

The SCAnner

The SCA NEWSLETTER

International Service Organization

© 2002 SCA

VOLUME 12, Number 1

Winter 2002

\$1.00

In This Double Issue:

SCA Recovery



In An Internet Age

**Experience, Strength & Hope
from SCA members worldwide.**

Contents:

ONLINE RECOVERY: BASICS & BACKGROUND

Overview of Online Recovery in SCA – An Outline of What is Available	3
Glossary of Commonly Used Abbreviations (adapted from Ray B’s list online)	3
Reflections from the Founder of the SCA Website (John F, New York, USA)	4
Online Recovery: My Experience (James B, Hawaii, USA)	5
SCA & “Paltalk”: The Online Meetings With a Voice! (Jim R, Illinois, USA)	7
My Experience with Service in SCA: Online & Offline (Deanna R, PEI, Canada)	9
The SCA E-Group: Another Online Tool of Recovery (Tra D, New York, USA)	10

INTERNATIONAL & REMOTE MEMBERS SHARE

Finding SCA Online From Ireland (Micheal D, Cork, Ireland)	12
Online Recovery from Scotland – A Godsend (Graham, Scotland)	13
The Amazing Thing About Online Recovery – An Indonesian’s Perspective (Ash, Indonesia)	14
Online Recovery: ES&H from a Rural SCA Member (Marabel, Georgia, USA)	15
Addiction Began At An Early Age – Recovery Thoughts from Belgium (Dano, Belgium)	16
All the Way From Japan! (Ricky, Japan)	17
Multiple Time-Zone Recovery – From New York to London (Tom B, London, England)	18

BENEFITS & CHALLENGES OF RECOVERY

Finding Recovery vs. Furthering Sex Addiction (B.T., Ohio, USA)	20
Using the Internet to Recover (TKB, North Carolina, USA)	21
The Therapeutic Value of Online Sharing (Tim D, New York, USA)	22
The Benefits of Online Recovery (Tim F, Pennsylvania, USA)	23
The Gifts I Have Received from Online SCA (Ben, Pennsylvania, USA)	25
Intentions, Boundaries & Internet Filters (Phoenix, Utah, USA)	27
How SCA Online Freed Me From a 30-Year Addiction (Linda L, New York, USA)	29
If You Are Willing to Go to Any Lengths... (Cathy C, Illinois, USA)	30
A Seminary Graduate Shares His ES&H (Dave M, TX, USA)	31
Online Sobriety Works (Akima, Montana, USA)	34
Newcomer Reflections (Tim D, New York, USA)	34
Measuring Progress With A Nickname (Brian S, North Carolina, USA)	35
Misery & Depression Replaced by Joy, Peace & Contentment (Clint, Texas, USA)	36
Online Recovery: Second Best Ain’t Bad! (Jo, Oregon, USA)	37
The Spiritual Principles are There, Online or Offline (Emily R, USA)	37
Recovery Comes Down to One Word: Choice (Vanessa, Alabama, USA)	38
The Greatest Lesson to be Learned is How to Love (Marabel, Georgia, USA)	38

MY STORY (Chris W, BC, Canada)	40
STEP FOCUS: Step 3 (Cate M, BC, Canada) & Step 8 (David T, Arizona, USA)	45

SCA INTERNATIONAL SERVICE ORGANIZATION (ISO) NEWS

Intergroup Reports (from the 2002 SCA-ISO annual meeting)	47
Current ISO Officers	49
SCA Contact Information	51

Editor's Note:

The SCAnner has been on hold for more than a year due to the early resignation of the last editor, and to unforeseen medical problems that cropped up after I took on the responsibility last February. Now that my medical problems are sorting themselves out, I'm finally able to take care of projects that had to be put on a back-burner for months.

The SCAnner is one of the biggest of those projects. It brings me great joy to be able to put together this long-awaited edition. I struggled a bit trying to come up with a suitable theme since past *SCAnners* have already covered some of the obvious themes (Steps, Traditions, Characteristics, etc.). Then it occurred to me that with the popularity of the Internet these days, it could only help SCA as a whole to hear about how members have coped with recovery in light of the trials & tribulations of the Net.

From this, the theme of “**SCA Recovery in an Internet Age**” arose, and this double issue was born. While it hasn't been easy, it has been extremely rewarding to put this issue together. I'm proud to say that this SCAnner has the greatest number of contributors EVER in the SCAnner's history: 30 in all. It also represents the greatest number of countries ever. You'll find stories of recovery from members in eight different countries: USA, Canada, Scotland, Ireland, England, Indonesia, Japan, and Belgium (and an indirect tie to Australia via the “Paltalk” article). This diversity is a noteworthy one since most contributions in the past have come from New York, Los Angeles, and a few other cities in the USA. It exemplifies the impact that online and offline outreach has had in spreading the SCA message to others around the world.

Whether you use the internet or not, sit back, read & enjoy the vast Experience, Strength & Hope on “SCA Recovery in an Internet Age” shared within these pages! I'm sure there's a little bit of something for everyone contained herein!!

Deanna R, SCAnner Editor and Proud Canadian, eh!

Websites of interest to SCA members:

SCA home page (maintained by ISO): www.sca-recovery.org
 SCAnner on the web: www.sca-recovery.org/scanner
 SCA Online Intergroup: www.sca-recovery.org/private

- Note: all Intergroup web-pages are maintained by the Online Intergroup and are “closed” – only those who are sexually compulsive or believe they may be sexually compulsive may access these sites. If you qualify under Tradition Three, you can access these web pages (including online meetings) using the username SCA and the password HEAL (case sensitive).

*Did you know that the SCA Online Intergroup is one of the largest of all Intergroups?
 It has hundreds of members worldwide.*

ONLINE RECOVERY: BASICS & BACKGROUND

Overview of Online Recovery in SCA – An Outline of What is Available

Online SCA comprises many different mediums and modalities. SCA has a home page maintained by ISO. The SCA Online Intergroup maintains two web-based meetings, twelve real-time textual chat-based meetings on IRC, and three real-time voice & textual chat-based meeting on Paltalk. The Online Intergroup website also has links to a fellowship area (the “Recovery Byte Café”), an email address list & photo gallery, Online Intergroup business items, a Group Conscience Aide, and numerous links to the ISO-managed portions of the SCA home page. Finally, ISO maintains its own web-pages that are used to help conduct SCA-related business.

Separate from SCA Online Intergroup are several other online venues for recovery. One of these is an E-group which allows for web-based and email-based posting and sharing with other recovering SCAs. There are also numerous unorganized ways in which SCA members can support each other online such as emails, instant message & private message programs, web-cam & internet long-distance voice communication, and through the sharing of personal websites. In addition, other S-recovery fellowships are available online and some have formal online meetings.

Contained within the numerous shares in this edition of the SCAnner you will find descriptions of all of these online opportunities for recovery. Read on!

Glossary of Some Commonly Used Online Abbreviations (www.sca-recovery.org/private/glossary.html)

<p>HP = Higher Power F2F = Face to face (meetings) RO = Romantic Obsession ODAAT = One Day At A Time BTW = By The Way BTDT = Been There Done That P4M2 = Pray For Me Too TWYLA LTR = Take What You Like and Leave The Rest HALT = Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired SO = Significant Other DOC = Drug Of Choice LOL = Laughing Out Loud</p>	<p>KCB = Keep Coming Back A/O = Acting Out ROTFL = Rolls On The Floor Laughing IMHO = In My Humble Opinion BRB = Be Right Back WB = Welcome Back BBIAB = Be Back In A Bit BBL = Be Back Later TTFN = Ta Ta For Now AFK = Away From Keyboard TS = Trusted Servant Op = Channel Operator (on IRC) ISP = Internet Service Provider</p>
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

SCA is one of five S-recovery fellowships represented at the Interfellowship Forum (the others are SLAA, SAA, SRA, and SA).

Reflections From The Founder Of The SCA Website.

For our 10th Anniversary issue of the SCAnner, I was privileged to write briefly about the origins of the SCA Web site and the online meetings in April 1996.

The online SCA meetings began with the inauguration of the SCA Web site in 1996, a result of my interest and expertise in the Internet and the desire of the International Service Organization to spread the SCA message.

Two years ago, when I wrote that article, there were 11 online meetings; at this writing, there are 17 (2 Web-based, 3 on Paltalk, and 12 on Starlink-IRC.org's Internet Relay Chat #SCA channel). In 2001, I wrote: "I believe the Internet will be a major factor in the future growth of our fellowship, as it has already become, and I hope we are able to harness the advantages of the Internet while always being aware that it can promote the very isolation that is so much a part of sexual compulsion."

I believe that statement is, if anything, even more true today. Let's look at places around the United States and the world where the SCA message is now being carried primarily (or entirely) because of our online efforts:

Brisbane, Australia	Chiang Mai, Thailand
Tremelo and Antwerp, Belgium	Dothan, Alabama
Toronto, Canada	Hot Springs, Arkansas
Hong Kong, China	Denver, Colorado
Helsinki, Finland	Hartford, Connecticut
Berlin, Germany	Ruston, Louisiana
Budapest, Hungary	Detroit, Grand Rapids and
Seoul, Korea	Houghton, Michigan
Auckland, New Zealand	Reno, Nevada
Glasgow, Scotland	Toledo, Ohio

SCA now has contacts, referrals, and/or meetings in these places, in addition to the hundreds of sexual compulsives whose only meetings are online. (Yes, hundreds: our Online Intergroup probably has about as many members as the largest of the face-to-face Intergroups.) This 12th Step work has been deeply gratifying to me and has certainly helped keep me sober.

I have had the opportunity to sponsor various people through the Online Intergroup, which is now officially incorporated and is the primary service board of our worldwide online meetings. At this writing, I am in a continuing sponsorship relationship with two SCAs, one in Canada and one in England. I have made it a rule not to sponsor people online if there is a face-to-face meeting they can attend. This is an effort both to combat

Want a great antidote to active addiction? Don't act out, and go to a meeting TODAY!

the isolation that seems to me to be inherent in online activities, and also to encourage attendance at face-to-face meetings. While my recovery has certainly benefited from attending online meetings, and there have been stretches of time when my principal meeting attendance has been online, my experience has been that face-to-face meetings (or "f2f," as we call them online) are far more effective than online meetings in promoting recovery. There's nothing quite like facing a fellow addict and getting current!

Nevertheless, as someone who is addicted to online "chat rooms," I viewed the SCA online meetings with great fear. For the first year of their existence, I did not attend because I knew that "just next door" there would be unsafe places for me. I compared holding a meeting in a chat room with holding one in the basement of a pornographic theater. You might not slip, but it surely did not seem safe to me.

As a result, I got my feet wet in the Web-based meetings, which to me were far less addictive because they were so much calmer! The early IRC meetings seemed often to become free-for-alls, with lots of advice-giving and little knowledge of the Traditions. That has since changed, so that now I recommend the online meetings – Web or IRC or Paltalk – to everyone. As I announce it in my home city, "If you need to be online and want a safe place to go, visit the SCA Web site at <http://www.sca-recovery.org/>".

That safe space also includes the Recovery Byte Cafe, which many folks have likened to an Alano club. It's a place where people can gather online and shoot the breeze, order a virtual latte, share poems, or what have you. It's not a "meeting" – it's a way to practice socializing, one of the Tools That Help Us Get Better. Oh, and if you stop by, be sure to say "hi" – for now, I'm the proprietor there!

By John F. (New York, New York, USA), Treasurer, Online Intergroup

Online Recovery: My Experience.

I became aware of my sex addiction in early 1997. I had been a sex addict for 40 years! However, I did nothing to deal with it until "hitting bottom" in 1998 when my partner, who is in recovery for another addiction, threatened to leave the relationship. I set out immediately to find out about my addiction. I read "Out of the Shadows", by Patrick Carnes, which helped me understand the dynamics of my addiction. I also went to a face-to-face meeting in another fellowship for sex addiction. I was not comfortable with this fellowship so I began to do an internet search for an online fellowship. This is how I discovered SCA. I began using the Feedback room, posting every day. I also began going to the real-time, chat room meetings. At that time there were two meetings per week and the only regular folks were Ray B (who had begun the meetings), Robert (in L. A.) and myself. (By the way, I used the pseudonym Harry M for a long time as I was

concerned about my anonymity.) Other folks would drop in and out, a pattern that would be fairly common throughout my time in the SCA online fellowship.

The online, real-time meetings continued to grow, and within a month or two I was "leading" one of the meetings. I had also found an online sponsor and had begun to work the steps, using the book and workbook "Hope and Recovery". At that point I was able to remain clean (i.e., sober) for long lengths of time, but would then slip or have a full relapse. In August of 1999 I became the trusted servant of the Topic Meeting, to increase my participation in the online community. Not long after that I also became the trusted servant of the Feedback meeting. I also began to sponsor some folks online. In addition, I tried to start a face-to-face meeting in Honolulu, but after eight months of sitting in an empty room, sometimes with my first face-to-face sponsor, I gave up. To this day I still get phone calls about the meeting, but I refer folks to SLAA which is active here.

One setback I had was that my original sponsor, with whom I had worked my first set of steps, had not been sober the entire time I was his sponsee. This placed the seeds of doubt in the validity of online recovery into my mind. However, I found another sponsor and maintained my service commitments. At some point I became the online representative to the ISO (International Service Organization) of SCA. At that time the ISO seemed to have very little interest in the online community, but interest grew over time.

Then, beginning in July of 2000, I started losing interest in online activity since it fed my urges to act out on the internet. I also had begun going to NA meetings regularly. Being both a drug and sex addict, I was, and still am, comfortable with NA. Finally, the desire for real human contact led me to give up all of my service positions in SCA. I still "lurk" in the Feedback Meeting, but have not posted there for quite a while.

