

SCA DC NEWSLETTER

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By SCA Metro DC Intergroup

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My Story

By Michael T.

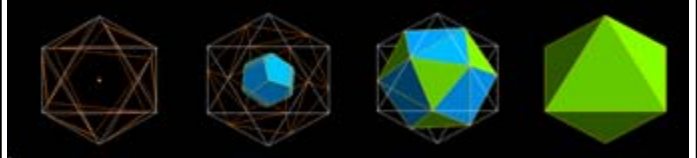
It is hard to believe that four years have zipped by since I first attended an SCA meeting. Although it was not my first exposure to sexual recovery meetings it was and has remained a powerful light pointing a way out of the very dark tunnel of addiction that had robbed me of my feelings and access to my true self. The road I've traveled to get here has been fraught with many twists and turns, ups and downs, and over time, there has been a certain clarity that has made a difference.

I was born in a quiet town in Northern New York in 1948, the oldest of three children of a middle working class family. I have a younger sister and brother. Growing up as a child of the 1950's and 1960's life was relatively calm and uneventful for the most part. I thought that mine was a normal upbringing. However, that was not the case. It took years to see and understand how living with a manic depressive mother and an emotionally absent father would affect me. Being the "star child", spending loads of time and energy trying to be perfect, constantly trying to please my parents, teachers and friends and always seeking their approval ruled my formative years. One thing was sure I never knew what to expect from my mother on any given day and that was crazy making. I walked on egg shells to avoid her anger and rage. Attempting to be the perfect child reeked havoc on any possibility of growing up in a health way.

Sex was never spoken of when I was growing up. Being a good Roman Catholic, the guilt and shame associated with sexual activity was a constant. When I was 15 years of age, I discovered masturbation and the feelings attached to it were overwhelming. This activity was an escape and a soothing experience and I was off and running. Masturbation was a constant companion in my daily life, a way to medicate myself and to feel good for a second or two. It was a secret way of making me feel good. But then I was caught by my mother and
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Our Morphing Compulsions & Addictions

By Doug P.



I had no idea when I started working on my specific addictions and compulsive behaviors how tricky these animals would turn out to be. I ran across this geometric when searching "compulsions", oddly enough. It seemed to fit. Play with it!

<http://dogfeathers.com/java/octicos.html>

As you can see in the diagram above, from a simple tiny cube (just a little "trouble spot" in my life) to a full Octohedron (addiction has taken over my life and obscured everything else), in-between are an endless number of geometries. If you do check out this website, think about how your life looks as you peel back each layer of your addiction. With every peeling, we expose and engage pieces of our lives we weren't aware of; this also opens a void of space in our souls that needs to be filled. We tried to be happy with just eliminating the troubling behavior, but the emptiness killed us. Life suddenly seemed more complicated with its new choices and directions. In recovery we learned to keep things simple, but we also found ourselves lacking in life skills, this lack having been covered by our addictions, and we were anxious or afraid (and fear is an emotion that tries to complicate life). This article is not about how addictions progress in their active state, but about how our addictions and compulsions speak to us and change their nature in recovery.

It is true that as we reconstruct our lives, peeling back the layers of
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SCA NEWS & EVENTS

Our next SCA social event is a potluck BBQ at Craig B.'s home near Dupont Circle starting at 4 pm on Saturday, July 21. Email Susan to RSVP.

Our 3rd annual DC-SCA Fall Retreat, Oct. 26-28, 2007, is filling up but there is still some space left. The theme is **Taking Recovery to the Next Level**. If you are thinking about going, please pick up a brochure at your next meeting or contact Craig B. soon.

My Story continued

the shame and guilt was reinforced for years. Everything I subsequently learned about sex I found out from the street and Boy Scouts. Having a secret life offered a real sense of excitement; my heart would race and offer a felt rush that seemed make time stand still or disappear. Excitement early on became part of my addictive cycle.

