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Dear Friends in SA,

Part of my responsibility from the beginning has been to observe and communicate to the membership at large the major currents flowing through our fellowship as they have emerged over time. I'd like to share with you now what I feel the most important of these is today. I would be derelict if I did not.

Two things are happening simultaneously: 1) We are discovering the real problem—the true nature and power of our disease, and 2) we are discovering the only solution that works—God, in and through the Twelve Steps.

In the beginning, we thought we had the 12 and 12 handed to us on a silver platter—ready made. It turns out that really isn't true. We are having to discover the hard way, as did the original AAs—each one of the Twelve Steps for ourselves—through our own experience. And experience for us has been trial and error, failure and success.

I believe we are just beginning to discover the First Step today: For the true sexaholic, in our own strength, victory over lust is impossible. It is a super-powerful disease, at least as powerful as alcoholism ever was and with indications it is even more so. We're discovering people can't get sexually sober by trying to do so—try as they might. So rather than having "arrived," we find ourselves at the real beginning—Step One powerlessness over lust. That's where the Fellowship of SA is today.

When we read AA history, we discover that the early members of those first formative years were what they called "last gaspers," those who had "hit bottom," with nothing left but death or insanity. The Twelve Steps were born out of the experience of those who could not stop drinking—people who had tried every imaginable means to stop or control it.

Most people coming into SA today seem to be at the beginning of their desperation journey! They thus begin trying to control their sexual acting out after they come into SA! And many are still experimenting with how they can "control and enjoy their drinking." They haven't hit bottom! In my opinion, this is proving to be SA's greatest problem today—members who haven't and don't want to come to the end of their "drinking," members who don't really want to stop all forms of acting out and have victory over lust. (And yet we have people giving interviews to the media when it's still contrary to national group conscience—as though we "had it made.")

The evidence for this observation has been progressively mounting from the beginning but in the last year or so has been increasingly calling for our attention. And it is coming from all quarters. This is the one universal problem of overriding concern throughout SA as a whole today.

Early this year I felt I had to somehow communicate this to the fellowship, and when I was invited to the Planning Retreat on March 9th in Seattle, I felt I would open the subject there. Thus, I asked if I might present a paper on SA Inventory to those planning the June get-together. I have enclosed that same paper and meeting format with this letter, making a few changes to reflect feedback from the various groups around the

country on which it was first tested.

Since his paper takes a tough look at what might be wrong in SA, I'd like to preface it by calling our attention to what I think is right with SA. The outstanding miracle is that men and women who are sex drunks are getting sober—and more of them than ever before. And considering how impossible it is for the true sexaholic to have victory over the obsession and compulsion, it tells me Someone is doing things for us we alone cannot do. New groups are forming all the time. Response to the literature is overwhelmingly positive. People want true sexual sobriety as we say we must have it for ourselves, and the stronger the stand we take on sexual sobriety, the better it seems to work. There is an increasing awareness of SA's presence in the world. Given where we were in 1981, all this is something that boggles the mind. All this convinces me that the principles on which SA is based, and our stand on sobriety in particular, are sound. Thank God!

But— This must not blind our eyes to seeing the truth about ourselves. Just as it is necessary for individuals to take personal inventory and make that known—Steps Four and Five—so I feel it is necessary for individual groups to inventory themselves and for SA as a whole to do the same. For this reason, I am making available the paper on SA Inventory I presented in Seattle March 9th. I am aware that in so doing, I am taking a stand on the principles of our program's Steps and Traditions.

I am also enclosing the suggested meeting format that is mentioned in this paper; it attempts to help put the principle into practice in our meetings. Will you please consider trying this out and letting me know the results? And how do you feel about these issues (those in this letter and paper)? How can we fix what's wrong?

**It's time for us to ask the hard question: What Is SA? Will it be just another "support group," supporting the disease, or will it be a Fellowship, under God, of sober, recovering sexaholics?**

The entire experience of the miracle of AA is summed up in the opening passage in chapter 5 of the AA Big Book; and this, I believe, best sums up the truth of what we're discovering the hard way in SA today:

- (a) We are sexaholic and cannot manage lust.
- (b) No human power (including our own) can relieve our obsession.
- (c) God can and will if He is sought.

