 14 Characteristics and the 12 Tools. But I thank God that they did the work

and that I have some wonderful and clear guidance about the tools that I can use to help me through this stuff.

Dating is a way of changing the instant gratification habit and getting to know more about ourselves and another person before committing ourselves to any sexual decisions.

I don't have to run out and get laid today. I don't have to have sex unless I really want to. I don't have to have sex until I'm ready. I don't have to feed my addiction at the expense of my inner child and spiritual growth. I hate this part, but I'll write it anyway, I don't have to have *any* sex today.

Dating can be fun. Or it can be hell. It's a time when I might get validation or rejection. And, of course, I am not looking for rejection. Worse, I might have to reject someone. I might have to reject someone who has a perfectly fine body! Yuck!

I might have to learn that the person isn't who I thought they were, isn't who I wanted them to be, isn't looking for what I'm looking for, or isn't interested in spending time with someone like me. Or, I might learn that the person is wonderful and thinks I'm fabulous.

Even if the guy doesn't have the sense to wear socks that match his outfit, he might turn out to be nice, sweet, smart, fun, and pleasant to spend time with. Man! Dating is weird.

So why bother? Why go through the headache of getting to know people and why forego the instant pleasure of tricking? Well, first of all, because being drive-by sex can be very unfulfilling.

And, until you get to know a person, it's potentially dangerous to be alone with someone. I've heard stories in SCA about guys pulling knives, tying people up, and worse. And then there were the guys who "tricked" with Jeffrey Dalmer. He was kinda cute!

Now I ask 'em right out, "Did'ja ever kill your parents or anyone?" (Of course, this can throw a wet blanket on a first date). But ya gotta know, honey, so I ask: "Ever take the HIV test? Got a frequent flyer card at the free clinic? Do you own any of those sheer black opera socks that I find so irresistible? (You might want to skip this last question or to substitute your own inappropriate conversation stopper.)

I swear, sometimes I think I say things on a date just to scare the guy away. He'll ask something innocuous, like "How many brothers and sisters do you have?" and I'll let loose with that story about the time my father....never mind. The point is, I have to remember to go slowly and that I can choose how much to reveal, and when. In the same way I can choose what I do with my body.

Last night I went on a second date with a guy I find very attractive and fun. I don't have a 3-date rule. Besides, I knew him before we started dating and I checked his freezer and there were no severed heads. This guy is age-appropriate, has a good job, lives in the same city as I, and is honest and open. But he's "old fashioned."

On our first date, we didn't even kiss goodnight. I'm thinking "is he in program?" What's up with that? But I felt good about it. At the end of the second date, he asked if I'd like to see him again. Shit. It's like he knows how to date! I really want to kiss (and "stuff"). I asked him if I could come up to his apartment. He hesitated, but then invited me up. We had tea. A nervous expectation hung in the air. Would we KISS? Who said that? I thought I wanted sex..... and here I am panicking that we might kiss!

OK. I'm complicated. I have conflicting desires and needs. On one level, since I haven't had sex in months, I think I REALLY want sex. But since I am so nervous, I guess I'm also not ready. When I left his home (after a little kissing but no sex), I felt fine. I can't believe that this is me, but I'm satisfied. I'm a little confused that I can feel like such a sophomoric innocent after all the wild things I've done in my life, but—TODAY—I'm happy to just be getting to know the guy and to go slowly. HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?

I have no idea. However, in New York, at the Center on Sundays at 5 P.M., we *do* have a Dating Workshop. So, maybe I'll keep going to that meeting and keep talking about this whole "process" thing. I hate it, but I also think it's great. And—today—I'm glad I am on this path.

#### Alan W. (San Francisco)

"Dating is a way of changing the instant gratification habit and getting to know more about ourselves and another person before committing ourselves to any sexual decisions".

I have sometimes heard at meetings that we addicts are people who are content with black and white but are uncomfortable with shades of grey. All or nothing, now or never, yes or no, a thousand partners or a stranger seen some enchanted evening across a crowded room. That is true of my sexual compulsion. During the years of my wildest acting-out, you might find me wasting entire weekends in pornographic bookstores, sex clubs and other acting-out spots, racking up dozens of sex partners. Or getting infatuated with an attractive person, as often as not another addict I'd met in one of those places sighing, daydreaming, telling my friends how excited I was about my new acquaintance.