In my experience, I found that the SCA online fellowship was very valuable, and, in fact, helped to keep me sober in my early recovery. I also found online service to be a useful tool to keep me involved and helped me to "live my recovery". The one thing that irritated me the most was constantly having to "reinvent the wheel" in terms of rules revolving around service duties and how to deal with inappropriate behavior on the web site. In the beginning, there were almost no guidelines for sharing, except to avoid "sensational language". However, of course, as the online fellowship grew, so did a bureaucracy. It seems like every time there was a new trusted servant, the current rules seemed almost disregarded. Then, there were the usual "personalities over principles" clashes. I know that I did not know enough about the traditions when I began service. I have found that all clashes can be resolved through the 12 Traditions of SCA (or any other fellowship, for that matter).

The most rewarding aspect of my time spent at the online fellowship involved sponsorship. Although most of my sponsees "went back out", I still have one sponsee

One good thing about a cyber meeting room is that no one has to sweep up!

who has remained sober for more than three years now!! I now have about 2-~~3~~ years of clean time in NA and have been sober with my sex addiction since 9-11-01 (an easy to remember, but tragic day).

Thank you for reading my story. My name is James B and I am an addict. (Honolulu, Hawaii, USA)

SCA & “PalTalk” – The Online Meetings With A Voice!

PalTalk is a nice little program that allows people to have a voice conversation on the Internet. It works like a CB radio in that only one person at a time can speak while the others in the session listen. I have included some of the pertinent details about the PalTalk program at the end, but this is more about our SCA meetings on PalTalk and what you will hear at them if you choose to join us.

PalTalk was first introduced to SCA about 18 months ago, when David_De and Cate M began using it outside of the IRC meetings for their recovery-related conversations. Cate got Phil B involved, and those three (and a few others) began using the program regularly. Phil immediately saw the potential for PalTalk as the basis for a different kind of online meeting. He did the necessary "leg work" to set up the meetings in PalTalk and arranged for password-controlled access to them. He set up the meeting times and days, and then got the details added to the SCA website. The rest, as they say, is history. He, Cate and David continue as regular members of the PalTalk meetings today.

At first the meetings were less formal, but late last year we agreed to apply the format for meetings as suggested in the back of the "Hope and Recovery" book (Page 318). There is always a bit of general conversation among the early arrivers, but then the Trusted Servant opens the meeting by reading the Preamble. Volunteers from the meeting read "How It Works" and the "Twelve Steps", followed by a few moments of silence for addicts everywhere, then the Lord's Prayer. Our Tuesday & Thursday meetings go directly to Open Shares and Feedback, but on Sunday nights we spend some time with readings and discussion of one of the Twelve Steps. After the reading, participants may offer shares about the reading and talk about how they have worked the Step and how working it has helped their recovery. Those of us who have not worked the Step often share about our anticipation of it, and, sometimes, our fears about it.

After the Step work, the meeting consists of Open Shares and Feedback. Because we are speaking, the shares are very much like what you hear at face-to-face meetings. By actually hearing someone speak, you get to hear not only their words, but often their emotions, too. Feedback is that way, too, and since ours is a small meeting, almost

everyone shares and gives feedback at every meeting. PalTalk also has a space for typing, so during a share or feedback, the listeners interject "I relate", "been there, done that", or other words of encouragement for the person speaking. Sometimes people come to the meetings who do not want to speak for one reason or another, and they are invited to type their share or feedback.

Every SCA meeting has its own personality, and the PalTalk meetings are no exception. If the personality of our meetings had to be characterized by just a few words, one might be "international". The 'regulars' are from Australia, Canada, and the US, and it is always a bit of a surprise to me when I stop to think that I am in an almost face-to-face meeting with people from so far away.

Another, more important characterizing word is "spiritual". Sometimes our shares and feedback include comments about the various tools we use to help our recovery: the Three Circles, the three-second rule, etc., but most often our shares are about the ways we are seeking and receiving God's help, not only with our recoveries, but with our lives in general. Not all of us are 'Christians', but all of us are trying to live that Step Three commitment, "...to turn our will and our life over to the care of God, as we understood God." Our shares and feedback reflect that commitment not only when we succeed, but also as we struggle both with our addictions and our understanding of God.

The SCA meetings on PalTalk have become a fundamental part of my recovery, and I don't believe I would have achieved the nine months of sobriety I have now without them. The meetings are also great because the nearest SCA face-to-face meeting for me is over an hour's drive away. For some of our members, there are no face-to-face meetings for sex addicts nearby. We meet each Tuesday, Thursday, and Sunday nights at 7:30 PM Eastern Standard Time (New York City Time). (If you are joining from Australia, and some do, that will be Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings, mate!)

There are two versions of the PalTalk software, both available at www.paltalk.com. One is free but includes periodic pop-up ads. The other version does not have ads, but costs about \$25 per year. You can type your shares if you like, but PalTalk is about talking. To do so, you will need to have a sound card in your computer and a microphone available. Just about any kind of sound card and microphone will do. Once you get PalTalk installed, there are still a few steps you need to do to get your microphone volume set correctly. You can do that easily on the PalTalk website where they have several "Help Rooms" to help you iron out any problems. If your computer has a firewall, you will either have to turn it off while using PalTalk or set it up to allow PalTalk to work. There are instructions for doing this on the PalTalk website, too. Finally, the pop-up ads that appear on the free version of PalTalk may include ads for adult PalTalk groups. These ads may be triggering for some. If this is a problem for you, you will want to purchase the ad-free version of the program.

When you start the program you are logged onto PalTalk's servers. You then click on the 'Groups' button to see a list of the various group categories. The SCA meeting is in the "Health/Parenting" group. When you double-click on the Health/Parenting group, you will see a list of the current PalTalk rooms. Ours is listed as 'SCA'. Double-click it, enter the password (which is the same as the password for the other online meetings), and the main PalTalk window will open. Our meeting room is only available when it is opened by one of the Trusted Servants. That is usually about 15 to 20 minutes before the meeting start time, and 20 to 30 minutes after the end of the meeting. It is "open mike" before and after the meetings, but we usually let the Trusted Servant manage the mike during the meeting.

If you are looking for a meeting to attend, we would be delighted to have you join us on PalTalk.

Your friend in recovery, Jim R (Chicago suburbs, USA)

My Experience with Service in SCA: Online & Offline

I first stumbled across online recovery back in February 1999 when I did a search for "sex addiction" on the internet. I wasn't looking for recovery back then, so I was quite dismayed when a bunch of recovery websites littered my screen!! It would take several more months before I decided to take a closer look at the SCA website and online meetings. Finally in November 1999, I realized that my life was going down the toilet very quickly as a result of my online and offline sexually compulsive pursuits. I had actually been an active sex addict since the age of 17, but it took 18 years for me to finally become aware of the fact that sex addiction exists, let alone admit that I was a sex addict.

I mark the beginning of my active recovery from sex addiction on the day that I found a sponsor (December 15, 1999). I had already been through two online sponsors by that point, then HP put my current sponsor in my path and I finally got the help I needed to put recovery #1 in my life. All of my recovery began online and continued online from then to now. At the urging of my sponsor (who I communicate with via email, online meetings, and the telephone), I looked for local S-recovery meetings. I found none except for one tiny S-recovery group that ended up not meeting my needs (there is a lot of gender bias where I live in terms of sex addiction recovery – a woman simply does not fit in well at the face-to-face meetings here). I do still go to this tiny face-to-face S-recovery meeting on occasion, but it has remained a peripheral part of my recovery.

Nevertheless, recovery became so important to me that I yearned for more face-to-face contact. For that reason, I visited New York City in May 2000 and discovered the huge

The only requirement for membership in SCA is the desire to stop having compulsive sex.

& rich SCA fellowship there. It was amazing! I was already very impressed with the quality of the SCA meetings I attended online, but the face-to-face fellowship in NYC surpassed my expectations. Not only did I meet more recovery friends there, but I also was able to sit down and have a REAL coffee with my sponsor for the first time (and get a real hug). Since then, I have visited NYC 2 to 3 times a year whenever possible just to take in more face-to-face SCA recovery and to sit down with my sponsor.

A natural offshoot to my recovery was to get involved in service. This started with very simple things like helping “watch the door” at online IRC chat meetings, then later on I took on a position as Meeting Leader. After a few more months, I took on a service position as the trusted servant of the web-based Feedback meeting. All of these service positions opened up a view of SCA from “behind the scenes”, and I was impressed not only by the work that has gone into SCA as we now know it (both offline and online), but also by how much it helped my recovery.

I now hold service positions with Online SCA Intergroup (as Intergroup Chair), and with SCA’s International Service Organization (ISO) as SCanner Editor. The two great things about holding these positions are that they have taught me VOLUMES about humility, and that I will not be in those positions for very long before the principle of “rotation of service” allows me to step down so that others can take my place. That’s a very good thing! I’ve also found that the Slogans & Traditions are particularly helpful.

Based on my experience, I strongly recommend that others give service a try, especially if they want to strengthen their recovery program. It’s a great way to expend that “what do I do with myself now” post-active-addiction energy, and a great way to see the Steps, Traditions & Slogans in a whole new light. Furthermore, service does not have to be anything “big” like holding a Trusted Servant position in a group or intergroup – it can be as simple as showing up at a meeting and sharing, or as simple as greeting a newcomer. As was so eloquently summed up in a mission statement from AA, “*I am responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of (the fellowship) always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.*”

Deanna R (Prince Edward Island, Canada)

The SCA E-Group: Another Online Tool of Recovery.

First I should probably explain the difference between the SCA E-group, and the online SCA meetings. What we do here in NY is a web posting (via an E-group). Someone will post a message, and people can read that post and respond, or post their own message. The online meetings are live meetings between SCA members, and are scheduled to happen at certain times. [Ed. Note: the SCA Online Intergroup includes two web-based meetings, 12 IRC-based chat room meetings, 3 Paltalk-based voice/chat

meetings, a fellowship area called the Recovery Byte Café, and numerous links to the SCA home page and other online SCA tools. The SCA E-group mentioned in this article is not currently included in the Online Intergroup since it began independently, but it is an important online tool available to SCA members anywhere.]

It all got started when Tom went to Florida. He was going to be gone for several months. Several of us traded email with him so we could keep in touch without the expense of making a lot of phone calls.

While the group of us was doing this, we realized it was a really great tool. We wanted to make it a little more organized so that people didn't get left out from any emails. At first, we each had basically created an email distribution list and would send group emails. But new people to the group were getting left off some people's list, so they were not getting some of the replies, or postings.

David B. came up with the idea of using e-groups (or something similar) to give us a central point to meet and post. This is where I came in. I was the one who actually set up David's idea and got the e-groups up and running. I started announcing it in face-to-face meetings and more and more people wanted to sign up.

Today we have 121 members and 4,186 postings (over several years now). I was the only moderator for a long time, but now Mike D. is also a moderator, and he is really good about announcing it at meetings, as well as being a huge help in keeping the group going.

This is the history of how the group got going, but it doesn't go into how it helps. This is a really great tool for me. Since I came into recovery 7 years ago the phone has always been a tool that is hard for me to use. I have beaten myself up so many times over the phone, and my lack of using it. For myself, I find that the e-group is so much easier. I feel connected to program without the pressure of the phone. And I feel that when I put up a post it is much easier for me to be really open and honest about what I'm going through. I think that might be because there are no physical people there looking at me while I'm opening up. I do open up in meetings and have been really open in meetings, but there is always fear connected to that. So many times I feel that people are judging what I'm saying (my shit). But with the e-fellowship, I just say what I need to say. I get it off my chest, and I get it out there for people to hear. I don't always get feedback, but I don't always want feedback. Regarding feedback via the SCA e-group, we can ask to have it or request not to have it.

Today the e-fellowship is really helping me. I have started a job where I work nights. On my days off I keep to the same schedule so I can physically work over night. For this reason, I don't wake up until 8:00 pm or 9:00 pm. Of course, all the face-to-face meetings are over then. My primary connection to program right now is the e-fellow-

ship. Without it I would only have my sponsor as a connection. Of course I still have my issues with the phone, so I rarely make any program calls. I think I just need to accept that I'm not a phone person. I never have been.

The other benefit I find with the e-group is that it is like a journal for me. All the postings are saved all the way back to the very first one. I can go back and read things that I have said, and see the progress (or regress) depending on where I am in my recovery. I'm very happy that this tool exists, and I'm glad that other people are finding it helpful as well. Most of the time I just sit back and read other people's posts. That in and of itself helps me, keeps me connected, and helps me stay grounded.

Thanks, Tra D (New York, New York, USA)

INTERNATIONAL & REMOTE MEMBERS SHARE

Finding SCA Online From Ireland.

I first encountered SCA online after searching the internet in March-April 2001, and the following month I attended my first face-to-face SCA meeting in New York City at the 2001 Conference. I live in Ireland and there are no SCA meetings here. Another "S" fellowship does hold a meeting in a nearby city once a week, though. In the past, prior to finding SCA, I did attend this meeting. The group learnt of my sexual orientation and I was in no uncertain terms informed that I was surplus to requirements. On being told this, one member did inform me that there was another program out there that was more accepting. I was curious, and soon began searching the net and found SCA.

On attending the conference in NY in 2001, I look back on it now as the first time in my life that I felt hopeful that there was help available. On returning to Ireland I soon realised that if I wanted to keep in contact with the fellowship, it had to be online. I met someone at the conference and after returning home wrote an e-mail asking her to be my sponsor. At the time I really did not know what a sponsor was (and perhaps do not today either) but I had heard people talking about the necessity of having one. Like so many areas in my life, at first I was compulsive about online sponsorship and visiting the SCA website. As time went on, I lost all interest in online recovery and, at the same time, my acting out escalated. For me to write all the pluses of online recovery would, in my opinion, be hypocritical. However, what I can safely say is that anytime in the past that I have used the different tools of recovery on the SCA site, I have always felt much better afterward and less likely to act out.

