

# The SCAnner

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# PEN PAL PROGRAM EXPANDS



By John F., National Coordinator

With the entry of SCA onto the Internet, our 'pen pal' program has gone there too. If you are interested in this service, we ask that you make a commitment to send one letter a month. Here's how it works:

- 1) First of all each volunteer will be paired with another member of SCA. Both SCA members ought to have a least one year in Fellowship and six months on a recovery plan.
- 2) The two SCA members are assigned with one "loner", (someone who lives too far from an SCA meeting to be able to attend it).
- 3) The work of reading and writing the letters is left to the SCA members. They can decide for themselves how to divide up the work. Sometimes one might do the writing while the other might read the letters to be on guard against inadvertent provocation and intriguing, etc. Sometimes the two might alternate months. They can decide what suits them best.
- 4) To maintain anonymity, we do not send out identifying information, including home addresses or identifiable e-mail names. (Anonymous e-mail is acceptable).

If you are interested in the e-mail version of the pen pal program. Write to :

**info@sca-recovery.org**

If you want to join the regular mail version of the program write to:

SCA Pen Pal  
PO Box 1585  
Old Chelsea Station  
New York, NY 10113-0935

## Editor's Note

Greetings fellow travelers on the road to Recovery. Welcome to another issue of the SCAnner. Once again you will notice that the SCAnner has transformed into yet another shape and size. No doubt you are all asking yourselves why is this so? And when will all this stop? The reason for the transformation? For some time the SCAnner has been plagued with production and distribution difficulties that have lessened, in our minds, the worth and value of our beloved SCAnner. In order to recoup on lost territory it seemed necessary, in publishing jargon, to change the look of the SCAnner. The smaller, more intimate format will hopefully make the SCAnner more precious, portable and more desirable as a reference tool.

This issue of the SCAnner looks at the Steps in great detail. In My Story, Dean Y (NY) shared with us the process he underwent in working all the steps one by one. This My Story differs from previous My Story pieces in that it makes only passing mention to acting out behaviors and focuses entirely on the step work. The rest of the issue deals with each of the steps one at a time: former editor of the SCAnner Joe F (NY) starts us off with Step One with Powerless but not Helpless. Vito (NY) tells about us about Step Two in Looking Out for Number Two. David A-S (NY) reveals Step Three in the Paradox of the Third Step. Jeffry Z (NY) asks Dorothy to Surrender in talking about Step Four. Seana A (NY) expounds the Fifth Step by explaining the slogan As Sick As Our Secrets. Stuart C (NY) shows us what it means to be Gettin' Ready in Step Six. Neil R (NY) reveals the power of the Seventh Step. Dean Y gets Beyond the Surface in telling us about Step Eight. John K (NY) shocks us with the Step Nine revelation that Love Does Means Having To Say You Are Sorry. Marc N (NY) shows us through Step Ten how Being Steadfast in Recovery Leads to Constant Renewal. David D (Milwaukee) leads us through Step Eleven and gives us the answer to the \$64,000 Question, and Paul W (NY) brings it all together in Step Twelve by revealing it to be a Spiritual Round Up.

It was quite a growth experience for me getting so many people to contribute to the SCAnner in one issue. I did try to get contributions from the West Coast and the Mid West but in the end I was forced to break arms in New York, where that kind of "attitude" works best. I hope you will find it as interesting as I did in getting it all and putting it together for you. I would also like to thank Andy M for doing a *marvelous* job proofreading the last two issues of the SCAnner.

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*



## My Story

Dean Y (NY)

*In this of issue My Story we are fortunate to have Dean Y (NY) share with us his courageous and exciting journey as he works the Steps recovering lost and abandoned parts of himself and discovering other completely unknown parts of himself.*

The night I got my current sponsor in SCA I wrote out my first step as fast as I could, making a list of all 139 people I had had sex with and my 47 romantic obsessions. Then I made an appointment to share it with him just like a fifth step. I saw for the first time that my troubles had been remarkably the same from age five to the present. I also knew my plan (no sex outside a committed relationship) was a good one that addressed each of my sex and romance problems.

Step two had already taken place for me many years ago. I was an atheist at the time and a friend of mine suggested I ask for power from any thing good in the universe to help me when I needed it. Some months later he told me I could take the extra "o" out of good and realize that I had been praying to God all the time. For step two to really work for me, I made a new addition of my own to the step to help it have more potency. "God and actively working the steps could restore me to sanity".

Step three was another humility step. It also gave me the instructions for daily living. I thought there might be a great mystery to deciphering God's will but when in doubt, I relied upon this rule of thumb. For today stay sober by helping someone else, go to a meeting, meditate and pray, pray to have my defects of character removed, pray for the health, prosperity and the happiness of those around me both friend and foe. Be patient, tolerant, kind, and loving with all the people I meet today including myself. Be grateful for all events that come to pass in response to these actions, because they are most likely God's will.

Step four was a step of deeper humility. I did my fourth step using the seven deadly sins as a point of reference. I started with lust, which I had basically covered in step one. Then I inventoried my life history looking at every instance I could possibly remember of greed, anger, gluttony, pride, envy, sloth and then I added a couple of categories of my own, one called general evil things and two others from AA's Big Book, resentments and fears. I read once in the Big Book that if a person did not do a fourth and fifth step, his chances of staying sober for any length of time were not good. Since I never wanted to go back to acting out I took the fourth step with the seriousness of an operation that would save my life.

Step five allowed me to take a really big chance on intimacy by telling another person about my life's secrets and shame. It took my sponsor and I several meetings and several hours to cover all these categories, but it was worth it. I suddenly felt better. All my darkness was out on the table and one person, my sponsor, did not run away from me in

disgust. I realized that everything I had done was not unforgivable and that if one person could accept me then surely God could too.

Step six took me to even deeper levels of humility as I prayed to be humble enough to turn to God for help with all my character defects revealed in step four. In this step I was asked to turn it all over to God since on my own I had never had made much headway in ridding myself of any of my character defects. I was like a person who swore off the bottle with the best of intentions, only to find after a short-lived reprieve that I was back at ground zero and often worse than before. I discovered that God could and would remove each and everyone of my character defects if I sought him on a regular basis.

When I took step seven, I went to a church to pray with my sponsor. I prayed my own prayers on my knees, asking for God's help to get me out of the mess in which I found myself. I also used the seventh step prayer. I prayed with a humble sincerity that I had seldom known before. I found myself sobbing uncontrollably with relief as I realized that I was going to finally allow God to remove from me all that I could not ever get rid of myself. For the first time in my life I was going to let God take over in this area of my life. This has become a daily practice for me and has paid off immeasurably by giving me the peace that I have so long sought.

