

SCA DC NEWSLETTER

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By SCA Metro DC Intergroup

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My Story

By Dave M.

If there's a single slogan that captures the span of my recovery to this point, it's progress not perfection. Slow progress, although not as instantly recognizable, has had a cumulative effect on my life that's beginning to amount to big changes. Today, I notice some of the promises coming true in my life. Slowly, self-pity, selfishness, and the feeling of uselessness are starting to disappear. Slowly, my attitudes are starting to change. Slowly, my fears are beginning to fade. Today I have a developing faith and hope that I could never imagine possible in the depths of my addiction.

I first came into SCA in 1997 through the recommendation of my partner who learned of the program through a local periodical. At the time, I was engaging in anonymous sex with multiple men on a weekly basis and taking more risks. I was beginning to cross sexual boundaries I had set for myself. Boundaries I never thought I would cross. What began in childhood as exhibitionism and graduated to restroom sex in college had now consumed me and was jeopardizing my life on a daily basis. I was crippled by fear. Fear of contracting STDs and passing them on to my partner. Fear of arrest. Fear of loneliness. Fear of death. I came to the rooms desperate for help and empathy. I found what I was looking for but I wasn't yet willing to accept it.

I left recovery, my relationship ended, and my addiction escalated. I continued to engage in restroom sex but also began to frequent public parks and internet chat sites. It was at a public park that I met my next two partners. Both were drug addicts and both allowed me the opportunity to act out my sex addiction inside a committed relationship. I was monogamous with my partners and truly believed that I found what was missing in my life; a partner that was exciting and attractive enough to keep me sober. When the relationships abruptly ended I found out I was wrong. The relationships were void of intimacy and dysfunctional enough to keep me interested. I soon went right back to acting out.

I spent the next several years in and out of SCA. It was during this time that I experienced significant and memorable lows. A typical day consisted of waking up, getting into work late, acting

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Exploring Long Term Recovery

By Jim S.

A couple of years ago, as I approached my 10-year anniversary of S-recovery, I looked around the rooms and realized that of the hundreds of people I had gotten to know over the past decade, only about 8 were still in the program! Where had everyone gone? Some people had moved out of the area. Of those I had kept up with, some had become connected with S-recovery in their new city, but many had not. Those I had kept up with who still lived in town had in many cases gotten involved in a new relationship, a new job, their church, a volunteer activity, etc. Their new life left no time to attend meetings or to work a program.

Even though there are many success stories in the literature of all 12-Step programs, featuring inspiring true cases of addicts who have gotten sober and lived happily ever after, these stories remind me of the diet ads that contain the disclaimer, "Results not typical." It's true that "It works if you work it," but that's a big "IF." I myself have dropped out of some other 12-Step fellowships that I definitely belong in also, but feel tremendous resistance to. Fortunately, I have stayed with SCA for more than 12 years.

Since this is a selfish program, my real motivation for asking these questions was this: Would I fall into a trap of allowing other priorities interfere with my S-recovery? Would I allow a disagreement with another member or a group conscience decision derail my recovery? I'm sure that if I did drop out, everything would go fine for a while. At first, I would feel relieved to not have to go to meetings and share uncomfortable feelings and struggles. I wouldn't have to check in with a sponsor and get honest. But knowing me, it would only be a matter of time before curiosity would get the better of me and I'd be back to my old acting out venues, perhaps at first only to "see how things are going." Then would come forays into acting out behavior. Powerlessness would soon kick in and my life would do a familiar downward spiral into uncontrollable, dangerous and perhaps illegal behavior which would ultimately make my life unmanageable.

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SCA NEWS & EVENTS

Service Work: Planning groups are forming for the SCA Spring Workshop and the Fall Retreat. These are both great service opportunities! For Spring, call Jim S. For Fall, call Brad E. or Derek S.

SCA Conference: SCA NY is holding its annual conference on May 2-3. More info is at http://www.sca-recovery.org/cities/newyork/special_events.php.

out in the restrooms at lunch and then again after work, acting out at the gyms after work and the parks or on the internet early into the next morning. Though never officially arrested or tried, I was stopped and questioned by the police on several occasions for public sex. My exhibitionism escalated and my unwelcome advances were often met with physical threats. I became paralyzed by my fear of arrest and contracting HIV. I was significantly underachieving at my job and neglecting my personal life due to the addiction. I was out of control and completely powerless.