In so many areas of my life, I want instant gratification. Sitting down at a key board

certainly does not provide this for me, especially if I really feel like acting out. But you know what? I realise today (I am sober for 2 days), that it is the only option that is available to me. I know that if I continue acting out the finality may be death. When I am able to look at it like that, I guess reaching out is not all that bad even if it not to a human face. In terms of recovery I often say to myself, "it is easy for them to be sober when they attend face-to-face meetings." Nevertheless, I know of people that have sobriety, and they say they owe this recovery to online contact.

Here in Ireland, I also attend meetings of another 12-step program (Al-Anon). I get a lot from those meetings, but they have not been able to help me stop the want to act out. Over the past two years, I have attended about 3 to 4 face-to-face meetings each week in this fellowship. I have noticed that if I am in a meeting in which there is a guy who triggers me, I share less honestly and talk less about myself and more about the faults of others. In my irregular use of SCA online recovery this triggering by an individual's appearance is not an issue. At the very few face-to-face SCA meetings that I have attended, to be perfectly honest, I have been triggered by a lot of members; I think this is my HP trying to tell me that, for me, online is where I am meant to be today.

Writing this has really opened my eyes. I was initially going to go to the SCA site, take a note of the facilities there and then "talk" about them here. To me this says that I do not have great familiarity with the site because of a lack of use on my part. At the end of face-to-face meetings, members gather around, hold hands and say: "It works if you work it, so work it, you're worth it!" This, of course, applies to online recovery, too. Writing this last line is, I believe, my HP trying to tell me that it is time to walk the walk, not just talk the talk.

Micheal D (Cork, Ireland)

Online Recovery from Scotland – A Godsend.

That's the best and easiest way for me to describe finding recovery online.

First, to discover that there were people like me and that I was not alone; to discover that my behavior had an underlying cause and that there was a way out! Having been an addict for most of my adult life, it was a revelation to have someone put a name to what was wrong with me, and even better, "they" seemed to know my symptoms.

I stumbled across a website for Sex and Love Addicts, and the addict in me browsed the link to see what it was all about. The range and quality of the information available seemed to legitimize things, and hey "Welcome to Recovery"!

After perusing the pages and reading about the principles, I found a link to an online

meeting. In there I “met” people with whom, for the first time, I could relate. Initially I was nervous about “sharing” my story and experiences with people who I didn’t know or couldn’t see. However, after a few days I took the plunge. Sharing was an unburdening experience and very quickly I “spilled my guts”. I felt so much better that I was now admitting the full extent of my illness.

Since then my recovery has been up and down, BUT I’m still hanging in there and working on getting better one day at a time.

Graham (Scotland)

The Amazing Thing About Online Recovery – An Indonesian’s Perspective

What is so amazing about the internet? It’s not about a bunch of data, it’s about connection and, greater still, about recovery. I have met nice people from all over the world just by sitting in my room in front of the computer. The *real* connection I have discovered through the internet consists of meeting people from around the globe who honestly struggle with their sexual addictions. Through the online meetings, I began to have a genuine relationship with myself, with others, with God, with nature, and with reality as a whole. What a grace to know that I am not alone in my infirmities and that there are people who are having the same common problem – and who try to recover together. That communal sense has given me strength and hope.

My first encounter with online recovery groups was back in 1997 when I searched the internet and found that there was such a thing as Sexaholics Anonymous (SA). I was surprised and happy. As my sexual addiction (in the form of excessive masturbation and porn) could not be handled well on my own, I was feeling quite desperate about maintaining my bottom lines. As far as I know, there are no 12-Steps meetings for sexual addicts in Jakarta, where I live (I’m native Indonesian). Even if there are, I don’t think I have the courage to go since I am a seminarian and quite well known by many people. I don’t think I would be able to bear the fact that someone in my community knows about my addiction. That is why sponsorship online has been tremendously helpful to me and has given me a spark of light & hope in dealing with my addiction.

My discovery of SA online led me bit by bit to finding online meetings in other S-recovery fellowships, namely SLAA and SCA. I usually attend SLAA meetings online (in #SLAA on IRC), and occasionally SCA meetings online (in #SCA on IRC). I find that these rooms, even virtual, are the most real thing in my life. People here are being what they are, with no qualifications. There is love, forgiveness, acceptance, joy, hope, support and hugs. Sometimes when I feel the urge strongly to act out, I come to the rooms to see whether there are people in them. I do this so that I can be honest, and it also allows me to ask for emotional support. These rooms are havens for me. I can

SCA first went online in 1996 with the establishment of the home page and two website-based ongoing meetings.

express my feelings freely and, in response, I can receive some feedback. In doing this, I can know myself better and be motivated to stay sober and work on my recovery. I am grateful to have such communities.

My problem is still there. I'm still an addict. At the time of writing this, I am sober for almost two weeks. I realize that I still have a long road ahead of me, but knowing that I have recovery partners online helps. I understand that the most important thing is the process, not the result. In this recovery process there are many people who hold my hand and encourage me to go on with my journey to freedom and happiness.

I am grateful for this wonderful opportunity to share my experience, strength and hope with you. Thanks for listening.

Ash (Jakarta, Indonesia) – email contact: ash_only2003@yahoo.com

Online Recovery: ES&H From A Rural SCA Member.

Hey all, Marabel, sex addict in recovery. Yes, it is possible to work recovery online!

I am not able to get to face-to-face meetings because I live in a rural area that has no nearby meetings, and I also do not have a car right now. I am making do with what I have, which are the online resources. And really, I am surprised myself at what one can do online.

Right now, I try to make as many meetings as I can. I attend the web-based Topic Meeting on occasion, go to the Feedback Board some days, and on many other days I can be found at the IRC meetings in the evenings. Posting at the Feedback and Topic Meetings helps bring me clarity about what I am feeling regarding whatever things I happen to be dealing with. I also journal offline which further helps me in dealing with stuff as far as being able to look back and say, "I've been here before, how did I deal with it?" or being able to chart a course as far as what I should be doing in my recovery in the days ahead. I also read and sometimes even save some ES&H (experience, strength and hope) that I get from the Feedback and Topic Meetings. Also, I go into the Topic Meeting archives every once in a while to find things that are helpful to me. There are also other places on the SCA site that are helpful. And the IRC meetings are as close you can get online to "face to face" meetings. I have "met" some very wonderful people in the IRC meetings. It's a great way to know that indeed "you are not alone".

I have found my sponsor and recovery partners online. Just like at a face-to-face meeting, when you go to enough meetings you find someone who has more sobriety and who you think you might click with, and you ask them. Sponsor e-mail addresses are over at the Recovery Byte Café (the addresses with the star next to their names) so it is

simply a matter of asking in an e-mail. I feel lucky, or blessed even, that I have found a good online sponsor and recovery partners. It takes a lot of e-mails, phone calls, and meeting on IRC instead of face-to-face meeting ... and it's worth it.

Step work is still a part of online recovery, as is keeping in contact with sponsor and recovery partners, and using the other tools ... only it's all online.

I also do service online as a part of my recovery in the IRC meetings as an operator, or "op". It forces me to stay focused on recovery, and keeps me from being too isolated. Just like at a face-to-face meeting, somebody has to lead, and somebody has to greet, or do the literature table, and it's not that much different online.

It takes maybe a little more discipline and a little more self motivation to do online recovery, I think. It's a little harder as far as talking to people you can't see, but believe me, it is possible to work recovery online if you really want to work it. Online recovery is every bit as "real" as the face to face meetings. I know that because of online recovery, I am better than I was a year ago. I am grateful to HP for the things that have happened to me since I have started online recovery. Maybe one day I will be able to meet some of these folks in "real life"...for now, I meet them online, and am always glad to "see" them.

Marabel (Atlanta area, Georgia, USA)

Addiction Began At An Early Age – Recovery Thoughts From Belgium

My name is Dano and I am a recovering sex addict.

I can recall at a very early age that I was having very strong thoughts in my head regarding sex. In the third grade (when I was 8) my very good friend Barney explained what he had found out the night before from his brother regarding sex and the basic acts. I can recall how I was very immature with this information and became very obsessed with thinking about sex and all the words that would describe it. I was very attracted to girls and wanted to spend time with them rather than playing sports. I can recall the excitement of passing notes in class and having crushes on a couple of girls when I was in the 6th grade, although I had already had a neighbor girl that I really liked and we were kissing at the age of 6 and 7. I lost my virginity when I was 17 in high school and I recall how my girlfriend wanted to marry me and feeling scared about that.

I was married at the age of 25 and soon after found that I was secretly going to nude dancing places and going about once a week and spending quite a bit of money. My first wife and I divorced after being together for 12 years and married for a total of 7.

I remarried 2 years later and we now have 3 lovely children. I have found that I stopped going to the nude dancing places but I have allowed porn and lusting to slip back into my life. Last year in August my father died and after flying to the States for the funeral I returned back to Europe and my family stayed behind for about a week. During that time I went on the Internet for a few days losing a lot of sleep and looking at everything possible. I was so embarrassed and tired. I rebuilt the operating system to hide my evidence of going on the Internet and looking at porn. That's when I got an e-mail from a friend I met in another 12 step program and it had a link to the SCA site. From there I went online and started to feel like I had a chance to recover and feel better about myself.

My sobriety has had its ups and downs, but I know there is a place for me to go and be able to talk with people who share the same issues and problems. I have learned that it is important to take things slowly and not demand perfection.

Dano (Belgium)

All The Way From Japan!

Hello brothers and sisters in recovery. I'm one of the new kids on the block, so I'd like to tell you a little bit about myself.

I'm originally from the USA, but I live in a small town in Japan near the port of Kobe. I have lived here for almost 18 years now, which at my age is past the point of no return. My life has always been a mess: sex and drugs and alcohol. The order of preference often fluctuated, but those were the driving forces of my life. That is until I met my wife – a cute little girl from Japan. I hid my drug abuse from her and she complained about the alcohol. I never thought I could ever get along with anyone that strict, but the bug bit. She had to go back to Japan because her visa ran out. A few months later I came to Japan and we got married in Kobe. I expected to stay for about month, but I got a job and the first thing I knew ten years had flown by.

Drugs were practically non-existent in Japan 18 years ago so that cured one of my problems. Then alcohol took over. I finally made it to AA in 1994 and have been sober since my second meeting.

That left only sex. Surely nobody would ask me to give this up, I thought. But my introduction to morality in AA soon began getting to me. In fact, I began to worry if this problem was not going to drive me back to the bottle. But I sat on it for eight years plus.

I thought I could get rid of the problem at the 6th and 7th steps, but alas I was not

ENTIRELY ready to have that defect removed. Boy was I ever surprised when I did the 7th step and the next day I wasn't cured!

Anyway, I finally hit bottom. I cannot describe the mental state I was in. I had to do something, but there are no S-recovery meetings here. The first thing I did was search the Internet for help. I downloaded IRC chat software and I found SCA.

At that time I thought this will never work. I don't know the people, I can't see their faces, and I can't hear their voices. But when the meeting started and the 12 steps started streaming across the screen, I perked up. When I "heard" the first share, I related completely. I began to feel a modicum of hope. After a week or so, though, I still felt like an outsider. I didn't want to give up, but I needed a more human connection. I finally got up the nerve to ask someone to be my sponsor and I got a telephone number. I had "heard" this person share before, but I couldn't imagine what kind of personality or voice I would hear on the other side. My heart raced. Then all of a sudden I heard "Hello." It was a warm and friendly human voice. Right away I felt connected.

Since then I have spoken to several members on the phone; all wonderful people. I have a different feeling when I'm online now. Although I haven't talked on the phone to each and every one, I have come to know many people in the same way a deaf or a blind person can know other people.

And here's the best part. The program is working for me, one day at a time. I'm doing things now that I never thought I could do. My life has become an open book. Now I really have nothing to hide. No more erasing my tracks, no more wondering if anyone saw me, no more alibis. I'm free. I know it's just a daily reprieve. My misery can be refunded tomorrow if I want it back, but today I'm free.

Who knows, one day there may be face-to-face meetings in this part of the world, or everywhere in the world. Maybe someday we will be able to link electronically and see each other and talk in real time. For now all I have is online SCA, but it's working for me, and if you live somewhere where there are no meetings I urge you to try it. It could change your whole life. If you're like me, you've got nothing to lose but your misery.

Ricky (near Kobe, Japan)

Multiple Time Zone Recovery – From New York to London

It is 8 o'clock on a January morning and the sky is still dark. Outside, the rush of the day has begun. Cars and buses whiz by, the morning talk shows are in full gear. Children arrive at school. The sky is still dark. The perpetual dampness, which keeps

our grass green year-round, covers the tiled walkways. A light snow falls but doesn't stick – for this is London. The buses are double-deckers, and though we have a mild winter climate, due to the Gulf Stream, (Thank you North America!), our winters are dark and dreary; we lie at a latitude closer to Newfoundland than to New York.

More importantly than the weather, however, is the fact that nearly all my historical connections to recovery are in another continent and time zone. By the time MY sponsor (and sponsee) in New York have had their first cup of coffee, it is afternoon. I was lucky to come into programme whilst living in New York City. I had access to meetings everyday. Fellowship, sponsorship, and all the tools of SCA were available to me. Yet I had no idea how lucky I was. Coming back to my original home was a product of my sobriety, but, surprisingly, London, a city of 6 million people, has only one SCA meeting per week and just a few members.

So, I have learnt to keep connected using one of the most important tools in my recovery: the Internet. That, combined with the telephone has become an integral part of my sobriety. Instead of my check-in calls to my sponsor, I now send e-mail. We are still trying to iron out a suitable combination of phone and Internet contact. But generally, a weekly call combined with more frequent emailing does the trick. Since I have already been through the formal step-work with my sponsor, this arrangement works well.