One of the chief benefits for me, of joining SCA has been a gradual cutback on those behaviors, while taking time to get to know people, reflecting and praying about my experiences with and knowledge of them, seeking counsel from other SCA members about the appropriateness of my behavior with each person I see. Going slow, not being sure, not giving up very much of my time, my attention, or my body to someone I don't know very well all of that has seemed to work better than the way I lived before. In other words, the color grey is becoming acceptable.

Dating has brought change into my week-to-week life. For me, it is related to the bottom half of my sexual recovery plan, that list of all the things I want to add to my new life of recovery. Once I started to slow up on the compulsive sex, I became more acutely aware of the unmanageability in my long-neglected life. The lawn needed mowing more often, letters sitting in piles, sometimes literally for years, needed to be answered, items of furniture I needed had never been acquired, friendships and civic life had been slighted,

bills needed paying more promptly. My sex plan has cleared up a lot of logistical problems, soaked up a lot of idle time, raised my self-esteem and left me less desperate for the attention of other people, much less people I am not yet sure can enhance my life.

While writing steps 4-7, I identified laziness as a defect of character and, strange as it may seem, I wondered whether it didn't have something to do with my addiction. Dating turns out to be hard work, much more difficult for me than living in a relatively undemanding world of sex and fantasy. Talking with people at length on hikes or in restaurants has required me to pay real attention to their lives instead of focusing on my agenda for their bodies or their hearts. I have also had to risk being known better, warts and all. I've needed to strengthen any number of disused skills: intuition as to who might be appropriate for me to get to know better, honesty and proportion in self-disclosure, courage to pursue further contact with people I want to know better, graciousness in turning down the ones I don't.

Among the most difficult skills for me to develop has been patience, that is, letting the potential for a friendship reveal itself over time and in more than one setting. One acquaintance I liked the first time we met. Our conversation flowed easily for hours, our interests seemed to overlap extensively. But this attractive person proved extremely difficult to make live phone contact with and, when we finally did set a date, showed up nearly half an hour late with no excuse except business. My intuition, which had early suggested "go", began to say "stop". I did not follow up with another date. I could see that the program was working, because I had kept an appropriate distance and decided to hold out for someone who was more available and respectful.

Another new face had seemed charming, funny, verbal, attentive, and serious about looking for a relationship. Over several dates those qualities grew, and then suddenly faded away. One evening I pleaded to understand what was happening, but found my new acquaintance curiously inarticulate about where we were headed. Only then was I able to see how inappropriate we would have been as partners. I did spend the next day or so feeling sad, but, if I had gotten emotionally involved too quickly as I had in the past, I might have wallowed in self-pity for a few weeks.

Two years into the SCA program, and after a few months of practice of this tool, about which my poor fellow members heard nearly every printable detail, I met someone who over time proved to meet most of my criteria. We endured a few months of false starts, which in themselves honed my patience and proved my newly developed lack of desperation. As we started dating, we met each other's family members and friends, spent time on things we both like to do talked a lot by phone. When we finally started having sex we rushed into it faster than I supposed we might have, but we made a point of checking with each other frequently to make sure our behaviours were appropriate to our feelings. We have been monogamous now for eight months (a new record for this recovering addict), and have a lot of fun together. Our ages and backgrounds are roughly similar, the sex is usually good and hardly ever rushed or compulsive, and we communicate pretty well.

The relationship has its problems for me, particularly around the amount of time we plan for each other. When I am stuck in resentment and start remembering all the fun I had in my old way of life, I run a tenth step. Writing it down usually reveals my fear of getting too close or, simultaneously, of not getting close enough. I bring those fears and inconsistencies to trusted SCA members at meetings, during fellowship, on the phone or by e-mail. With their counsel, their ideas, and an awareness of just whose defects of character are a chief cause of my dissatisfaction, I can go back to my partner and try to work things out.

I often have to remember that in getting to know another human being there will be slow, hard work interwoven with the fun and the sex and the happiness. I always have a choice: to stick with the program and grow through my defects of character or to turn away from the difficulties by heading back to my old haunts. So far, so good, one day at a time.

*The Slogans* are simple statements that can be used in crisis situations, so that we have some basic guidelines.

