

SO, YOU'RE
LEAVING PRISON?



Introduction

If you are leaving prison or jail, and are a Sexaholic, there is hope for you. This is because the fellowship of Sexaholics Anonymous (SA) is here to help you. If your offense is a sexual offense, all the more reason to throw yourself into SA with all your force. If you were working the SA Program while incarcerated, you have learned something of yourself in prison. But whatever your circumstances, you must now adjust to a society in which sexual offenders are often misunderstood and face numerous obstacles. You will probably have to register as a sex offender. Our experience with probation and parole officers tells us you must be vigilant and take seriously the conditions of your release. Our stories do vary. The challenges for those who reenter society will be harder for some than for others.

This pamphlet offers help for the sexaholic receiving parole. The goal is to connect the soon-to-be released prisoner with local SA members and ideally former offenders in the fellowship. Because many parole officers are unfamiliar with SA, we've included a section addressed to them. After the introduction, we have two main sections: "Practical Guidelines", and "For your Parole Officer." We understand your concerns as you prepare for life on the outside. We assure you that hope awaits those in recovery.

Adjusting to post-prison life can seem like a never-ending ordeal of alienation,



frustration, and loneliness. Your new freedom may prove to be a tough adjustment. You may be used to the regimen of prison, being told what to do and when. Now you must learn to set your own priorities. Be certain to include SA meetings, staying in contact with your sponsor and members of your group, and working the Steps.

Working the 12 Step program of SA is vital to your recovery. Working a strong Program has led many a sexaholic through the prison gates and into meeting rooms and real freedom. Simply put, working the Steps means living free from lust today. Working a strong Program stands between us and the problems that result from relapse. Leaning on our local SA group helps to remind us, while others may be unsympathetic, we do not have to go it alone.

We usually must find a place to live and to work. There are numerous obstacles such as employers and landlords, public registry, apathy from family and former friends. We are probably court mandated to report to correctional, parole and probation officers. We will probably have to register in states, counties and municipalities. We may face additional restrictions on our movement and whereabouts. Some of us may be required to wear an ankle bracelet. Despite these difficulties, if we stay sober, accept life on life's terms, and adhere to the conditions of our parole and probation, we can make the adjustment to life on the outside.

Life offers us a regular reminder of our

powerlessness over outside circumstances and troubles. Surrender and prayer to our Higher Power helps us to cope and remain hopeful, serene and sober, regardless of our conditions.

Practical Guidelines

Learning to work our recovery program and learning to rejoin the society present major life challenges. Meeting these challenges teaches us the essential value of careful planning. We begin to see each challenge as an opportunity for personal growth, rather than as a problem to complain about.

If we have experienced sobriety in prison, we redouble our recovery work, once we rejoin society. If we are new to SA, we overcome our fear or mistrust, and throw ourselves into this program. Remember: Lust is patient and very cunning. Staying sober today requires regular contact with the fellowship and our Higher Power. Day by day, we rely on prayer, meditation, Step work, and meetings. Addiction and obsessive thinking severely limit our free choices. By knowing where we are, who we are, what we are, and by relying on the fellowship, we avoid slipping back into our disease of isolation, depression, and despair.

As we face the challenges of our new life, we can imagine someone in a situation we just left. When we see an SA member arrested or being sent to jail or prison, we can be of help to that member, by offering



our experience, strength and hope. We are in a unique position to help. Service work, and the unity of the fellowship, is the path of recovery.

Effective SA recovery includes:

- 1) Attending meetings
- 2) Making program phone calls
- 3) Reading SA (and AA) literature
- 4) Selecting a sponsor
- 5) Working the Steps
- 6) Using the tools of recovery to promote inner growth and shape a healthy life

Rejoining society requires planning in all areas of life, especially in:

- 1) Parole conditions
- 2) Recovery
- 3) Financial issues
- 4) Social stigma and self-esteem issues
- 5) Family and friends
- 6) Housing, transportation and employment

In many jurisdictions, you will be paroled to a half-way house, which will help you with housing, transportation, and employment. If not, please ask your parole officer or a social service case worker for assistance with these issues. One of the most important lessons we learn in recovery is that it is not a sign of weakness to ask for help. It is a sign of strength! We have finally come to a place where we accept the fact that we do not know everything, nor should we, and we ask for help. We may have to swallow our pride and

accept work which we consider beneath our abilities. We also look seriously into volunteer opportunities. Volunteer opportunities keep us busy, and help us build work skills and social skills. Finding work is important to our financial recovery. Where we can work will be subject to our parole. We will likely find restrictions as to the kind of work, location, and how we get there. Many SA parolees find themselves in similar situations. They rely on the tools of the Program.

