

Vancouver SAA lution, May-June 2009

If you would like to contribute part of your story, or a theme to the next newsletter, please contact the newsletter representative at newsletter@saavancouver.org

THEME: Keep Coming Back

Editorial: I am living evidence of the truth of this slogan. I have been coming to SAA meetings in Vancouver since the fall of 2005 after hitting a bottom with my acting out behaviour. I did not want to do what I was doing—paying for sex and intriguing. Since joining the program I have had 4 months clean, then 9 months, then 3 months, then 6 months, etc (I currently have 5 ½ months free from my inner circle after a slip). Meanwhile, I've always known that masturbation to media and fantasy is my core addiction, but for many reasons, despite talking about it with my sponsors and recovery friends regularly, have been unable to give it up until I hit a bottom last week when my wife discovered me and I saw how much this behaviour hurt her, and fully sober, realized how sad it made me. I don't know the future, but I know that the whole world seems different now that I have become really ready to surrender, one day at a time, this core behaviour that I have nurtured and purged in a cycle since I was about 11 years old. I really believe it took more than three years of coming back to SAA, once or twice or more per week, with phone calls almost every day, step groups, sponsors, etc, for me to come to this place of surrender. Of course I feel sad that it took so long, but I also feel a deep hope that my life can be different without this, my drug of last resort. I am heading now into an intense program of recovery, 7 meetings in seven days, the three day convention in Oakland, and possibly 90 in 90 to allow my brain to heal. A friend tells me, "surrender early, surrender often," and each meeting I attend and phone call I make is a surrender to my higher power which for now I understand as the group. Keep coming back, it works!

Donations for intergroup for Convention delegate.

The international SAA Convention will be held in Oakland, California May 22-25 (see other brochures for more info). Our Intergroup is sending our elected delegate to represent our needs and concerns and to report back to us afterwards about issues facing individual SAA groups and our larger fellowship as a whole. Thank you for your service! Of course it costs money to pay for his plane ticket, hotel and other costs. While intergroup donations have started picking up in the last month or so, we still need more funds. Please bring this issue up at the business meeting of any local meetings you attend and suggest that excess cash over your rent, supplies and reasonable reserve be donated to Intergroup for this and its other important outreach expenses (mailbox, phone line, website, etc.)

Call for Intergroup Reps from each group

The Intergroup for Greater Vancouver SAA meets every third Tuesday at 7pm at the Centre, Room G, on Davie and Bute. All SAA members, brand new, or old-timers are welcome. Our purpose is to provide service to the local meetings and act as a liaison with the SAA International Service Organization. One of the special benefits of attendance is learning more about the 12 Traditions of SAA in readings and in practice. If you regularly attend a meeting, why not find out if that group has an intergroup representative and volunteer to do so if there isn't one. Responsibilities are simply to carry information about the group (attendance, financial situation, # of newcomers, literature requests) to the intergroup so that intergroup can best serve the needs of your local group. This is an excellent service position. If you are a sponsor, please consider talking to your sponsees about service in this or any other position. Service commitments have served many members as a reason to keep coming back regularly to meetings, even when we least wanted to go to a meeting.

Outreach Committee

Intergroup has tentatively begun an outreach committee whose goal is to make sure that people suffering from sexually compulsive behaviour know about us. This can be as simple as making sure the local papers carry an ad for us, or as involved as contacting mental healthcare professionals around the city to explain who we are and how to recommend us to their clients. If you are interested in helping get this important work off the ground, please come to intergroup.

2012 Convention Bid

Several members will be in Oakland at the International Convention this week/end (May 22-25) pitching Vancouver's case for hosting the convention, please keep them in your prayers. Hosting a convention would be an excellent opportunity to strengthen the Vancouver fellowship and provide service to sex addicts from all over the world.

Workshops

If you would like to help organize a workshop on any recovery-related topic for the fellowship, please attend intergroup or tell an intergroup representative about it and we will try to help you make it happen. Many thanks to Howard for his masterful organizational skills on the last workshop. Possible themes could be any one of the twelve steps (or all of them in a "Back to Basics" seminar) or other topics from the Green Book, maintaining relationships in recovery, maintaining a career in recovery. Recent sessions have included topics like "acting-in" (no sex in a committed relationship during recovery), healthier dating in recovery, etc. The easiest location to book is the 49th & Kerr meeting space which is usually available on Sunday afternoons.

Retreat committee

David V. has offered some family property for an SAA retreat either in June or September. This is excellent news for those of us who would like to increase recovery opportunities for our local fellowship. David L (newsletter@saavancouver.org) and Ron have volunteered to strike a retreat committee. Please contact either one of us at meetings or otherwise if you are interested in helping us organize! If we are to get this off the ground this year, we need volunteers to help organize food and workshops (can be as simple as a theme and a few questions you'd like to discuss—you don't need to be an expert on the topic). It may seem a daunting thing to organize, but a single overnight with two or three themed sessions and one or two regular sharing meetings along with socializing could be a powerful recovery tool for new and old members. The space David V. is offering is on the Sunshine Coast, 15 minutes from the ferry. There is room for dormitory sleeping for about 15 people in the main house, a separate building for cooking and dining, and space to set up tents (with extra tarps in case it rains). There are also bed & breakfasts nearby for those who need comfort, and a backpacker's hostel is ½ mile away, so we should be able to accommodate as many people from the fellowship as want to come.