#### David A-S (NY)

How many times have the Slogan got me out of a pickle? I don't know. More times than I can count. They have certainly saved my life on many occasions, by showing me that I could change my direction in mid path, mid-sentence. The addict taught me that there was only one way to do anything. It said that that was the "easy way" but it always turned out to be the hard way. The Slogans showed me that it was neither a matter of hard nor easy, but rather a matter of appropriate. Oh, how the addict within me hates that word. Such a pansy word! We've all heard it ad nauseam, and have certainly being at the receiving end of it's manipulative possibilities. But it is the best word that fits to describe the Slogans for me. Another way to put it might be "the correct portion". Getting to know the correct portion of emotions, disclosure, boundaries or involvement for any situation is a fine art indeed. There are many slogans, all of them helpful. I will treat only a few here.

#### One Day at a Time

This Slogan burst so many of my grandiose balloons about Tomorrow, and brought me face to face with the present moment. I was in shock at first but so relieved immediately after. The idea of living just one day at a time had never occurred to me before I came into Program. I was always worrying about all the things I had to do two, three weeks in advance. As a result, I was always muddled. Now I break things down and plan ahead. I do what I can each day to work towards each plan. At the end of the day I give thanks for all I have been able to do and go to sleep peacefully, knowing that tomorrow I can do the same again.

#### Easy Does It

As I have the inclination to want to do everything all at once, I have to constantly remind myself that I can put only so much food on a plate. Easy Does It helps me to slow down and assess just where I am and how far I've come, which is always further than I imagine before I stop to consider my progress. This analogy may not work for everyone, but it always helps me to ask "Do I want my plate to look like a beautifully arranged Japanese

do I want a heaped plate of Chinese food?"

#### First Things First

Knowing what comes first and why seems like a Chinese puzzle that has no answer. But if I draw on the two Slogans above, it certainly makes it easier to understand what might conceivably be attended to first. I've found that looking into my immediate needs like Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired, first certainly helps and makes it possible for me to attend to practically anything else afterwards.

#### Let Go and Let God

When it comes down to it, I am a loner I guess. Letting anyone into my life seems like an invasion even if I have invited them in the first place. Allowing God to take over seems like a tall order. I have found that I've had to use many and varied ways to let go and let God. Sometimes it has meant repeating the Serenity Prayer. Sometimes it has meant getting really angry, sometimes not. Sometimes I've sat down to pray and meditate, sometimes I've cried. Sometimes it helped to call my sponsor, sometimes it helped to do a Fourth Step. Sometime I put it in my God Box. Sometimes I talked and talked about it. Ultimately it has always worked out better to let go than to try to get my way at all costs. After a while (sometimes this meant years!) my way began to look embarrassing. (Sorry Frankie!!)

#### Count Your Blessings

I can have a Pity Party at the drop of a hat, but stopping to Count my Blessings is always a difficult thing. However, I have learnt now that when I start to despair because I am comparing, the best thing to do is to pull out a piece of paper and a pen and to start writing a gratitude list. This immediately brings perspective, distance and clarity into my life and makes me truly grateful for all the things I have and don't have in my life. "Man's rejection is God's protection".

#### How Important Is It?

This Slogan has literally saved my life a number of times. I have been so close to doing or saying something that would have endangered my life had I gone with the original reactive impulse. Stopping to consider the importance and consequence of my action (never as grand as I first imagine) helped me to step aside and let it all pass by me. How grateful I am to be able to ask myself this question before I put my foot in my mouth.

#### Let It Begin With me

It's easy for me to complain about just about anything, however I am often blind to my part in the problem. When I take a simple action towards effecting a change it always surprises me how much the situation seems to change, or at least my negative response to it changes because I feel involved. So many of my problems result from my feeling left out, and the only way to remedy that is to include myself by letting it begin with me.

#### Don't Take It Personally

There was a time when I was convinced that people at the other end of the room who were laughing, were laughing at me. It's hard to shake off this feeling, but I've learnt in recovery not to make assumptions, since they only hurt me, by limiting or misdirecting

me. It is always best to go directly to the source, and ask directly whatever it is I want to know. Even when people directly criticize or gossip about me, I need not necessarily assume that they are right. It may be just how they are feeling at that moment, and Feelings are Not Facts. What's more What Other People think of Me Is None of my Business!!

*Service is a way of helping ourselves by helping others.*

#### **Joe L (LA)**

When I first attended 12-step meetings, I wanted neither to be seen nor heard. I usually arrived late, sat as far back as I could and left before the closing prayer. All those controlling do-gooders running meetings, pushing literature and hawking program events were part of the stupid "in" crowd snobs who probably wouldn't talk to me even if I approached them. I didn't trust those who shared and I wasn't willing to reveal my own shame-driven behaviour and what was the point in raising my hand when I probably wouldn't be called on anyway? I wasn't in program to be social; I was there to cure my compulsion. Of course, most of "them" were in recovery and I was deep in my disease.