Family issues take time. In some cases, we cannot, or should not spend time with our biological family. Even when we can, we often find ourselves reverting to old behaviors in their presence. This is natural, but every time we are wrong, we promptly admit it. Family hurts take time to heal. The best advice is to work a strong recovery program. Talk about your family issues. Learn to identify and discuss the feelings that are triggered. And be patient; healing in the family takes time, but will come to those who work at it. Friends may shun us. We do not resent their behavior, but are grateful for the friendships we do have. Here, the wisdom of the SA fellowship proves invaluable: "Prepare for the worst but work at making it better. It can be done, many have proof of this." Our fellows in SA often become our new friends. SA friendships for many are much deeper and better friendships than any we've ever experienced. Your local meeting will provide a helpful phone list of members. Remember to keep the communication lines open.



The social stigma of living as a registered sex offender may seem daunting. Getting on with life on the outside may require counseling. Support from clergy and others also help us deal with our various challenges. We are reminded time and again about our unmanageability; at these times, we turn to our support system. Talking things over with others, and with trusted members within the SA spiritual family reminds us of the dual truth: That recovery is an inside job; ours is a 'we' program, not a 'me' program. Many of us deal with these issues on a daily basis. Life goes on and we learn to accept our past and the things today which we cannot change. An attitude of grateful acceptance is our best ally.

Staying out of debt means we make a detailed expense budget and income budget. We seek income from paid work, social security, retirement accounts, religious institution assistance, welfare and other government assistance; but, we also remember that it is fear of financial insecurity that is our worst enemy. Release from this fear is one of the promises of working our Program. Fear is the enemy, not poverty. We learn that we only have to take care of today. If we are hungry today, and the cupboards are bare, we swallow our pride and ask for food. Or, we accept hunger as an opportunity to fast and pray for food tomorrow. Fear is the deceiver; the enemy is not poverty or circumstance. By working our Program, we learn to trust God and accept our lot. And we gain the courage to take the steps to find work and other financial support. We ask for help and trust in God.

It is important to remember that many of us have multiple addictions. As recovering addicts, we can be sober in one area while looking for some kind of escape in another. “Sober” doesn’t mean “cured.” We learn to live life on life’s terms. What we have is a daily reprieve, “contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition.”

It is important to understand the legalities and conditions of your parole. It is essential and bears repeating: Follow each and every rule, to the letter, no matter what. Give your parole officer, family, and your friends every reason to trust you. In addition to fellow members, locate mentors among your religious affiliation, the Veteran’s Administration, and other charitable bodies who are willing to help. Find local non-profit agencies that provide vocational services and career counseling. Freedom on the outside means taking responsibility. When life gets overwhelming, remember to ask for help.

Above all, make good use of the patience you learned in prison. By taking the first right action, other actions follow. Practicing humility and gratitude are gifts of recovery. It works if you work it. One Day at a Time. These are not just phrases; putting them to good use on a daily basis, we become living proof of the promises of recovery.

Depending on the situation, some parole officers may not allow you to attend or start meetings. If this is the case, follow the rules. If certain places are off limits,



you will be able to meet your sponsor or trusted servants in a home, a public place or informally on a regular basis. We have learned that these restrictions are not barriers to working your Program. Finding yourself in this position, you may want to ask your parole officer to read the next section of this pamphlet.

