

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



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.

Subscribe!!!

Save the trees and sign up to receive each quarterly issue of *Out of the Fog* by email.

Send your request to:

newsletter@bayareasaa.org

Looking for a meeting?

A complete list of current Bay Area SAA meetings can be found at:

www.bayareasaa.org/meetings.php

If you cannot make a meeting in person, a complete list of electronic meetings can be found at:

www.saa-recovery.org/Meetings/ElectronicMeetings/

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Gratitude List

Many recovering sex addicts find that identifying and acknowledging things in their life they are grateful for, helps them avoid succumbing to self-pity and despair and keeps their life in perspective. Each issue we will share examples from fellowship members who employ this tool in their recovery practice.

Today, I am grateful for:

- ✓ Reading a fun book
- ✓ That I have a good job that pays the bills
- ✓ My partner and daughter...they deserve my sobriety
- ✓ Phone call and chat with my friend in Chicago
- ✓ Aches and pains from working in the garden (hurts so good)
- ✓ Flannel sheets
- ✓ Paid off one of my bills

What are you grateful for? Submit your suggestions to:

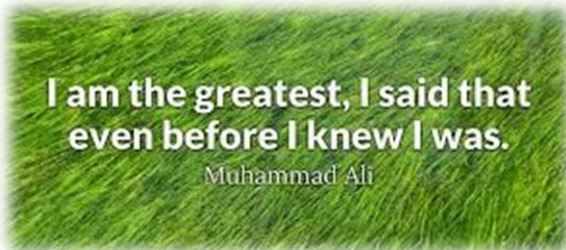
newsletter@bayareasaa.org

The Simple Power of Affirmation and Gratitude

At a recent meeting I attended in Berkeley a prearranged volunteer offered a short reading and reflection that was followed by round-robin shares from the members. The presenter did not choose a reading from SAA or recovery literature, but instead chose two very short stories, one on the theme of *affirmation*, the other on *gratitude*.

The stories were quite simple, yet at the same time profound and powerful, just like the concepts they describe. Each of the two, affirmation and gratitude, are so easily accessible to us – just a thought away, don't you know – and yet so potentially impactful (if we are willing) on our recovery.

Is it not easy – play along with me here – to simply let your eyelids gently close for one second and bring to mind one thing that you are



grateful for? Even if it is just gratitude for this one moment of peaceful thought?

Is it not just as easy, to silently say the words to yourself (even if you do not believe them) that you are at the core a good person worthy of love, and who, with the guidance and support of your higher power and this program, can on this day conquer this disease?

On the surface, this might seem like a pointless mind game however the fact is that there is substantial scientific evidence on the effectiveness of practicing these techniques (aka mindfulness) on a variety of physical, psychological, and behavioral outcomes.

Deepak Chopra, whose initial career was as a physician, with a specialty in Neuro-Endocrinology (the study of brain chemistry) said, "Wherever a thought goes a molecule follows. Your consciousness is actually governing your biology...each thought, altering your brain chemistry." Research on neuroscience has *proven* that our thoughts help establish, and with repetition, strengthen, the neural pathways that reinforce the reality behind that thought.

Or in other, simpler words spoken by the Buddha, "What we think, we become."

Such is the power of expressing affirmations.

And in the past two decades, multiple studies have shown conclusively that people who regularly take the time to acknowledge and/or express gratitude for people or things in their life and surroundings are healthier, happier, and better able to address and forestall anxiety and stress.

A man is what he thinks about all day long.
--Ralph Waldo Emerson

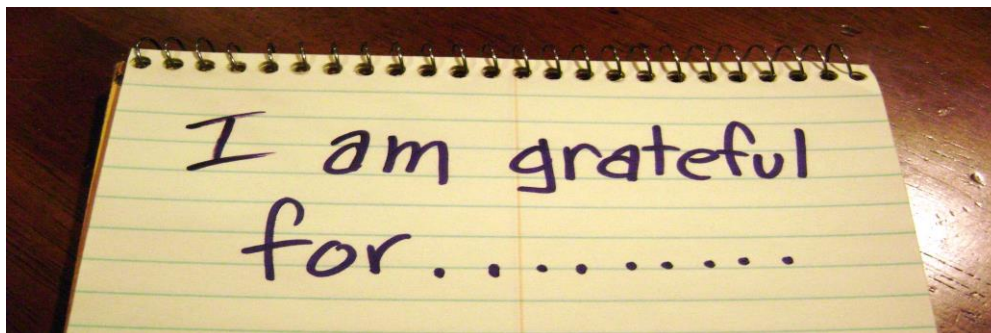
These people are less angry and resentful at others, and more forgiving of themselves. And in one study out of the University of Connecticut of 1726 participants in AA, 40% of those who regularly practiced gratitude over a 3-month period avoided taking a drink in the following 12 months, while only 2% of those who did not stayed sober.

All of these concrete benefits are accessible to us just a few thoughts away.

Engaging in regular meditation is one way to build and exercise our thought control muscles so that we can proactively employ affirmation and gratitude in support of our recovery.

So, what are you waiting for?