My sponsee and I, however, have much more of a dilemma. He and I are trying to get through his fourth step transatlantic style. It is not easy and we are still working it through. We discussed using a simultaneous chat program, but that presents too many logistical difficulties, mainly having to type at breakneck speed. Once again, e-mail can help us. We have learned to do the main step-work on the phone, something we had already started when I was still in the USA. (My sponsee lives in a rural area, far from NYC.) But now with the time-zone difference, it seems an e-mail list of fears, resentments, etc *before* our phone call helps prepare us and focus our calls. It also gives us a chance to catch up, bond, and enjoy some fellowship without worrying about the minutes.

Now that I don't have daily fellowship through meetings and frequent programme calls, I have also grown to rely more heavily on the SCA Internet tools. Firstly, I tend to go to the SCA website more frequently, just to read. Sometimes I look at the meeting lists, (USA and International) just to remind myself that we are a global fellowship and that I am not alone. More importantly, I read the postings on the SCA Yahoo Groups site [*Ed. note: this is the E-group mentioned in Tra's article*], nearly every day. I know that I can get a meeting-between-a-meeting by going there, and that the time difference doesn't count. If I'm struggling, feeling slippery, or just feeling isolated, I will post, knowing that I will be heard.

I am trying to sort my schedule so that I am able to get to an online chat-style meeting

once a week. There are many of us around the world in need of online fellowship, and having morning, afternoon, and evening meetings gives all of us in various time zones the opportunity to connect. And connecting, keeping us from our isolation, is the greatest benefit the Internet offers us.

The Internet, however, is not just a tool I use to do SCA work. It is also a form of 3rd Column, life-affirming celebration. I love to listen to certain National Public Radio shows, as well as Radio Classique in France. Because of the Internet, I am now able to give myself those special times as gifts, time to enjoy being with myself and to nurture myself with things I like. And I feel like it's something special because it comes from a far off land.

In sum, the Internet has become one of my most important life-tools. It has narrowed the distance, geographically, spiritually, and emotionally for me. Time zones and oceans are bridged with a screen and keyboard. My recovery continues, one keystroke at a time!
(SCA Note: SCA, London meets once a week on Sundays. Tom B. is the contact person and may be reached on (44) 781-621-4005. From inside the UK dial 0781-621-4005.)

Tom B (London, England)

BENEFITS & CHALLENGES OF RECOVERY

The Internet: Furthering Sex Addiction vs. Finding Recovery

Hi! My name is B.T. and I'm a recovering sex addict. I first started recovery almost 12 years ago. I found the SCA website about 4 or so years ago I think. I have had many ups and downs along the way. My recovery has been far from perfect. I've recently re-dedicated myself to the program with mixed results.

The internet age really furthered my addiction along when my then wife and I first got online. I would work 8 hours and then spend all night and well into the morning in chat rooms. I then would take a 2 or 3 hour nap before going back to work. All the while, I was neglecting my wife and our son.

I would be irritable from not getting enough sleep. I would get upset with my wife if she was online when I got home. We started to argue more and more as I wanted to spend my "free time" online and not help around the house or with raising our son. Eventually we were divorced. We even argued over who would get our internet browser!!!!

In the last two and half years, I have really started taking advantage of the good that the internet can provide in terms of recovery. I frequent recovery-based chat rooms and

message boards. I have met so many wonderful friends this way, not more acting out partners.

I have opportunities to get to face-to-face meetings, but with the distance required to get to them and my schedule, I'm finding the online meetings to be an adequate substitution. Don't get me wrong, for me at least, face-to-face meetings are always better. Nevertheless, with online recovery I am able to easily get in touch with recovery buddies and share what's going on in my life. Sometimes I find it easier to put it in an email than talking about it.

Keep coming back no matter what! Recovery does work if you work it! Peace and love to all of us!

B.T. (Ohio, USA)

Using The Internet To Recover.

My particular mode of addictive sexual compulsion is similar to many others I have met in the recovery process. The compulsive use of pornography and masturbation began early in my life and developed through the years to the point that it became the central most important part of my day-to-day life.

I was first introduced to pornography when I was in elementary school. At that time my older brother began bringing home magazines discarded by the father of a neighborhood friend. It was during this time that I began learning how to hide materials, behaviors and myself from the eyes of others – particularly my parents. During my high school years, print pornography was supplemented by the introduction of pornographic movies at a local drive-in. These two were the primary media for me for approximately 22 years.

In 1996 I signed on with an ISP [*Internet Service Provider*] and began to learn how to surf the web for pornography. This made a dramatic difference in the development of my addiction. Now I could access pornography for free at any time of the day or night within a matter of seconds. My addict began to gloat itself on the opportunity. By July, 2002, I was spending 3 to 6 hours a day surfing the net for porn while masturbating.

On July 16, 2002 I was confronted by my wife who had discovered the history of my surfing during the mid afternoon. This was not the first time she had discovered my activities, nor was it the first time she had told me that she believed I had a sexual addiction. But it was the first time I agreed with her and admitted that I also believed I was a sex addict.

The next morning the tool I had been using to feed my addiction became the tool that opened the door for me to SCA. I used the same skills I'd learned to discover pornography to locate recovery resources. I date my entrance into recovery at July 17, 2002 because that was the day that I discovered and began participating in the SCA online recovery group.

While being only a few months into the recovery process, I have developed several useful habits that are aiding me in the process. I start off my days with a visit to the SCA Feedback for Recovery Meeting. There I post my commitment to working the program for that day. I also usually write a brief message reporting events or reflections that seem important to me regarding my recovery that morning. I also read what others have posted and often respond to them. Because of the nature of my work, I am often able to visit this board later during the day as well.

Another habit I have nurtured is to attend the nightly IRC meeting. Because there are no SCA groups in my area, this is the only access I have to "real time" recovery meetings on a daily basis. I have found myself deeply moved by the depth of sharing, the honesty and the genuineness of caring expressed in these meetings. Often I find myself in tears. And I have grown to know and deeply care for many of the 'regulars' at this meeting.

A third habit I am cultivating is the use of email to stay in contact with my sponsor and other recovery partners. It was interesting to me that I had to overcome an initial resistance to sending emails in the same way that I (and other addicts) resist picking up the phone and calling someone for help. But I practice often these days! And I'm discovering that it is a useful way to stay in touch with my recovery partners regularly.

Finally, I am discovering a growing body of recovery resources on the web. Many websites are appearing that are related to recovery, including S-recovery. I am finding useful resources in the form of books and articles on these sites.

Now, I am aware that there are some sexual addicts who need to stay as far away from the internet as possible in order to protect their sobriety; there are times when I am among their number! But, for me in general, the internet has been an invaluable tool for recovery. One day my computer was an instrument for feeding my addiction. And the very next day it became an instrument for my recovery and transformation.

TKB (western North Carolina, USA)

The Therapeutic Value of Online Sharing

I try to post in all of the online "rooms" as much as I can, so you should be seeing more of me there. It's actually therapeutic. They say that alcoholics, for example, enjoy more

about the act of drinking than just the drink. The feeling of the glass in their hands, the coldness of the ice, the way the drink looks in a glass in just the right light ... it all contributes to their experience and, in a way I guess, to their addiction. But, if you can get some of those same feelings with ginger ale in the glass instead of Johnny Walker Red, it can actually help you miss the "drunkenness" part of drinking less. Posting is the same for me. I enjoy the rhythm of the keys as I type, and I enjoy the feeling that comes with communicating my thoughts. Even the feeling of a mouse in my right hand is enjoyable. It's strange, I know, but isn't this whole thing about online addiction a little strange, too? When Al Gore (or whoever) invented the internet, do you think they had any idea that some of us could be susceptible to such things?

Tim D (Clinton county, New York, USA)

The Benefits of Online Recovery.

My addiction was likely life-long, but I see it becoming a fixation from age 20 to 37. After bouts with depression and financial stressors (imagine that!) for a year, I sought counseling and began drug & alcohol recovery in 8/95. While many around me were relapsing repeatedly after weeks, I put together over 13 months, drank one night, and put together another 7+ months. Throughout that time, however, I now know that I was substituting sex for alcohol and my addictions were not being addressed. I knew this, but no one seemed to talk about sex as a "drug." Yet I attended meetings daily and became active in service and worked with a sponsor on the 12 Steps.

In late 1996, I learned about a local ministry that dealt with three major components concurrently in a weekly meeting: renewal through religion; overcoming sexual addiction; and overcoming homosexuality. An interview was required and I was forthright in explaining I wanted the first two of these three things but had a major issue with the third. They welcomed me anyway and today I know that "when the student is ready, the teacher appears." They were using the White Book of a sister fellowship. I never knew of S-fellowships before, and called their Central Office. From that call, I learned about SCA, SLAA, and SAA and my life has never been the same. I stopped going to that particular ministry after about two months, but traveled long distances to make other S-fellowship meetings.

Since 1997, other financial factors have made getting to local meetings troublesome at times. In 1998, I found online recovery. I consider myself a "meeting-maker" and seek at least 7 meetings each week. Because of the internet, I can often do better than that. I've probably done a lot more than 2300 meetings in 2300 days and do not plan on changing that trend, as it keeps my medicine stronger than my "dis-ease."

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.

I've had a face-to-face sponsor for over a year now, but I did have an online sponsor for two years. He typically had 4 sponsees at any given time and we all worked together from a Step Study workbook. We would break each Step down into small bite-sized pieces and email each other our answers. Then we would meet online in a chat room for 90 minutes weekly and discuss the most difficult or important questions in greater detail. We would also write more frequent "check-ins" to each other, briefing all about how we were doing physically, emotionally, sexually, spiritually, and with short-term goals. This model from my former sponsor worked extremely well, and I am using it for my current sponsees (all of whom are long distance via the internet).

My online presence has benefited me greatly in my personal recovery, and many long and lasting friendships have been formed. I've felt blessed in meeting four members in person – one of whom visited me for a little over a month from across the globe (in addition to a few face-to-face members that I've met later online after I've explained online recovery).

Admittedly, I've always had a problem journaling. Even writing frequent check-ins has been a challenge. But I also feel that there is something more powerful in the written word. When I type an email or a share at an online meeting, somehow I often see more clearly afterwards what I was trying all along to really get out. With regard to the web-based meetings and email, I am able to write at any time of day or night when the "time is just right" and the recipient(s) is(are) also reading (and perhaps responding) at their best time, too. I just love that about the internet. That being said, my favorite meetings are the IRC-based meetings on StarLink-IRC.Org because they are often attended by 20 members in real-time. Like a face-to-face meeting, they last an hour and have a formal opening and closing (I like rituals). StarLink-IRC is our porn-free and ad-free host and they are diligent and respectful (like a church or hospital trustee would be).

A few final thoughts about the advantages of online recovery: 1) Some of our members do not have local meetings and depend on the SCanner, books, or other printed material to work their program. In my case, meetings are too distant to allow me to attend regularly. Meeting online is at no additional cost to my internet service. 2) Since online recovery is international, I have made friends and acquaintances with people from all over the globe. I might be struggling at 3 a.m., yet I often can find other members online. It might be 11 p.m. or afternoon for them, and vice versa. 3) While the IRC meetings are in real-time and the web-based Feedback Meeting and Recovery Byte Café hold about four days of dialogue, the Topic Meetings have been archived since July 1996. The archives hold a wealth of information on each Step, Recovery Plans, Tools, Sponsorship, etc. 4) Even with a few 24-hours under my belt, I occasionally go to a meeting where I find myself triggered by the appearance of another member in recovery. At an online meeting, I know people by their nickname only. To me, this has often proved a safer route in my personal recovery. (For some, it also eliminates problems of scents.) 5) One of the tools of recovery that I've found most beneficial is

service. Online recovery with SCA provides many varied service opportunities and is one more way to “give back what was so freely given.”

In my years of attendance, I remain deeply grateful to the online recovery fellowship of SCA and sister fellowships. They have not only figuratively, but also literally, saved my life. Being a part of this fellowship – and especially this online community – humbles me. I am grateful for the recovery you offer and I am glad to call you all “my family.”

Yours in service, Tim F (Lancaster, Pennsylvania, USA)

The Gifts I Have Received From Online SCA.

I’ve been in SCA online since October of 2000. Yes, I’ve just passed the two year mark and I am critical of myself for not being further along the recovery path than I am. I’ve watched tons of people come into the program after me and zoom through the steps without ever breaking their bottom lines or with a willingness to get right back up after a slip, then move on in what to me can only be a whirlwind breakneck rate of recovery. I struggle along. I have two plus months of abstinence, but without sustained sobriety. I’ve heard that sobriety = abstinence + spiritual development. Am I sober after two years? No, not really. Why am I here then if progress is so slow for me? Why do I keep going? What do I get out of SCA? The only answer I have to these questions is that I have changed, and I’ve changed in a variety of ways. Ways that are difficult for me to pinpoint or put into words ... but healthy change, nevertheless. First of all, I’m able to admit that I’m jealous of people who have come into the program after I have and have months of sobriety when I seem to be unable to gain any sobriety at all. I can freely admit that I am envious. In admitting this, I recognize that most people look at this character flaw as just a part of the human condition. It’s not about the envy itself, it’s about what I do with it. Self pity would lead me to act out. After a lifetime of belief that I had only one character flaw (sexually acting out), admitting this fact is major progress. What else have I denied about myself for all these years? The list is too long to print. I’m prideful, angry, filled with resentment, and God knows what else is yet to be revealed.

But these flaws aren’t the issues either. I’ve come to recognize that I want to punish myself more than anyone else in SCA might want to punish me for having these negative traits. That in itself demonstrates to me that I need to continue turning these flaws of character over to my higher power and to the group if I ever want to be free from them. Surrender is something that I am finally beginning to learn. For months, I’ve confused surrender with “giving in” rather than “giving over.” But I’m learning. I’m learning what surrender means ... and that’s the first major accomplishment of my time in SCA.