For the Parole Officer and Community Reintegration Personnel

Sexaholics Anonymous (SA) is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover. SA is a recovery program based on the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). Regular meetings are a core component of the program. Meetings are conducted autonomously by individual groups in cities and towns throughout North America and in more than 40 countries internationally. Like AA, SA members respect the principle of anonymity. What is said in meetings and in private conversations among members is kept confidential. Members openly share the program of recovery but not the names of the individuals in it. Anonymity does not mean we cover up crimes nor fail to protect individuals in danger of harm. We do not monitor the activity of our members. However, we respect, and follow the law. Anonymity means we keep our names out of public view.

We acknowledge that there is still considerable controversy over the nature of sexual addiction. The trend of research

on the subject reveals that the concept of what constitutes addiction is evolving. We speak from our own experience in recovery. When dealing with sex or lust, we persist in offensive or dangerous behaviors despite negative consequences. Like the alcoholic, who is powerless over alcohol, we cannot stop once we are addicted to lust. This is sometimes referred to as compulsive behavior, or a habitual way of thinking. Whatever you call it, our experience is that applying the Twelve Steps of AA to our problem has given us the reprieve we've long sought.

There are several "sex" based recovery programs. What sets SA apart from the others is that our central tenet is "lust is the driving force behind our sexual acting out, and true sobriety includes progressive victory over lust." In addition to the realization that our core addiction is to lust, we also have a sobriety definition that we share in common. It is "No sex with self. No sex with others except the spouse, and progressive victory over lust."

Our meetings are where we share our experience. We find that we cannot successfully recover without the support of other sexaholics. We find that we first stop our sexual acting out in all forms and seek a spiritual solution for our problem. Then, we thoroughly examine our character and progressively seek to change patterns which led us to resort to fantasy and sexual acting out in the first place. Our goal is healing from life-long practices of unhealthy thoughts and actions. In



meetings, by leading with our weakness, we discover acceptance by our peers and begin to accept ourselves. We were only as sick as our secrets, and discover that we are no longer bound by them. Having a peer group that understands our worst thinking allows us to surrender our “stinkin’ thinkin,” our lust, before it materializes.

SA is neither treatment nor therapy. SA is a program of sexaholics recovering from their own sexaholism by working with others and helping them to recover. And just like AA, our experience is that it works. We focus on finding solutions to our problem behaviors. Many SA members are also involved in various therapies. Many therapists have found the SA program to be an excellent complement to therapy.

SA is a spiritual program, but it is not a religion. We refer to a “Higher Power” and “God as we understand Him,” but no belief in God is ever necessary to become a member. Atheists and agnostics find recovery in this and other Twelve Step programs.

Most meetings are only open to those seeking their own personal sexual recovery. We advise newcomers to attend at least six meetings before deciding if SA is for them. We ask newcomers to identify themselves at the beginning of the meeting by first name only. We also recommend that newcomers find a temporary sponsor to answer their many questions. The sponsor is someone who has likely gone through these issues before, and reassures the newcomer through their own experience, strength and hope.

Member's Shares

Miles S.

My name is Miles S. and I have been sober since January 2010. I have been released after 20 years in prison. My biggest obstacle has been myself. Once I worked the Steps around my fear of failure, I was free from the fear, able to set about accomplishing my daily tasks. It gets better, as they say. Every day I act with intention to make it on the outside on parole. As to housing, I found state run programs that helped me. I do struggle sometimes with life on life's terms. Being out on my own can feel as if every day is square one. In my youth I learned to fear others, and my addiction led me to distrust authority. But I now have learned to trust my Higher Power, who works through others. People come into my life and provide help. They tell me I am very determined to make it on the outside, and I have found friends, for the first time, who offer me what I need to stay sober. One person knew of a job. I have found work and an apartment. The state has provided me with clothes, food, and housing. I was given a bus pass to ride to and from work. I often take walks. I know prison life was hard compared to enduring the Midwest winter. My recovery helps me realize I am a survivor. Through my contacts, I have made appointments with secondhand stores and with new job interviews. SA recovery has allowed me to see that I am incapable of doing these things on



my own. I now trust God. The program has opened my eyes as to why I need to learn to trust others. I am determined to stay sober. My faith practice and the fellowship help me to stay determined. I was grateful to have a Higher Power that I call God, who is real and works in my life. With every setback, I recognize that I am moving forward. I have no interest in lust, and even though I am tempted sometimes, I do not have to go back to my addiction. My life revolves around church, work, and the program. I attend a 12 Step meeting in my church. They gave me a birthday cake on my five year anniversary. In addition, I attend phone meetings, help the newcomer, and sponsor prisoners by mail. Connection with the fellowship has helped put me on the right path. I am proud to call my sponsor and fellow SA's my friends and let them know I am progressing in recovery. My life is now about being there for the suffering sexaholic.