One example of the incredible power of God to work in this came in the form of the removal of my anger and resentment toward almost everyone who had ever crossed my path. I wanted more than anything to have God remove my anger because it was always getting in my way. It had destroyed so many opportunities and relationships for me in my past. I had often tried to control my rage but had always failed. I had masked it with a smile, only to have people run from me when they found out my true nature. By asking on a daily basis to have my anger removed, I have found that it has been removed. I have found that in order to have my defects of character removed I must: 1) Identify a character defect. 2) Share it with just one other person, who will not help me to justify it. 3) Immediately and repetitively ask God to remove it from me. I used to have a therapist who encouraged me to get in touch with my anger and even express it in 'appropriate' ways to the person with whom I was angry. This just seemed to fan the flames. I would feel justification for my anger and my ego and pride would inflame until I exploded into a rage. Before I knew what had happened I was full of anger and suffering again without a shred of peace in my life. I believe that expressing my anger appropriately at the object of my anger would work for me if I was not an addict. However, since I am an addict, I recognize that asking God to remove my anger is a better strategy for maintaining my sobriety and peace of mind. I have found it useful to never mention my resentment directly to the person with whom I am angry. Even if someone confronts me directly about my feelings toward them, I must take full responsibility for my anger by not blaming them. I need to express it and then I must get rid of it, because like a cancer, anger eats away at its own container. Left to ferment, my anger will only poison me. As an adult I can choose to see myself as a victim or I can choose to be responsible for my recovery and see that it is pointless to be angry with a person who is like me simply going through the pains of growing up. I believe this is the best strategy for sustained serenity and sobriety. This is the new thinking God has given to me and is one of the greatest gifts I have received so far in recovery.



Step eight required even more humility. I had to list all the people I had harmed and take full responsibility for my actions. I simply made a list of all the people I even remotely thought I had harmed, often reminding myself that no one was to be excluded or overlooked because of wrongs I perceived they had done to me. I reviewed each person with my sponsor and made a plan of action for each one. I had more than 150 people and institutions to try to address. Many could move on quickly while others it seemed would take a life-time to sort out. In still other cases, God would have to show me the way.

Doing step nine was an experience that was quite different than what I had expected. People's reactions to my making amends were, as I had expected, always different. I once paid back sixty dollars I had stolen from an old employer, thinking he would be shocked and I would be totally embarrassed. Instead, he basically thanked me for the restitution as nonchalantly as noticing that the sky is blue and didn't even acknowledge that I had done anything wrong.

Another (indirect) amend took the form of helping a man who had a stroke and was confined to a wheelchair. I did this amend one day a week for a year. In my teens I had harmed someone who had had a stroke and was also confined to a wheelchair. Since this man was no longer alive I could not make amends to him directly. At the right time, I learned from my sponsor that someone in AA who had been sober for 22 years had had a stroke and needed help. I offered my help to this man in reparation for the damage I had done to the man who had died. I really came to love this man and we share a great friendship to this day.

Other amends involved making simple apologies and a decision to lead a more sober and useful life. I was also obligated to address institutions from which I had borrowed money and had been less than prudent in making my repayments. This involved negotiating reasonable repayment agreements and following through on my agreements. I also had to make amends to my parents for many things, while never making reference to harms I perceived they had done to me. I even made a written amends to a man who had sexually assaulted me years earlier, again keeping the focus on my wrongs and never bringing his wrongs against me to light. The deep depression I had once known while sober, without working the steps, completely left me now. I found that all the promises in the AA Big Book to be true and real in my life once I had taken the ninth step.

I have taken the tenth step on two occasions now. It is an opportunity to clean up any new wreckage I still bring about with my character defects. I can only say I am so much happier and more sane than I have ever known before. However, I am still an addict and must keep my ego in check, so I can still continue to be useful to God and others. This has been the purpose of the tenth step for me. Without it I would become very sick once more and be useful to no one.

Step eleven is all about prayer and meditation and constant seeking and listening for God's purpose for me. I once told a friend that I wanted to be so powerful and famous that I would never be forgotten. He responded by asking me a question. He asked me to name the seven Caesars. I was only able to remember Julius and Augustus. In response he said "Never being forgotten is not a very attainable or noble goal. These men were

probably the most powerful men that had ever lived as well as the most famous and you can not remember who they are!" I realized then that I needed and wanted a new reason to live and I found that being useful to God and others was more rewarding and sufficient one than any I had had before. Step eleven gives me the instruction and purpose for my life. God is my employer. My prayers today are prayers of gratitude for the way my life is and the way things are. Earlier in my recovery I would pray for the way I thought things ought to be. With my improved conscious contact with God, I realize that everything is perfect as it is and is perfectly placed for me to learn valuable lessons in my life, even if I do not always see where my life is going. I know from past experience that I have nothing to fear from the future as long as I keep faith and spiritual attitude through the use of prayer and meditation.

Step twelve is how I keep all that I have by giving it all, in its entirety, away. At present I have 19 sponsees. I try for the most part to just work the steps with them in a written way with them. I actively try not to be a therapist and listen to their concerns, guiding them to the steps as soon as possible. Every time I meet with a sponsee, I get more out of it than they do if we talk about the application of a step to a problem. I sponsor all these people not to keep them sober but to keep myself sober. There is nothing like reviewing a step from AA's Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions to keep the rust of addiction out of this addict's mind. If I get lazy about giving it away, I feel the sickness start to creep back in. I try not to let a week go by without making an appointment with a sponsee to go over a particular step. I find I do best on 2 or 3 meetings like this a week. It is the most effective way I know to keep the steps alive in my own life.

At present I have been in recovery for 14 years and I just now have over five years sobriety. My life is full of purpose, happiness and love, in an abundance I never dreamed possible. I am grateful to have suffered from sex and romance addiction, for without my illness I would not have had access to the spiritual life I lead today. The rooms of SCA have, in my opinion, matured to the point where they would support me with rich step work, honest recovery and spiritual experiences back into recovery if I were (God forbid!) to go back to acting out and come back for support as a beginner once again. To SCA, my sponsor and all the recovering sex addicts that have helped me so greatly all these years to find the happy, joyous and free life I have today, I say thank you. May God Bless you and keep you in spirits as good as he keeps me.





## The Steps

*At last year's InterFellowship Forum, there was a national outcry at the lack of focus on Steps in "S" Recovery meetings. In response to that outcry, the SCAnner is very pleased to devote an entire issue to members' sharings about working the steps. Ed.*

### Step One

*We admitted we were powerless over sexual compulsion  
- that our lives had become unmanageable*

#### Powerless but not Helpless

Joe F (NYC)

I first arrived at SCA in the summer of 1983. The program was just a year old at the time, and consisted mostly of members regaling each other with their acting out adventures. I had come in because I wanted to be good. I was almost a year in a relationship and my boyfriend had to go away for the summer. I certainly wasn't surrendering. I had a compulsive sexual problem, not an addiction. I hated the label "sexual compulsive"—it sounded so clinical. Straight out of a deviant psychology textbook. I didn't like the members. I didn't really want to be there. When my boyfriend returned at the end of the summer, I left the program since he was obviously the solution to my sexual addiction.

Three years later, I came crawling back to SCA, ready to take the first step. I managed to attain eight months on my sexual recovery plan when I had moved to Europe. Within three weeks I was back in the midst of my addiction—but this time without the support of SCA meetings and fellowship. I had never felt so bad about acting out. I hit an emotional bottom. I realized that in order to stay sober I had to stop acting out. I was constantly teasing my disease because I thought I had some control over my acting out. I wasn't as bad as you addicts. I still got payoffs: validation, escape, adventure. But no more. It was just a dreary and demeaning addiction over which I had no control.

