

# SCA DC NEWSLETTER

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By SCA Metro DC Intergroup

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## My Story

*By Ed S.*

I came to the program almost 11 years ago because I had to. My life had become completely unmanageable in many ways. I was in a “committed, monogamous” relationship which was neither. I had been fired from a job for performance reasons—I was too busy acting out. I entered a treatment program for gay men and in order to participate, it was mandatory to attend 12 step meetings. I entered treatment and attended meetings willingly at first. I was destroying my relationship, my career, taking more risks and entering more dangerous situations. I was honest with my partner, admitted that I needed help, and reached out for it. I was in therapy, and this new willingness was welcome. I thought that I would save my relationship. I soon realized that it was not possible to attend recovery 101 for a short while, even a year, get better and graduate. It was to be a much longer process. I ended my relationship because it became clear that I could not work on my sobriety and fix a broken relationship. There was no longer any trust. Without trust, there is no relationship.

Early recovery was marked with intense sorrow, loss, and depression. I finally had the courage to seek out a psychiatrist to address my depression. Thankfully I did, as it seems as if I were crying 18 hours a day, any time I was awake. The medication that I took was miraculous. Within a few weeks, I felt that I could function again, was not incessantly crying, accepting that I was single, and that I had much personal work to do. This work resulted in 25 months of sexual sobriety, which meant no anonymous sex, no visiting hook-up web sites and chat rooms; dating, going to lots of meetings, and working steps 1, 2, and 3. I have had slips, periods of relapse and recovery, and another dishonest, unfaithful 3 year relationship.

I had to avoid or strictly limit my time with family for a number of years, especially during the winter holidays. Family, especially in early recovery, was a significant trigger; I would visit family, come back to DC and act out. Acknowledging this

*continued on page 2*

## Getting to and Through Step 4

*By Doug P.*

Step 4 is viewed by many as the defining milestone of a program. For newcomers to the SCA fellowship, the very words “searching and fearless moral inventory” may strike terror in the heart. Perhaps it is about this step more than any other that some exclaim “what an order, I can’t go through with it!”

At step 1 we are still filled with shame and doubt about our worthiness and ability to commit to solutions for our lives. Almost everyone struggles with the idea of powerlessness; we think we are helpless and hopeless. At step 1, though, we learn to self-identify; to name our past and own it. In taking ownership of our story, we get a sense of empowerment, but we still wonder “can I get through this?” Is there a solution? Step 2 teaches us to accept that there are spiritual precepts from which we can draw strength and courage, that there is sanity on the horizon.

We come to embrace the idea that a power greater than ourselves can restore us, yet we are still haunted by the idea that we ourselves are powerless....the meaning of that is elusive. Still, now we begin to see that at the very root of our acting out is a spiritual void, at the core of our being, which is how we view ourselves and our connection with the world, skewed as it is by those things we felt, believed, and did. It seems plausible that if our own spiritual concepts (driven by self-will and all our defects) were off-center, that the source of true spirit, as we understand it, can guide us back to the path, but only if we can lay aside self-will and submit to the higher authority. In submission we can define a new moral framework for our lives. This leads naturally to step 3, where we surrender to this authority. Because we do not trust easily, this step does not come easily, but when faced with the reality of living as we have been, we become willing to take a leap of faith.

Why, then, do we need the terror of step 4? Step 4 is the beginning of the treatment of our spiritual maladies. Success in recovery is about two cornerstone principles: rigorous honesty and letting go of self-will. In step 1 we saw what we did and how our lives were made unmanageable, but we didn’t exactly define our character. In order to begin “treatment” we must surely define who we really are;

*continued on page 2*

## SCA NEWS & EVENTS

**DC SCA 2008 Fall Retreat – Oct 10-12:** This is Columbus Day weekend and the retreat will begin on Friday evening & end on Sunday afternoon. This year the retreat will be held at the Claymont Retreat Center which is located in scenic and historic Charlestown, WV, just 68 miles from DC. Last year’s retreat was the biggest ever with 30 participants. Deposits are due August 8. Be sure to pick up a brochure and send in your registration soon!

**Summer Social Event on Sunday, Aug. 2, 7 pm at Susan’s home on Capitol Hill** – Bring your favorite dish or drink. Get creative. Do it up traditional. Or do it up Whole Food Style. Spouses & partners are welcomed. RSVP and to get directions.

## *My Story continued*

fact was another very painful experience. How could the people that seemed to care about me most and know be best have such a devastating effect on me? After much group and individual therapy, and many meetings, I was able to see that while I was not abused, I feel that I never received the physical touch and affection I needed, as early as age one.

