

**Contents** What is SAA?

From Coffee to Zoom

Santa Cruz Beach Burn



Summer 2024 Issue No. 32 v2

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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 people 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.

### A Woman's Walk through SAA - Part 2

The meeting is starting with myself and 3 strange men. It's only been minutes into my first meeting and I'm already hearing a share that brings me to tears. A man is blurting out my deepest darkest secret as his own personal experience. I feel the healing that was taking place and hope for what is to come. I feel home deep within my soul.

Driving home on the windy dark roads of Highway 17, tears are streaming down my face with unidentifiable feelings. I'm trying to

mentally make sense of this moment, how does this logistically fit into my life? Will this fix my life? This is too overwhelming. I need to feel nothing again. I wanted to feel nothing without suicidal ideation. It's a futile battle as the shame is creeping back into my body and mind.

## Summer Reflection **Recovery Quotes** Using SAA Tools of Recovery Reflections: Self Sabotage or Sobriety Mads & My Recovery Journey

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A Woman's Walk through SAA - Part 2

Waking up, it's the morning following my first SAA meeting, I can't move my body! The panic sets in as I realize I can't get out of bed. It's logically unexplainable. The most I'm able to do is call an Al-Anon friend, hysterically crying, and ask her to come over and help me. She's on her way as the heaviest shame I've ever felt in my life is lifting just enough to get out of bed to take a shower with breaks to lay down in the bathtub so I don't pass out.

It's 3pm, 3-days have passed and I have no memory of them, and I'm so confused, with thoughts, 'I don't think I can ever go to another SAA meeting'. Instead I'm calling another Al-Anon friend. We are not particularly close friends and she knows nothing about what is going on, but something deep inside is telling me to call her. I call her crying and begin to tell her about my situation. She says, thank you for calling and trusting me. I know someone in SAA and I can ask him to meet you at the Los Altos meeting tonight.

I'm in the parking lot of my second SAA meeting and see men everywhere. I'm so scared. My friend arrives and walks with me into the meeting where I'm shocked to see another Al-Anon friend I have know for many years. This time there are two other women in the meeting that are unknowingly bringing comfort to the chair I'm sitting in. The meeting is progressing with shares and I hear an older man crying as he shares the pain he feels from his actions. I'm sharing soon after him and sobbing with confusion of how I can relate to the man's pain...I don't know why but it's strong. Again I feel deep in my soul that I am at home.

The meeting is over and so many members are coming up to me to thank me for my share and for being there. I'm in shock and awe at how welcome I feel, how a part of a community I feel.



Aim your smartphone camera at this, tap on it, view newsletter online



#### Summer 2024



### From Coffee to Zoom

The Saturday morning We Are Not Saints (WANS) Workshop shared what it's like working together:

- "We are definitely not saints! However we do wake up more than an entire hour earlier than the other "Not Saints" attending the 8:30am Zoom meeting." ~Shelby, San Jose
- \* "Being able to work my steps within a group setting has been very valuable. Being able to hear other people's perspectives has helped me to open up my point of view and have a more rounded experience working my steps." ~Austin, Seattle



- ❖ "A place to get added support as one works the 12 steps with a sponsor" ~Gil, Santa Cruz
- "Inspirational and a cornerstone to my sobriety, a safe space to connect with other sex addicts and to be authentic and intimate with others, a powerful way to do my step work in community."
  "Jeff M, San Jose
- \* "A free, spiritual, real, and loving place that is helping me grow and heal on this path of recovery I've chosen to be on." ~Anonymous
- "An inspiration, fountain of knowledge and a good humored space I can be vulnerable and develop in"
  "Gavin, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK
- ❖ "Grounds me in my recovery and my SAA community." ~Paul, WA

A member of the WANS Workshop started an additional online text support group where many of us share our daily struggles, gratitude, step work, and check-ins as needed. We would like to share some of what we have written.