When I finally admitted complete defeat, I started to get better. I could no longer run in and out of tea rooms or cruising areas. I could no longer go into public men's rooms. I could no longer go in gay bars alone, or parks with acting out areas. The war was over. I stopped negotiating with my disease. I have learned that once I start arguing with my disease, I've lost. It is much more powerful than me. But "we"—my higher power, the program, the fellowship, and finally me—were stronger than the addiction. As for the second part of the first step, my life had become completely unmanageable. I couldn't stop acting out when I wanted. I couldn't stop cheating on my lover. I couldn't work because I would rather act out than look for a job. I couldn't even learn the language of the country where I lived, since I would constantly run out to the men's room to cruise during language class. I had to be humbled in order to see my powerlessness. God certainly knew what I needed. This addict needed to be isolated in a foreign country where I didn't speak the language well, where there were no SCA meetings to finally be willing to do whatever it took to stay sober.

Today, 12 years later, I still need and use the first step in my recovery. I feel that my surrender has opened up the rest of the program to me: the fellowship, the steps, service. I certainly became willing to listen to suggestions. I had a sponsor who used to say to me, if something really makes me angry, then I am usually powerless over it. I am powerless over many areas of my life, but not helpless. Because of the first step, I am able to ask for and accept help quicker. (When all else fails, follow directions!) I don't play around with my addiction. I reach out to a power greater than myself more readily. This may be: talking to a friend; reading some literature; praying; or, going to a meeting. Because of the first step, I know that I can not put anything before my recovery. I have canceled plans because I knew that a meeting was more important than whatever social obligation I thought I had. I am more willing to do service and help newcomers, since that helps keep me stay sober.

Ironically, I thought that when I surrendered that all the fun in my life was over. All I had to look forward to was a lifetime of gloomy recovery and white-knuckling it. My experience has proven the opposite. The first step is the start of freedom. Being powerless over sex addiction removes so much from life and frees me up to live the rest of my life. It's as though my sex addiction is a tiny country, and there is a whole world left to explore. Yet, I often want to go back to the tiny country—that small, dark place.

Sometimes I even need to go right up to the border of my sobriety, but when I remember the first step, I realize that if I cross the border I may never come back. But freedom comes with a price tag: choice, responsibility, consciousness. And that's where the rest of the steps come in. To help us deal with and enjoy this newfound freedom.

### Step Two

*Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity*

#### Believing in Number Two

Vito (NYC)

While contemplating what I could possibly have to say about the 2nd Step, many thoughts came to mind. The first: "What could I add to what's already been written? How could I compare with text that has been translated into dozens of languages and read by millions?" Then I came back down to earth and remembered that while my own voice and experience are valid, all are welcome to take what they want and leave the rest. OK. Then I thought: "The 2nd Step. Isn't that just kind of a pit stop on the way to Step 3. Now *there's* a step." Hmmm. Finally, I thought about the Scanner Editor's reaction if I came up empty-handed and figured I'd better just focus. Step 2: "Came to believe...." After careful consideration I awakened to how essential Step 2 really is. After admitting comes believing. The supporting beams are put in place once the foundation has been laid. Without believing, what do we have? How do I make a decision, as in Step 3, without some prior belief system. Maybe not perfect belief. Maybe just "acting as if" as in a leap of faith. Faith... I think its religious connotations make it seem less hip than it is. My preferred definition is from *Miracle on 34th Street*: "Faith is believing in things when common sense tells you not to." This tells me I need to relax! Get out of my head and into my heart, my spirit. *Oh that*. When I came into program my spirit was like a tired,



wet alley cat. Underneath there was strength and courage and beauty, but to look at it—oy, what a mess....And to feed my spirit with the belief that I could get better; that something greater than me could restore me! Wow!! Now, I never had a problem with the concept of "God". (Being surrounded by nuns sometimes has that effect.) Much of my perception is colored by the Bible epics of the '60s and my imagination. Step 2 helped me to examine that, broaden it, update it—and accept. I don't really understand a power greater than myself but I accept and believe in it. I know I have limitations and that there's much I don't understand. Math equations, running water in NYC, the infinity of stars, a thunderstorm—Regis and Kathie Lee. But that's OK. I don't fully grasp the process of a caterpillar becoming a butterfly yet I am still able to marvel at the process. And as for sanity—don't we all crave that? "Crazy" is used so haphazardly in language. It is often used in place of "busy" or "hectic", but as an addict I know the compulsive end of it. Coming in to recovery and being offered a rope to the other side—a life with sanity—has been a welcome gift. A restoration to sanity that can enable me to experience hope.

Many years ago I heard a man say, "Faith is like swiss cheese. It's the holes that make it stronger." It has always stuck with me because it's given me the permission to believe and doubt all at the same time. Perhaps I need my common sense to help me make the best choices for me, but I need my faith challenged and restored every day to keep believing in my Higher Power, the possibility of sanity and the Promises of program. And while I may never fully understand the metamorphosis of the caterpillar to butterfly I hope I never lose my sense of wonder and appreciation of that process, as well as my own.

### Step Three

*Made a decision to turn our lives and our wills over to the care of God as we understood God*

#### The Paradox of the Third Step

by David A-S (NYC)

The Third Step breaks up into two parts. The first part of the step, "made a decision" is a very simple and practical thing. The second part of the step asks us to "turn our will and our lives to the care of God as we understood Him". This is much more difficult thing to do and required me to do a lot of searching.

Before I came into program I found it very difficult to make any kind of decision. I would always wait till the last moment, wait till something or someone pushed me to do it. Even acting out was something I would get pushed into, not so much decide to do. I even felt that not deciding was much more noble but the reality was that it was very much a way of being left out of the process. Alternatively, if I did make any decision about anything it was absolute final and irreversible. My decision was my life and my God.

Since the first part of Step Three says "made a decision" I began to make all sorts of decisions. I got myself into lots of trouble, because I began to exercise my "right of decision". People were shocked that I was making decisions, they were used to me just

going along with whatever everyone else decided. I liked the idea of having some say in my life all of a sudden. It really made me feel like I mattered. I began to take responsibility for my life. This was both exciting and frightening.

I still didn't know how to turn my will and my life over to the care of God. It seemed to me that the Third Step was a paradox. If I am alive and breathing then surely my life and will are in the care of God? However Step Three says that we made a decision, a conscious decision to turn our will and our life over to the care of God. The ultimate goal of all the steps is to be conscious, and here in Step Three we are being asked to be conscious of our relationship with God. As I continued to make decisions I noticed that other people also made decisions about their lives. I found this quite bewildering at first and then realized that this was how others got on with their lives, by making decisions. I began to look further afield to understand the second part of the third Step.

Tradition Three told me that the only requirement for membership in SCA is the desire to stop having compulsive sex. This was a little difficult to accept at first. It meant I had to accept people on face value, not because they had passed my rigorous tests. This was really difficult, since it meant conceding to others the right to make decisions of their own. This was quite difficult to accept. I had grown up in a house where some people made the decisions and everyone else had to abide by and obey those decisions. Suddenly I was confronted with the revolutionary idea that everyone could make decisions and indeed had a right to do so.