Secondly, I've learned that I never really believed in a power greater than myself. I believed in other people telling me that there is a power greater than myself and that it was probably themselves to whom they were referring. Wow!!!! That was a major revelation I gained here in SCA. If I do what these people tell me to ... if I believe what they tell me to believe ... I'll be free from addiction. After all, their God has worked for millions of people. That may be the case, but that God never worked for me. He was a God of fear – a monster that I somehow had to come to “love” because that's what people told me I had to do. What did SCA give me in regards to spirituality? I have come to believe that I can have a God of my understanding ... free from fear ... if I so choose. Again this was no overnight revelation. It took months and months of my complaining about religion and my inability to “understand” what I was “supposed” to do. In SCA, no one told me what I'm “supposed” to do to find God. They were willing to stand by me and work with me to be open. The people in SCA helped me become willing to allow God to find me. They never pushed me to find their God or any other God. They knew God would find me if I only allowed myself to be willing. What a major breakthrough for me! Sure, I'm tempted at times to want someone else's HP for myself when theirs seems to be working better for them. Well, no one's perfect!

Finally, I learned that I was ok. Probably the greatest gift I received from the online group has been to recognize for the first time in my life that I'm ok. I don't need to be anything else. Again this didn't happen overnight. My nickname was “orame” for months when I first arrived at the online SCA meetings. I portrayed myself as being straight, too. I wasn't even willing to “come out” to group members. Denial was a major defense mechanism for me. Have I learned to be myself in the real world? No, not at all. But I have learned to be more of the person I am in SCA. I've learned to let go a bit and just be. That was no easy task for me either. Again, I fall often in this regard and try to be someone I'm not. Others recognize this in me, but don't say anything about it. There's always someone in SCA who is where I am or who knows how I feel. There are also those who have been where I am and have long since passed through it and transcended it. Both are necessary to my recovery. I need to be challenged and to be supported. I cannot cope with this addiction alone. I can no longer isolate if I want true sobriety in the form of abstinence + spiritual development. I need SCA in order to continue my journey. “Two years with two months of abstinence ... that's a pretty crummy record”, I think to myself. But when I do that, I'm not being honest. I'm in denial. In reality, I've gained major insights into issues that I have denied and have been unwilling to face for all of my life. That's what SCA and recovery is all about: learning to know who I am and learning to come to appreciate the person I am. Thanks SCA for being here.

Ben (Pennsylvania, USA)

Intentions, Boundaries, & Internet Filters.

I came to SCA online because my sexual addiction had found the internet in October of 1998 and I had been hopelessly lost in internet porn for several months. It was March 17th, 1999 when by grace I found SCA online. There wasn't much left of me emotionally or spiritually notwithstanding my face-to-face SA meetings once a week. I simply needed much more support than I was getting. What I found in SCA was a reasonably safe place to express the hurt, pain, confusion and powerlessness I had and have with sexuality.

Some of the challenges I faced with online recovery still exist. First, the internet is the single most prolific source of my addiction. It has more illicit and erotic content of any and every kind than anything I had access to growing up. In a sense it's like a compulsive gambler having to walk through a casino to get to his meeting place in the back of the building somewhere. This taught me that my addiction is not about place but about presence and state of being. When I come to the computer screen it is the intent for which I sit down at the computer which determines where I will go and what searches I will pursue. As much as I would like to consider myself a victim of the internet with its pop-up ads and enticements, that defense is flawed since it is my choices to point and click that set up the next set of choices to point and click. In this way, I lead myself down the path to hell in porn, or, through much greater effort, I find paths toward more positive things. If my INTENTION is to get recovery, then it is just as easily located online as it is offline. I can point and click my way to SCA just as easily as I can point and click to my active addiction.

You must remember that when I came here it was BECAUSE I had already been 'out there' wallowing in the filth. Finding this site in the midst of that tumultuous sea of porn was like finding a safe harbor in the storm and it gave me respite if I was willing to stay in its harbor.

Second, the internet itself represents a place of potential to be discovered for good or bad. As such, it is a place of intrigue and unmanageability. I can't begin to count the number of hours of time I have spent online since 1999. Most of that time has not been in the pursuit of porn but in the pursuit of positive and beneficial things. The main value seems to be in making positive connections. Although the internet offers that, it also has many counterfeits for anything I might seek. Critical internet survival skills I've developed have included being able to focus my intention, learning to trust referral sources, and qualifying those referral sources BEFORE exploring online.

Since I continue to attend 12 step meetings in the face-to-face world, I am occasionally approached by sex addicts who want to know more about my online activities. They have some hesitancy about going anywhere near the internet so they want to hear more.

I tell them that I don't recommend they go online if doing so overwhelms them in their willingness and capacity to adhere to safe boundaries. If, on the other hand, they are in a situation where they are compelled to use the internet for work or livelihood and must be online, then they might as well know about the SCA site and where they can turn for help.

Limits and boundaries encompass a topic that I should like to suggest is the primary issue for compulsive personalities like me. The internet offers a compulsive personality precisely what is most impossible to manage; it offers unlimited access to unlimited resources to feed the focus of whatever obsession you might have. It is therefore central to my recovery to become willing to accept and abide within limits. When I live within the limits I am sane. When I go beyond the limits I'm very quickly caught up in the undertow of the currents and swiftly carried back out into compulsive madness.

There are several things that are unique to online recovery. When I first started doing online recovery my verbal communication skills were not what they are now especially in terms of expressing and defining feelings. In the beginning it was very difficult to have such powerful emotions and not have the word power to express them. My typing skills were much less also. I was forced to develop both of these aspects in my desperate need to work my recovery program online. Today I consider these things as blessings that I don't think I would have if I had not been forced to do recovery online. The fact that I can't see the other people I'm talking to, read their body language, or hear voice intonations in a type-written medium are the very limitations that have forced me to develop the communication skills that I now have. It adds dimension to my sharing and functionality in the offline world and that's a good thing.

There are also drawbacks to this enhanced communication ability. When I started online recovery I had only been involved in self-sex and porn. My limited communication skills perhaps contributed to the fact that I had not engaged in online problems like sex chat. I still had and do have many unmet emotional needs, and now with the improvement of my communication skills it has become more treacherous for me to be online and in chat rooms. Again as with porn sites INTENTION is everything to my recovery online, as is my WILLINGNESS to abide by safe emotional boundaries. If I don't have solid spiritual footing I have to pull back and reinstate older boundaries and limits until I get my senses again.

I might also cover the topic of internet filters. At one time I had two filtering systems. One came from my ISP [*Internet Service Provider*] which filtered out about 98% of all the smut. I also used "*net nanny*" which my wife and I installed on the computer ourselves. As long as I had filters I felt compelled to 'test' them and to 'try' them; it became an obsession and compulsion just to beat the system and get around it. I found that I could get around internet filters.

One day my sponsor reminded me that the problem is not the machine but the user of the machine. I got rid of my filters and today I don't use any filtering devices. My filtering devices have to be internal and within myself and are based on INTENTION rather than external and based on obstruction. In my experience, obstruction filtering is only a temporary and partial solution; it cannot be relied on for long, but it may give me a short period of time to rethink and re-choose before I go down the dark path. The only working filter I know of is a constant focus and vigilance on keeping a pure intention. On a daily basis, this includes acting only on intention to recover, and surrendering the intention to act out my addiction. This filtering always works when I work it.

Phoenix (Utah, USA)

How SCA Online Freed Me From a 30-Year Addiction

You can hardly open a magazine or turn on the TV today without hearing a story about how the Internet has greatly increased the number of sex addicts in this country, and how prevalent its effect is. My story is a little different. It is about how the Internet, and specifically SCA online, freed me of a nearly 30-year addiction.

My addictive history is pretty straightforward. I became a compulsive masturbator in my teens, and by the time I realized I wanted to stop, in my mid-twenties, I couldn't. Since I was (and am) a single woman, the acting out with myself became more entrenched and more compulsive with each passing year. I tried willpower, prayer, religious activities, therapy, and everything else I could think of, but was hopelessly caught in the addictive cycle.

Four years ago, when I was near despair over my inability to control this addiction, I started with a new therapist. After a few months, she brought up the subject of the 12 Steps, telling me that the only way I would be cured was by finding other people with the same problem and talking to them about it. I laughed at her. Having no familiarity with the steps, I found the idea of a shy, isolating person like me discussing her sex life with strangers to be ridiculous.

Still, after a time, desperation led me to look into S-recovery groups in my small city. I found that there were chapters of a couple of them, but no meetings that were open to women. Now what?

I had bought my first PC a few months before this. One day I typed "sex addiction" into a search engine to see what I would find, and it brought me to the SCA website. I was fascinated by the possibility of sharing in a truly anonymous way, and before long I was attending meetings, posting on the bulletin boards, and had obtained an online sponsor.

How does online recovery work? For those who have access to f2f groups, we always encourage them to go there as well as visit the website. But most of the people who come to SCA online don't have the chance for f2f meetings. The website provides several bulletin boards for sharing, and getting feedback if desired. We have live meetings in a chat room. We have an email list for those who want to write or to receive email from others. We also provide online, long distance sponsors.

For me the start of true recovery was getting a sponsor. We worked the steps together, mostly by email, sometimes by phone. Step 5 was done in a two-hour phone call. I have since spoken to other SCA friends and my own sponsees by phone, and have met a few of them in person when I travel. I even attended an SCA retreat at Pawling (in NY state) – my first f2f meeting! There are many people who can testify that the online SCA community has led them to recovery. Though it is not the conventional way to do the 12 steps, it still works if you work it.

As for my own recovery, last August I celebrated 3 years of abstinence on my plan. I was active in many services positions in the online community, and am still an SCA sponsor. As my own addiction has been under good control for a long time, I spend less time with the group. I have moved on to a face-to-face 12-step group that deals with another compulsive area of my life, but I will always be grateful for the help and recovery I received from SCA, and especially for those who decided to put SCA's presence on the Internet.

Linda L (upstate New York, USA)

If You Are Willing To Go To Any Lengths...

Hello, my name is Cathy C., and I am a sex addict from the windy city, Chicago. I have been in recovery since August 16th, 2002. During this time, I have exclusively attended online meetings. Also during this time I have become and remained sober and I am looking forward to celebrating 5 months clear and free from bottom lines. I cannot tell you how much I owe to online meetings. It has completely changed my life.

Before I came to meetings I never thought I would be able to break free from my compulsive masturbation. I had been trying to quit for 3 years to no avail. I tried everything including prayer, fasting, and telling people when I acted out. If I was in my dorm room, I even went to the extreme of having (a) no TV, (b) Christian music or bible verses playing on the CD player, and (c) the door always left all the way open.

If I needed to change I would have to go to the bathroom to do so. But, as all of you addicts know, no amount of white knuckling will keep a true addict sober. And I am

nothing, if not a true addict. It did work for 4 months, but those were miserable days. One night I had just had enough and needed my fix so even though my door was open, I decided to act out. I can truly say that I was extremely angry. Among other things I am a Christian, and I thought if I really loved God, that prayer and those rules should have been able to keep me sober. I fell into despair and active addiction again. I progressed with my compulsion to the point of almost bleeding to death once because of my need for the fix. I knew then that I was going to die if I kept up the addiction.

So a good friend from church who I had told about my compulsion told me of a website with articles on sex addiction and from there I found the SCA website. It was not long after that that I found the IRC meetings and started attending.

At first one meeting a week and a lot of white knuckling kept me sober. But I soon realized I could not do it alone, and many people in the room were not content to let me be just another name. They would ask me questions and seemed to genuinely care for me. They would even email me if I went MIA. *[missing in action]*

After about a month and a half, I decided I needed a sponsor. I looked in the Recovery Byte Cafe *[email address list]* and saw that one of the people listed as willing to sponsor was someone I had seen everyday that I had been to an SCA online meeting. I asked her and she said she was willing to give it a go. I didn't know it at the time, but that took a lot of surrender and willingness on her part and I am truly thankful for that.

My sponsor is always available for me. I truly feel like I can and have called her anytime of the day or night. She cares about me in a way that no one ever has before. And she has been through what I have been through and is able to help me see the trees through the fog. The other big lifeline for me has been the online feedback board. Sometimes no one is in the #SCA room on IRC. In addition, I keep weird hours. So if there is no one around, I can still post how I am feeling at the feedback board and read other's ES&H. That has also been a true blessing for me.

I want to leave with this one thought: if you are willing to go to any lengths, recovery will be possible. All we have is today so take it one day at a time.

Your sister in recovery, Cathy C (Chicago, Illinois, USA)

A Seminary Graduate Shares His ES&H.

My experience with sexual compulsion begins in my 13th year of life. I grew up in a very regimented and strict environment as a Preacher's Kid. Sex was a non-topic of conversation. I scratched an itch one evening as I was lying in bed and strange things happened to me. I was scared to tell anyone or ask any questions. I just knew how good

Sobriety is not just a day count. It is abstinence combined with personal & spiritual growth.

I felt, and since I didn't feel good very often, it was like I had a new tool for coping. Along with my love for music, masturbation became a survival and coping skill from that day forward. All of this happened without pictures, fantasy, imagination or anything else that would later become a part of the equation.

It wasn't long until I noticed that when I looked at certain pictures of women that I began getting funny feelings in my groin; feelings I now know were arousal. These pictures were benign compared to what is available now. Pictures of film stars in bathing suits or lingerie on *Life Magazine* covers. Then I went to the local drugstore and saw my first Playboy, and I ejaculated without ever touching myself. Of course, these pictures started creeping into my imagination and fantasy life where my acting out with masturbation continued.

I was married in 1965 and kept Playboy and Penthouse under the bed. My expectations of sex with my wife were fueled by my imagination and fantasy enhanced by these magazines. My wife never had a chance to fulfill my fantasy needs, but we are still together after 37 years. Over the years I added more explicit magazines, x-rated video arcades, strip shows, and when overseas in Germany and Korea, became involved with other women. (By the grace of God, I never had an affair when I was home.) No matter how good our sex life was, I always had to masturbate to take the edge off, and often fantasized even during our own lovemaking. Internet porn did not become a way of life until after 1997 when I was first introduced to the internet; I honestly couldn't believe what I found. We bought our first computer in 1998 and the enhancement of the sexual compulsion became worse. Of course, this was a boon to my addict, but devastating to my wife.