#### I struggle with...

- "Letting go of unhealthy or unrealistic fantasies." ~Paul, WA
- "Setting boundaries with others, people pleasing and then feeling resentful afterwards, euphoric recall" ~Jeff M, San Jose
- "Conflict and feeling I've done something wrong even when I haven't." "Matt T, Seattle
- "Knowing I am enough, knowing I am worthy of love, not being able to go back and reassure the young me" ~Gavin, UK
- The shame of my past holding me back from being the person I know I am meant to be." ~Anonymous
- "Knowing whether someone in my past is an ex-acting-out-partner or an ex-boyfriend."
  ~Shelby, San Jose
- \* "Self and thought life. Despite knowing the program works, I still can find myself indulging in the bondage of self through anger, resentment or fear. I've gotten better at recognizing it and can take the corrective actions." ~Gil, Santa Cruz

(continued)



#### Summer 2024



# From Coffee to Zoom (continued)

### I am grateful for...

- "Being able to start fresh every day." ~Paul, WA
- "Developing a daily practice of grounding myself, humility, and surrendering." ~Anonymous
- \* "A God of my understanding, a program that is practical, tools to turn from self-will to God's will, a second chance to live, being able to give away what we've been given, morning practice, family and friends" ~Gil, Santa Cruz
- \* "The energy and humility of the recovery community" ~Matt T, Seattle
- "The growth that allows me to see myself as a respectable woman" ~Shelby, San Jose
- \* "The SAA fellowship, the Gift of Sobriety for today, a loving Higher Power and my conscious contact with my Higher Power" ~Jeff M, San Jose
- \* "My wife's understanding of my addiction and her acknowledgement that I am progressing in recovery through this program and the workshop." ~Gavin, UK

### **Favorite Inspirations**

- "Every second counts" ~Anonymous
- The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago. The 2nd best time is today." ~Matt T, Seattle
- "The 3rd Step Prayer" ~Paul, WA
- \* "The set aside prayer, progress not perfection, Higher Power (GOD) will never give you more than you can handle." ~Jeff M, San Jose
- \* "The gift of desperation, We are powerless, not helpless, trudging the road to a happy destiny, the 3rd Step, 7th Step, 11th Step Prayers" ~Gil, Santa Cruz
- "Progress not perfection" ~ Gavin, UK
- \* "What Universal Will puts in my path is enhanced with self-respect and care, what my own will puts in my path is sabotaged with self-respect and care, unless my will is Universal Will" "Shelby, San Jose

### Santa Cruz Beach Burn

The Santa Cruz fellowship recently hosted its quarterly Beach Burn on Friday July 26. If you're wondering what's a beach burn, it's a bonfire on the beach. The idea for the beach burn came about in December when a couple of members were thinking that wow some of the guys don't have a family to go visit. Why don't we do something as a group to host and share. The first beach burn was held in December and it created



such a great atmosphere that the Santa Cruz Fellowship decided to host it and offer it to any others in the Bay Area SAA fellowship. Friday's Beach burn was another complete success. We had a 22 members. We had a speaker as well as tri-tip salad, sushi, vegetarian pizza, and plenty of non-alcoholic beverages plus homemade cookies and ice cream. Stay tuned for the next one or contact Mark T (408) 607-8186.



#### Summer 2024



### **Summer Reflection**

As the summer is underway, I am inclined to look back at my life with gratitude for the things that the 12-Step Program has given me. My first exposure to this life-saving program, being the acknowledgement of my misuse and inability to control my drinking, allowed for me to continue my honest effort at applying all that I would learn to every area of my life – I thank God for the 6th and 7th Steps. As stated in the 6th Step, however, coupled with an honest look at my life is absolute readiness: "We were entirely ready . . . . " I was to begin to ask myself, "Am I entirely ready?" and, furthermore, "What would being entirely ready look like?"

This readiness would eventually be directed to my sexual behavior, that which I did not think was a problem. Why would it have been? I had a terrible habit of comparing the consequences of others with (the God-given grace of) my own external situation. I had never suffered the consequences that I heard others had suffered, "those" individuals who severely needed help. I, of course, wasn't one of "those." I had a lot of items on my never-has-this-happened-to-me list. Unfortunately (or fortunately, depending on how you look at it) sex addiction is not defined solely on the individual's external situation.