I went even further afield trying to understand the implications of this step, and found that Concept Three, which says that "The right of decision makes effective leadership possible", suggests that not only is it everyone's right to make decisions but indeed it is everyone's obligation. As I read about Concept Three I just happened to glance at Concept Four. This contained an amazing idea, which totally turned my life around and helped me to fully understand the second part of Step Three. Concept Four says that "Participation is the key to harmony".

I found this idea totally repugnant at first but the more I thought about it and the more I allowed myself to participate, the more harmony I found in my life. Shortly after I read about Concept Four I went to a retreat in the country. One evening there was a dance, that I was completely disdainful of to begin with, but then I realized that this was the only gig in town so I decided to go with it, to participate fully. I had a wonderful time in spite of the fact that I didn't like the music and everything else. Participation was the key that lead me to harmony.

This then, I understood to be the way to turn my life over to the care of God. By putting myself in the mainstream, by accepting everything that came towards me and being willing to deal with it I am surrendering my life to the care of God. So when I turn my life over to God, and I am fully immersed in the stream of life and participating in it fully, I am fully immersed in my life and everything that it presents to me moment by moment. *So that surrendering my will and my life to God, paradoxically, meant being more involved in my own life.*



I recognized that there were many ways in which I chose not to participate in life. One of them was the use of pornography. So I had to give that up and begin to deal with real people and real situations in order to hand my will and my life over to God. This was not at all what I had expected would be the result of doing Step three, yet it definitely seemed to make me feel much more in touch with God. I realized that the things I wanted to do in my life were the things that God wanted for me too. This was really so overwhelming as a concept. Surrendering my life and will over to the care of God did not mean that I would lose my life as I had at first feared but rather it meant for the first time really and actually having my life fully and totally. This then, was the fulfillment of Step three.

#### Step Four

*Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves*

#### Surrender Dorothy

by Jeffry Z (NYC)

I used to wish that my SCA Fourth Step could be as simple and eloquent as that of Dorothy Parker, famous literary boozier/sex addict from the Algonquin Round Table. It went something like this: "I'd like to have a martini, two at the very most, three I'm under the table, four I'm under the host." Simple, glib, yet gut-wrenchingly honest, a work of Art. It was sad for me to realize that although Dorothy could size up her troubled life so effortlessly, she died a lonely drunk. What went wrong?

I was more saddened to learn when I started working my SCA Fourth Step that it wasn't going to be about crystallizing the misery of my life into some witty bon mot. It wasn't going to be about creating Art. It was going to be about being honest with myself (something I hadn't been in a long time as an active sex addict) and then sharing that honesty with others. It was going to be about confronting the past, honoring the hell of it, having it witnessed, and with any luck at all, beginning the process of moving on in my life. It was going to be more like traversing Siberia on my hands and knees. I didn't want to go, but somehow I knew I didn't want to end up like Dorothy.

I first tried to do my SCA Fourth Step alone, mostly because of the tremendous shame I had about my life. I bought a Patrick Carnes workbook and quickly and glibly (and angrily) answered all of the questions. I wanted to get this over with and I did. I didn't share my writing with anyone. That was enough fearless searching for me. And I couldn't stop acting out, just like Dorothy.

Then I attended the SCA Fourth Step workshop at the local Gay & Lesbian Community center, a meeting that I had avoided in the initial stages of my recovery. The meeting's structure was simple: Write your responses to the questions in this outline, write for twenty minutes, and read your answers to the group IF YOU WANT TO. "Were you wanted at birth?" No. Answered that one. "Were you afraid of storms?" Yes. Whew. Another question completed. Wow. That was easy. I read my answers quickly and with embarrassment and the slow, steady pace of the meeting was driving me nuts. I couldn't

wait for it to end. Finally, I took a copy of the outline home and quickly and not so angrily (and not so glibly) answered all of the questions. I didn't share my writing with anyone. But I noticed something. For the first time in my adult life I was able, for a few days or even weeks at a time, to stop acting out. Something was happening.

So after two years of what Patrick Carnes calls pre-recovery (and what I can now look upon fondly as "research"), I surrendered to the program. I did a ninety-in-ninety, stopped all of my bottom-line acting out behaviors and attended the Fourth Step meeting religiously. I wrote down EVERYTHING and shared it all. I admit that withdrawal was sheer hell and reconnecting with people continues to be a challenge. But acknowledging and then sharing the pain that I had been trying to numb for so long probably saved my life. I realized that I had been trying to kill the very thing that makes me human: the ability to feel anything, joy, pain, and everything in between and most importantly, learning to let it go.

I'm still working on my SCA Fourth Step and it's been over two years. I now know that the process of getting sober is an ongoing one of truth and surrender. And I say my prayers for Dorothy, wherever she is.

#### Step Five

*Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being  
the exact nature of our wrongs*

#### As Sick As Our Secrets

Seana A (NY)

It took courage and willingness to do Step Five. I felt like I had been such a bad and deceptive person who had done disgusting things that I was much too ashamed to share aloud. Being sexually compulsive, I had had anonymous sex, abusive degrading sex, wasted huge chunks of my life in fantasy and romantic obsession and stayed in long-term destructive relationships. There were things I didn't want to reveal to anyone.

However, I had heard in program that I was as sick as my secrets. Unless I was willing to expose who I really was to myself, to God and to another person, I knew I couldn't get better. I went to the SCA Fourth Step writing workshop and answered the questions on childhood, adolescence and adulthood and even the questions "which you swore you would go to the grave with unspoken".

I read my answers aloud to my sponsor, my therapist, my spiritual director or a program friend. When I was finished, I had such a sense of relief and compassion for myself. I was not a fundamentally bad person. I was a human being looking for love and support and nurturing. I didn't get them as I was growing up and I wasn't taught how to give them to myself. Now I could clearly see the patterns in my life and what worked to give me what I needed and what didn't. None of the people I confided in ran screaming from the room. I was a garden variety sex addict and I could be helped like everyone else who diligently wanted the program. Turning my Fourth Step over out loud felt like putting down years of accumulated baggage. I felt like I could fly! It was another step in accepting my past



and myself and getting the knowledge and insight to help change my behavior in a loving and gentle way in the future.

### Step Six

*Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character*

#### Gettin' Ready

by Stuart C

This step was, like every step before it, a surprise. At first reading I thought, "Whew, an easy one!" Yeah, right. Who was I kidding? None of the previous steps had come easy so why would Step six? There was something about the wording that implied ease. "Entirely ready." Yep, I'm entirely ready – but for what I thought? It had taken me nine years of SCA meetings and therapy to write a Fourth step, one month to dump it and now my sponsor was advising me I was "in" the sixth step. "In the sixth step?" I wondered – what does that mean? She said that the step would unfold and that all I had to do was relax, live and take action. "You're no longer the master of your ship," she said. I was confused. From taking the previous five Steps I'd come to think God had restored my desires for healthy living. I was wrong. Naturally, being the shame-based sex addict I tend to be, at first I didn't share my confusion with my sponsor. It seemed, like every other recovery lesson, I'd learn this one the hard way. Thank God, my higher power has a profound sense of humor and unending patience. You see, that was the element I was missing about this Step – the higher power.