I cannot remember ever being without my sexual drug for more than 30 days, and that was self-imposed for one month in Korea in 1977 where I locked myself away from sex, drugs, and alcohol. But at the first suggestion of a drink to celebrate something after that 30-day period, I binged on all three until about a month before I came back to the States. I had an alcohol/drug problem since my 21st birthday, but did not know it until the early 1980's when it started to affect my ability to function at work, or to even get to work. In 1985 I went to my second treatment center for alcoholism and have been clean & sober by the grace of God and a member of AA/NA/ACOA for 17 ½ years (forgetting my other drug of choice – Sex!). I guess subconsciously that I knew I had something to fall back on that had continued throughout the years to make me feel good.

As with my other addictions, this is the second time I have seriously attempted to rid myself of my sexual compulsion/addiction. I have 200 days in the SCA program at this writing and am 40 days sexually clean and sober. After 44 years of addiction in my 58 years of life, I can see the light at the end of the tunnel. I'm not foolish enough to believe I won't have some slips along the way, but I am determined by the grace of God, my sponsor, and these fellowships to surrender this addiction and live a life of

sexual sobriety.

How did I get here at this place and time? Several things have come into the mix. I am a seminary graduate and active minister in my denomination with my own church. My wife has caught me several times viewing internet porn and has told me pretty much, that I didn't need her as long as I had my porn. She has not threatened to leave (YET), but has suggested that I can't be the two persons I've been trying to be all these years. The front-page news about ministers/priests and their sexual problems has reminded me that, "There, but for the grace of God, go I." There are too many "Not Yets" that haven't happened to me, and I definitely don't want them to.

I have gotten to the hopelessness and despairing stage. "I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired." Either this addiction will kill me and all that I have in significant relationships with my wife, my children, my grandchildren, my God, and my church, or I will kill myself from the guilt, shame, and self-loathing that comes with my addiction.

I'm in recovery for the long haul and my hat is off to all who post in these forums and others as we battle this addiction together. Due to distance, I have relied on internet recovery since I began on June 11, 2002. I use "*we-blocker*" (free) downloadable software that screens sites by words and I find it very effective, sometimes to the point that I can't get to the Feedback Meeting at SCA. Its vocabulary is very triggering if you look at the list, but that's why it works. I use mIRC chat for meetings and connecting with other addicts in recovery; the telephone; and e-mail. Paltalk did not work for me as it had too easy access to sexual chat rooms with video. In addition, I have an online sponsor who is outstanding. I questioned having a female sponsor and I don't believe I would ever try it face-to-face, but here it works. My sponsor and I fit together like hand and glove for recovery purposes. It has to be a God thing that has paired us in recovery.

I am connected to SCA by meetings online and also attend other "S" meetings online. It has been my salvation in recovery. I have met many men of similar age, profession, and sexual addiction. I know I am not alone. The other thing that impresses me online is that I share with others who walk this path from around the world.

I have found SCA to fit my needs in most every way, because for me I truly am a Sexual Compulsive Addict. The setting of my own bottom lines is important to me because I come from a strict religious background where I was told "do as you're told" too many times. Yes, my bottom lines are probably as strict as any anywhere, but that's because I know they have to be if I want to work recovery and stay sober.

Thanks all for reading and listening, Dave M (northeast Texas, USA)

Online Sobriety Works.

I have only been in this program for about a month and I don't know what recovery is like offline. The only meetings that are available to me are online. I found my sponsor online, and I am finding new things all the time. I found the open sharing in the Recovery Byte Cafe recently and just found the online chat meetings tonight.

I find online recovery a little easier actually than face-to-face recovery. I am in AA so I go to face-to-face meetings for that. I don't have to go out in the cold to get to online meetings, I don't have to hire a babysitter, and I can talk to my sponsor anytime I want to by sending her an email. I feel like I am really growing through this fellowship and have the potential for a lot more growth and I will probably do it all online. Even though I can't see or hear the people at the online meetings, I am coming to feel like they are my family. I finally see hope in my future and it is directly due to the people that I have met online. That to me is proof that online sobriety works, at least for me.

In the last year I have done all my acting out online also but have found that if I keep away from my acting out places that I am fine. I also cut ties with all my acting out partners and don't frequent porn sites or anything like that. Sex chat rooms are my downfall and I know that they are just a click away, but as they told me when I got sober in AA, there is always going to be alcohol around, there is no way to get away from it.

I see no reason why anyone can't recover online. I did have some trouble at first with not knowing the people I talk to about my deepest secrets, but I have found them to be some of the most giving and loving people I have met. It doesn't matter if I can see their faces or hear their voices. And we are all here for the same reason: we don't want to give in to our sexual addict anymore.

Akima (Montana, USA)

Newcomer Reflections.

I'm scared to death, to tell the truth. I've seen things online no one should see, or do. And somehow I've gotten used to them. I finally got up the nerve or smarts or whatever it is that it takes to use my internet savvy to actually try to help myself stop rather than find more sources. I have a great family that love and depend on me, especially my son. I can't imagine life without him now. He is an amazingly bright, articulate and perceptive little boy. He has filled my life with joy and meaning and I can't imagine doing anything to hurt him. I would face a thousand horrible deaths before I would allow one hair on his head to be harmed. At the same time, his very existence gives me

*What does the current SCAnner editor have in common with Anne of Green Gables?
Both live (or lived) in beautiful Prince Edward Island, Canada!*

hope, and meaning. If all I every really do in this world is to help him grow up happy and healthy, that will be enough for me. That's why I don't understand how I got into this place ... this place of hopelessness, of depravity. It's like it's not even me at the keyboard, watching the screen. I can hear my conscience telling me to stop. Don't click there. Don't type that. You still have time to pull back. You still have time to stop. But when I'm in "the zone," I don't stop. Today is day one for me. Now is hour one for me. Instead of searching out my own destruction today, I used this bleeping machine to try and help myself ... to try to let others help me. Today is day one.

I'll say this for online recovery....it sure is private. It gives you a real chance to sit down and put what you're feeling right there in front of you. Somehow, to me, the spoken word is less permanent, almost fleeting. But when I take the time to type something here, it's more real to me and I can go back and remind myself of it later. I know the hardest times are ahead, but, I'm gaining confidence, little by little.

Tim D (Clinton County, New York, USA)

Measuring Progress With A Nickname!

Hi! I'm Brian S. and I'm a sex addict. Some of you may know me by my online name, "sortalovab." It's supposed to be "sortalovable" but mIRC only allows ten characters in its screen names. *[Ed. Note: mIRC is one of the most commonly used chat software programs available – it can be downloaded from the Web for free.]* You may think that sortalovable is sad name. Let me tell you though, it is by far better than the name that I first appeared online with, unlovable. Many people asked me why I chose that name and my reply was usually the same, I felt unlovable because I didn't love myself and felt no one else could either. My outlook is a little different now. Now, through the love and support that I have found online, I consider myself "sorta" lovable. I still don't love myself much but I'm doing what the program suggests, and letting others love me until I can love myself. I'm even at a point now where I'm considering changing my name to mostlylovable. One of these days my hope is that I will abandon the adjectives that come before lovable entirely and simply be known as lovable. My gut tells me that it will happen someday as long as I continue to enter the online SCA chat rooms (as well as the SLAA and SAA chat rooms).

Thanks, Brian S (coast of North Carolina, USA)

Misery & Depression Replaced By Joy, Peace & Contentment.

My name is Clint, and I am a recovering compulsive sex addict. When I was 8 years old, I was sexually violated, and then again at 14, both times by older males. Since my sexual boundaries were broken down at such a young age, I began acting out with male cousins sexually, and thought it was OK (i.e., I thought that it was a guy-thing to do). I had been taught by older guys, so it must be all right. In time I became fascinated with the male body. I bought magazines exhibiting the male body in stunning poses, showing off their great physiques, muscles bulging – everything a young boy wanted to become. I was skinny and sorry looking. How could I ever become like one of those guys? In my fantasy world, that's how.

The more I looked at these guys in the magazines dressed in their bikini briefs, the more I wanted to see them with nothing on. I found some male photography books with nude men posing in a variety of positions, so I started buying these. Then I got into nude male videos. When guilt hit me like a punch in the stomach, I destroyed the videos and got rid of the magazines. But then I found the internet. It was a simple matter to log on to soft porn on the internet and look at a variety of men posing in the nude – then I found other sites where men were having sex with other men – and I went deeper and deeper into online porn. Again, the old guilt feelings hit me because I was trying to live right, the way a good person is supposed to live, yet I had this secret desire for voyeurism – looking at naked guys on the internet. This often led to masturbation and fantasizing about doing it with the naked men I had seen on the computer monitor.

When the guilty feelings returned and I talked it over with my wife, we both decided it was time for me to seek professional help. I found a psychologist who had experience with sexually addictive patients, so I made an appointment to see him. Through his guidance, support, and advice, I am now on my road to recovery. It has been over 55 years since I began this sexual bondage quest and now at last I am seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. There is hope. First, there was the addiction. Second, recognizing it for what it was. Third, feeling sorry for what I was doing. Fourth, seeking help to find release from the addiction. Fifth, working daily on a program to free myself from the addiction. Sixth, joining SCA, finding a sponsor, and posting daily at the feedback meetings to find strength in walking the recovery road. And seventh, talking daily to my HP and seeking His guidance and intervention on my behalf in overcoming this deadly addictive behavior.

So far I have been sober 59 days in my recovery program, and I feel great. I use the internet to talk with SCA friends, to ask for their encouragement, to tell them of my experiences, to share what my HP is doing for me, to share my regression and progression. I would be totally lost without internet interaction. I also email my sponsor, and receive email from him, and what a blessing this has turned out to be. Sure you can abuse the internet and find porn and a host of other unsavory things, but by choice I use

the internet to HELP me recover, not to help bury me deeper in addiction. It has been a real blessing to me.

The misery and depression of being an active addict have been replaced by the joy, peace and contentment that come with being a non-active addict on the road to recovery. I am slowly building up those sexual boundaries again that were broken down so many years ago. Once they are in place again, I will never let anything destroy them again.

Clint, sex addict in recovery. (south of Fort Worth, Texas, USA)

Online Recovery: Second Best Ain't That Bad!

Hi guys! I'm Jo, a recovering sexual compulsive here. I can only say "recovering" because of online programs like this one (SCA) and SLAA. I am out of range of any face-to-face meetings. I began my first program (Al-Anon) face-to-face, and I believe it is more conducive to recovery. We isolate, so getting ourselves to meetings is one of the challenges that aids in recovery. Also seeing and knowing and talking with my sponsor is more fulfilling in person. So, if meetings were available, I would be attending and seeking a sponsor in real time. Having said that, the truth is that I'm online, my sponsor is online, and I'm recovering. In fact, I'm recovering really well! So, to me, second best ain't that bad. In fact, it's pretty terrific and I'm thankful that it's available. I suppose what it all comes down to is how willing am I to work the program, online or offline.

Jo (Gold Beach, Oregon, USA)

The Spiritual Principles Are There, Online or Offline.

Well as far as my experience is concerned with sex addiction recovery, I haven't been able to find face-to-face meetings for S-groups (they're rarer than AA, NA, Al-Anon, etc.) and I felt alone (I was the only female sex addict I knew). I was afraid because not many people understand it. I find that the online recovery principles are the same spiritual principles as any other 12 step group, and I still feel the same closeness, love, and UNDERSTANDING as I do at an AA table. I was so afraid that no one would understand, but I'm so GRATEFUL that these people understand and give me the feedback I need to hear.

Emily R (USA)

Resentment is the number one offender. It destroys more sex addicts than anything else.

Recovery Comes Down To One Word: Choice.

Online recovery? Why no, it can't be done. Take a woman from a small Southern town and tell her it can't be done! I dare you!! I've been in recovery now 23 months and it has all been done online. I came into recovery when a friend had me read "Don't Call It Love" so that I "could better understand what he was going through." "So what now?" I asked. "Now you begin to recover," he said. But how? There were no face-to-face meetings in my area. He suggested I try the online meetings and the rest, as they say, is history. I found that there was some of me in every person there. Gay, straight, man, woman, it made no difference. They say you don't miss what you've never had. Indeed this is true. We have love, and support, and even hugs (((your name here))). And I feel those hugs as surely as I would if they were given in person.

But how, in today's age of so much internet pornography can one possibly RECOVER online?? For me it all came down to one word. Choice. I was dying a slow death at the hands of internet porn and anonymous sex. Each time I log on I have a choice to decide whether I want recovery or active addiction. I have to struggle with the "next right thing" some days, but I would challenge anyone who wonders to admit that they've never gone to a face-to-face meeting and not been triggered therein. It's all a matter of choosing which path to take. Each day I give thanks to my HP (upon waking and before retiring) that He has given me those 24 hours on the path of Light. I am grateful that in the age of ever ready sex on the internet, that we are graced by the alternative, 24/7 recovery. It has saved my life in the very literal sense. I am walking proof that it does work, if I choose to work it!

Vanessa, gratefully recovering sex addict (Dothan, Alabama, USA)

The Greatest Lesson To Be Learned In Recovery Is How To Love.

SCA is for me! "Hi, I'm Marabel, and I am a sex addict." Those are the hardest words for me to say. But I am saying them, and because of SCA, I am learning to accept this reality and to deal with it.

I never thought that I would call myself a sex addict, and there was a time not long ago when I would have thought that it was funny. When I used to hear about sexual addiction, I remembered saying something like, "Gee, I bet it would be fun to be a sex addict...". This, of course, was before I realized I was one. There is nothing funny about the destruction that sexual addiction leaves behind.

