

# Out of the Fog

News, events, outreach, and support for the Bay Area Fellowship of SAA

A publication of the San Francisco Bay Area Intergroup



**THEME for this issue: “Achieving Long Term Sobriety”**

With one exception, each of the contributors to this issue have over 3 years of sobriety. Each addict’s path to sobriety may be different, but all of our experiences potentially hold valuable lessons that can help others who still suffer to confront our common disease.

Next issue’s theme will be, “*Overcoming Isolation.*” Consider submitting content related to this topic. Send queries or content to: [newsletter@bayareasaa.org](mailto:newsletter@bayareasaa.org). Send ideas for future Themes and/or subscribe to receive “*Out of the Fog*” by email to the same address.

**What is SAA?**

Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA) is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other so they may overcome their sexual addiction and help others recover from sexual addiction and dependency.

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**SAVE THE DATE**

for the

**2019 Annual Bay Area SAA Retreat**  
**Friday, March 15<sup>th</sup> – Sunday, March 17<sup>th</sup>**



Workshops!! Fellowship!! Great food!! Recreational Activities!! All in a beautiful Marin County setting. Registration for the 2019 Retreat opens in January. Register for both attendance and workshops at the **Events** tab on the SAA website: [www.bayareasaa.org](http://www.bayareasaa.org). Early bird pricing and scholarships available!!

## This Issue's Theme: Long-Term Sobriety

When it came time to come up with my contribution to this issue I found it difficult to settle on any one thing that I could attribute my long-term sobriety to. During these past five years there had been varied tools or practices or guiding principles that came to my rescue at any given time that challenges to my sobriety arose.

Then one morning, the poem that accompanies this article (May Sarton's **Now I Become Myself**) came appended to one of the gratitude lists sent to me by one of my friends in the program.

The title and opening line, "Now I become myself" seemed to be an affirmation that living life in a sane, sober way was my truest (and best) self. And the subsequent lines spoke to my journey from the insanity of my addiction to the sanity of a life focused on recovery.

They described where I had been: "...Time, many years and places; I have been dissolved and shaken, Worn other people's faces, Run madly...." and the bottom I had hit one gray day looking over the rail on the Golden Gate Bridge: "...crying a warning, 'hurry, you will be dead before--...what?..."

That day I had stepped back from the edge to fully invest myself in the SAA program and eventually, to come to my senses, be self-aware, and become able "...to stand still, to be here, [and] Feel my own weight and density..." that is, to exist in the real

### *Now I Become Myself*

*Now I become myself. It's taken  
Time, many years and places;  
I have been dissolved and shaken,  
Worn other people's faces,  
Run madly, as if Time were there,  
Terribly old, crying a warning,  
"Hurry, you will be dead before--"  
(What? Before you reach the morning?  
Or the end of the poem is clear?  
Or love safe in the walled city?)  
Now to stand still, to be here,  
Feel my own weight and density!  
The black shadow on the paper  
Is my hand; the shadow of a word  
As thought shapes the shaper  
Falls heavy on the page, is heard.  
All fuses now, falls into place  
From wish to action, word to silence,  
My work, my love, my time, my face  
Gathered into one intense  
Gesture of growing like a plant.  
As slowly as the ripening fruit  
Fertile, detached, and always spent,  
Falls but does not exhaust the root,  
So all the poem is, can give,  
Grows in me to become the song,  
Made so and rooted by love.  
Now there is time and Time is young.  
O, in this single hour I live  
All of myself and do not move.  
I, the pursued, who madly ran,  
Stand still, stand still, and stop the  
sun! — May Sarton,*

world vs. living in the fog of a fantasy world acting out, and escaping by self-medicating with sex and intrigue.

"...As thought shapes the shaper..." --- there, the power of self-affirmation! "...All fuses now, falls into place..." my recovery takes root, then deepening, strengthening: "...from wish to action...gathered into one intense gesture of growing like a plant. As slowly as the ripening fruit...Falls but does not exhaust the root..." these lines accurately describing recovery as a process, a process that may suffer stumbles but arises again.