The first five Steps showed me that my ego and pride were far larger than I'd assessed. Though I felt the relief of finally letting go of an aspect of my compulsive nature and ego, there was a growing desire, need, even demand for some kind of restoration of my power. Well, in the light and peace of the Fifth step restoration to self I jumped at the opportunity to assert myself anew. This time I did it with the force of recovery. Now I was clean, healthy and ready to live my life. I'd confessed my deepest darkest manipulative nature, came to own my sexual perversions and even got honest about how much money I stole during my addiction. Hell, I'd even admitted I hurt my parents and stopped playing the victim. I felt I'd earned my newfound health and was anxious to jump back into relationships and assert myself in a renewed way.

I asserted my new found self into living. Somewhat healthy dating entered my life. I lived like this for a few months, fueled by the spiritual peace of the Fifth step. Through a series of dating and work related interactions I started to feel like something wasn't quite right. It felt like someone was putting a huge spotlight inside my mind that was highlighting my character defects. I began to become conscious when I acted out my anger. It was becoming harder to deny my pride, sloth and self-pity. I'd thought all this crap went away when I turned over my Fifth step. Why were they still here? It wasn't pretty. A growing sense of doom and depression slowly covered my soul – silently I prayed for relief and silently I shamed myself for once again being "the worst sex addict of them all."

I finally told my sponsor what was happening. She laughed – I love when she does that! Anyway, she told me I was right on time and that the Higher Power was moving me through the Sixth step. She suggested I read it. I hated that. Anyway, I reluctantly read it. Slowly the words came through, "entirely ready to have **GOD** remove all these defects of character." It slowly dawned on me that the Sixth step was the same as the First step except it dealt with the character defects my addict uses to keep things hopping. In that painful awakening my head nodded in humility – *Ok God, I accept you're the only force that can lift these behaviors and feelings and I'm ready for you to help me.* My sponsor smiled when I told her what happened.

### Step Seven

*Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings*

Humility not Humiliation

By Neil R

Step Seven along with its companion Step six, eluded me for years. Probably, this resulted from my failure to realize that these steps must be worked steadily over time. For me, at least, there would be no immediate release from all of my shortcomings. My belief that there should be such a release, if I worked the program the "right way", led to discouragement, self blame and anger. Even so I was able to make some progress. Pride, arrogance and ego, along with anger, rage and resentment were reduced in intensity and frequency shortly after I asked for their removal. Rarely have they returned to pre-Seventh Step levels. However, there has not been a complete removal of these defects and I have to ask for their removal and deal with them on a continuing basis.

For me much of this step is about humility; the humility to know that I can not remove or even reduce my shortcomings in any meaningful and sustainable way by gritting my teeth and putting my back to it, in other words, by the use of my own unaided will. After acknowledging my defects I must ask for their removal in toto, as well as incrementally. The Seventh Step prayer (page 76, Alcoholics Anonymous), has been very helpful for me. "My creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength as I go out from here to do your bidding. Amen".

For me it became important to add myself to the list "my fellows", when saying this prayer. Otherwise it took on a meaning of deprivation and lack of worthiness that did little to further my recovery. In addition to praying for the removal of defects I must cooperate by using my will not to act out my character defects, to the best of my ability.

When I first came into recovery, I thought that humility and humiliation were similar. Humility, in my understanding, meant to put oneself down, (rather than acknowledge one's strengths), and bow, scrape and mumble with downcast eyes. That image is not something I aspired to. In fact it revolted me.



In the program, I have heard humility described in various ways that are helpful. One definition of humility comes from the Latin word "humus", which means soil or ground. Others are: "knowledge of one's assets and liabilities without judging them", and "to be right-sized".

Another important word in this Step is shortcomings. It has been said that Bill Wilson once stated that there is no difference between defects of character in the Sixth Step and shortcomings in the Seventh Step. While I have no problem with these terms "defects of character" and "shortcomings" at present, I find that the term "defense mechanisms" is usually more useful to me. Using "defense mechanism" instead of "shortcomings" or "character defect" highlights the fact that there are subconscious thoughts which often drive me to act out in ways that are not in line with my best thinking, highest aspirations and values. Since I can not control what goes on in my subconscious mind, this term further illuminates my need for the help of a higher power.

This Step asks me to put down my whips and chain, to finally stop blaming myself and others in areas where I fall short of the mark. If I could have eliminated my faults on my own, I would have been perfect years ago! However, I can not even though I can control some of my defects to some extent, some of the time. The Seventh Step tells me that I must call upon my Higher Power for help and surrender all to Him if I wish to grow and flower. I must trust and be willing to do whatever work is put in front of me.

If I insist on keeping my character defects by refusing to ask God to remove them or fail to cooperate by doing my share of the work, I am consigned to go into relapse or remain on a plan while living on a plan.

My defects prevent me from living my life fully, abundantly, joyously and freely. Although I have worked this step, as well as the others, very imperfectly, I have already tasted true joy, peace, freedom, love and abundance. I know that I need to continue to look at my defects, become willing to have them removed, on an ongoing basis, ask God to remove them and do my best not to act out on them. If I can do this, I know that my journey to freedom and serenity will continue.

### Step Eight

*Made a list of all the persons we had harmed and  
became willing to make amends to them all*

#### Beyond the Surface

by Dean Y

The Eighth Step requires a lot of humility. In my experience I had to be slowly humbled in the previous seven Steps to be remotely prepared to take the eighth step. As an addict, I often felt self justified in all my actions and I blamed everyone around me for my poor behavior. I blamed my family, my therapists, my broken relationships and the world at large for what was wrong with me. I collected resentments as if they were prized possessions. If cornered and held accountable, I always cried victim. Harms I perceived

done to me fueled my acting out, not only sexually, but in many other ways not limited to stealing, lying, cheating, defaming, criticizing, neglecting and slandering.

In doing the eighth step, I had to look a lot deeper than just the surface and look to my real motives. "Why did most of my dealings with others end in pain?" I asked myself. There is an old saying that "when you point the finger at someone else, you point three back at yourself". Could that be the case with me? The Eighth Step required a "no sacred cows" and "no stone unturned" approach if my sobriety was to have the legs of longevity that I so desperately wanted. Any suspect behavior I could remember since I was a child had to be reviewed. I found my Fourth Step inventory immensely helpful in trying to make any progress. It says in the Twelve and Twelve (page 77) "I can make little headway in this new adventure of living until I first backtrack and really make an accurate and unsparing survey of the human wreckage I have left behind in my wake". I take the advice of the Twelve and Twelve very seriously and did just as it suggested.

I listed all the people I could remember harming and started to take full responsibility for my actions. Often I had to remind myself that no one was to be excluded or overlooked because of wrongs I perceived they had done to me. This is one of the most important aspects of step eight that required a truly humble attitude on my part. On page 78 of the AA Twelve and Twelve, I read "Triumphantly we seized upon others behavior as the perfect excuse for minimizing or forgetting our own. Right here we had to fetch our selves up sharply". My sponsor added that I should make no mention whatsoever of misbehavior I had perceived by others done to me when making actual amends.