Anonymous wrote the following:

My first challenge upon release was dealing with choices. I had forgotten how many choices exist outside of prison. In prison, there are no choices in clothes or routine, and we had only two choices about meals. Hours after my release, I accompanied my parents into a large store where the variety of products, styles, colors, and loud advertising displays came close to overwhelming my mind.

My parole officer was in charge of all the sex offenders in my county and, as is typical, she had many cases to handle. Even among those familiar with the system, a prevailing belief is that there

is a high re-offending rate among sex offenders. Statistical data from the Bureau of Prisons shows otherwise. In spite of this, many people continue to treat it as if true. When I encounter someone new, I behave as if this person knows I am on parole/probation. By obeying the terms of my probation, I give my parole officer one less problem to worry about, and she appreciates that.

After release, I was underemployed for years. I could not return to being a teacher and stubbornly looked only for jobs in education. I could only get positions that were variations on low-paying adult-education jobs such as GED-training. Eventually I realized I could use my teacher training in other jobs. In time, I no longer had to list my felony on applications, and now I make a comfortable living as a technical editor. There was much for me to resent about my probation and inclusion on a sex-offender registry for life. Step Twelve reminds me, "...practice these principles in all our affairs." I am powerless over these requirements, I accept that this is how it is right now, and I release the resentment to my Higher Power. I remember that I am dealing with the consequences of my actions.

Following the suggestions listed in the Big Book of AA, from SA, and this brochure helped my transition to life after prison: Go to meetings, work the Steps, and become a trusted servant. What works best for me is to remember that the 12 Steps change how I think and behave. My former self and my actions earned me a place in



prison. While in prison, I embraced my 12 Step Program. I followed the suggestions of my sponsor and members after release. As a result, each day I am grateful for the blessings of this “new” life in recovery.

Merv D, writing in the June 2012 issue of Essay (our quarterly publication) says it best:

“I am a convicted felon and a registered sex offender, and ...I am thankful that there is such a fellowship and that I am able to attend two meetings a week, with a group of wonderful people who I can call my friends. ...nothing helped me much until I came to SA ...I knew I was in the right place after that first meeting! I started attending SA meetings regularly, reading the literature, and working the Steps with my sponsor. I was beginning to learn a lot about myself.

Today I am a better person and much more comfortable around people I don't know. I make an effort to be more positive and less judgmental. I don't get angry as often as before and when I do, I surrender me and the anger goes away. ...Thank you God, for this wonderful program of recovery!”

Conclusion

Every person has dignity: no matter what their station in life, economic status, addictions, illness, no matter what they've done. You have value and are worthy of respect. Those of us who have recovered believe that we were powerless over

lust and our lives were unmanageable. In working the Steps, our blurred vision changed, and we saw more clearly the wreckage of our past. We set about to right the wrongs and live a spirit filled life. Things got better. We felt healthier. Those around us saw a miraculous change. We realized that God and the 12 Steps of SA were doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Contact Sexaholics Anonymous:

Mail: Sexaholics Anonymous
Correctional Facilities Committee
P.O. Box 3565
Brentwood, TN 37024-3565
USA

Phone: 866-424-8777

Fax: 615-370-0882

Email: saico@sa.org

Or: sacfc1@sa.org

Web: www.sa.org



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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SA 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. Online meetings and remote contacts are also available.

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

SAICO
P.O. Box 3565
Brentwood, TN 37024-3565
Phone: 615-370-6062
Fax: 615-370-0882
E-mail: saico@sa.org
Website: <http://www.sa.org>