The final lines describe for me what it is like to be living a life of recovery, "...rooted by love..." Living solidly in the present, "...O, in this single hour I live..." A place where even "...I, the pursued, who madly ran..." can accomplish anything: "...and stop the sun!"...even what I once thought to be impossible, live a sexually sober life.

And so, I come finally to the key to my sobriety as reflected by my interpretation of this poem that randomly showed up in my inbox: I have adopted the practice of looking at everything through the lens of recovery. Every poem I read, every film I see, every person I encounter, every random occurrence in my life become an opportunity to apply to my recovery, to practice one or more of the 12 Steps, etc. This practice leaves nearly any room for the sex addict in me to elbow in.

--- Edwin F., Editor – 5 years sober.



## Long-Term Sobriety: Q&A

We asked several questions of 2 sex addicts with several years of sobriety.

### Anonymous – Sober 8 years.

**"What would you say has been the most helpful to you in maintaining your sobriety over time?"**

What has helped me stay sober for 8

years is my strong connection with my Higher Power [HP], and daily awareness of the quality of life that I enjoy now. My sobriety isn't perfect. The addict creeps in once in a while, but I now have lots of tools to use to get me back on track quickly

(praying for help, reaching out to my sponsor and program friends, showing up to meetings and being honest, etc.). I remind myself when I'm triggered what my painful acting out life was like compared to the sober life I now enjoy.

**"What advice would you give someone who chronically slips/relapses after achieving modest terms of sobriety [e.g., 1-3months]?"**

Never, ever give up! You CAN do it! The reality of getting sober is that you WILL have to go through withdrawal. It's not easy. You have to go through the pain to get sober. There is no "easy button." If you're not ready to go through withdrawal, you're not ready to get sober. You cannot do a half-assed program and expect to get sober. Either you're 100% in, or you're not. Work it, 'cuz you're worth it!

**"Do you have a daily practice? If so, what is it?"**

I email a small group of program friends 10 things I'm grateful for first thing in the

morning. This grounds me to my program to start my day. On my afternoon walk in nature with my dog, I say the Serenity Prayer with meaning (not just saying it without thought), then I say a favorite prayer from my childhood religion, and finally I talk to my HP - I pray for help with things I struggle with, say thanks for things I'm grateful for, and ask for forgiveness where I've failed (kind of like a daily inventory with God).

### Found Humility – Sober 3 years.

**"What would you say has been the most helpful to you in maintaining your sobriety over time?"**

Being able to recognize the differences between

right and wrong and just knowing that there are consequences associated with the bad ones. As a young child I knew lying saved me from getting in trouble so I did it often. And even though I was scared I received a rush doing so, so I kept doing it. You have to break that habit or else it will become part of your adulthood. Once that happens everything becomes normal and eventually you start lying to yourself. This becomes a hard habit to break. Listening to someone that can help such as a sponsor can assist with that. I've learned that anyone can change...but it will only happen if you

want to. It will work....if you work it.

**"What advice would you give someone who chronically slips/relapses after achieving modest terms of sobriety [e.g., 1-3months]?"**

First off its ok to slip, you just have to realize why you keep doing them in the first place. Why do you keep doing it? What are you trying to lose/gain? Are you hurting yourself or others because of your slips? In program you have to make an effort otherwise nothing will work. You just have to remember that this is your recovery and no one else's. Seek a Sponsor/Temp Sponsor to assist you.

**"Do you have a daily practice? If so, what is it?"**

Every day I wake up telling my Higher Power how grateful I am. And prior to driving anywhere I say, "God, guide me and protect me because I can't do things by myself without you" For me, this gave me the opportunity to relax a bit and have God drive while I sit in the passenger seat. I let God control that for me. Throughout my day I try to be present or in the moment. I stop trying to control others and when I make a mistake, I admit it, learn from it, and move on. Every night I self-reflect what I did for the day. If you have a journal write down any feelings or emotions so you can look back and see why they came about. Can you fix it the next time it comes about or are you still in the same feelings again? Last but not least do your best to not go bed with a resentful mind.