Once, I arrived at a meeting early and was greeted by someone who was arranging chairs. As we chatted, I helped. At the end of the meeting, I was thanked for doing service. The first time I shared at a meeting, one or two attendees made a point of thanking me. Not only was sharing cathartic for me, I began to feel that I was making a contribution and the acknowledgements warmed me. A few times I stayed after a meeting to clean up. Once, when the secretary didn't arrive, I facilitated a small meeting. Soon, I looked forward to being asked to read aloud from our literature. Eventually, I chose a sponsor. When a friend (who was putting in court-assigned time at AA after a drunk-driving conviction) asked in a confrontational tone why I needed a sponsor, I found myself saying, "so that some day, I can sponsor somebody else". Maybe that was one of those breakthroughs we hear so much about.

I became a greeter at a regular meeting and relished all the hugs I got. Over the course of the next few years, I accepted responsibility of co-secretary, treasurer, literature person, and what-have-you at various meetings. I was even "cake monitor" at one SCA meeting, responsible for recovery-birthday [Anniversary] celebrations. Even the way I shared evolved: instead of staring at the floor or closing my eyes I began to make eye contact with others when I spoke or read and, eventually, learned to look directly at others while they were sharing or reading. What a difference that made! I perceived a much more intimate connection. It dawned on me that when I contributed, I received more than I gave. The biggest gift was the distinct sensation that I owned the program. It wasn't any longer the program; it was my program!

I was so in awe of those who gave workshops and remember the first time I was asked to co-lead one at an SCA Convention. The subject was the Tools, and I knocked myself out trying to find ways to make something we heard read regularly new, interesting, informative and fun. I found a prop for each tool and loaded them into a big, butch

tool box. The enthusiastic feed back was rewarding and encouraging. I have created and led many workshops since and always prepare extensively for each. Happily, I learn something valuable every time.

Service has helped to change many things in my life. For example, I call friends regularly to keep in touch more often when they are experiencing difficulties. I rarely pick up call waiting; with the exception of telemarketing, I return all calls promptly. I try to express myself with honesty, compassion and love. I send cards and/or personal notes to acknowledge birthdays, anniversaries, condolences, get-well wishes and other special events. I keep appointments, show up punctually and write thank-you notes to those who have done something extra nice for me. I try to be courteous to other motorists and stop for pedestrians, even if they are rude. I hold doors for people and try to find something complimentary to say to all I meet. I volunteer at a children's hospital and read to kids at the library. I vote in every election. When I screw up, I make amends. I don't give money to street people, but have bought some a meal. Daily, in and out of program, I can find countless ways of being of service to someone, some cause or some event.

One perk of service is that I get to more meetings and have more involvement and connection with my fellows. Another is a supportive circle of loving friends. You know what? I barely have enough time left over to thank HP for the rich, joyous, fulfilling life I lead. Who would have thought that service could have given me all of this?

#### **David B (NY)**

As a result of having practiced the first eleven Steps, the Program suggests that I'll recognize in the Twelfth Step that I've had a spiritual awakening. Spurred by this awakening, I'll likely turn outward, to carry the message of recovery to still-suffering addicts and to practice the principles of the Steps in all my affairs.

I'm told I'll undertake a fuller, richer practice of service. This "way of helping ourselves by helping others" (*SCA Fourfold*), this "giving that asks no rewards" (*Twelve Steps And Twelve Traditions*, p. 106) is the payoff for which all else before has been preparation.

But, I have less than eleven months in SCA! I'm still struggling in the First Step, still negotiating my surrender to powerlessness, still writing my formal sexual history, still exploring the sad bankruptcy of my addict's life. How can I use Service or experience anything of the joy of living and the key of action promised in the Twelfth Step?

As it turns out, the rewards of service have already begun. Even though I'm not an SCA veteran, I work most of the Tools; and several of them tender a gentle invitation to service. I will probably work the Steps in order, but I work the Tools in random rotation and the experiences they've provided afford me tantalizing glimpses of the endless riches promised in the Twelfth Step. At meetings, service inheres in bearing witness to the experience, strength, and hope of others; in being chair, treasurer, literature person, Intergroup rep, or Interim Sponsorship Coordinator; in setting up or putting away chairs; in sharing and qualifying. I also serve by the reassurance and support offered by my

physical presence in the room. My body is literal evidence of the courage to recover. I serve by simply showing up and daring to remain in my seat.

