

SCA DC NEWSLETTER

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By SCA Metro DC Intergroup

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My Story

By R. B.

I came to my first SCA meeting three and a half years ago at the recommendation of my therapist. I had sought help after my acting out behavior had cost me my marriage, several friendships and countless sleepless nights.

I had been lonely as a child. I never quite fit in with the other kids and I struggled to be accepted. I quickly learned several mechanisms to deal with life. First and foremost was to get people to like me, which often meant telling people what they wanted to hear, even if it was a lie. I tried to become all things to all people. I learned to make people laugh, to be thought of as a “nice guy” and to avoid conflict at all costs. In retrospect, I was building the skills that I would later use to live the double life of a sex addict.

My parents were wonderful people and, though they did their best, they had a hard time displaying affection toward me when I was young. As an only child, I had no siblings to turn to for a “reality check”, to get advice or to learn the healthy coping skills that seemed second nature to most people. At a very early age, I discovered masturbation and sexual fantasy as my biggest refuge, the place where I could go to medicate myself against a world in which I felt lost, lonely and frightened.

Later in life, when my marriage faced challenges, I tried to ignore them. Instead of facing those challenges as most people do, I blocked them out with visits to prostitutes, having affairs, using pornography and escaping into long periods of sexual fantasy. In my twisted logic, I saw this as a perfect way to cope, to have two lives: the respected life of a gregarious family man and the hidden life of sexual escapism.

Eventually this double life caught up with me when my wife discovered my acting out. My world (actually, both worlds) came crashing down. It was as if the rubble of both lives had mixed together in a heap so that the sexually unhealthy side of my life had polluted, in fact, all but destroyed my life.

After seeing a therapist for several months, he recommended

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Waiting to Exhale

(Dealing with Feelings in Recovery)

By D. C.

Breathe. There, I said it. My secret's out.

That is, if you can call it a secret. Breathe. That's all there is to it. My own little miracle cure for dealing with my feelings, and I can't even bottle it.

When I was in treatment (the second time, not the first, the third, or the fourth), I discovered I'd been living as if under water for most of my life. Taking short little breaths, no deeper than my nipples (both of them). Waiting to exhale, but not in the Angela-Bassett-torch-my-ex-boyfriend's-car kind of way. More like pinching the nozzle of a fully-inflated balloon, afraid that if I relaxed my fingers even a little the party (my life) would end. I mean, is there any hope for a balloon that can't hold its breath?

So now I'm learning to live life above water. As feelings surface, I take a deep breath, then I let it out knowing there's more air to be found where the previous supply came from. No need to recycle the stale air in my lungs. For every new feeling, there's plenty of fresh air. My higher power arranged it so.

I did some breathing while in London recently. My partner and I were 'on holiday' (translation: weekend getaway) and went to see Billy Elliott – The Musical. And there's that scene where Billy's Da' (translation: Dad) crosses the picket line, desperate to give his son a chance in life. Dad scenes always bring up really big feelings in me. I wished he were my Dad. I waited years for my Dad to rescue me from my loneliness. He never did, and he never will. Maybe Billy's Dad would? I could feel my throat begin to tighten as my eyes began to water. And I began to breathe, really big breaths (for really

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SCA NEWS & EVENTS

We are now taking registrations for our 3rd annual DC-SCA Fall Retreat, which is on Oct. 26-28, 2007. The theme is **Taking Recovery to the Next Level**. We hope you will consider signing up. Doing so may be the pathway to taking your recovery to the next level. We are accepting deposits (\$80) through June 8. Partial scholarships may be available. Pick up a brochure at your next meeting or contact C. B.

Be part of DC SCA's online recovery support group. Email DC-SCA-News@googlegroups.com to join.

Please contact your editor, R. F. at [REDACTED] if you would like to share your story or contribute in other ways to the DC SCA newsletter.

