

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: “Overcoming Isolation”

The theme for this issue is ‘Overcoming Isolation.’ Please send your ideas and suggestions for other themes you would like *Out of the Fog* to cover in future issues to us at: newsetter@bayareasaa.org.

Submissions Needed!!

Send queries or content to: newsletter@bayareasaa.org.

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.

IN THIS ISSUE:

Gratitude List.....1

Overcoming Isolation; Drawing Strength from Solitude.....2

Strategies for Overcoming Isolation.....3

Becoming.....4

Bay Area SAA Intergroup Information.....4

Gratitude List

Many recovering sex addicts have found that taking the time to acknowledge things in their life that they are grateful for, helps them to avoid succumbing to shame and helps keep their life in perspective. Here are some examples from readers who have employed this tool in their recovery practices.

Today, I am grateful for:

- ✓ *Needed rain*
- ✓ *The courageous shares at meeting last night*
- ✓ *Program friends and program calls*
- ✓ *Honest talk with my wife*
- ✓ *An invitation to a hike from an old friend*
- ✓ *Rewarding fun volunteering at the beach cleanup*

What are you grateful for? Submit your suggestions to:

newsletter@bayareasaa.org

Overcoming Isolation; Drawing Strength from Solitude

It should come as no great revelation to any sex addict that this disease thrives in isolation. We conduct our acting out behaviors in the dark corners of our physical and social worlds, in secret and out of view of our loved ones and friends.

Whether this is from a sense of shame and embarrassment, or just the desire to escape personal or legal accountability for our actions, the result is the same: when we isolate, we place ourselves at greater risk of being led by our addict down the path towards 'incomprehensible demoralization.'

Alone with ourselves, we are more easily swayed by our addict's lies and rationalizations. Unmediated by external influences, we are more apt to believe the lies we tell ourselves and others about our choices and decisions.

The SAA program offers many tools for countering the effects of isolation. Our SAA meetings, of course, provide us the opportunity to interact with others like ourselves, to hear and share stories of experience, strength, and hope, and to begin to move beyond the shame that leads us to retreat from the outside world. Meetings also provide avenues for further fellowship outside the confines of the rooms.

Taking the time and care to define a robust set of activities in our 'Outer Circle' helps shift our attention and emphasis

away from focusing inward towards a more outward orientation.

Working with a sponsor, and making and receiving program calls also can help us become available to others, further breaking down the walls of isolation.

However, while we make every effort to counter our isolationist tendencies and the danger that lies therein, it is worth noting that much of our work in our recovery program is undertaken alone.

Yes, we consult and interact with our sponsors as we work the Steps, but much of the actual Step work is done while we are by ourselves, via inner contemplation and introspection.

In Step 1, we revisit the solitary dark corridors of our isolated addictive histories, not to wallow in shame, but to come to the truth of our powerlessness.

In Steps 2 and 3 we contemplate the mysteries of spirituality and faith, and define a relationship to a Higher Power that will always be a prayer away.

Rigorously working the Steps requires that we dig deep inside ourselves, alone, to a solitary place where we can be honest with ourselves on key questions such as, 'What are my fears and resentments?

What are my character defects? Who have I harmed and owe some level of amends to?

Such questions initially demand serious self-contemplation [before we share with our sponsors and others]. And there lies the difference between isolation and solitude. In isolation, we live in a world of secrets, shame, and self-pity, with all

within to be kept under wraps at all costs.

But Solitude is a place of opening ourselves up, bringing the skeletons to light, looking at them under the magnifying glass. It is a place for revelations, new

understandings, and building renewed resolve.

It is where the seeds of Recovery are planted, nurtured, and strengthened.

Embracing Solitude as described here is not without its risks. The addict within us after all is 'cunning, baffling, and powerful.' If we are not on our guard it would be all too easy to convince ourselves that we are in 'Solitude' mode when in actuality we are employing it to keep ourselves separate from others, and from life.

But the ultimate payoff is Recovery, and achievement of the spiritual awakening promised to those who rigorously follow the Program.