It was during this time that I met my current partner. When we met in March of 2004 I was mostly unavailable for a relationship. I continued to act out and put both our lives in jeopardy. It wasn't until August of 2005, after engaging in dangerous sex with several men, that I came clean to my partner and reentered SCA. I was experiencing the exact same powerlessness and unmanageability that brought me to SCA in 1997. I had discovered that my addiction became exponentially worse outside of recovery.

A few months after I returned to the rooms in August of 2005, I would endure two of the most difficult years of my life: my mother was diagnosed with terminal cancer, I lost my job, I spent two years traveling back and forth between Washington, D.C and Michigan to help care for my mom, and shortly after my mom's death in October of 2007 my sisters and I discovered that my father, an active alcoholic, was having an affair with my mother's hospice worker and was engaged to be married. I realize now that I could not have faced and survived these experiences without the grace and support of SCA and the people in it.

When I came back to SCA, I wrote a simple bottom line: no sex outside my primary relationship. Though I didn't achieve linear sobriety on that bottom line, I noticed my acting out behaviors gradually lessen in intensity. My sexual experiences outside my relationship were much less dangerous and much less frequent. In addition, my partner and I agreed that I would tell him about my slips. This strengthened our trust and reduced the shame and secrecy of acting out. Our relationship today is much better for it.

Towards the end of January of this year, I rewrote my bottom line to include cruising for sex or visiting acting out places. I realized I was leaving myself open to slips by hanging on to intrigue. This kept the addiction alive for me. Shutting the intrigue down has brought up lots of feelings but also allowed me to experience a deeper recovery. The urges come less often nowadays and with less intensity. I'm more in touch with my feelings on a daily basis, good or bad. I'm now two-thirds into a 90/90 and have kept my new bottom line for the past two months. Daily practice of the tools and principles of recovery keep me sane. Not long ago, I heard someone in a meeting say "we do a miracle slowly". I do believe my recovery is a miracle I take part in a day at a time. Today I practice making the next right decision and leave the rest up to God.

Back to thoughts of "where are they now?" I thought of a young man who had come to one or two SCA meetings. He was as pale as a ghost and explained that he spent all his time in sex clubs and never saw the light of day. Where is he now? Why didn't he come back? Was there some way I could have reached out to this newcomer to make him feel more welcome? I wish he had stuck around long enough to see the benefits of recovery and the Promises coming true.

I started to jot all these ideas on paper, coming up with an outline with bullet points: comparing out, frustration by slow progress, thinking we're "fixed," complacency, etc. At the following day-long SCA Spring conference, I organized a workshop in which I shared these thoughts. I received excellent suggestions and came up with a more readable draft, which I continued to share with people in SCA. This draft was approved by the DC-SCA Intergroup for submission to ISO for consideration as possible conference-approved literature in whatever form they thought best (pamphlet, chapter in the next edition of the Little Blue Book, etc.). It was also approved for distribution at the local level, with the notation that this is still in draft form and suggestions for further revisions are welcome. It has been gratifying to know that this document is being read by other SCA members in other cities, who are also giving their feedback. The themes are universal and could apply to any 12-Step fellowship and the resistance many of us feel towards embracing long-term recovery. I know that working on this document has been helpful for me and I hope that it helps others as well. This was truly a collaborative effort and I'm grateful for the opportunity to have been a part of it.

I find it helpful to realize that there is a part of me that wants to get rid of anything in my life that stands in the way of acting out, especially the program and being accountable to fellow recovering addicts. So when I'm tempted to cut back on meetings and phone calls, I know my inner addict is trying to take over my life again. Even though I've done Step 3, sometimes I find myself wanting to take my will back.

I'm truly inspired by those people who have stuck with the program. I do my best to emulate their behavior. One common theme of those who have been around for the long term is Service. I know for myself that Service helps me to be more connected to others in the program. I'm fully committed, rather than hanging out on the "fringes" of recovery (where it's very easy to disappear unnoticed!). I try to "stick with the winners" even if I have to "fake it till you make it."

Note: The piece of draft literature referred to in this article, "Avoiding Common Pitfalls on the Road to Recovery," is available at no charge. Please see your group's Literature Rep or Intergroup Rep.