– Edwin F., Editor



Poetry as Prayer

Early in my recovery, my sponsor suggested that I look into a poem that spoke to him: *"A Guest House"* by Rumi. Ever since I did, it's become part of my 11th Step. Just as prayer helps turn my attention to a Higher Power, poetry allows me to turn my attention and heart towards something greater than myself.

The Guest House

*This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.*

*A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.*

*Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they are a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.*

*The dark thought, the shame, the malice.
meet them at the door laughing and invite
them in.*

*Be grateful for whatever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.*

— Jellaludin Rumi,



The following is my reflection on these mystical words.

The 12 Steps is a daily program. We are on daily reprieve from our addiction based on our spiritual fitness.

My addiction took me into fantasy and out of this human experience. My addiction took me on roller coaster rides from low lows to high highs, spanning the emotional spectrum of joy to depression.

Just like *'unexpected visitors'*, my emotions and addiction came unexpectedly, at all times of the day or night unannounced.

'Welcome and entertain them all,' says Rumi. This is, in other words, acceptance of life on life's terms. Ours is a path of acceptance and as the big book mentions, acceptance is the key. My meditation practice helps me most in this practice of welcoming and inviting them all.

My addiction was like a *'crowd of sorrows'* that *'violently swept my house'* clean leaving me spiritually empty and demoralized. Yet in my addiction, I did not *'treat my [disease] honorably.'* I hated myself. In my recovery I've come to regard myself with gentleness; my actions (with help of others and higher power) needed to stop.

'He may be clearing you out for some new delight.' This is like Steps Six and Seven's surrendering of my character defects and the removal of

some. I have noticed that some of the character defects I held on to so dearly have disappeared or have been stolen, making room for more of my character assets and new delights in my life!

A *'dark thought, or a shame, or the malice'* still visit! These are frequent guests who show up daily to remind me that I now have support in walking this path.

These thoughts are regulars. But as our green book suggests ours is a program of action and our thoughts may take years to drain away.

So, meanwhile, we can meet these thoughts laughing. Many of the actions and thought patterns that rule my life are in fact quite humorous; our pre-program solutions to our addiction were often hilarious.

To end the poem, Rumi reminds us about gratitude – gratitude for the challenges and the gifts of life, gratitude for the addiction that brought me the gift of spirituality, gratitude for a community of recovering brothers and sister, and of course, gratitude for recovery. All of these have been sent from above. They are messengers from beyond to guide me along this path back to my Higher Power.

May we improve our conscious contact with God through poetry, prayer and meditation.

– Anonymous



The Step Corner



Mark Lundholm is a standup comedian with over 20 years sobriety from drugs and alcohol, who uses comedy to deliver powerful messages of recovery to 'those who still suffer' from any addiction. Born and raised in Oakland, California, Mark's career path began when, just out of rehab, he performed a 20 Minute comedy routine at San Quentin State Prison. Along with regular comedy gigs, Mark facilitates day-long comedic recovery workshops at in- and out-patient treatment programs around the country.

<http://www.marklundholm.com/>

Reader Shares

Planning For My Recovery

I would like to share a tool that I have found valuable in my recovery, and that tool is: planning my time.

Isolation is a big trigger for me. I've always been a loner, the self-reliant type, and this habit has been tough to crack. With more sobriety, I am a little more comfortable around people, but still very, very anxious.

Now, at the beginning of each week, I spend a few hours planning which events I will attend that week, which friends I will see, etc.

The catalyst for this was my 30-meetings-in-30-days experience. After completing it, I realized I could push myself to leave the house more. This was essential to my recovery, as I was able to leave the house and meet people instead of staying home where my computer loomed.

I had a massive streak of going to events (and sobriety, as well) that lasted months. Unfortunately, I ran out of steam one night, stayed home and ended up acting out. This confirmed for me the importance of making the effort to go out in public. Luckily, I was able to control my urges the next day and resumed my tool of planning my time.

I often make about one connection per event. I don't usually become good

friends with the people I meet at these events, but it's good to meet folks, and there's always that chance I will find someone who I really click with.

I see my higher power intervening by blessing me with wonderful events (spiritual, conscious community, language exchanges, cultural events, dance, etc.), and as the 3rd Step says, I 'turn my will and my life over to my higher power' by getting out to these events. Now instead of using my computer to act out, it is where I go to use the many sites available to find events near me that match my interests. These include: Eventbrite, Meetup, Facebook (incl. their events app), and the Events in City app, allevents.in.

If you are a sex addict who suffers in isolation, pull out that calendar and plan your time in recovery. It's also critical to attend a few meetings per week and participate in fellowship, if possible. Personally, I try to find meetings where I feel comfortable and program friends who I get along with just like friends I'd meet outside of program. Other events are great, but nothing can substitute for a meeting when it is needed.

- Anonymous



SF Bay Area Intergroup of SAA – 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 the Int'l Service Org. [ISO]

Call for Submissions

Out of the Fog depends on the willingness of Bay Area SAA members to share their stories of experience, strength and hope with this community.

Send content/queries to:
newsletter@bayareasaa.org