After years in the program, I worked the 4<sup>th</sup> step with my sponsor and a close group of SCA fellows, I am now counting almost 14 months of sobriety. The current period of recovery is a much deeper one than ever before--I now know that I always have a choice of whether to engage my top line/healthy behavior, or descend into unhealthy areas. We call this replacement—substituting old patterns of acting out with healthy, care-taking ones. I am as stressed as ever before, yet I'm reaching out to my sponsor and other program friends. What I struggle with now is being single and accepting that there is no romantic/sexual relationship in my life.

In addition to my sexual recovery plan, one of the many important tools to staying sexually sober, I have a dating plan. In this plan I state that I must know/date a man for at least 4 weeks before sleeping together and being sexual. I want sexual expression to be sacred again. I have been on many dates, but a month gives me time to know the person well enough to know if there is potential for something deeper. None of the dates have reached that far—he's unavailable, emotionally or otherwise, and we're incompatible in some or many ways. I have also determined that the idea of seeing someone or a few people on a regular for just sex is not healthy for me. As a result, I have not been sexual with a man during this period of sobriety. I don't know how I've done it, I have just not been able to get sexually involved when I knew that we were not compatible. As a sex and love addict, it is not possible for me to be sexual and not get emotionally involved. So when things don't work out in a dating relationship, I'm sad, it hurts, but I'm not emotionally devastated as I was in the past when we'd jump into being sexual. My goal now is to continue this period of sobriety, keep balance in my life, and take breaks from dating when I need to.

Some other wisdom and lessons are as follows: maintain healthy boundaries; keep recovery and sobriety number one every day; follow my sexual recovery and dating plan; take care of myself by eating well, exercising, and resting when I need to; realize that I'm lovable and OK being single; stay aware of intensity and drama by avoiding them; and work on being WHOLE.

## *Getting to and through Step 4*

this is the work of step 4. On the road to step 4 we cried out for help and surrendered our self-will to a higher way. In doing so, we began to lose our fear and gain courage to face the really tough work – being honest with ourselves and other human beings. We have support – divine and from our fellowship, but we still must do the work.

So, I am at the threshold. Step 4 is in front of me. Now, there is something going on here. Admitting powerlessness didn't seem as daunting as claiming my character defects. I don't want to know that I am a defective person. I want God to just fix it. Many of us feel this way. **For those who read this newsletter, may you find strength to persevere, that is my prayer for you.** The chances of successful recovery depend upon rigorous working of step 4. Those who balk at this point are far less likely to experience the complete benefits of the program. For if in step 3 we admit that we must release our self-will, we have also made a pact with Higher Power to equip ourselves with the self-knowledge of the source of that self-will and its triggers, and to seek to actively live a transformed life. When I say "I resent...." - "because I am selfish", or "I am afraid", and admit that I act responsibly when I'm not selfish, and irresponsibly when I act on fear, I have laid a firm foundation for true transformation. The fundamental feelings and self-image that are at the core of our spiritual selves can be repaired – but to empty ourselves in submission to Higher Power, we must first acknowledge the dirty stuff in the core that self-will has been hanging onto (fear, self-hate, self-centeredness) in self-will – these things separate us from Higher Power.

Fearless does not mean painless. We have some newfound hope as the result of the first 3 steps, but shame still looms. For many, the acting out has a long history, painful to recount. But now we must go beyond owning our story, we must identify specifically what core feelings and values were at play and how our acting on those hurt people or self. Fearless is our commitment to honesty and rigor. There are different ways to do step 4. Regardless of the method chosen, we write inventory to discover the TRUTH... about the LIES we have lived with. Only when we arm ourselves with the truth, can we fully embrace the rest of the program, healing and ridding ourselves of defects and living fruitfully.

This is hard work. To get through, make sure you:

- ❖ Learn to use the program tool of writing. A 4<sup>th</sup> step must be written to achieve its purpose.
- ❖ Have a sponsor. Do not try to work step 4 without a permanent and committed sponsor you trust. It is best that your sponsor has been by your side as you worked the first 3 steps.
- ❖ Commit fearlessly. Remember – fearless does not mean painless. We are all together in this, you have support. Don't balk.

If we meet step 4 with courage and get through it, we find we are ready to transform and live a renewed life. We can fearlessly embrace the rest of the steps, truly believing that we can be free of our demons.

**INSANITY IS THE INABILITY TO SEE THE TRUTH.  
SANITY IS THE ABILITY TO SEE THE TRUTH.  
AN INVENTORY IS A TOOL TO ENABLE US TO SEE  
THE TRUTH.**

*THE TRUTH WILL SET US FREE.*