I dreaded every day that I was alive. I would contemplate suicide while walking to work. I would begin an attempt at controlled sexual acting-out while it inevitably yielded more shame and depression. Left to my own power, I was doomed, and I knew it. Up to this point, I had been an active and sober member of another 12-Step Program for seven years.

My recovery from sex addiction can be defined by two moments. I was first exposed to personal sexual sobriety after reading from the literature of the original 12-Step Program in 2019. I came across a line that I must have read on at least five separate occasions: "[O]ur sex powers were God-given and therefore good . . ." (Alcoholics Anonymous p. 69). Never, up to this point, had I ever considered inviting God into my sex life. Sex was something that I was to control, something I would define on my terms. Never did I think that sex was something outside that which I could demand or deny. How arrogant I was. This initiated the foreign consideration that what felt right for me on a sexual level should and must be the guiding force in my behavior – how I should act and those behaviors which I should avoid was to be revealed, not by another person's standards, but on the God-given intuition inside of me, an intuition that has only been cultivation through the 12-Steps.

As I began my way through the SAA Program, I read in the beginning pages of our primary text, to this day, the most sobering observation I have ever come across regarding sex addiction: "[T]he disease had a life and an agenda of its own" (Sex Addicts Anonymous p. 4). Every intellectual defense that I had put up to prevent me from admitting that I was one of "those" people crumbled. I could no longer hide behind my seemingly consequence-free life. With my acknowledgement that the internal was to be required for my admittance of defeat and my defining of abstinence, this statement humbled me more that I was aware I needed. In my other 12-Step Program, there is a way of thinking understood as the "not yet" concept. If one is comparing themself to another member, saying, "I must not be that bad because I haven't done that thing," it is recommended that the individual say the word "yet" at the end of their comparison; i.e. I haven't done that . . . yet. I was inclined to consider the same exercise regarding my sex life. I haven't been arrested . . . yet. I haven't sexually abused anyone... yet. If I were a sex addict (which I am) I was

(continued)



#### Summer 2024



### **Summer Reflection (continued)**

not going to be able to control how far down that dark tunnel of sexual depravity my disease would take me, and, the worst part would be that my morals and opinion of myself would not make any difference. The disease that I have couldn't care less about my morals. It has an agenda of its own.

As I complete this summer reflection, I remind the reader and myself that there is hope in the hopeless situation in which sex addiction leaves its victim. Although my disease has a life and an agenda of its own, my sex powers are God-given and, therefore, good. Fortunately, this program is designed for us sex addicts to find recovery from our destructive and obsessive sexual behavior through the reliance and dependence upon God (as each individual understands God). What then would my life look like if I gave these powers back to God? What a beautiful restoration that would be.

- Joseph R.



### **Recovery Quotes**

<b>□</b> "I	t does n	ot matter h	ow slowly	you go	as long a	s you do no	ot stop." –	Confucius
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- "Recovery is about progression, not perfection."
- "You have to break down before you can break through." Marilyn Ferguson
- ☐ "Fall seven times, stand up eight." Japanese proverb
- "Recovery is taking all twelve steps... over and over and over and over..." Toni Sorenson
- "I'm not telling you it is going to be easy. I'm telling you it's going to be worth it!"
- "Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving." Albert Einstein







### **Using SAA Tools of Recovery**

It's the little things that keep we sex addicts sober. Once we are engaged with our simple program, we concentrate on overcoming this baffling, powerful, and cunning disease of sexual addiction.

Day by day, we encounter incidents that test our belief in the care promised by our Higher Power. How do we do that?

By using simple tools to fight a complex disease, we fight the good fight. I remember coming to a stop at a busy intersection in Berkeley while on the way to a meeting. The longest 3 seconds of my life ensued while the most beautiful pedestrian I've ever seen walked across the street. Yet, I didn't roll down my car windows, honk or make other aggressive gestures.

After all, the Higher Power exists for each one of us, and we all have our crosses to bear, beauty marks, warts and all. I remember reading a dated issue of People Magazine which recalled Elizabeth Taylor as a wallflower in adolescence.