There seems to be no other way for us, as it was for them! So don't despair—those of you who are having trouble. It does work; and it can work for you too—if you'll only surrender to those three simple abc's!

*Yours in sobriety & the grace of God,*  
*Roy*

## SA Inventory

### Something's Wrong

Let me share my own personal experience in SA with you to inventory where I think we are today.

At the very beginning, I thought that all I had to do was get some sex drunks together in a room around a table and start talking and great things would happen, as in AA. After all, wasn't that what was happening in AA? Didn't people get around a table and talk; and look at how many sober people there were in AA!

I thought it was so wonderful to just be able to talk about my malady with others of my kind who could talk about theirs. I thought people would simply get sober automatically! They hear about SA. They come to a meeting. They find the answer they've been looking for. They get sober. Right? Wrong! That was 1977 and 1978.

Later, we still had no literature and no Statement on sobriety, and I must have thought that just having the 12 Steps there on a piece of paper and saying we were using the same program AA did would make it happen, just like in AA. Right? Wrong! Within six months, SA was finished. Kaput! That was 1979. The second false start.

Then, learning from those failures, we got our Statement on sobriety and our brochure and finally, even our own book, Sexaholics Anonymous. This would surely do it, we thought. We not only had literature now, but we had many groups around the country and things were beginning to liven up a bit. Dear Abby had put us on the map, and the media got wind of us, and suddenly we were legit and on our way. Right? Not so right... All that publicity and influx of inquirers and newcomers didn't help us get sober or stay sober any more than before! **Mere numbers did not bring sobriety or recovery!**

And so it is today. Thousands of people hear about SA and inquire. Hundreds read the literature and say they want in. And hundreds come to meetings. And they keep coming. And keep leaving, many as soon as they come in. Very few get and stay sober.

People come in. They start talking about what they've done and are doing. They may even read and flash on the literature. "O wow!" they say. They may even abstain for awhile—with some it's easy, with others, hard—but then most go back to resorting to their drug, either dropping out of SA or still attending meetings. With many of those who still come to meetings and don't get sober, something typical seems to happen. Lo and behold, meetings seem to help them feel better about being sex drunks! They keep coming back, and they keep talking about how they're acting out or thinking out, and we keep patting them on the back encouraging them. We even let them hold office, lead meetings, and vote in business meetings. And they keep coming back and are even heard to say, "You know, I don't beat myself over the head with guilt now (when I act or think out). Coming to these meetings is helping me feel better about myself." And we say, "Keep coming back; it works!" How often are we supporting their disease? And what are we doing to SA? Something's wrong.

A good example is what happened recently in a meeting. A newcomer was there for his third meeting; he raised his hand to talk and the leader let him. He told us he had been sober a week and a half—no prostitutes or masturbation. He's been going with his girlfriend for over a year. They had sex twice in this last week and a half, but he said he felt better about himself. He said, "This is only my third meeting, and I'm not sure if

you'll call me sober..." Then he stopped and looked around for some response. Getting none, he continued, "I think I am." (Very interesting. You see, the other side of him knew he was pulling a con job on himself, and we let him.)

One who was six weeks sober responded by saying, "I think feeling better about yourself is a sign of sobriety." (How tolerant and loving! The AAs have a word for that that isn't so tolerant; it's because they've learned the hard way over the years that tough love and the sobriety imperative are the only way to go with addicts like us!)

How many of us who've been around SA for a year or more see through that? The booze was talking! Third meeting and he didn't know which end was up, but he was telling us all about what sobriety is! Do you see it? What's deceptive is he doesn't look or sound drunk—to look at him. But suddenly the spirit of the meeting was infected with weakness; the power was gone. I wanted to get out of there as fast as I could.