When I was young, my mother had boyfriends who would try to have sex with me, and I was afraid. I liked the attention, but I didn't feel it was quite right, yet I had unwittingly

Today I will think the very best and draw the very best to myself.

stumbled onto my "drug of choice". Then I discovered masturbation at 11, and fantasy as well. Those would prove to be the things I struggle with to this very day. At 14, I almost lost my virginity with a friend of my mother's. And when I started actually dating at 20, the rollercoaster began. I was in and out of relationships, and at one point I was juggling three relationships at one time. Somehow, I had managed to get married twice in all that time! As time marched on I "discovered" the Internet during my second marriage. I discovered online porn and chat rooms as well, and found myself losing control even more. Over the years I have left behind a lot of damage – two dead marriages, many lost friendships and other relationships, lost time, lost money, and lost sanity – because of this disease.

I have already lost so much to sexual addiction and don't want to lose any more. While I can't get back what I had lost before, I know that I have an opportunity to gain a new life in recovery. It beats the alternative, which is to let this disease lead me to spiritual, emotional and even physical death.

I had tried to stop the rollercoaster when my second marriage was crumbling, but my second husband caught me online looking at porn and I ended up going to counseling. I had gotten involved with a different online group that wasn't 12-Step, and was failing miserably. My counselor then suggested I go to "S" group meetings, and I started going to SLAA face-to-face meetings.

Even though things had gotten worse in our marriage, I still wanted recovery and went to meetings anyway. Then when I recently got divorced, I moved closer to where my job was (in a rural area). I was worried because I had just started in recovery and I still felt slippery. When a friend told me about the SCA online meetings, I knew it was the first thing I wanted to do when I was able to get my Internet connection set up again. And so far, it has been a very good thing.

I began attending the SCA online meetings in February of 2002. I have an online sponsor who lives in Canada, one recovery partner one state over from me, and another a few states north of me, and we talk by e-mail and telephone. It is a challenge to do my recovery this way, but I am glad that I can do this. As of today I have had almost a year in recovery, and five days sober. I have managed to string together quite a few consecutive "one days" between slips.

I know that sounds kind of discouraging, but I should let you know that my slips are getting fewer and fewer, and that I'm able to come back from them much quicker than I ever thought I could. I am finding out what is behind the slips I do have, so that I know what triggers them, and know what to avoid – and that is what is important to me right now. In fact, one of the biggest things I have learned in this program is to be patient with myself and with my Higher Power – it's "Progress, not perfection". I am also learning how to ask God and others for help, which has been a hard thing for me

because of my fear. I always want to look like I know what I'm doing. Through this Program I now know that it is OK to 'not know'. All in all, one could say that while the disease is progressive, so is recovery, if you give it a chance.

My greatest fears about being a part of an online group were that I would be judged in the way I had been in the non 12-step group, and that I would be rejected if I reached a certain number of slips. Kind of like "three strikes and you're out". SCA wasn't like that at all. Instead of judging me, they would tell me to "keep coming back." When I would beat myself up for having "slipped", they would tell me to be gentle with myself. When I needed honesty, they were honest, but they were also kind. They kept encouraging me to try, not setting me up to fail, and would let me know through their ES&H (experience, strength and hope) about possible things that may work for me. As a result, I find that I am gaining new tools to help me deal with this addiction. A lot of these new "tools" also help me in dealing with other parts of my life as well, which is a wonderful side benefit.

I am also learning how to "surrender". Surrendering has always been a difficult thing for me to do because of the way I grew up. I grew up in a family where alcohol ruled the roost. Part of the deal with that is that alcoholics don't talk about things, they medicate pain, and they don't give anything up. Those lessons became a part of me as an adult child of an alcoholic, and as someone with my own addiction to sex. Now I have to unlearn them if I hope to recover. By surrendering myself to my Higher Power, who for me is God, I find that I have power and strength that I have never imagined. Day by day I feel much stronger than I have ever been. Slowly I am finding joy in life again.

The greatest lesson to be learned while in recovery is how to love. Having sex is easy. It doesn't take rocket science to do that, but to know how to love is hard. Through the "unconditional love" of those in the Program and SCA, I am learning one of the best lessons of all.

Marabel (Atlanta area, Georgia, USA)

MY STORY

My name is Chris. I'm a sex addict. I'm a relative newcomer to the online recovery group of SCA, but I'm an old hand at addiction. This month (January, 2003) I will turn 50. Today, I can trace my addictive behavior back to when I was seven or eight years old.

How I became a sex addict is a question I have given a lot of thought to over years, much of it expensively assisted by therapists. I have a few insights, but I no longer give

it very much thought. It really doesn't matter very much. What matters to me today is acknowledging that I AM a sex addict and recognizing that no one else can un-make me one.

By the time I was in my early forties, it was certainly clear that no amount of therapy was going to do that. I had spent hours upon hours with a succession of psychologists and psychiatrists from the age of eight (when my parents first took me to one to deal with my 'anger' issues) well into my thirties. And I was still helplessly locked in my addictive behavior. For me, that meant mostly compulsive masturbation, often in dangerously exposed places like while driving, acquiring extensive collections of pornography, an accelerating use of phone sex, sporadic obsessive non-sexual romantic relationships and a 24/7 preoccupation with sexual fantasy.

By the time I was 40, I had lost one marriage due in large part to my addictive behavior. I had contracted venereal disease. I had spent thousands of dollars on pornography and telephone sex. I had been involved in a series of destructive relationships with people who were locked into a variety of their own abusive dysfunctions, but I could use them to meet my addictive emotional and/or physical 'needs'. I had dedicated tens of thousands of hours – days, weeks and months of my life – to emotionally and intellectually stifling acting-out instead of to my career or productive self-improvement. I had had brushes with the police as a result of some of my borderline-illegal behavior (which, miraculously I now believe, had not resulted in criminal charges).

That year, 1993, I very nearly destroyed a second marriage by becoming involved in a romantic obsession (with heavy sexual overtones) by long distance with one of my wife's best friends. When my wife 'busted' me, I swore (yet again) to stop that kind of behavior.

In 1994 I was living in the Pacific Northwest, with a good job that left me a great deal of unsupervised time. I was also living in an addictive haze from the moment I became conscious in the morning until I lost consciousness at night—scheming about when and how I could act out next. I was in a state of permanent despair, resentment, anger and fear about work, money, and my deeply strained relationship with my wife. (Does 'unmanageable' come to mind?)

And I was miserable. I felt trapped, driven, fundamentally defective, shame-ridden and doomed. I carried with me at every moment the fear that people could see through my outward guise of good citizen to the slimy, lying, twisted sick pervert I was convinced I really was. During the winter of early 1994, I became convinced that it was only a matter of time – and more likely months than years – before my life as I knew it came to an end. It would at least be discovery and public disgrace, the loss of my job, wife and relationship with my son. It might just as easily end with assault or disease contracted in the course of my increasingly dangerous acting out in public, or the new behavior I had

begun of buying time from prostitutes. Or perhaps I would simply give up the effort to hold on to the last shreds of outward sanity and let myself go into mental breakdown and be locked up ... or go off one of the bridges in my city.

In what would turn out to be something of an irony in the road that was still ahead, I discovered the first step back to sanity online.

The Internet then was quite new, but I was an 'early adopter'. I had heard the phrase 'sex addict' used in the mid-1980s and had at first laughed at it. Gosh, that wasn't me! I was just indulging in a 'drug of choice' that had the advantage (compared to other people's) of being natural, legal (well most of the time), always available and 'harmless'. But by now the denial has becoming harder to sustain. My sexual 'escapades' were no longer much 'fun'. They were more often frightening, shame-filled and depressing. And yet I could not stop doing them. It was perfectly plain to me that I was addicted.

Using the crude text-based browser (window-type browsers hadn't even come out yet), I searched 'sex addiction' online. I found a 30-part questionnaire to help determine 'if you might suffer from this problem'. I think I scored a hit on about 27 of the questions.

The same site referred to AA-type programs that some sex addicts found helpful. I went to my local phone book and found a number. I called it, and waited. I was still acting out and I think I was actually a bit resentful when someone actually called back!

Nonetheless, when I found out that there was a weekly meeting of a group called Sex Addicts Anonymous on Saturday morning at a Gay and Lesbian Center just a few blocks away, I decided, with my wife's encouragement, to go see what it was about. I can still remember the knot in my stomach as I walked up the hill to that meeting.

I wish I could say that my life changed then and there for the instant better. It did change, and very much for the better, but not instantly. That day was April 1 (April Fool's Day!), 1994. As I type, I have just 22 months and about ten days of unbroken sobriety from my last day acting out. Do the math.

But I thank my Higher Power that I got to that meeting. If I had not, I am certain I would by now be either living in abject poverty or on the street, incarcerated either in a correctional or mental facility, or quite possibly dead. But recovery did not come quickly or easily. I think I managed to not act out for about a week after that first meeting. Then I broke down and used my pornography (which I had not gotten rid of) to masturbate to. That set a pattern that lasted for months, but I did keep going back to meetings.

Over the next several years, two things slowly changed in my life in somewhat contradictory ways. As I slowly began to absorb the 12 Steps, I began to reevaluate my life and how I approached it. I began to see how I created and maintained the conditions

*Many sex addicts have lived lonely, driven lives without the saving grace of the Twelve Steps.
May these people and the addicts who still suffer be in our thoughts & prayers.*

that led to my acting out. I began to get periods of abstinence that lasted longer than a week. I took a one-week chip, then a one-month chip. But always I would have another slip that generally led to a relapse.

And the Internet had advanced. It was flowering with porn sites. I still bought magazines, but increasingly I was spending time accessing my 'fixes' online, for 'free'. I began spending many hours at the office looking at Net porn and masturbating in my closed office. I filled my computer hard drive with images. I discovered I could make contact with other people in chat rooms. (Until then I had avoided making personal contacts because of the difficulty and danger of doing so in the 'real-world', while preserving a facade of normalcy in a highly public job and without arousing further suspicion in my wife).

But I kept going back to meetings. Even as I failed again and again to STAY sober, my periods of clean time got longer. I took a 90-day chip, then another. I made it to six months. Sometime in the year 2000, I think it was, I got a new sponsor and began calling him every day.

Something was also happening in my head. It was getting harder and harder to get into the 'bubble' of the acting-out moment. Instead, it felt simply like slavery, like being forced by some evil power to do things I knew to be dangerous and which I did not really want to be doing. I was also becoming too aware of how unnecessary my behavior was – that I DID in fact have a choice. I realize today that I was also resisting 'turning my will and my life over to my higher power with complete abandon'.

The last straw came on a dark, wet, cold Friday evening in February, 2001. I don't know what snapped, but something did. Thank God. I realized, while out in public once again in a compromised, semi-exposed get-up, how much I was tired of this while thing. I became, finally (please God!) ready to do ANYTHING, to 'go to any lengths' to be free of this insanity.

The next morning, a Saturday, I went again to my weekly meeting, but this time with a new humility. I began to work Step 4 in a strenuous way. Searching with something like desperation (as close as I could get to 'searching and fearless!') for the moral failings and character defects that kept leading me back into the pit. I began putting the program and my recovery ahead of everything else in my day. I called my sponsor every day and when he was unavailable, I called someone else in the program. I worked Step 4, and did a Step 5 with my sponsor and another person. I worked Step 6 and now do a Step 7 prayer every morning. I have done one pass through Steps 8 and 9 in the past but am now back at Step 8 in a deeper way. I try to work Steps 10 and 11 daily. In doing all this, I hope I am working the most important part of Step 12 ('practice these principles in every aspect of our lives') although I have also worked the 'carry this message' part in 12-Step meetings with people and in taking on two sponsees.

Every 24 hours that I did NOT act out, was a victory. Eventually, to my astonishment, those days added up to a year.

Today, I no longer work for the same employer I did, but I am out of debt, my economic life is stable and I am not hounded by fears on that front. My relationship with my wife is truly wonderful: warm, trusting, loving and sexual in an intimate and, yes, very gratifying way. I am closer to my son than ever. I wake up eager to start each day and almost always fall asleep able to look back on a day of productive living. I am still working on staying sober for just THIS 24 hours.

I still put my recovery first in my life, which is how I wound up coming to SCA online. My belief is that I need to maintain contact on a daily basis with the program. When I have traveled in the last 22 months, I made a point of searching out meetings of one or another S-related 12-Step program and attending them. (What a rush it was to speak out in a room with 50 or so total strangers in Houston and say the words "My name's Chris, and I'm a sex addict"! And then to be overwhelmed with the support and fellowship those strangers showed me!!)

My wife and I are now planning a trip to visit another country for the month of February. In preparation, I went online to look for an S-related 12-Step fellowship. I checked out all the programs I usually do, including SCA whose website I have had bookmarked for some time and have also previously accessed for "*The Tools That Help Us Get Better*," "*Fourteen Ways to Avoid a Slip*," and "*Four Obstacles to Success*." Regrettably, I was unable to find any references to S-group meetings where we are going (I did eventually track down a meeting of another fellowship where I qualify which I plan to attend). However, I also wanted to be able to stay in touch specifically with sexual recovery. I saw the SCA online meetings listed, and sent an email off for the password.

What a gift! I have 'attended' the SCA nightly online chat meeting several times already in the ten days or so since I discovered it. I feel that it is going to become a regular source of Experience Strength and Hope that I can tap into daily in addition to my two regular weekly f2f meetings (one each in SAA and SLAA; SCA does not (yet) have meetings in my city). I have also begun to make several visits a day to the Online SCA bulletin board 'meeting'.

It is funny to be coming as a newby to these meetings with so much time in the program under my belt. But it is very much like every other new unfamiliar meeting I walk into in another city. It quickly becomes very familiar indeed as I realize that I am among people exactly like me: addicts struggling to get through another day free from insanity.

