

# THE SPIRITUALITY OF SERVICE



In Sexaholics Anonymous, as in all Twelve Step fellowships, service and recovery go hand in hand. Indeed, service on behalf of the Fellowship is recovery in action.

Most SA members first experience the benefits of service in their home group, where we begin our personal journey in recovery. Our first interactions are likely to be with fellow SA members who are performing some aspect of service—the one who answers our phone call, greeters who meet us at the door, members who facilitate meetings, give lead shares, collect donations, offer us Program literature, and of course, the one who offers to be our temporary sponsor.

We pull up a chair and join the circle. The first reading we hear usually is the SA Purpose, which is really a synopsis of our Twelve Traditions. Thus in one gulp, we are exposed to a number of spiritual principles—unity, equality, responsibility. We learn we are part of a larger Fellowship, that the primary purpose of our association is to help one another solve a common problem we couldn't solve alone, and that to preserve our Fellowship we must carry the message of our recovery to sexaholics still in their addiction. We learn there is but one requirement for



membership—a desire to stop lusting and become sexually sober—but that requirement applies to all, regardless of how long we've been attending. We learn we are self-supporting, that the time and effort we devote to service counts as much as our financial contributions.

Our sponsors tell us to go to meetings, and perhaps find us a service position, such as greeter or coffee maker, in our home group. Our Fellowship, we discover, sits on a “Three-legged Stool,” each leg representing one of the three legacies of Sexaholics Anonymous: Recovery, Unity, and Service. Without Service, the stool teeters on two legs; with it, the stool is steady and grounded.

Absent an honest attempt to work all the Steps, under the direction of a sponsor, the effectiveness of our service work is considerably diminished. “But obviously you cannot transmit something you haven't got” (AA 164). Thus we begin our journey through the Steps, and often we find that our journey of service keeps pace with our Step work. In Step Three, we decide that henceforth a Higher Power shall be our Director. In Steps Four and Five, we dig down to uncover our defects, and admit them to our sponsor and our Higher Power. In Steps Six and Seven, we become ready to turn over our defects to God. In Steps Eight and Nine,

we try to right our wrongs, reconnecting with the world outside our Fellowship. Step Ten teaches us the value of continued inventory, and gives us the ability to see and admit when we're wrong. In Step Eleven, we seek to improve our contact with God, praying for knowledge of his will for us and for the power to carry it out.

It is in Step Twelve that we join hands with our Third Legacy: Service. Service offers us the opportunity to work with others, in a spirit of unselfishness and love, toward achieving our primary goal: to carry the message of our recovery to the sexaholic who still suffers (Tradition Five). To attract new members, we work through our groups and Intergroups, reaching out to other Twelve Step fellowships, to helping professionals, prison officials, places of worship. We tell our stories in meetings. We send out mailings that share essential information about our Program.

Performing service can be challenging, especially since we have lived lives dominated by various forms of selfishness. But once we start, the benefits we experience can be immediate and profound. Service gives our lives a new sense of purpose and meaning, which we might



call a spiritual awakening. In time, we find that we too can give up some of our ego-drive and become part of a community in recovery.

Through service, we develop the ability to surrender our own selfish will in the interest of the group. We learn obedience to spiritual principles. It is by performing service that we come to a deeper understanding of the message we carry. When we are elected to positions of responsibility in our Fellowship—becoming known as a “trusted servant” —we are granted an opportunity to advance in spiritual maturity. We begin to see service to the Fellowship as a spiritual practice, guided by a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.

As we look at leadership through a spiritual lens, and practice it with humility, we see that it provides countless opportunities to learn more about ourselves—our strengths and weaknesses—and how we work with others, both inside and outside the Fellowship. We have the chance to practice patience and listen to people with whom we may disagree, yet who we know may have something we need to hear. These are invaluable lessons. And they are only the beginning. Service means working for and with members who have different stories, life experiences, hopes, fears, and expectations, all to

help fulfill a primary purpose that binds us together. Best of all, we see how God works in us and in the Fellowship to help us adhere to the spiritual principles set out in the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts.

