

SCA DC NEWSLETTER

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By SCA Metro DC Intergroup

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My Story (reprint from Vol 1, Issue 2)

By Doug P.

My name is Doug and I'm sexually compulsive. I have a 30 year obsessive/compulsive, alcoholic history, one that eventually landed me in prison for 3 years. Bottom lines have included exhibitionism, voyeurism, using prostitutes, and eventually assault. I became an artist at split living early in my youth, being an honor student in high school, respected church member, scholarship college student, and respected military officer. I held the highest and most sensitive security clearances, all the while acting out in criminal ways. I married twice. Because I was so clever at balancing the two worlds, I would never have admitted that a problem was out of control. I even became arrogantly proud that I could handle it all. I ignored the self-loathing and personal disgust I felt each time I caved in an acted out "just one more time – for stress relief." It almost became a game for me; I was arrested several times for misdemeanors that I beat either by getting sharp lawyers and relying on my community stature, or by paying off witnesses. I thought I was in control, I had no idea this monster had me; I truly hated what I was doing but totally convinced I was hurting no one. I became exhausted; I disappeared in a fantasy world.

It came apart with an arrest I couldn't get out of. This one cost me my military career and I was discharged just 3 months before being eligible for retirement. I rebounded, still with family intact. I completed an alcohol program that didn't tame my arrogance. It took me 3 programs and 6 years to finally get a sobriety going there. Two years later (as if I hadn't lost enough already), I caught a felony sexual assault charge from earlier years that finally came out. Till then I was in therapy and dabbled in SAA, but these programs didn't work well because I wouldn't be honest about what I had done. I learned a hard lesson: complete honesty is THE and ONLY cornerstone to build a recovery on. For me at the time, this meant revealing criminal behavior that would be prosecuted. I also learned that therapy, etc., cannot be effective until all legal matters are settled – one can't talk about things still in litigation. I received probation on the felony charge, but – now get this – my self-image (the fake one I wore so proudly) was so damaged by sustaining a felony (my God, this

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Willingness

By Russell Z.

About a year ago, I was wrapped up in an acting-out binge. I had been up for the better part of two nights, and that familiar adrenaline surge was coursing through my veins. Somehow, in the midst of that addictive stupor, I had the presence of mind to call my sponsor. I told him that I did not want to stop acting out. Instead of persuading me to do otherwise, which would have fallen on deaf ears in that moment, he simply suggested, "pray for willingness."

There is a big difference for me between willingness and willfulness. To be willing is to be open to new ideas and to take direction and advice from others who have my best interests in mind. To be willing is to consider that there is wisdom and experience that exists outside of myself. To be willing is to realize that others (including a higher power) care enough about me to gently suggest ways of acting that may be counter intuitive to me. To be willful is different. To be willful is to rally my own resources, move (sometimes with brute force) in a particular direction, and in essence, to be "king of my own castle."

I can be a very willful person, and that's not entirely a bad thing. At different junctures in my life, and in different circumstances, being willful has come in handy. It helped me to achieve in school and excel at many of the endeavors that I undertook. In other circumstances, being willful has not been handy at all, and in fact, has been destructive. This usually occurs when I get self-centered, indignant or if I "need to be right." It just so happens that these are on my list of character defects.

At the root of my addiction is a desire to avoid strong feelings of anxiety, fear and sometimes even joy and happiness. I learned very quickly that addiction has the power to highjack my life and take me down a road that I do not want to go. No amount of willful behavior can stop this. Promising "never again," making resolutions that "this is how it is going to be," and deciding that "I am through" with

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SCA NEWS & EVENTS

Service Work: Planning group is being formed for the Fall Retreat. This is a great service opportunity! Call Brad E. at 202-255-4316 or Derek S. at (301) 270-0081 for more info.

My Story continued

can't be me), I got roaring drunk and was arrested on a misdemeanor exposure charge less than 30 days after sentencing. At that the judge threw the book at me and I was prison-bound. That cost me my home, all my financial resources (totally), all my material possessions, and my family.

Now I'm back again, 9 years out of prison. I like the man I am becoming, an honest man. I will always regret hurting people I love, but am willing to make amends possible, then let God handle it from there. All this mess is just what it took, tragic though it was. I like myself; for the first time in my life I truly feel what it is like to have integrity. I discovered that it is never "over" – society teaches us that we can destroy our lives. Wrong. At mid-life I am rebuilding but not starting over. I found that within the offender was a good heart; experience and capabilities that could still be leveraged. True, some opportunities are closed to me now, but it's a big and beautiful world and there's room for all of us. I reconnected with God. I finally got the whole truth of me out – to family, friends, even co-workers. I found acceptance and faith from friends and family (ex-spouse included – but couldn't save the marriage) except one daughter who will not talk to me, a small price to pay all considered, and I am grateful for what I have left. I am able to find reasonable employment. I have 13 years alcohol sobriety, and am counting a little over 3 years continual sexual sobriety (over all my bottom lines, but for 13 years also, no serious behavior such as that which landed me in legal trouble), although I have only recently started counting. I've been in the SCA program for several years, but like my alcohol recovery, it has taken me till now to really "get it." I have a sponsor I'm grateful for. Most of all: I am free of my demons. You don't have to live with them if you face them and call them by name.

I never believed my compulsions could be conquered, and I suspect there are many who feel that hopelessness. My message is that yes, it is possible. If you believe it and begin the work, it can happen for you.

Willingness continued

addictive behaviors is willful. And in fact, none of these behaviors have ever helped me to move along the road of recovery.

Willingness is the key to my recovery: willingness to go to meetings, to interact with my sponsor and others in the program, to work the steps and set aside time each day for reflection. Sometimes, being willing just to do the next right thing is enough, like on that day when I was in an addictive stupor and asked my higher power for willingness.

This year marks the start of my ninth year in recovery. Willfully, I sometimes wish that the recovery had been linear, clear cut, and "pretty." It has not been like that at all. Instead, my recovery has involved painful relapses, been very slow and has been quite messy. To my surprise, recovery involved a change in career (after seven years of very specific schooling) and a move half way across the country. I am still working the seventh step (that's less than one step a year! My willful self could have gotten a PhD faster than that). Yet, after all this time, I am beginning to learn that when it comes to recovery, the course is not mine to chart. More than ever, after these years of recovery and all the changes in my life, I feel hopeful about the future and the possibility that I can live with serenity in recovery.

My willingness has also involved help from outside of the program. I have been in counseling with wise therapists who understand addiction. I have asked the question, "do I need medication to help me manage my feelings?" Sometimes the answer has been yes, sometimes no. Different members of the fellowship avail themselves to different forms of outside help. Something that I see in those with strong recovery is a willingness to do whatever it takes, and no matter what the cost, to get and stay sober. For some of us, that means getting rid of the internet, for others, text messaging. I helped one friend destroy a laptop he had been using to act out (hint: take out battery before attempting this brave act of recovery to avoid a house full of smoke). I certainly have been willing to go to great lengths to indulge my addiction...I can honestly say that reaching for outside help has never been as burdensome as the effects of the addiction. Outside help brings my recovery into all facets of my life, and helps me to address some of the roots causes that prompt me to act out.

I am not responsible for the success of my recovery, but I am responsible to be as willing as I can to recover, and when I am not willing, to pray for willingness. My prayer today to my higher power simply is "God, help me to be willing to grow along the lines of recovery." My higher power, and all of you in the rooms, have shown me that willingness each day and in little ways is the key to serenity, growth and recovery.