It's like somebody yelled in my mind "HALT". We know that this acronym in our fellowship stands for Hungry, Angry, Lonely and/or Tired.

What is it that we're hungry for? It could be food, drink, love, sex, power, relief or none of these. How do we feed our hunger? Aristotle, among others, told us to do so in moderation. Doing so creates balance in our lives so that we don't go to extremes.

What are we angry about? Most likely, it has to do with our reactions to what other addicts or would-be addicts did to or for us. Since we cannot control how others interact with us, what is left consists of our reactions. We could be thankful, mad or sad. Alternatively, we could "turn the other cheek." The choice is ours. Since we have free will, is anger our preferred option? I THINK NOT.



We sex addicts are known for our ability to isolate. Is that because we're better than others? Not necessarily, as we enjoy (or so we believe) living in our fantasies. For some of us, that hides the loneliness we feel. Yes, it's difficult to make program calls when we don't have anything we care to talk about. But that's okay, since voices reaching out in the wilderness are invariably welcome.

How much sleep should we get? Does spending hours watching porn late at night count as sleep? It depends who we're asking or telling. When we're tired, we risk the lives of mankind. It could be feeling drowsy while driving, misspelling a word, mistyping a number for inclusion in a report whose deadline is imminent, making a phone call or keeping an appointment we have dreaded and having lost sleep over.

But let's not forget the big things, like gratitude, patience, perseverance and quality work (as the US Army commercial goes, "be all we can be"). That extends to ingenuity. If a technique works for us, don't keep it a secret. Since we don't live on deserted islands, we are made to share.

What are we waiting for?

- Juan K.



#### Summer 2024



### **Reflections: Self-Sabotage or Sobriety**

"What is required for many of us, paradoxical though it may sound, is the courage to tolerate happiness without self-sabotage." — Nathaniel Branden

Since entering SAA in 2008, I've witnessed how self-sabotage can prevent sex addicts from getting sober and/or staying sober. Moreover, mental, emotional and/or psychological issues can lead to self-destructive behaviors. Breaking the cycle of self-sabotage involves identifying triggers, setting realistic goals, developing positive habits and being an active member of SAA.

Addiction can lead to a binary outcome, self-sabotage or sobriety. Self-sabotage begins with insidious thoughts which tell you that you're not good enough, can't do it, or are not worthy of success. These thoughts can manifest themselves in various ways such as procrastination and negative self-talk. Most importantly, self-sabotage may provoke a surrender to addiction.

Furthermore, there is a powerful psychological concept called "learned helplessness" which may give us a better understanding of how addiction can control our minds. Learned helplessness occurs when an individual continuously faces a negative, self-destructive, situation and stops trying to change their circumstances, even when they have the ability to do so.

Thus, a sex addict may repeatedly try but fail to stop inner circle behaviors. As a result, he may grow frustrated and come to believe that nothing he does will help, and therefore stops trying altogether. The false perception that he is unable to change his thoughts and behaviors lead to self-sabotage.

In SAA, our primary mission is to achieve and maintain positive mental health and long-term sobriety. We make a sincere commitment to recovery, no matter how difficult, painful, or fearful it may be. At group meetings, we give voice to our emotions by sharing personal stories. And, we share our victories which inspire us, and others, to find the strength, courage and wisdom to stop middle and inner circle behaviors.

As we work to complete the Twelve Steps, with help from our sponsors, we discover how to become more open and honest with ourselves, our Higher Power, and other relationships. We embrace the freedom of sobriety and reject the slavery of addiction. A wise soul said, "Taking responsibility for my happiness is empowering. It places my life back in my own hands. Ahead of taking this responsibility, I may imagine it will be a burden. What I discover is that it sets me free."