Feature Recovery Story: "My Return to SAA"

I'm Jack. I'm recovering from sexual addiction. I'd like to begin by saying that the following writing is from my own experience. Just like I do not agree with everything stated in the Twelve Step Program, so you don't have to agree with mine. This is not carved in stone, take what you like and leave the rest.

Many of you probably remember me being in the Program before May of 2008. I'm glad to be back among those faithful, but I'm sad to see others have gone and moved on. I thought the main reason I left the Program was that I just wasn't learning or growing anymore. I really thought I said, heard, and done everything there is to be said, heard, and done in the Twelve Step Program. God knows how tired I was of hearing myself sharing in the meetings about every time I've acted out. As a loving friend has pointed out to me, unfortunately, I was focusing on the Problem. So, I needed time to reason things out with myself, my Counsellor, and especially my Higher Power. In retrospect, that last statement was the main reason I had to remove myself from the Program. Indeed, I needed to refocus on the Solution. I just want to elaborate a little bit about why my old program, which didn't work for me in the long term. I think for several years I stuck to the cookie cutter kind of sobriety-abstinence. That's all that was in the box, according to my definition of sobriety in my first five years in SAA. For me, abstinence was like riding on rollerblades. As I have proven it over and over, I just wasn't born to be a "Rollerblader." In the beginning, I was determined to learn to skate and I had some very limited measure of success. I was able to go some distance on my rollerblades but it never quite became natural to me like riding a bike. For some people rollerblading is as natural to them as riding a bike. Feeling unstable all the time, I struggled to keep my balance, which is so difficult because it's so subtle. One false move and I ended up crashing down on the ground, hurting myself very badly at times. It was very much like acting out. Similar to rollerblading, my old program did me more harm than good.

I acted out enough, I hurt myself enough, and I complained about it enough! It was time to make a change! It was time to change my program.

Change didn't happen to me overnight! My Higher Power had been trying to convince me saying, "Take those ridiculous rollerblades off!" And of course, I was so reluctant to remove them, because I got nothing else other than my old program of abstinence to count on. But, very gently my Higher Power convinced me saying, "You just need to learn to stand on your own feet and start walking!" I perceived that message as "It's time for you to learn to think for yourself and to live with yourself, Jack!" From what I gather, I find that God is very reasonable and he doesn't set terms that are too difficult for any of us to comprehend or achieve. I also believe that God wants us to succeed not only in our recovery but also in the rest of our lives. Change happened in the way I think, I began to accept that I have a very analytical mind, and there is nothing wrong with that, except that I tended to direct that analytical energy towards negative thinking, as a very good friend suggested, who also said, "Now, use that same energy and re-channel it towards positive thinking!" To sum up the idea, I believe that God allowed me to process this thought and learn to apply it to the rest of the way I think, which I consider as a life transforming experience of "conscious evolution."

In more specific terms, I think God and I made a breakthrough when I recognized that I can go beyond Step One, being powerless over my sexual addiction and then, I moved into Step Two and Three, being restored to sanity and having surrendered my will and my life to God, he in turn empowers me to experience healthier sexuality. I cannot explain the whole transformation into words, but I realized that I could begin to accept "What is outside the box!" - "What does real sobriety look like for me?" It was like God said to me, "Now, I give you the Power! Go! Exercise your freedom to explore and discover for yourself all the possibilities of healthier sexuality!" Hold on, this doesn't mean I can act out all I want! No, that's not the point! The point is I can have all the healthier sexuality I want with my personal values and beliefs intact, by respecting my boundaries and practicing moderation. That's as simple as it gets! And it's not about perfection, I still make mistakes. But, I consider making a mistake is not acting out for me, actually, it's a learning curve! I truly believe that when I am living a satisfying, meaningful, and purposeful life, and practicing healthier sexuality, there is no need for me to act out! Thus, so far, my own experience of Step One, Two, and Three, from admitting my powerlessness to being empowered by My Higher Power is a very precious experience I needed to learn.

In connection to my previous point, the solution part of my recovery from sexual addiction is to make the best out of the rest of my life. This makes the solution stand out even more by looking further "outside the box." Week after week, with help from a friend, who has been my mentor this past year, I discovered that I find satisfaction in pursuing writing as a way of life. There is something about expressing my thoughts into words that helps me feel understood and writing to share about my own self-discoveries gives me a sense of accomplishment. I've discovered that my passion for writing, which I consider as a gift of my Creator, comes with a responsibility to advance common human good and spiritual well-being. Sometimes, it's better than sex! Honest!