Ten years ago, I had a friend who had carried a romantic obsession for me for eight years. I was fully aware of his feelings for me and it bothered me. However I felt I could not live without this man's adoration and loving attention. I kept him strung along making sure his affections were exclusively for me. I never had sex with him nor was I sexually attracted to him. I would tell him from time to time what I thought he wanted to hear, if I sensed he was thinking of straying from me. The whole thing culminated in a sexual assault. A violent rape would not be too far off in describing the scene that took place. Self righteous and with indignation, I cut off the relationship, citing his sexual abuse of me as the irrefutable reason. I told him how sick he was and told him that he should seek out psychiatric help. I threatened him and told him he was lucky I did not go to the police. I was the sole victim and he was the crazed perpetrator who should suffer. That was my interpretation for many years.

In doing the Eighth Step I had to go back and look much deeper at my involvement. I had to become willing to say I was sorry for my part in all that had happened. I also had to be honest about exploiting this person's feelings for my own gain. Hardest of all, I had to accept full responsibility for my actions and never make reference for any wrongs I perceived had been done to me. It was a very humbling experience. So often I had been guilty of self-righteous and vindictive behavior. Step Eight required a major attitude change. I had fostered the belief that this man's sexual violence was unforgivable. I finally realized that I must forgive him without reservation if I hoped to stay sober for any length of time. It seemed so odd that I had to point out my own faults in this situation



and then forgive this man in order to save my own life. In fact, it was an absolute necessity if I were to ever know peace and long-term sobriety.

Looking honestly at each broken relationship and the wreckage of my past, my sponsor and I made a plan of action. I had more than 150 people and institutions that I had to address. Thankfully this step only requires the willingness to make amends. The main focus here was to be thorough and seek out each instance where I was wrong.

It is my opinion, in retrospect, that anyone who has become humble enough to admit their faults, and is willing to make a true attempt at full restitution for all the harm they have caused other, will know the promises of the program. The AA Big Book tells us most assuredly that the promises will materialize upon completion of steps eight and nine.

At present I have been in sexual recovery for 14 years and now have five and a half years on my simple plan "no sex outside of a committed and loving relationship". My life is full of purpose, happiness and love, in an abundance I never dreamed possible. I am grateful to have suffered from sex and romance addiction, for without my illness I would not have had access to the spiritual life I lead today. "Step Eight is the beginning of the end of isolation from our fellows and from God". May God bless you and keep you in the same spirits he does me.

### Step Nine

*Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others*

#### Love Does Mean Having To Say You're Sorry

by John K (NY)

*The setting is a coffee shop in Chelsea. Two young men are seated at a table, DAVE and ROBERT. Neither speaks as the lights come up. Dave finishes a cup of coffee while Robert fiddles with his silverware.*

DAVE: I think I'll get another cup of coffee.

ROBERT: You've had three already.

DAVE: Have I?

ROBERT: Alright, Dave. Enough already.

DAVE: You're right, I've had enough. No more coffee.

ROBERT: No, enough period. You send me a letter in the mail after two years of no contact at all. Then you call me and ask to meet for dinner at a well-lit coffee shop which, as you put it, "has no past meaning for us."

DAVE: It doesn't have any meaning for us, does it?

ROBERT: No, none at all. It's perfectly meaningless, just like this entire evening has been.

DAVE: Oh God, you're upset. I've done it, "except when to do so would injure them or others." Or in this case it's just you I'm injuring.

ROBERT: What? Look, Dave. We've had dinner. We've discussed all the secret messages and plot devices of the X-Files movie. And you've obviously had enough coffee. So unless you want dessert I'd say this mysterious meeting is finished.

DAVE: No, not yet.

ROBERT: You want dessert?

DAVE: No, I want to say I'm sorry.

ROBERT: Huh?

DAVE: Rob, when we were together I was pretty selfish and I didn't appreciate all the good things we shared. I took our life together for granted. I took you for granted, Rob. The affair was the last straw for you, I know.

ROBERT: Damn right it was.

DAVE: And I'm sorry. I know I hurt you and I never meant to. I was just so wrapped up in my own stuff, my own mess. Maybe I wasn't ready for a relationship at that time, I don't know. But I do know that I hurt a bunch of people in my crazy days. I've made a list of those people and you're at the top of that list. So I wanted to see you tonight just to say I'm sorry.

ROBERT: Are you expecting me to say you're forgiven and everything's okay?

DAVE: No, I just wanted you to give me the chance to say I'm sorry, and you did that. Thanks. But if you want to forgive me....

ROBERT: It'll take more than an "I'm sorry" and a cheap meal at a coffee shop.

DAVE: I know.

ROBERT: But it is a start.

DAVE: Really?

ROBERT: For two years I've been angry because I never heard you say those very words, "I'm sorry." You had the affair, I said we were finished, you said fine, and our life together ended just like that.

DAVE: Yea, I remember.

ROBERT: You have no idea how long I've needed to hear you say just that...Just a simple "I'm sorry."

DAVE: I am, Rob.

ROBERT: I believe you. So what now?

DAVE: I don't know. Dessert maybe?

ROBERT: Dessert would be nice.

DAVE: God, Ali McGraw had it all wrong.

ROBERT: What?

DAVE: She's dying of leukemia and she turns to Ryan O'Neal and says "love means never having to say you're sorry."

ROBERT: Not *Love Story* again, please.

DAVE: I thought that was the sweetest line, until now. It's not a sweet line, it's stupid, it's wrong. No, sometimes love does mean having to say you're sorry.



### Step Ten

*Continued to take personal inventory and  
when we were wrong promptly admitted it*

#### Being Steadfast in Recovery Leads to Constant Renewal

Marc N (NY)

For me, this step is about the spiritual principle of perseverance. It is one level for me to *understand* recovery as a mental exercise, but quite another to make a commitment to *live* it. This takes the form of keeping a positive attitude, relating to myself and others from the heart, and by showing gratitude. I have heard in the rooms many times that recovery is about the process that we undergo as we take the steps, not about a final destination where we end up once we're finished. I believe that a large part of my work in recovery is to acknowledge where I am, and to accept and love myself right now, with "warts and all". With Higher Power as my partner, I find strength in gentleness. I will never be cured from sex addiction, but I can live happily in remission. Moreover, the Tenth Step promises that I can know myself as completely as I want, one day at a time. My experience is that progress comes incrementally, and adds up fast if I make it a routine. We all know that addiction is progressive, a one way street of insatiable desire. The good news is that recovery is also progressive. The more I utilize the power tools SCA offers me, the more I feel grounded and connected to others.

I find it very helpful to have a general idea of my character defects when working this step. Because I am prone to self-criticism, I often refer to my defects as "defenses", which for me is much more compassionate. This helps me to embrace my defects, and increasingly saves me from acting them out in a destructive way. The way I understand it, my character defects are actually defences for my true, loving self, which is buried underneath. Because this inner part of me feels very hurt and vulnerable, I am often inclined to protect it by making harsh judgements of others or just blatantly pushing them away. Some of my defences which pop up again and again are: controlling others (selfishness, dishonesty) feelings of worthlessness (fear) and grandiosity (fear in the opposite direction). Although I learned these in order to protect that sensitive place within, I now realize that they don't serve me and I am willing to replace them with healthy behaviors as they surface. I find it helpful to have an attitude built upon the assumptions that 1) there are no bad people, just bad actions (beginning with myself and my actions), 2) I am infinitely teachable, and 3) with the Higher Power's help, I am capable of great love. If I spill something on the floor, I mop it up right away. The Tenth Step suggests the same thing.

