

SCA DC NEWSLETTER

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By SCA Metro DC Intergroup

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My Story

By Jon C.

What did my sexual compulsive behavior cost me?

I entered the rooms of SCA back in 2001 and began my journey as a result of getting my 3rd DUI. I was never arrested for my sexual addiction, but I had placed myself in legal jeopardy many times. As a heterosexual male, with multiple addictions (sex addiction and alcoholism), I needed time to reflect, meditate and journal. My acting out behavior consisted of having anonymous sexual encounters, and started back when I was in my freshman year in college. It consisted of frequenting bars, parks, restrooms, adult bookstores, bath houses, and chat rooms.

My sexual addiction really took off when I began to travel with my job early in my career. Being away from home, from people who may discover my secrets, I was off to the races. I would go out to the bars and become a different man. What I discovered was that my alcohol addiction was a major trigger for my sexual addiction. They are so tightly integrated. My sexual addiction encounters continued into my early 40's when I began attending SCA.

Early in recovery, at the encouragement of my sponsor, I began to quantify all the associated costs of my sexual addiction, including spiritually, monetarily, physically, mentally, morally, ethically, and time; In relationships and responsibilities including family, work, personal health, energy, career; Having feelings of guilt, low self-esteem and doubts about my own personal character, and a lack of respect for myself and others.

Upon reflection and discovery, I considered the following key items: Associated guilt that I created by living a double life; Monetary costs of my acting out places and alcoholic behavior; Time spent on taking trips away from home so I could act out; The dangers associated with placing my life in physical and legal jeopardy; Increased stress levels within my body and soul due to my secret life of shame; Sleep deprivation due to my acting out behavior; Inability of making good choices as a
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Fear

By Doug P.

A while back, I wrote a snippet on Step 4. I said that step is viewed by many as the defining milestone of a program – and also that approaching it strikes terror in many of us. As I ponder the subject of fear, I can't help wondering – was it fear of doing the step that plagues us, or is it fear in and of itself? I think maybe now this is more accurate for me...fear is a predator on my soul, with a living, breathing existence all its own. It's not so much about being afraid of anything in particular, which is not always unhealthy, but it is about living in a state of fear that cripples our ability to embrace life to any meaningful degree.

How did it get that way? Was I born a wimp? Is that it – we who fear life are wimps? It starts with actually being afraid of things – will I make the baseball team? Will I pass the test? Then more insidious experiences: afraid of beatings by father, afraid of what my parents will think, afraid of the school bully. Failing to resolve these readily identifiable, tangible, experiences results in crippling our ability to resolve anything. But perhaps the worst grade of fear is that we learn from fearing fear itself – the unknown. The shroud of confusion when we live in a home environment of emotional isolation – nothing we could describe to anyone – just an atmosphere of un-acceptance, uncertainty – perhaps bits and pieces of parents' conversations that left us anxious; the paradox of the alcoholic home: one minute blessed, the next – a nightmare. We learned from such experiences to fear life itself and everything in it. Add the passage of years to those experiences, years spent in crippled living, reacting to life out of fear – and we develop a way of living as fearful beings, way beyond the point where just “dealing with it” will work. Our fear is now generalized as part of our core identity; fear is a way of life. We have long forgotten the origins. The people and circumstances that were the source of our fear are no longer available to us – we couldn't resolve anything if we wanted to.

In the book Feel the Fear and Do it Anyway, Susan Jeffers, Ph.D., describes 3 levels of fear:

1. Situation-oriented fears; things that happen that are inevitable (aging) or require action (losing weight). If we are healthy, we either deal directly with these (lose weight), or indirectly and emotionally – attitude issues – such as accepting aging and finding value in being older.
2. Ego-based fear – reflections of the inner state of mind and
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SCA NEWS & EVENTS

12 Step Study Group: A 12 Step study group is being formed and will be using Patrick Carnes' Gentle Path Through the 12 Steps. They will be meeting at the Dupont Circle Club on Thursdays 8:30-9:15 pm starting on 3/17. Once it starts, the group will be closed. If you are interested or need more information, call Phil M.

Voices Needed: As part of its outreach, DC SCA Intergroup is starting a project to record some of the stories that have been written in this newsletter on the DC-SCA voice mail message while protecting the anonymity of its members. Contact Brad E. for more information.

My Story continued

result of my unmanageable lifestyle; Being in depression and living an isolated life by playing a game with myself and others; Constantly lying to those around me by keep my secrets; Manipulating others; Wasting huge amounts of time by going to cruising places and acting out; Affecting family, personal and work relations by being so self-centered, not being present to them or to my responsibilities.