What we should have done was screen this man before he ever came to his first meeting and tell him our stand on sobriety. I think we can save ourselves this debilitating sickness—this consumptive quality in meetings—by being hard-nosed about the sobriety imperative. And for those who've been coming to meetings and where obviously, after time it becomes apparent they really don't want sobriety, the best thing we can do for them and our fellowship is to suggest that they stop coming until they've come to the end of themselves and want sobriety as we have come to want it. Listen to what they say in AA: "Why don't you go back out there and try some controlled drinking for awhile?"

Something's wrong. How many really sober members do we have in SA? How many do you have in your group—people sober six months or over according to our statement of sobriety? And don't count those who have turned into periodics. ("Well, I haven't acted out my real obsession now for five months. I may masturbate once in awhile to relieve the tension or have wet dreams, but I'm not doing all those nasty things I used to." Do we really swallow that rationalization?) SA has been going nationally now since the latter part of 1981. How many truly sober people are there as a result? Not how many meetings a week we have. Not how many we have coming to meetings. Not how many First Steps inventories we've heard. **How many truly sober men and women do we have?** People who've stopped acting and thinking out? How many with six months; how many with one year or more of continuous uninterrupted sexual sobriety? And what is the quality of meetings in SA? The quality of our lives? What's really going on? **I think the June convention should include a time of honest inventory of SA from top to bottom.**

Let's say a new SA meeting is starting up and I'm eager to attend. (I need to be with people who want what I want.) We have our first meetings, and there is great hope and expectancy. I feel good about going. I freely share the frailest parts of myself because there seems to be something in the meeting—that spirit of honesty at depth—that draws me out. Others do the same. It's catching. There's a God-hunger—a hungering after rightness, a collective, progressive reaching upward and outward. Sobriety develops and grows. There is victory over defects and joy, a spirit of oneness and belonging. I am progressively able to see, reveal, and get power over my defects. I keep going back because I want to. The meeting has great drawing power. AA calls it "attraction."

Then, newcomers start coming in. Most identify as sexaholics, but some seem to lack that certain "something" the others have—Surrender. They haven't come to the end of themselves yet, and all kinds of symptoms reveal this. Some will start questioning our stand on sobriety, some subtly, some openly. The point they may question is really not the issue; they may argue for masturbation, a "relationship" (loving and committed, of course!), a lover, or whatever. What they're really doing is trying to "control and enjoy their drinking." They discover it's impossible, in our own strength, to be sexually sober in thinking and acting out; or, they don't want to pay the price. Week after week they "keep coming back" because we tell them to and because they're able to let the sickness out—on us! And week after week they poison the meetings. What happens? I find myself dreading going back to that SA meeting! Even though I may not be able to tell you why at the time. Dread and resentment—in the one and only place I can go to live! It begins to tear me apart. And I'm not the only one...

Another situation is where there are those who keep coming back and talking about their acting or thinking out or their flirting with lust. We all seem to learn by testing our limits, but these play it back, not to send it away, but to continue doing it! And we let them talk! And Lust is having a field day inside Sexaholics Anonymous meetings!

Another common phenomenon in groups—new or old—is the appearance of our old friend Resentment. He used to be our friend, and some of us hang onto that "loving and committed relationship" as long as possible before getting burned. Others seem to get infected once they start getting "sober" (dry would be a better word). Switching addictions. Resentment may be against an authority figure or person having group responsibility, or it may burn in a "sober" member against anyone for any reason. It can capture anyone, drunk or sober! Again, the particular issue is irrelevant; the person has to stay drunk on something; resentment is just as powerful a drug as lust; so he or she must resent. Resentment is having a field day in Sexaholics Anonymous!

There are still others who are therapeutically or analytically oriented and who cannot seem to divorce that kind of thinking from the true and simple practice of the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions. They take as much time as we'll let them have in meetings digging back into why they are what they are and what or who "caused" them to be that way, going on and on; and of course, it never ends, because there's no healing there. They don't seem to understand that the true 12-Step program does not mix psychology with it, and they resent any who would challenge their analytical intellectualizations (look how deadly those very words are!) and try to wean them away from it to the simple action program that is ours. It appears from AA's experience and ours that the psychological approach in our program can cut God out by making knowledge the Source of power and healing. It isn't.