Bill N, We are not Saints, San Jose



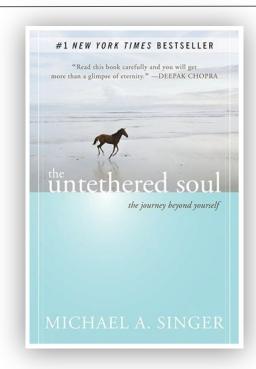


#### Summer 2024



### **Book Report: The Untethered Soul**

I gained so much valuable insight by reading Michael Singer's "The Untethered Soul - The journey beyond yourself" that I've been sharing it with others for a couple years now. Throughout my recovery journey, I've realized and yearned to better understand and come to a peace with what is always going on between my ears. I tried reading some of Eckhart Tolle's books (The Power of Now, A New Earth), and although they are rich, I could not fully understand his points or complete the books. Then I came across The Untethered Soul. At the start, Singer writes "we will undertake an exploration of 'self.' But we will not call upon experts in psychology, or the great philosophers... We will, instead, turn to a single source that has phenomenal direct knowledge on the subject... And that expert is you." And then he proceeds to do just that – and I totally got what he was saying, and it gave me a fresh new and valuable perspective inside myself. I am on my 2nd read through this great book and uncovering even more value. The 4 main points are 1) "I" am the underlying awareness inside me that



is observing my thoughts and feelings (I am not my thoughts, my emotions, etc.); 2) my thoughts and feelings can be like an irritating roommate - and there is great value in learning to control that inner roommate; 3) it is impossible to control the outside world, so I can focus on controlling my inner world; 4) I can use death as a tool for growth instead of fearing it (this may sound a bit jarring, but his insights are profound). I encourage you to try reading this book – it is the opposite of psychological rocket science; instead, it is highly intuitive and, if you're like me, you'll have many "ah ha" moments.

### **Meds & My Recovery Journey**

One area that I don't hear us talk about much in SAA meetings is mental/physical health & medications. However, based on many conversations, it seems that a fair number of people in the program have mental and physical challenges (above and beyond addiction) and some are taking medications to help. I believe it is important and valuable to talk about these things so that no one views taking medications as a weakness. So I will start.

About 20 years ago, I was diagnosed with adult ADHD - not because I was hyperactive, but because I would often get sleepy and be unable to focus after lunch (regardless of what I ate) and sometimes got very drowsy while driving. So I started taking medication for it and things improved (I take 20mg of Concerta daily). When I first got in the program about 15 years ago, my sponsor recommended I talk to my doctor about taking an antidepressant. I have taken 5mg of Lexapro ever since, and it has helped. About 5 years ago, my wife noticed that I would stop breathing while sleeping, so I went to a sleep doctor and was diagnosed with severe sleep apnea – not only dangerous, but also not helping with my wakefulness during the day. Since then, I have been wearing a CPAP each night, and it has really helped.

I encourage each person in SAA to be open to talking about your mental and physical health as well as meds in meetings and with your sponsor and others in the program. In addition to recovery from compulsive sexual acting out, we also deserve the chance to live a healthy mental and physical life.

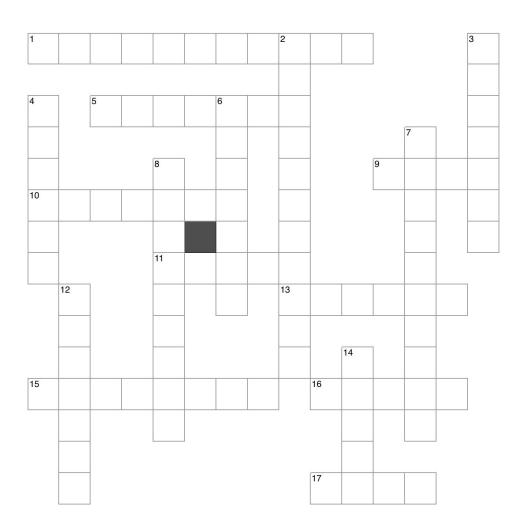
- Matt T, Seattle



### **Summer 2024**



# Summer 2024 Crossword - "The Promises"



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### **ACROSS**

1	we will know
5	our experience can others
9	they will materialize if we for them
10	we will suddenly that God
11	they are being fulfilled
13	we will be before we are half way through
15	self seeking will
16	we not
17	of people and economic insecurity
-	

#### DOWN

2 are these \_\_\_\_ promises?