My Story continued

that I go to an SCA meeting. When I attended my first meeting, I immediately knew that I belonged there. For the first time in my life I met people who understood what I was going through. Hearing them share their hope, strength and experience in these meetings made me consider the possibility that if they could turn their lives into something worthwhile, then there might be just a small chance that I could as well.

I've had my ups and downs with recovery and the first several weeks were particularly difficult. At one point early in recovery, in a bout of depression, I began to feel that maybe I wasn't worthy of recovery, that perhaps the world would be a better place if I were not in it. I began planning my own suicide.

I had decided that I would kill myself on my birthday and, being the sex addict that I am, I would have one last go-round with a prostitute before I checked out of this world.

One evening after an SCA meeting, I was approached by someone in the fellowship who, after some discussion, offered to be my sponsor. I accepted. He told me about some tools I could use to help with my sobriety, particularly one called "bookending" which is a way of surrounding certain critical times with phone calls to members of the fellowship.

On the week before I had planned to commit suicide, I made an appointment with a prostitute. A few days before the appointment I began to have second thoughts and decided to try this bookending tool I'd heard about from my sponsor. I had a phone list from one of the SCA meetings and I began calling the numbers on it until I connected with one of the SCA members. I told him that I intended to cancel my appointment with the prostitute and that I'd call him back after I had done so. It took me two days, but I finally cancelled the appointment. After I called him to "close the bookend", I hung up the phone and said out loud to myself, "It works." And I began to cry.

I had never in my life been able to walk away from an opportunity to act out until that very moment. I was able to walk away, but I couldn't have done it alone. I realized that, though I might be powerless over my addiction, I'm not helpless. I am not alone.

There are several things that define my higher power, but perhaps the most important is unconditional love. The loving kindness that exists in this fellowship has allowed my spirituality to blossom and has helped me to realize that my life, imperfect as it will always be, is not only worth living, it is worth improving upon. As I work the twelve steps, I give thanks everyday for support I find in the fellowship and for the honesty, compassion and acceptance that I feel in every SCA meeting.

Waiting to Exhale continued

big feelings). And with each exhale my throat relaxed, and my tears subsided, and the feelings passed. No more recycling. Breathe in, breathe out. Let it come, let it go.

That's my secret. But I paid a lot of money for those treatment centers (or at least my health insurer did), so let me pass on a few more tidbits I learned:

- **Keep it simple.** Light can be reduced to three colors – red, green, and blue. In the same way, my counselors encouraged me to use only seven words to say what I was feeling – love, joy, hope, fear, angry, lonely, sad. It sounded silly at first. After all, I was a complicated guy, with complicated thoughts and complicated feelings. Certainly I need 'feeling' words more than two syllables long. I found that using such simple words, however, helped me to really feel my feelings. Anxiety was fear in my neck and shoulders. Depression was anger with no where to go. Bigger words tended to keep me in my head and away from my heart.
- **Sweat the 'big' stuff.** I discovered my really big feelings – anxiety (fear) and loneliness – while working on my 4th Step inventory. Most any feeling can push me into the gray areas of my sexual recovery plan, but anxiety and loneliness bring out the bottom line behaviors that put my sanity and my life at risk. Thanks to my 4th Step, I've learned to be mindful of these feelings in particular, like watching over your kids at the playground.
- **Think happy thoughts.** Speaking of kids, they give me joy. Without fail, no matter what's going on or where I am or what I'm feeling, seeing a kid being a kid will bring a smile to my face. I consider it a gift from my higher power. Gratitude does the same thing for me. It eases me out of whatever I'm feeling and helps me get ready for the next thing to come along. And I have much for which to be grateful. Like kids. And carrot cake.
- **There are no 'bad' feelings.** I like to think of my feelings as e-mail. The message arrives, I read what it has to say, and I hit the delete key. My feelings are messages – they tell me who I am, what I'm up against, and what really matters. When I label a feeling as 'bad', I tend to stop my ears and refuse to hear. But my feeling messages are persistent. They tend to stick around until they've been heard.

So why not listen? And breathe.