My inventory is constantly aided by the slogan "keep the focus on yourself". It is so fascinating and easy to spot shortcomings in others, but I can not recall a time it helped me in my recovery. While acting out with anonymous sex, I was unconcerned with the other person except for how they could satisfy my immediate desires. Although I would sometimes project elaborate fantasies onto a partner, when I got honest I had to admit that I had little regard for much else other than his body. By taking the 12 Steps, I now know that I am worthy to be seen and appreciated as a whole person, and consequently, I have changed in this respect toward others. Respecting everyone in this way has tremendously

helped my self esteem. It was amazingly freeing to realize that it is not relevant to *my* recovery what anyone else does. I can only change *my* attitudes, thoughts and actions, not theirs. The Serenity Prayer profoundly helps me to contemplate this bigger picture, and it is extremely helpful in little ways too.

When I first started recovery I could wander off the spiritual path for days and it seemed normal. Now the path is much more defined for me and as soon as I step off the path I generally know it right away because my feelings tell me so. It has been a tremendous gift to have access to my feelings. I heard someone share that in recovery we recover our feelings and subsequently the ability to feel them and let them go. This dialogue with myself and my HP encourages me to take more and responsibility for my actions, as opposed to being locked in a cycle of defensive reactions. Fellowship and sponsorship are important because they offer me the opportunity to distinguish normal, healthy thoughts from addict-thinking. Progress happens when I admit to myself and then humbly to another, when I have transgressed. Sometimes I owe an apology to a friend, coworker, etc. Or, sometimes talking about my behavior helps me distinguish whether it was wrong or not. It's like during a meeting when the Truth becomes apparent because we are communally reaching for it. I love the definition of responsibility as the "ability to respond" versus react.

I learned in a step meeting that the 12 promises and 12 rewards directly correspond with each step and tradition. The Tenth Promise: that fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us, has been hugely inspirational. I have had two significant love relationships during recovery (as opposed to hundreds of superficial encounters before) from which I have gained a perspective on my self-impose obstacles. I am currently part of a monogamous relationship with a healthy and appropriate man, and bit by bit I have been able to identify blocks to intimacy. In some cases, miraculously, I have been given the grace to surmount them. I say miraculously because I remember that, as little as a year ago, I thought I could never give up the security and isolation of pornography, and before that it was the destructive short-term "affairs". I realize that the motives people have are much more benevolent than the ones I ascribe to them, and many are actually prepared to love me. And regarding economic security, well, I found an entire 12 Step program for that!

The Tenth : a clear pattern of life instead of a purposeless existence, is becoming more and more true for me. It's the difference between struggling to survive and having the freedom to make choices which enrich my life. Life is effortless, but there is a flow to it now and I certainly feel more flexible and light in my responses to it.



### Step Eleven

*Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God,  
praying only for God's will for us and the power to carry that out*

#### The \$64,000 Question

by David D. (Milwaukee)

I didn't come into SCA to develop conscious contact with God. I came into this program to stop cruising for sex in parks and on the streets and to stop having anonymous sex. What I've found though, in the nearly four years I've been in recovery, is that my sobriety is intimately linked to my conscious contact with God.

I stopped going to church when I was fourteen years old. The religion that I had been raised in didn't seem to support me or answer the questions I had about life. It wasn't until twenty-some years later, after I had been in program for a short while, that I thought about going back to organized religion to find a system to support my spirituality. After checking out a number of different practices and religions I found a Soto Zen Buddhist center in the town where I lived that felt like home to me. I began attending classes and meditation sessions that have proved invaluable. I mention my specific religious practice not in any way as a recommendation, but simply as a way of making my story more personal and hopefully more meaningful. There are many religious traditions out there, and just as no one type of diet would be appropriate for all of us, no one religious tradition could possibly serve all of us. And in fact I know people in SCA who don't belong to any organized religion, but who are deeply spiritual people.

What I have seen for myself in my recovery is that my spirituality, just like my program, is constantly changing. For example, I have never really been very good at praying, and yet at difficult times I have relied heavily on prayer. The serenity prayer has been a mantra for me at times, and its importance and meaning have been unfolding and growing for me over the years. I have also relied a lot on the prayer in the AA Big Book which asks our Creator to remove our defects. [Page 76 of AA Big Book, and page 45 of *Hope and Recovery*. Ed].

Actually, one reason I find it hard to pray is that I have never believed in a personal God. I don't think of God as a spirit or a being. I tend to think of God simply as the way things are. And if you're even remotely like me, you'll understand the problem with that is that I like to see things the way I want to and not the way they are. I fantasize; I fabricate; I deny. The more I am in touch with the world as it is--*life on life's terms*--the more I feel I am in conscious contact with God. How can I manage to see life the way it is and not the way I want it to be? Well that's the \$64,000 question, isn't it? I don't think there's any one simple answer to that question. I do *many* things to support myself in seeing life as it is. I talk a lot with program people; I go to meetings; I do sponsor/sponsee work; I read spiritual texts. I meditate four or five times a week. In Soto Zen Buddhism, meditation is the fundamental key. We call it *zazen*, or *simply sitting*. When we sit, we sit cross-legged on a pillow facing a wall and we let our thoughts come and go without attaching to them and without resisting them. In our day-to-day lives we tend to give our thoughts a lot of power. I begin to think about someone I don't like at work and what he did

Friday afternoon, and I become angry and tense. Over the weekend the thought can easily compel me into a bad mood.

I begin to plot revenge. Monday morning I drive to work early so I can park in a certain space to annoy the person, and it just goes on and on. *Zazen* is an opportunity to practice letting go of being manipulated by thoughts and of manipulating them. To me, that is God's will for me: to quit letting my thoughts play God, to have thoughts come and go without compulsively being at their mercy. In other words, to let go and let God.

Perhaps the most important thing I've discovered about working the Eleventh Step is this: I don't think we need to have it all figured out before we can work the step. We don't need to be able to define or understand God before we can work the step. The process of finding what God means to us *is* the process of working the step. I have asked more than one sponsee this question: How does God figure into your recovery? There is no one definitive answer. It's a question I need to pose myself every day. It's not as if I ever intend to fully understand the question, but I've learned that I don't need to understand God to have conscious contact with God or to carry out God's will.

### Step Twelve

*Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps we tried to carry this message to others and to practice these principles in all our affairs*

#### Spiritual Round Up

Paul W (NY)

When I started recovery [in Al-Anon] the Twelfth Step really scared the Hell out of me! I thought "Oh God, I have to tell everybody I'm in recovery and get them into the program". I felt very uncomfortable about my Twelve step responsibilities. My misconceptions about Step Twelve clearly illustrate the physical, emotional and spiritual state I was in during my early days. In hindsight, I see that I defaulted to my character defects of forcing a solution and perfectionism. Needless to say, I was in a very frightening new place. All my defects and defenses were blaring at full force. It was exactly where I needed to be.