As you can see, my sexual compulsive behavior caused me great spiritual and emotional pain. After doing this inventory, I recall just sitting there in awe. Dealing with my sexual addiction became a matter of life and death. I needed to take action. My sponsor encouraged me to then quantify the costs associated with all people, places and things in my life affected by my addiction, even those that were not actively involved. I discovered my spiritual, emotional and financial loss was not just a few \$\$\$'s, but rather a significant financial drain. My higher power revealed to me that my sexual addiction was very powerful, cunning, and baffling. Yet, there was a solution, and that was God and the steps of recovery. I needed to get in the center of my SCA program and to follow the steps of recovery to the best of my abilities. I needed to become willing to take direction and listen to my higher power and others.

Bottom-line, this is about my life, my character and my finances and self-worth. I'm so extremely grateful to have completed this exercise early in recovery, and to have followed my sponsor's advice. This did not make me feel less about myself or stir up major unhealthy thoughts, guilt or shame. Rather, this enabled me to thank my higher power, this program, and the support of the fellowship of SCA and my sponsor.

Being in SCA now for over 7 years now, I can say I am truly a grateful sexually addicted man in recovery. Today the associated costs with my sexual addition are minimal. I know that I need to remain humble and work a daily program remembering that my sex addict is out there, and 'sneaky' is constantly inviting me to fall and enter into my bottom-line behavior. Yet, for today I choose not to go there. I choose to use the tools of recovery. I choose to make good decisions. My desire is to never become physically, mentally, morally and monetarily bankrupt again as a result of my sexual compulsive behavior. For this, I'll keep coming back. Thanks for keeping me sober.

Fear continued

self-image. They reflect our sense of our ability to handle this world. Here is where we generalize feelings (e.g., a specific experience of rejection may lead to generalized feeling of being inherently unworthy, whereby we react to all situations from a rejection standpoint). Reaching level 2 can be a result of not dealing with level 1 issues, and because we usually try to make logical sense out of things, we generalize our inaction on specific issues into a negative ego-message about ourselves. We become self-limiting. At this point we are losing grasp on exactly why this is happening.

3. At level 3, our self-message is I CAN'T HANDLE IT! At this point our fear is that life is burying us; at the bottom of our fears is simply the fear that we can't handle whatever life may bring. This is where fear becomes the predator I spoke of in the first paragraph.

Now, if I told you that all you have to do to diminish your fear is to develop more trust in your ability to handle whatever comes your way, how would you feel about that? Not bad, eh? Well, it's as easy and as difficult as that.

The problem for many of us lies with how we define "handling it." What we do is demand that life change for our benefit, creating a mystical and delusional world of power in our mind that believes such, thus we remain in the emotional trap of fear. We develop unrealistic expectations based on trying to control outcomes that we have no control over (I can shine, i.e. through preparation, in a job interview but I have zero control over the hiring manager's thought processes or decision; I can make wise investment decisions and still lose money; I can express my feelings and become a better person in my relationship but whether my loved one remains in the relationship is not my call). Now, I didn't say all our troubles will go away in one magical mystical spiritual whack just by affirming that we can handle life....but simply expressing self-trust in our ability to deal will lift a heavy burden from our hearts – as soon as we truly buy into it, that is...oh, yes, and there may be a *wee bit 'o work* involved to acquire some skills we perhaps lack...but none should doubt that we intrinsically are created by the Creator with innate abilities to deal with that which may ever plague our spirits. We also find that sharing our fears in meetings and with sponsors also takes the 800 pound gorilla down to size – "right-sizing" fear.

A final note concerning a path I have seen many on: the search for understanding. Many brothers and sisters in recovery spend inordinate amounts of time trying to understand the roots of their behaviors and attitudes, to figure out "why" they do what they do. I do not criticize this; there is value there, especially in cases of severe childhood abuse. However, this is what I say: it is often impossible to really, accurately figure out what are the actual causes of negative patterns in our lives, and even if we did know, the knowing does not necessarily change them. I believe that when something is troubling us, we start from where we are and take the action necessary to change it. In this case, we know that we don't like the fact that lack of trust in ourselves is stopping us from getting what we want out of life. Knowing this can create a very clear, even laser-like, focus on what needs to be changed. We don't have to scatter our energy wondering why. It doesn't matter. What matters is that we begin now to develop our trust in ourselves, until we reach the point where we will be able to say:

"WHATEVER HAPPENS TO ME, GIVEN ANY SIUTATION, I CAN HANDLE IT!"