I am very grateful to have discovered SCA online. I know it will help get me through the month away from my regular fellowship. But I also hope it will be part of my

recovery long after that as well.

In closing, I have just a couple of thoughts left to share with anyone who has come through the SCA 'door' online as their very first step in searching for freedom from addiction. It IS scary to admit that our behavior is an addiction and that we are powerless over it. It may seem hopeless when you slip again. But this program WORKS, IF we work it.

If you can, I urge you to find a face-to-face meeting as well and to attend it. I urge you to work the steps. I beg you to surrender with complete abandon to the care of your Higher Power. There is hope in these rooms, in the steps and in our Higher Power.

And KEEP COMING BACK. There is recovery to be had. I know. I have it. Today. I wish you another 24 hours of recovery.

Chris W (British Columbia, Canada)

STEP FOCUS: STEPS 3 & 8

Meditation On Step Three.

“Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.” As I was saying Step Three aloud to myself today, I suddenly had what I consider to be a profound revelation, and more about the meaning of Step Three was revealed to me. That’s the miraculous thing about the Twelve Steps, they are incredibly profound and deeply spiritual! The further I go along in my recovery journey, the more I appreciate the Twelve Steps and the spiritual messages contained within them. The simple wording of the Steps belies their depth.

The revelation I had as I recited Step Three to myself was that, not only does this Step instruct us to turn our will and our lives over to God, it declares to us that God cares! *“Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the **care** of God.”* That phrase instructs us that it is not a cold, condemning, judgmental God that we are to surrender our wills and our lives over to – it is a God who cares for us. In early recovery, the biggest barrier I had to working Steps Two and Three was fear of God. I believed in a God of my own understanding, but I could not bring myself to believe that God cared about me and about my life. I believed that God was a loving God, but only towards others and not towards me. I guess I didn’t feel worthy of God’s love and care, but also, I was not willing to give up my addiction at that time and I didn’t believe that God would love me as long as I was acting out. At this point in time I find it hard to believe that I would choose acting out over God’s love. Talk about insanity! It was an

Sexual abstinence is not necessarily the same thing as celibacy. We get support in SCA by abstaining from people, places or things that we consider harmful.

experience of feeling God’s grace and amazing love pouring into me one day in church even though I had done nothing to deserve it – that finally changed my beliefs about God forever.

Step Three goes on to say “*as we understood God,*” giving us more information about God and how He cares for us. Whatever our understanding of God may be, even when we don’t believe in Him, God cares about us. God granted us free will. He allows us to believe whatever we choose about Him, and to go our own way in life. One of the ways He demonstrates His care for us is by honouring His gift of free will. He does not abandon us when we go our own way and choose to ignore Him. In fact, He will often try to get our attention and show us another way in order to deter us from taking the wrong path and making a choice that will ultimately harm us. Many times in IRC meetings and on the message boards at SCA Online, I’ve read shares by members who express wonder as they relate an experience of being offered a helping hand by “HP”. When they chose to accept it, the help that was offered led to them make a choice that prevented them from having a slip. When I look back, I can see that there were many times, even during my craziest days of acting out, when God tried to get my attention and steer me away from making a crazy decision that would harm me. Invariably, however, I was too set on having my own way and I didn’t listen. Doesn’t matter, God was infinitely patient with me. He cared enough to keep trying to get through to me, and to demonstrate His care. I am truly grateful for God’s tremendous mercy, and sometimes I marvel that He can be so patient with one who is so blind and so stubborn.

Whether you believe in God, or whatever your understanding of God may be, God cares for you. I can attest to this truth, in fact, I can never doubt it because I’ve felt God showering love on me more than once. He also demonstrates His care towards me in many ways, small and large, each and every day. I’ve learned that God wants nothing more, and nothing less, than a close and personal relationship with us. He wants to care for us, but He wants us to choose to receive His care. He will never force us.

“How It Works” (Alcoholics Anonymous) states:

- a. *That we were sexually addicted and could not manage our own lives.*
- b. *That probably no human power could have relieved our addictive behaviour.*
- c. *That God could and would if God were sought.*

Also, “*there is one who has all power – that One is God. May you find God now!*”

I would like to say it a little differently, “*May you seek God now*”. He cares.

Cate M. (British Columbia, Canada)

Step 8: Thoughts On Making Amends.

It has occurred to me in recovery that actions speak so much louder than words when it comes to working the steps. It is one thing to say that you now trust your HP or that you have taken a fearless moral inventory, it is another more difficult task to actually put it in practice. My story is simple, I have a relationship addiction and because of my compulsive behavior and need to be in control, I never allowed true intimacy to develop in my marriage. By doing so, I got exactly the opposite of what I always wanted.

The key I have found is located in step eight of the SCA program and it can be so very frustrating but rewarding as well. Making amends is about taking action and not just talking about it. Each day now, I am as kind as I can be without being phony or fake. After all it's about respect for the feelings you have and the feelings of others. I no longer hide from the fact that I have an addiction, nor do I hide from the fact that I will someday probably have a truly loving relationship with another human being. Only this time I feel different, I'm changing every day. You see, I'm making amends to the person I've hurt – my wife. I'm respecting her need for space; I'm giving her a rest from my relentless pursuit.

The irony is that she doesn't know who I am now! Am I really changing or is the more controlling side of me just lurking in there trying to come out again. I know now that she will let me know on her schedule rather than mine. Over time she may just decide I'm okay and take a few baby steps herself. Who knows, stranger things have happened, right?

Yours in recovery, David T (small town Arizona, USA)

SCA-ISO NEWS

Intergroup Reports from the 2002 SCA-ISO General Meeting (February 2002)

Chicago – there has been some growth, with an additional Tuesday meeting. Now there is a meeting every day of the week. Special events include a day or a weekend of recovery. It has been a challenge to find members willing to do service work at the Intergroup level.

Milwaukee – there are now 4 meetings a week. The meeting list includes both SCA and SLAA. Fifty percent of the membership are straight. Most people have the computer as an issue and thus may be unable to use the computer as a tool of recovery. There have been mailings to police, courts etc.; these projects are done together with SLAA. There has also been an increase of women at meetings.

St. Louis – meetings have increased by two. Fifty percent of the members are straight, many coming from SAA or therapist referral. There are approximately 60 to 90 members. Getting

Confused about service & structure in SCA? The Online Intergroup has an outline of how it works posted at www.sca-recovery.org/servicestructure.html.

participation in Intergroup has been a struggle. Six to eight people are involved in the Intergroup. There are now 9 meetings, having closed the Monday afternoon one. St. Louis has approximately 3 workshops per year with 2-3 topics in each workshop..

Los Angeles – LA has 27 meetings, having gained 2 meetings and lost 2 meetings during the year. The SCA convention was a success. There were only three sessions per day and a recovery show. Intergroup sponsored a writing workshop. Attempts are being made to integrate the Spanish and English speaking meetings into one Intergroup. LA continues to have four ISO reps. LA would like to bid for the national office (when the time comes that we can afford and staff such an office). Local guidelines for LA Intergroup are being prepared. The Intergroup has a person who takes care of chips for lengths of sobriety.

LA Spanish Meetings – the meetings continue but are yet to be represented at LA Intergroup.

San Diego – has 12 meetings, which represents an increase of 2 meetings since the previous year. The meetings are well attended. San Diego has become very step oriented (versus therapy or popular books). Our conference this last year had 86 attendees which represents roughly a 40% increase over the previous year. San Diego will continue to have its annual conference in November. Intergroup meets once a month and conference committee meets once per month. A phone line and mailbox are maintained to carry the message to the San Diego addict who still suffers.

Phoenix – no report provided.

San Francisco – the San Francisco groups are struggling. There are 3 meetings a week with the possibility that one of these will close. The city will not be able to sponsor the 2003 ISO meeting. In SF, SAA and SLAA are the predominate fellowships.

New York – there are four new meetings in NY and four which have folded with a total of 40 meetings. The new meetings include a GLTB (gay, lesbian, transgender, bisexual) meeting, a Sex, Money & Self Esteem meeting, and a 3-column recovery plan meeting. The Spanish meeting persists although it is extremely small. The 5th Tradition committee of Intergroup is working on a piece of literature about terminology that might be confusing to the newcomer. Intergroup is developing a flyer to promote service by letting people know what Intergroup is. The NYC conference will be called “Recovering together, Healing together” and will be held 18-20 May at the Center. Summer and Winter retreats continue to be a success. The 12th Step Committee is placing Fourfolds at college health services, starting with NYU. Prison outreach is under serious consideration.

Online – has 18 meetings. There is a web-based feedback meeting with no advice or crosstalk. The feedback meetings are not archived. The web-based Topic meetings are archived. Of the 12 IRC meetings 7 occur regularly and are well attended. These 7 meetings are led by one person and a greeter who screens for newcomers. The other 5 IRC meetings occur if 2 or more members are present. The IRC meetings occur on the StarLink-IRC network which is a safe non-porn chat network. There are 4 new meetings available through Paltalk which are voice-based with text interaction (and possibly web cam) and they are doing well. Online has an e-

Our primary purpose is to stay sexually sober and to help others achieve sexual sobriety!

mail list with online sponsors. There is also an online café and photo gallery. Groups have established group-conscience guidelines, including suggestions on how to behave in online meetings. Inappropriate behavior in chat rooms between meetings is now being monitored by a “BOT” which records this interstitial time and can be referred to when reviewing complaints (if there are no complaints, it is never accessed). There was an attack on the web site in the last year with a large influx of inappropriate & abusive messages, so a temporary ban on certain IP addresses was instituted. Online intergroup has developed significantly and is self-supporting. The treasurer is in the process of setting up a new bank account and the fellowship as a whole is contributing to ISO. A new document to outline service structure for online is in the works.

Washington, D.C. – has 6 meetings a week, having added a new meeting. The first retreat was held with few but enthusiastic attendees. There has been a DC conference for the past two years which will continue. There is increased meeting attendance, with some conflict between intimate meeting preference and growth. Interest in intergroup has increased and DC is ready to start formalizing intergroup. More sharing about long-term sobriety is found as the DC fellowship matures. There are quarterly workshops. It has been a struggle dealing with transient people attending from treatment centers. A flyer “promoting” intergroup has been prepared. The ISO Rep. suggested that a flyer “promoting” ISO would be in order.

List of ISO Officers (current up until the February 2003 ISO meeting)

<u>Officer</u>	<u>Term Expires in:</u>
Chair – <i>Peter C</i>	2003
Secretary – <i>Joe H</i>	2004
Treasurer – <i>Brian B</i>	2003
National Coordinator – <i>Joe S</i>	2003
Literature Distribution Coordinator – <i>Daniel C</i>	2003
SCAnner Editor – <i>Deanna R</i>	2003
Literature Development Coordinator – <i>Bill B</i>	2004
1-800 Coordinator – <i>Jarvis</i>	2004
Electronic Communications Coordinator – <i>Bill E</i>	2004

If you are interested in doing service at the Intergroup or ISO level, contact your Intergroup Representative and/or an ISO officer for more details.

Upcoming SCA Events:

- *New York SCA Conference – May 2003 (dates TBA, contact NY Intergroup)*
- *San Diego SCA Conference – November 21-23, 2003 (San Diego, CA)*
- *Contact Intergroups for more information & for Retreats not listed here*

For a list of upcoming SCA events, see the calendar at www.sca-recovery.org/calendar.html.

The SCAnner is YOUR Newsletter!

The SCAnner is published twice a year (in the summer and in the winter) by ISO, the International Service Organization of SCA. It is meant to serve as a Forum for SCA members who want to share their ES&H (Experience, Strength & Hope) with other members. This is particularly applicable for those who may be isolated and cannot reach a meeting easily or regularly. Your contributions and comments are greatly encouraged, and always sincerely invited.

Please send your contributions to:

**The SCAnner, c/o SCA NY P.O. Box 1585
Old Chelsea Station, New York, NY, 10011**

The opinions expressed in the SCAnner are those of the individuals who gave them and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of SCA as a whole.

SCAnner Orders

ORDER FORM ✂

The SCAnner is the Newsletter of Sexual Compulsives Anonymous. Individual copies are available for only \$1.00, plus postage & handling.

Name/Organization: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

_____ Winter 2002 _____ Copies @ \$1.00 US \$ _____ Total

_____ Summer 2003 _____ Copies @ \$1.00 US \$ _____ Total

Add \$1.00 postage & handling (per issue) \$ _____ Total

Enclosed

Please make checks or money orders (US funds) payable to SCA SCAnner Subscription.
Send to **SCA Subscriptions, c/o SCA NY, PO Box 1585 Old Chelsea Station, NY, NY, 10011**

SCA CONTACT INFORMATION

By Email: info@sca-recovery.org

By Phone: USA (toll free) 800-977-HEAL **Healing is just a phone call away!**
 International: +1 212-606-3778
 Atlanta, GA: 404-239-8048
 Chicago, IL: 312-935-3573
 Kansas City, MO: 816-374-5909
 Los Angeles, CA: 310-859-5585
 Spanish Hotline: 213-368-4814
 Milwaukee, WI: 414-963-1189
 New York, NY: 212-439-1123
 Orange County, CA: 714-664-5105
 Phoenix, AZ: 602-340-3081
 St. Louis, MO: 314-253-4085
 San Diego, CA: 619-685-8540
 San Francisco, CA: 415-255-7967
 Washington, DC: 202-736-3736

By Snail Mail: SCA
 PO Box 1585, Old Chelsea Station
 New York, NY, USA 10011



The SCAnner is published twice a year (summer & winter) by SCA ISO, PO Box 1585, Old Chelsea Station, New York, NY, 10011. Editor: Deanna R. Distribution: Daniel C. Printed by Staples: The Business Depot in Charlottetown, PE, Canada. The opinions expressed here are those of the individual who gave them and do not necessarily reflect SCA as a whole. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without the consent of SCA ISO. © 2002, SCA ISO