"...You cannot do a half-assed program and expect to get sober. Either you're 100% in, or you're not."

-- Anonymous



## Readers Share: 12 Lessons

*The lessons of long term sobriety are not solely earned by virtue of the length of one's time in the program. At a meeting earlier this year, I bore witness to the following presentation from a fellow addict just one year into his time in SAA.*

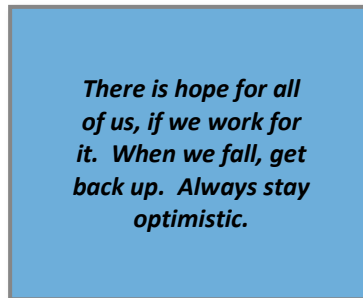
Brothers / Sisters,

Because that's what you are to me. Together we've all worked through this process, which at times seems never ending, day after day, week after, week, month after month (and in the cases of a number of you) year after year.

Over this, my first 12 months I've come to understand the meaning of the words, "progress not perfection." I humbly offer to you now the following 12 key takeaways I've come to in the past 12 months:

1. **I know I'm an addict** and realize this is a disease that never fully goes away. I need to stay vigilant and not let my guard down.
2. **I know what my triggers are.** For example, loneliness leads to porn. I know if I mix drink with computer games the result is dipping into porn. I'm self-aware which is the first step to tackling the problem

3. **I know that I'm not alone.** There are meetings for support. I have my close



friends, a sponsor. I need never face the fight alone if I call on others for help.

4. **I know that this is a process.** There is a cyclist quote that seems appropriate: "The race is not to the swift but to those who keep pedaling." I need to keep working the steps and tools day in, day out; stay the path with calls, meetings, and tools
5. **I know that there is NO such thing as failure;** there is only learning. Growth comes from pain and struggle.
6. **I know to live in the now** and not dwell in the past. Every day is a chance to start fresh. Don't the past.
7. **I know the power of routines.** I start with a powerful morning routine: getting up early, exercising, and meditating, then setting clear goals for the day.

8. **I know that motion creates emotion.** The act of PHYSICALLY moving, helps me break the thoughts that otherwise corrupt me.

9. **I know the importance of giving.** When I give to others without thought, I always feel good about it.

10. **I know to value my accomplishments.** When I set goals for myself and hit them, I celebrate. My shy self, just having the ability to stand up here in front of you and present is a huge thing for me. It helps me stay sober to know I can do this..

11. **I know to love myself.** It's embarrassing to admit, but I say "I love you" in the mirror each morning. When over the course of the day I stumble (as often happens) I focus on forgiving myself vs. turning to self-hate.

12. **I know that I'm human** -- a human 'becoming' vs. a human 'being.' There is hope for all of us, if we work for it. When we fall, get back up. Always stay optimistic.

Thank you.

-- MadMork

*Subsequent to this presentation, MadMork moved to South America where he continues to walk on the pathway of his recovery each and every day.*



### SF Bay Area Intergroup of SAA – [www.bayareasaa.org](http://www.bayareasaa.org)

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The SF Bay Area Intergroup of SAA (BAISAA) manages the business of SAA in the SF Bay Area. Each SAA group is encouraged to elect a representative to provide input to the Intergroup and relay relevant info back to their group.

#### **Monthly Intergroup Meeting**

The Bay Area Intergroup Meeting is held on the second Saturday of each month from 11:15 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. at the Lutheran Church of the Cross located at: 1744 University Ave., Berkeley, upstairs in room 210.

#### **DISCLAIMER**

The views and opinions contained in *Out of the Fog* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Bay Area SAA or those of the International Service Org. [ISO]