In high school, I struggled to fit in with my peers. I always felt different. Although I dated girls, my attraction to boys and the terror of being labeled a sissy was real. Somehow I discovered another boy in the neighborhood whom I experimented with sexually for 3 years. The rush, the excitement, the pleasure and the ultimate release involved in these encounters were patterns that were etched deeply in my psyche.

“How does a Catholic boy deal with being gay and all this ‘shameful and sinful’ activity?” My answer was to enter the seminary and become a priest. Maybe by doing so I was hoping that things would change. And yet it was actually during my four years of theology that I discovered gay pornography. For years I bought these magazines and used them to feed the addiction and then destroyed them time and time again. Each and every time the promise of never doing it again was broken over and over again.

Over time the pornography escalated to videos, anonymous encounters and one night stands. The use of alcohol gave me permission to act out. And as an addict I was never satisfied. Although ordination led to a respite and break from acting out for a time, it didn’t take the craving away. Within two years of ordination I sexually abused a minor and twenty nine years later that led to the loss of ministry. My addiction had a mind of its own and I fed this pig constantly in different forms. I lived a double life for years and being dishonest can naturally. I had a double life and was living a lie.

There have been many changes since being in SCA and struggling with this demon over the past four years. Through the program I have become more honest and that has led to a more integrated life. My name is Michael and I am an alcoholic and a sex and love addict. I haven’t had a drink in 18 years, and the 12 Steps of SCA have been a life line in the midst of all my struggles to recreate a new life. For too many years I lived in isolation, darkness, and fear. Prior to coming into SCA I was on was a one-way road to hell.

SCA has proved to be a resting place. Getting a sponsor, working the steps, having a sexual recovery plan and connecting with others in the program gradually brought me out the profound isolation that the disease created. Progress not perfection has become a way of life and the Hallmark of working ACCEPTANCE continues to make a profound difference in my life.

Morphing Addictions continued

our addiction, the disease speaks to us. It doesn’t stay the same. We constantly rework our bottom and middle line behaviors because we are uncertain what is OK and what to avoid. We need sponsors and our groups to help us; we don’t trust ourselves (addiction always speaks to us trying to rationalize a new, different behavior that is OK – but....). Our addictions change in substance and in form. The night before writing this, I polished off a ½ gallon of ice cream in one sitting. I’ve never had an eating disorder, and I do not like sweets. I’ve put on 30 pounds in one year. My addiction morphs. Many start smoking heavily once committed to recovery. Some spend huge amounts of time and money on new hobbies (these can easily become obsessive/compulsive). Some become gym rats. At worst, some may turn to drugs or seek out unhealthy relationships, effectively replacing the old addictions/compulsions with new, equally destructive ones.

Here is the litmus test: as we peel back the layers, are we filling voids with healthy and productive behaviors that bring us good living, or are we still in an escape mode? For me, my escape mode is born out of uncertainty and confusion, the need to do something but not knowing how to get my goals on track, so I want to do things that make me “feel” better, which puts me back on the compulsive track. I have learned that at each “peeling”, there is a period of time I must sit with the void, because good answers don’t come quickly or easily.

It may be useful to acknowledge that our particular addictive or compulsive issues come from “core destructive tendencies” within us. I don’t pull this from any literature; it just seems to make sense. This says that my issues on the surface are the behaviors I am doing, but they are in response to some deep-seated condition within me. The core issue is that condition, and not really the acting out behaviors. When I understand this, I can also evaluate my new behaviors, and I’ve found some of them (like overeating) just to be signs of the same old addiction surfacing in a different form. Just because I’m sober with my bottom line behaviors doesn’t mean I’m sober or healed in my soul, and I need to keep working the deep issues to find peace and keep the addiction truly at bay.

Try the geometric exercise (it’s made for compulsives...you don’t need to understand the math.....). As your addiction (the color shape) shrinks, leaving dark empty spaces within the framework, how are you filling those spaces? How can you be sure you aren’t just feeding your compulsion in a different form?