When I use the telephone, I employ a meeting between meetings. In phone contact, I bear similar witness, shoulder similar responsible attentiveness, and exhibit similar courage as I do in a meeting. Thus, whether my audience is one or many, I experience the gift of Service and previews of the bounty of the Twelfth Step. I have never yet put down the phone after a program call without feeling better than before the call, whether I made it or received it. The invitation to service beckons both caller and recipient. For me, one of the stunning paradoxes of recovery is that my need affords another person the opportunity to perform service. *In asking for help, I am helping someone else.*

My sex and fantasy addictions have pushed away almost everyone whom I have loved and valued in my life, but the tool of sponsorship gives me the gift of practicing intimacy within a vehicle of service. Whether sponsee or sponsor (I am now both), one helps the other, without thought of payment or *quid pro quo*.

In my opinion, a majority of addicts suffered emotional, physical, and/or sexual abuse, subtle or not, in childhood. In such circumstances, charades of intimacy were purchased at terrible prices; nurture, support, and love were bound up in unspoken and unspeakable tradeoffs. In Sponsorship, a seminal Program transaction, I get the chance to practice unself-centered caring, support, and love, the very things *not* modeled in my dysfunctional family. I discover exquisite lessons of service and I experience *service as action*.

Socializing, too, is an invitation to serve. "Here," it says, "break your isolation, get to know people in non-sexual contexts. Come out to play, bring out your inner child and your adult growing in health, that self you are when you're not active in your addiction. When Socializing, I'm invited to climb outside myself. I'm gently asked to experience other human beings *being*, warts and all. I am asked to give and take, instead of merely taking in an addict's greed. I'm invited to learn to engage as an equal instead of trying to impose on others *my* beliefs, *my* self-centered fears and *my* expectations. I relearn social skills I lost, or learn the ones I never had, or regain the ones I let rust from disuse. I am led, as if by the smell of water in the desert, to love my fellows even when I do not like them. In socializing, I offer others a gentle mirroring, a sharing in the round of life, a quiet reassurance that they are not simply body parts, sexual objects, anticipated conquests, or losers in the sexual marketplace. Socializing is a Tool that shows me self-seeking slipping away.

One of AA's great, bone-deep truths avers that service to a fellow sufferer is an addict's principal route to recovery. Service in the company of addicts blunts my extreme self-centeredness and challenges my presumed self-importance. It is the road out of lethal self-preoccupation. It's the way of spirit, the "works" without which faith is dead. In the "simple kit of spiritual tools laid at our feet" (AA Big Book, p. 25), service shimmers. It is everywhere I look in SCA. If I use the tool of service, the light that shines in me will burn more brightly. I might even come to know that God's will for me is to serve. And come to learn that my service will set me free and lead me to find much of heaven.

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### The Twelve Suggested Steps of SCA

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

### The Twelve Traditions of SCA

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

## SCA INFORMATION LINES

For information on SCA meetings, or to list a new meeting, write to:

SCA International Service Organizations  
PO Box 1585  
Old Chelsea Station  
New York NY 10113-0935

National Hot Line (800) 977-HEAL  
In New York or International, call  
(212) 606-3778

Web: <http://www.sca-recovery.org/>  
E-mail: [info@sca-recovery.org](mailto:info@sca-recovery.org)

SCA Information Lines  
(recorded message and call-back)

New York	(212) 439-1123
Los Angeles	(310) 895-8659
Chicago	(312) 935-3573
Orange County CA	(714) 664-5105
San Diego CA	(619) 685-8540
Midlands/Odessa TX	(915) 560-5240
Milwaukee MI	(414) 299-0755
St Louis	(314) 253-4085
Phoenix AZ	(602) 340-3081
Spanish:	
Los Angeles	(213) 368-4814
New York	(212) 388-9124

SCA is not affiliated with SLAA or SAA, but maintains a list of meetings of these fellowships in cities and countries that have no SCA meetings. Contact ISO for this information at least 2 weeks in advance. The following information is provided in the spirit of fellowship. For Information on SLAA and SAA meetings in the USA and overseas write to:

SLAA PO Box 650010 West Newton MA 02165-0010 (617) 332-1845  
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