If there is anything that keeps me coming back to the Twelve Step Program, it is the Spirituality component that does it for me. It is a total miracle that I've stayed sober over the last eight months. It hasn't always been a bed of roses, but I've had some wonderful discoveries of freedom from my addiction. I truly believe that "reality is not tailored to the limitations of self, and that hardship and loss as a valid part of life as joy and pleasure," like it says in the SAA text page 58 under Step Eleven. Yes, sometimes I wish I do not have an addiction to sex and not suffer its consequences anymore, but I am convinced that hard won recovery from this affliction proves greater in defining my higher spiritual purpose. In agreement, yes, I know, it's easier said than done!

In contradiction, some may say, "What for?" "Why go through this hardship and loss, when we can't see the end of it?" Some say "Recovery has no destination, we'll never arrive, but it's one heck of a journey!" While some may not believe that there is a "Destination," but among others I do, and I know that there are "Rewards" for our hard work, and I can testify to the fact that God is not a liar when he gave us The Promises. Let us not forget that The Promises are there for us to stand on and to comfort us, and encourage us to keep going when nothing else seems to matter. I had to leave the program. I'm not saying you have to either. I had to do what I had to do to get some sobriety, but God never left; he has always been there for me. "We just have to keep looking for God until he finds us." I quote from Answers In The Heart, January 21. Besides, is it not his will to fulfill The Promises among us, if we continue to work for them, and may I add, with him?

In conclusion, I am a beneficiary of a loving God, who has graciously and generously afforded me the lessons to think for myself and to learn to live with myself. As such, there are still precious reasons to hope, for there is more room to grow. Even without any guarantee that I will always be present, sober, and sane; I know I am safe in the hands

of God. Yet, I may sometimes wonder from the Path of Recovery, which only reminds me of a comforting song that my Pastor sang for me after my long absence from Church. The song is called, Even Though There Were Times I Stepped Out of His Will, I've Never Been Out of His Care. In this gracious spirit, may God bless you and keep you safe! And just like we say in Greater Vancouver, BC SAA, "Keep coming back! It works! And we're worth it!"

Meetings in Vancouver

Phone
604.290.9544 (voice mail)

Email » men@saavancouver.org
or » women@saavancouver.org

Closed Meetings The designation "Closed" indicates that only sex addicts interested in their own recovery may attend.

Open An "Open" meeting indicates that the meeting is open to all persons.

Mixed - "Mixed" means that both men and women may attend.

Vancouver S.A.A. meetings are open to anyone, regardless of gender or sexual orientation, who has a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior. To ensure that these meetings remain a safe place, we regret that friends, observers, or support persons may not attend closed meetings. We are willing to meet with these people outside the meetings to provide information and answer any questions.

Our Tradition 3 reads: The only requirement for SAA membership is a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior.

Monday

Fresh Start

12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Mixed/Closed

[The Round House Arts and Recreation Centre](#)

In the Music Room
181 Roundhouse Mews

Genesis Group

7:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.
Mixed/Closed

Seniors Adult Day Care
3076 East 49th Avenue (and Kerr)
Annex Bldg. on S.W. Corner, Entrance
from parking lot behind building

Tuesday

Shame to Grace

5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.
Mixed/Open
The Centre, Room G
1170 Bute St. (Across from Blenz at Bute
and Davie, Upstairs)

Langley Tuesday Night Meeting

7:30-9:00 p.m.
Mixed/Open
Douglas Recreation Centre, Games Room
20550 Douglas Crescent, Langley

Recovery on The Inlet

7:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. Mixed/Closed
St. Andrews United Church
2318 St. Johns Street, Port Moody

Wednesday

Wednesday Evening SAA Group

7:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.
Mixed/Closed
St. Vincent Room
Holy Rosary Cathedral
650 Richards St. Vancouver
Enter from Richards Street through the
door marked 650 (not 648).
The St. Vincent Room is the first door on
the right.

Thursday

Serenity at Noon

12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Mixed/Closed
[The Round House Arts and Recreation Centre](#), Music Room
181 Roundhouse Mews

Thursday Night "Answers in the Heart" Group

7:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.
Mixed/Closed
Seniors Adult Day Care

3076 East 49th Avenue (and Kerr)
Annex Bldg. on S.W. Corner,
Rear/Laneway Entrance

Friday

Friday Night Fellowship

7:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.
Mixed/Closed
[The Round House Arts and Recreation Centre](#)
Board Room
181 Roundhouse Mews

Saturday

Saturday Morning Awakening

10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Mixed/Closed
St. Paul's Anglican Church of the West End
1140 Jervis Street (at Pendrell)
Lower Hall. Enter on Pendrell Street, NE
corner of building, downstairs.

How It Works

7:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.
Mixed/Closed
St. David's Anglican Church, 2475 Franklin
Street
Corner of Franklin/Kamloops, enter at
back from alley parking area

Sunday

Step Eleven Prayer and Meditation

11:00 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. (Meditation Period
is from 11:00 to 11:10)
Mixed/Closed
[The Round House Arts and Recreation Centre](#)
Boardroom