Insobriety, Lust, and Resentment are infectious. They poison the atmosphere; they are the dominant "vibe" when present in a meeting and swamp out the divine presence. They destroy unity, erode the sobriety imperative, and invite into our midst a host of other ills. They have actually destroyed SA meetings. They can destroy SA. We countenance these in our meetings, and pretty soon who wants to go to meetings! Not me! Not those who want recovery and healing! Who wants to go to those meetings? I'll tell you who—the drunks! Men and women drunk on lust and/or resentment. They need that "supportive" environment in which they can dump their disease! They're the ones who want to keep coming back! It's working for them; they keep dumping so they can keep acting out without guilt! Until no one's left to play those sick games on. Then they move off to some other meeting that will let that stuff in.

There are other problems, like people participating who are on mood-altering drugs; and there is the problem of the psychotics and criminal court referrals. But these are not too common yet and I won't get into them now.

When do I dread going to SA meetings? When the disease has the power. When knowledge or ego has the power; when hunger for rightness is not in the air and God is not there.

When sobriety and honesty at depth have the power and God is there, I enter an aura of strength. A light is shining there, and it pulls me out of my darkness and into the light, into the right. I am pulled up, higher than I can go by myself. I am truly part of, and the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Something's wrong in SA. How do we fix it?

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### The Sobriety Imperative

An interesting thing happened recently. A new SA group was started in a city by two AA members who were already into sexual sobriety—one a couple of months sober and the other nine months. In their second or third meeting they tried a new format, where everyone, on introducing themselves by first name and as sexaholic, also gave their length of sexual sobriety, which was defined as in the SA literature. Then, it was explained that only those who had 30 days or more sobriety would participate, and the leader called on only those sober members. The meeting was closed in the normal fashion and then reopened immediately for those with less than 30 days and newcomers to tell where they were at. Sober members responded as called for from program principles. The model for this format was from AA.

This format was subsequently tried in a couple of other SA groups with immediate success. One variation was to shift formats within the meeting instead of closing the meeting after sober members participated. Suddenly, these were transformed meetings! And those not sober 30 days were heard to say that they felt better about it, that it was stronger that way. One man said it gave him an added incentive to get sober. There was strength there. The sobriety imperative was undergirding the meeting; it had a solid base. And those who had admitted they were starting to dread coming to meetings said they couldn't wait to come back. **Something was right.** The sobriety imperative was operating, it had the power. (Reports coming in from groups trying out this new type format are all positive so far.)

Do we want to let people in who don't want sobriety, and do we want unsober members poisoning meetings? Let's look at the analogy in AA. How many of you have been in an AA meeting when a "wet one" walks in? I have—many times. Often, the wet drunk will want to talk—how they love to talk. But sober recovering alcoholics don't like to hear it and won't hear it. Period! They're very intolerant of that. Matter of fact, no one's more intolerant of a talkative wet drunk than a sober alkie. Why? The booze is talking, that's why. And nobody but another drunk likes to hear booze talk. Sober alkies who are used to talking program can smell that kind of talk a mile away. They've been there. The way they handle it in AA is beautiful. They know that the best they can do for the guy is get him a cup of coffee, sit next to him, and suggest (strongly sometimes) that he shut up and listen.

Is the case of a practicing sex drunk any different? What makes it appear different is that the person is usually well-groomed, attractive, articulate, intelligent, and even educated. He's not slurring his speech and reeking with alcohol. But what's the difference—on the inside? He's still inebriated with lust, still drinking lust, still "out of it;" and the "booze" is still talking! Why should we be any more tolerant of him spouting his diseased ego in a meeting than of the talk of the alcoholic? Think about it.

It's so easy in SA for us to tend not to see this or to overlook it. But it's hurting us terribly. I think it's one of the big reasons we have so little true sobriety and are not yet ready to carry the message. Many of our meetings aren't that great yet. Maybe most. (How do we know unless we do an honest inventory of ourselves?) The power isn't there!