3	sometimes sometimes slowly
4	we will not the past
6	we are going to know a new
7	we will the word serenity
8	self-pity will
12	gain interest in our _
14	our attitude and

outlook upon life



#### Summer 2024



### Announcements & Events

Bay Area Quarterly Speakers Meeting Online - Sun, Aug 4 @ 5:30pm PST SAA: Scott G, Oakland, 23 yrs sober & COSA: Sylvan M, Oakland, 4 yrs sober Zoom: Link // Meeting ID: 837 2934 5573, Passcode: 121212, (669) 900-9128

HELP NEEDED: Call for "Giving Thanks" (November) Venue We are seeking a Bay Area SAA member with access to about a half acre yard, or 2,500 sq-ft indoor venue in which we can host "Giving Thanks". Please contact Brian R - (925) 788-7842 (brian19541@gmail.com)

**HELP NEEDED:** Have experience in web design and/or WordPress? If so, please contact bradinrecovery@outlook.com – there is a service opportunity for 1 or more people to help with the Bay Area SAA website.

Quarterly Santa Cruz Beach Burn (see article at bottom of page 3) For more information: Mark T (408) 607-8186

Podcast listener? Check out the Sex Addicts Recovery Podcast Available on Apple, Spotify, YouTube, Bay Area website 130+ episodes which are downloaded and listened to around the world. For more information: jason@sexaddictsreciverypod.com

**Sponsor Support Group -** 9:45 - 10:45 am, Saturdays: 10/5/24, 12/7/24 Trinity Presbyterian Church, 3151 Union Ave., San Jose For more information: Bill N (408) 568-9702

Sponsors Helping Sponsors - Thursdays, 11 am US EST / 8 am PST Zoom ID: 419880404, pass code: 123456 Phone: 646 558-8656

Contact: Christine C. 260 209-4445

Bay Area SAA Intergroup - Serve our 90+ Bay Area meetings! 2nd Saturday of each month 11:15am - 12:45pm Online: <a href="https://zoom.us/j/87065412456">https://zoom.us/j/87065412456</a> Password: Admitted

**Bay Area SAA Website Development Committee** Fridays @ noon - Contact Gil R. for more information (831 419-3342)

Please Submit Group Donations via Website – this ensures we know which group is donating. Use this link: <a href="https://bayareasaa.org/contribute">https://bayareasaa.org/contribute</a>

### California-wide Prisoner Outreach

More than half of the thirty prisoner requests arriving every week in the ISO Office come from California. Filling these sponsor requests always has a backlog, especially for Spanish speakers. Rey G from the Southern California Intergroup of SAA (SCISAA) thinks California SAA Fellows can/should take care of our own. He is building a coalition of SAA Fellows throughout California doing, and willing to do, Step 12 service to these SAA Fellows and new-comers in prisons.

For more information: <a href="https://scisaa.org/prisoner-outreach">https://scisaa.org/prisoner-outreach</a> Rey G - prisoneroutreach@proton.me 818.486.4053 (text first)

### **ISO Donations**

If SAA has helped, consider becoming a LifeLine Partner to support ISO either as an individual or as a group.

### Resources & Links

- Women's Newcomer Line 510 426-6420
- Men's Newcomer Line 510 906-1644
- Women Seeking Recovery women@bayareasaa.org
- GLBTQQI Seeking Recovery glbt@bayareasaa.org
- Spanish Speaking Information espanol@bayareasaa.org
- BIPOC Specific Recovery bit.ly/SBIPOCintergroup-welcome
- Bay Area SAA website
  - Bay Area Meetings List \*\*



- O Bay Area Events
- Bay Area Meeting Updates & Intergroup Info
- o Intergroup Orientation
- o GSR Info
- Printable Bay Area Meeting List
- Worldwide SAA website
  - Global Meeting Finder \*\*



- SAA Literature
- Sex Addicts Recovery Podcast
  - o Listen Directly
  - Podcast YouTube Playlist
- San Jose Recovery website
  - Step Guides & Worksheets

### Feedback / Submissions

**Newsletter Submission**