I could never bring myself to act out the Twelfth Step the way I feared I was supposed to a la "round-um up and drag-em into the rooms". Thank HP! In my jump to do something I totally neglected the having "had" a spiritual awakening part of the step. First things first, I had to recognize and recover my spirit. I started my recovery in Al-Anon but I was still acting out sexually. My spiritual awakening came slow. For me it came out of the safety and consistency of the meetings. I began to trust the people in the rooms. I remember opening my mouth to share and all that came out were sobs and tears. I cried and shook for my full four minutes. At the break, a line of hugs formed. These loving people told me that I was in the right place and to keep coming back. They saw me at my most vulnerable, they did not judge or hurt, they held me, the pain passed and the clouds began to lift. My original spirit began to return and stir. I began to open, let-in and have feelings. My armor slowly began to fall away, allowing me to see my surroundings and most importantly myself. The more I came back to meetings and made contact the more I



was able to see. It wasn't all pretty. Because the program offered me a safe place to "be" I eventually awakened and claimed my sex addiction. Ultimately this was no major surprise but I had grown enough to take the risk to accept what I could not change and get the help I needed to recover from sexual compulsion. On September 13th, of a year I can not remember, I went to my first 12-Step meeting for sexual addiction three years after I'd started my journey in Al-Anon. For me the spiritual awakening has been slow; one step forward, two steps back. Fear and my addictive desire to return to the old familiar ways of acting out [as well as some new ways] have regulated a slow spiritual awakening for me. The beauty of the awakening, as I have experienced it, is that it is multiple and expansive. It is not a one shot deal; once awake, now forever awake. Every day in recovery is a chance to have a spiritual awakening or spiritual dimming. Recovery gives me the tools to choose and awaken. I don't always make that choice. What I have come to know is that a day is only 24 hours and tomorrow is another day to choose recovery. The people, meetings and steps [when I'm willing to use them] keep me from the dark, from spiritual re-confinement. I get to choose. Some days I'm more in the light than others. It's progress not perfection. I've also come to know that I can't control the outcome. I try to turn my will and life over each day and stay open to the "flow".

Living my life "one day at a time", in recovery and as sober as I'm able to be, is the best Twelve Step work I can do to carry the message to others. This is quite a conceptual shift from my first thoughts of having to go out among the masses, round up and preach. Today I never really know how my Higher Power will use me as a Twelve Step messenger. All I have to do is "try" to be open to the will of a power greater than myself. I've come to experience the "carrying" part of the step to be a very natural, easy, not-plotable occurrence. Of course there are things like going to a meeting, being visible and

qualifying that are quite conscious and chosen forms of Twelve Step work. Both the "in the moment" and chosen forms are equally important and involve vulnerability and willingness. Two qualities I can grow very short of when I'm spiritually shut down. How I live my life has a direct impact on my "awakening" and my ability and willingness to "carry" the message. This may seem like a very obvious statement but to me it exemplifies the absolute connectedness of all the aspects of Step Twelve; the spiritual awakening, trying to carry the message and practicing these principles [the steps] in all my affairs. They all connect and affect the other. Daily balance of all three is the key [for me] to able to truly work the Twelfth Step.

Keeping it very simple, I am a sex addict and I get a chance each day to choose sobriety. The program offers safety, tools and support to achieve this daily goal. Each moment presents different challenges and feelings. By taking the time each day to make contact with a power greater than myself, I am reminded that I am not alone and I will be taken care of. Turning my will over is not always easy and does not always feel good. It is hard for me to admit my powerlessness. As I work the Twelve Steps, as best I can, slowly I have had a spiritual awakening and I continue to be awakened to life and myself. Being in the "flow" a day at a time helps me to practice these principles and carry the message. I am reminded of something that Stewart always says at meetings "it all comes down to love and service". Today I care for my spirit, know it's value and desire to share it.

## The Gift or Why I Stay in SCA

by Joe L. (LA)

*This poem was read at both the LA and NY SCA Conferences last year (1997) and is now brought to the attention of the whole fellowship here in the pages of The SCAnner. Ed.*

When I was a kid, overweight, wearing glasses,  
I lusted for lads, but danced with the lasses  
It wasn't okay for a boy and a boy.  
But to the girls I brought home, my mother said "Oy".

We lived in New York, where we rode underground.  
I traveled to Grandma's and guess what I found:  
There was more going on than making a wee wee  
In the men's room where I saw many a pee pee.

It's amazing but somehow I knew from the start  
what tickled my fancy....and that other part.  
I thought I was wanted, I felt so attractive,  
but only at moments when sexually active.

I cut all my classes and flunked out of college  
to pursue a degree in haute carnal knowledge.  
In the army, I thought, with a piece I would trifle.  
Who knew that a piece meant some stupid rifle?

How jolly, how happy I thought I could be;  
I felt liberated, assumed I was free.  
I did it in parks and the streets and the car,  
an alley, a bath house, a sex club, a bar.

I did *it* in secret, I did *it* in shame –  
No feelings, no pain when I played the game  
I had some s.o.'s I called s.o.b.'s  
I'd woo 'em and win 'em, then leave 'em with ease.  
Of course, all the while, I was eating and spending,  
Heading pell mell for a miserable ending.  
Sometimes I got by with booze and/or drugs  
When what I was needing was just lots of hugs.

I easily switched from Jeckyll to Hyde:  
So cool on the outside, so tortured inside.  
The more I felt needy, the more that I cruised,  
Until I felt seedy and battered and bruised.



So I came to this program a-kicking and cursin'  
With doubts of becoming a much better person.  
I hadn't a clue what to say or to do  
And I never knew what was fake, what was true.

I noticed at meetings you guys are so cute  
and thought "this one's a darling and that one's a beaut.  
I'll take him for a husband and those for my lovers"  
Thinking bliss we'll discover once under the covers.

For that's all I wanted from men who are gay  
'Cause I wasn't like them.....no way, José.  
What did I know about feelings and such?  
My heart wasn't the part I would want you to touch.

When I got a sponsor and wrote my first plan  
Was the day that my recov'ry began.  
Celibacy was not lots of fun  
I might as well have become a nun.

So I tried another but I couldn't wait  
to kiss or to screw until the third date,  
I would leave and come back, then leave and come back  
And then we could jump right into the sack.

Soon I found the right plan, which is now an antique;  
I'll be on it six years, I think in a week.  
I use all the steps, traditions and tools,  
And for the most part, I follow the rules.

I found Higher Power and now pray with ease –  
A whole different reason to get on my knees.  
Emotions I'm feeling from morning till night  
Let me know who I am and that I'm alright.

Now, I love all of you and I love myself, too.  
We're addicts! We're addicts. Hoorah! Haroo!  
We're gorgeous, unique and above all we're rare.  
That's all there is. Thanks for letting me share.

## SCA RADIO PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

SCA Radio PSA kits are now available. The kit contains a pre-recorded audio tape and script for a 30-second and a 60-second radio spot about sexual compulsion and how to get in touch with SCA. A step by step instruction sheet on getting the spots aired by local stations included with each kit. This sheet also explains how to alert the 800-number volunteers of any additional information you might want to have passed on to people seeking help in your area. The kits cost \$12 for the first and \$10 for each additional kit. Order a kit for each station you hope to have air the spots. Make checks payable to:

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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:

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