Before SA came to be, a member of AA, a self-styled “sex-drunk” began to speak openly of his desire to stop lusting and become sexually sober. It wasn’t a message that most people wanted to hear. “We all have sex problems,” they told him. “If sex is troublesome, throw yourself all the harder into helping other alcoholics.” But some did identify with him, and in time, these new “sexaholics” began to hold meetings of their own. They shared their stories face-to-face, in writing and on the phone. Where previously their only options were to act out their obsession or suppress it with white-knuckle willpower, together they discovered there was a Third Option—surrender to a Higher Power (SA 84).

Thus SA was born. Service, which had been a spiritual principle, now became a matter of survival. And so it remains. We have learned that we can’t recover in isolation. Through service, we become grateful for one another—first for those who have served us, and then for the op-



portunity to serve others. We thank God for service—for the blessing of service received and for the fruits of service given.

The “spiritual awakening” promised in Step Twelve propels us to “carry the message to sexaholics” —to serve others. In service, we reach out to do the work of SA, to help the newcomer, and to preserve and maintain the structure that enables our recovery. However, if we act from ego-lust—for applause, recognition, or an illusion of power—we have lost the spirit of service. We have left God out of the process. What we have forgotten is anonymity, “the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions.”

As the “spiritual foundation,” anonymity is the principle whereby self is subordinated to the good of the whole. In this, anonymity becomes the fruit of our recovery from sexaholism: “[W]e turned more and more away from our isolating obsession with sex and self, and turned to God and others” (SA 61).

Love is the key and Step Twelve shows the way. In Step Twelve, we “took the actions of love to improve our relations with others” (SA 145). When love inspires service, the polarity changes from self-centered to God-centered. We are doing whatever it is for God, out of gratitude for what we’ve been given; for our fellows, surrendering the demand to get anything

back from them. This is the essence of anonymity. Now service becomes spiritual, and leads us to increasing spiritual growth, once we take ourselves and our ambition out of the process. “We were learning how to give, and the measure we gave was the measure we got back.” (SA 62) We do our best, relinquishing the right to reward or recognition, and leave the results up to God.

Finally, we are enabled, by the grace of God, to carry the idea of service into all our affairs: practicing it first with the suffering sexaholic, then in our work lives and in the lives of our recovering families as well. Thus our relations with others enter a whole new dimension. We become servants of a Higher Power, and our service enters a spiritual realm. As we continue to practice these spiritual principles in our lives, we become a sign of God’s saving grace to others. Through carrying the message in service, we see the words of the Third Step Prayer become real, as victory over our defects bears witness to those we would help of God’s great Power, Love, and Way of Life. Armed with the principles of our Steps, Traditions, and Concepts, we become partners in the great enterprise: Victory over sexaholism by the grace of God.



## The Twelve Steps of Sexaholics Anonymous

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

## The Twelve Traditions of Sexaholics Anonymous

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on SA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop lusting and become sexually sober.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or Sexaholics Anonymous as a whole.

5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the sexaholic who still suffers.
6. An SA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the SA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every SA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Sexaholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. SA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Sexaholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the SA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, and TV.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

*The Twelve Steps and Traditions are adapted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. (“AAWS”).*

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## STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLE

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

In defining sobriety, we do not speak for those outside Sexaholics Anonymous. We can only speak for ourselves. Thus, for the married sexaholic, sexual sobriety means having no form of sex with self or with persons other than the spouse. In SA's sobriety definition, the term "spouse" refers to one's partner in a marriage between a man and a woman. For the unmarried sexaholic, sexual sobriety means freedom from sex of any kind. And for all of us, single and married alike, sexual sobriety also includes progressive victory over lust (*Sexaholics Anonymous*, 191-192).

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

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

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



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

If you think you may have problems with sex or lust addiction, we invite you to join us at an SA meeting. Look for Sexaholics Anonymous in your local phone directory, call SA International Central Office toll free (in the USA) at 866-424-8777, or visit our web site at [sa.org](http://sa.org). Online meetings and remote contacts are also available.

Additional copies of this pamphlet and a literature list can be ordered from:

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