Now we're all defective; it turns out there seems to be something drastically wrong with each one of us aside from our sexual obsession. Tolerating these defects in one another is one thing—that's what love and recovery are all about. But tolerating anti-sobriety, anti-program talk and behavior is quite another. In my opinion, we can't tolerate it and survive for very long.

How can I hate lust in myself (as I must do to recover) and not hate it in others? I must become increasingly intolerant of lust in my life. That is a FACT for us. I think we must become increasingly intolerant of lust and insobriety in our meetings. I take my stand on this. Who is with me?

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Can it be that something as simple as implementing the sobriety imperative in the way we conduct SA meetings can make such a difference in meeting quality as it has when we've tested it experimentally so far? If so, I have an amends to make to the entire fellowship. I've sensed this was true all along, but was too much of a people pleaser to take a vocal stand. I was afraid of people's reactions. FEAR! No longer, by the grace of God! I've seen too much damage to SA to be silent any longer.

Let me air my feelings, just as another member: I don't want Seattle in June to be just another SA meeting where pitch after pitch, hour after hour we have to sit and listen to drunks who are not in recovery! I'm very intolerant of meetings like that, and others are telling me they are too. I want to do what others do—get up and leave! We were so people-pleasingly "tolerant" (weak) of the drunks dominating the time and spirit of our meetings in our previous conventions. And we are so people-pleasingly "tolerant" of them doing the same and much worse in our own meetings. **We have better than that to give now.** Let's uphold the sobriety imperative in our meetings like AA does! I'm convinced God will honor that.

Here's what I'm suggesting:

1. Let's try out the new format and give it a test. I've enclosed a copy. Please report on the results.
2. As voted unanimously in Phoenix, let's read our "What Is a Sexaholic and What is Sexual Sobriety" in every meeting or at least the core paragraph defining sobriety.
3. Let's hold fast to our Third Tradition. There is a requirement for SA membership, and it is that the person want sexually sobriety as we have defined it for the sexaholic.

4. Let's advise inquirers of this requirement. Screen them before they get to a meeting. It will turn some away, as it should, but it will also turn a lot of trouble away.

5. Let's take an SA inventory, including a sobriety census, at June at the convention.

6. Let's use this new format and approach in the convention in June. Set time limits for sharing and keep them! Let's only have members with senior sobriety leading meetings and not select leaders on the whim of the moment. The most important decision concerning any given SA meeting is who will lead that meeting. And leaders should lead, and not be at the mercy of the "booze talking." Let the power be there, not weakness and accommodation. There are many in SA around the country now with true long-term sobriety who are in recovery. Let's have truly sober, recovering, experienced, tested trusted servants committed to the principles of SA leading meetings and participating in our get-togethers. Let's not let the drunks dissipate our power and strength. A get-together on this scale is a very special occasion, not just another SA meeting—weak at that. There's too much at stake now. We've been paying too high a price for weakness.

7. Maybe we should start giving chips for 30, 60, 90 days, six months, and cakes for one year and more of sobriety. Make it a special deal, like AA does. This helps create a sobriety consciousness. We could do this in June.

8. Let's start working the STEPS. In our meetings! That's the best place. It's not just talk around the table. It's SOBRIETY and the STEPS!

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Listen to what someone wrote after one group went through one of these agonizing encounters with a couple of members who were tolerated for months with great destructive effects on the group. It was a proposed plea to newcomers:

"We don't know where you're coming from. We have uncovered ourselves to you, but you don't want what we want. We cherish and need the spirit of love and unity and common purpose springing from our common problem and common desire for sobriety and recovery. We dare not let this be jeopardized by any who may still want to "control and enjoy" their lust." If we allow a spirit to poison our meetings that is alien to our hunger for sobriety and spiritual growth, we let in a destructive force. Our common welfare must come first; personal recovery depends on our unity as a group. A threat to the good spirit of our meetings is a threat to our sobriety, recovery, and very lives. We want you to understand this."