--- Edwin F., Editor

"...all men need enough silence and solitude in their lives to enable the deep inner voice of their own true self to be heard at least occasionally. For he cannot go on happily for long, unless he is in contact with the springs of spiritual life which are hidden in the depths of his own true soul."

---Thomas Merton



Strategies for Overcoming Isolation

Sex addicts do not have a monopoly on isolation. Social isolation is a growing epidemic in the general population – one that's increasingly recognized as having dire physical, mental, and emotional consequences. Since the 1980's, the percentage of American adults who say they're lonely has doubled from 20 to 40 percent.

A wave of new research makes more explicit how social separation is harmful. Individuals with less social connection have disrupted sleep patterns, altered immune systems, more inflammation and higher levels of stress hormones. One recent study found that isolation increases the risk of heart disease by 29 percent and stroke by 32 percent.

Another analysis that pooled data from 70 studies and 3.4 million people found that socially isolated individuals had a 30 percent higher risk of early mortality.

Ironically, along with the greater visibility and attention being paid to this issue has come a bevy of ideas and strategies for addressing it – ideas and strategies that we sex addicts can avail ourselves of.

A quick google search brought forward several suggested ways that we can begin to escape the dark confines of our isolation. Here is a sample:

✓ **Decrease your use of social media**

It is easy to believe the myth that social media has increased our connections with others. I mean, look at how many "friends" and "followers" I have! But the reality is very different, particularly for we sex addicts where the lit screen can act to highlight for us the differences between our lives and those of all those 'normal' people out there posting their fun 'selfies.'

✓ **Reach out to family and friends**

We are familiar with the tool of 'program calls' as a support for our recovery. But also pick up the phone and call someone, anyone in your familial or acquaintanceship circles not related to the program. Even the smallest of small talk represents an active break from your isolation bubble. Make contact with someone a regular part of each day, like taking medicine, brushing your teeth, or exercising.



✓ **Get busy**

Reconnect with your interests, hobbies, etc. When our addiction is active it sucks up all most if not all of our free time. And then when we achieve some level of sobriety it is easy for us to not return to those things we were interested in before. Make a conscious effort to fill your time with outer circle activities.

✓ **Rewrite your inner narrative**

Change your description of yourself as feeling passively isolated to an active sense of active solitude. Utilize your alone time on working your Steps, making plans for outer circle activities, etc. Fake it until you make it.

-- Edwin F.

"Solitude vilifies;
isolation kills."

--Joseph Roux

"Isolation is a dream
killer."

-- Barbara Sher

"If you want to end your
isolation, you must be
honest about what you
want at a core level and
decide to go after it."

-- Martha Beck

"In solitude the mind
gains strength and
learns to lean upon
itself."

-- Laurence Sterne

Becoming

Alone upon the sea
Oars lost, compass gone.
Water, my cocoon.
Safe within this vastness
Boundaries do not exist
Except in my mind.

I had feared madness
In my younger years.
Now, I am embracing
It's obscurity.
Perhaps one must
Fall into insanity for a time

In order to see life
From all perspectives.
The line between madness
And prudence
Must dissolve
Momentarily

To allow a glimpse
Into a world otherwise only imagined.
Confronting impediments
I have feared,
Allows a chance
For faith to grow and thrive.

An atmosphere
Of perpetual anxiety
Surely creates
A tangle of dis-ease
Which can invade like
A cancer.



Here upon an expanse
Of timelessness,
There is only peace.
I can breathe into it
Preparing room for it
Welcoming it.

Within it's calming presence,
There is no taste of mania.
Hysteria subsides
And disappears
Into the fabrication
From whence it came.

The gentle waves
Which lap against
The sides of my vessel
Tap out a rhythmic pattern,
In time with the beating
Of my heart.

Every moment, a decision
To remain embraced
Allows me to inhale
My own maturation and change.
Remaining still, accepting,
I do not question my unfolding

-- Diane B. -7/23/18



SF Bay Area Intergroup of SAA - www.bayareasaa.org

Bay Area SAA • P.O. Box 14754 • San Francisco, CA 94114 • (415) 456-1063
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]