

SCA DC NEWSLETTER

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By SCA Metro DC Intergroup

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My Story — Tearoom of the Heart

By S. F.

I am a love addict. That's my thing. Rest stops do nothing for me. Tearooms are not my preference, and a bookstore is just a bookstore. But, if you introduce me to an ornery, unavailable man with a bouquet of flowers in his hand, and a mouth full of empty promises, then I am in the tea room of the heart. I keep going back to that man, hoping he'll have time for me, that he'll love me, and that this time he'll stay. I am addicted to the excitement of new love, the thrill of someone new, the rise on the wave of romance, and then the fall into Hell afterward. Sex is merely a tool in this equation; love is the point.

Before S recovery, finding, keeping, and stockpiling men was my life. I made all life decisions based on where I could meet a man or how a man would fit into that next move, from where to live to what I did for a living. By the time I finally reached my bottom, I was dating 4 men at the same time, unable to remember their names, sleeping with only 2 of them, but juggling the months I slept with each man so that if I did get pregnant I would clearly know the father. I gathered men for the thrill of it and to numb my difficult feelings, but by the time I hit bottom, I was no longer feeling that thrill.. All I felt was a painful, empty sadness, my soul deadened, no matter how much romance I shoved into my day.

I finally became suicidal, and that's when the miracle started. Whenever I doubt whether there is a higher power, I remember my mother driving me to the same treatment facility she had gone to the year before. I remember the doctors and nurses whose schedules were unexpectedly freed so that I could be immediately checked in. I remember the other addicts and that written First Step that finally allowed me to see how my addiction was destroying my life. I remember that for the

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Addiction as a Blessing

By T. S.

Recently, a member of the group asked me to write a reflection for the newsletter on the topic "Addiction as Blessing". He said that he heard me speak about this at a meeting and would I put my thoughts on paper. I immediately reacted very strongly saying that Addiction is NOT a Blessing, I never said anything like that and I thought that I probably never would. For me, living with an Addiction was and is pure hell. I told him that I would be willing to share my thoughts from another perspective. At first, I was not sure what that perspective would be. I knew the pain that addiction brought me but I also knew the hope that has entered my life as I try to live in recovery. And so, one day at a time I try to remember that ***Addiction is Hell but recovery is a blessing filled with hope.***

I have struggled with sexual issues almost all of my life. Looking back, my sexual addiction first got underway in 1974 when I was 13. It was then that I began to carry secrets about orientation and my sexual activity. My life was a series of lies about who I was and what I was doing. I lived with the fear that people would find out the "real me" and would hate me. Living life was hell. In recovery, I have admitted to myself, to God, and to another human person the exact nature of my wrongs. My "secrets" were out and that was OK. My secrets were out and life continued. Today, in recovery I can live a life free from secrets and this is ***a blessing filled with hope.***

In the 35 years that I have struggled with sexual addiction I have been very lonely and isolated. The more I acted out, the more lonely I felt. The more lonely I felt, the more I acted out. I felt that no one would ever understand the sick and crazy life I was leading so it was much easier to isolate. I would go out to dinner by myself and even vacation by myself. This would eventually lead to more acting out.

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SCA NEWS & EVENTS

DC SCA 2008 Fall Retreat – Oct 10-12: This is Columbus Day weekend and the retreat will begin on Friday evening & end on Sunday afternoon. This year the retreat will be held at the Claymont Retreat Center which is located in scenic and historic Charlestown, WV, just 68 miles from DC. Last year's retreat was the biggest ever with 30 participants. Reviews were glowing, with almost all participants indicating that they wanted to attend a retreat again. This will be a great opportunity for fellowship, step work, and helpful input from other recovering addicts, etc. Be on the look out for retreat brochures this summer in order to register.

May Social Event on Sunday, May 25th – Come join your fellow S friends for a leisurely stroll through Asian art at Freer Gallery of Art, located at Jefferson Drive at 12th St, SW, off the Smithsonian Metro stop. Meet in the foyer at 3 pm. For more info contact S.F.

My Story continued

first time in my life, I was making decisions based on wanting to live rather than wanting a man

During the 28 days at that hospital, I worked through the 12 Steps. After treatment, I attended 90 meetings in 90 days, and at the suggestion of my doctors, I took a break from dating for an entire year (the suggestion was actually 1 to 2 years, but you know I was not going to stop dating for 2 years). Experiencing life without the constant buzz or numbness of addiction, along with my written First Step, helped me set up a bottom line and a circle plan of green, yellow and red behavior. If I didn't know what being sober felt like, how could I know when I was experiencing addictive feelings? As my sponsor at the time put it, "If you HAVE to have it, it's likely something addictive."

Once I started dating again, I worked with my sponsor to create a dating plan of what was sober behavior on a date and carried that plan in my pocket during the date. Along with this, I followed the example of recovering food addicts and called my date plan into my sponsor or another addict before the date (I will go in a separate car, we will kiss but no more, etc), and I then called that person after the date to report back. Doing this, I managed to have a far more sober dating experience and life.

That was in 1992 and I continue to live a basically sober life. It's not been perfect, that's for sure. I did relapse for a while, but I kept coming to meetings, and I got sober again. I still do find unavailable men to date once in a while, and it is the Program that brings me back. It was the 12 Steps and other addicts that saved my life, got me sober, and help keep me sober today. All I can say is, thank you Higher Power for saving my life. I am just so grateful.

Addiction as a Blessing continued

The loneliness of living life with a sexual addiction was hell. In recovery, I have realized that I am not alone and that I do not want to be alone. The fellowship of a 12-step meeting has been an incredible gift. To be able to be "rigorously honest" and hear others in their honesty has filled that void of loneliness. Today, in recovery, I can share my life with others and that is ***a blessing filled with hope.***

To compensate for the hell that I was living on the inside, I had to be perfect on the outside. I became the caregiver for my parents, my family, and my friends. I was the "best little boy in the world." If I took care of everyone, no one would know that I was not the perfect son, brother, and friend. The more I took care of people the more I wanted to act out because this became my reward. I could fix anyone's life but I would let no one fix mine. In my time in SCA I have been able to admit and to accept that I am not perfect. In fact, I have been able to admit that I am not OK and it is OK that I am not OK. I have been even able to begin to ask for help. At meetings, I have been able to say that I am struggling. The phone list that I keep taped to my wall is a reminder that there are many people that I can call and say I am having a rough time and there will be no judgment, just concern. Trying to live a perfect life with addiction was hell. Today, being able to admit my broken humanity is ***a blessing filled with hope.***

I have always known that I am gay. I equated being gay with being different and being different with being bad. My sexuality has caused me great shame my entire life. Shame was the driving force of my addiction. The more I acted out the more shame I felt and the more shame I felt the more I acted out. In recovery, I have been able to accept my orientation. And even more importantly I have been able to accept me! In recovery I have accepted the fact that in my addiction I have done some bad things but nonetheless I am still a good person. When I go to a 12- step meeting, I can leave my shame outside the door and be totally accepted for who I am. Living with the shame of addiction is hell but living with the acceptance of recovery is ***a blessing filled with hope!***

It is important for me to always remember the hell of living life in the depths of sexual addiction. There are moments when I just remember the "high" of acting out and not the hell of the "morning after." My "addict" only wants me to remember these moments but recovery challenges me to look at the whole picture. This is a daily struggle. If I only focus on the hell of addiction I continue to live in the depths of shame. But if I look at the total picture of my life I can begin to experience the power of the promises; "we are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness," and "we will know peace!" I still do not have my "act" totally together but in recovery I have learned that it is "progress, not perfection!" To be able to reflect on this has been a blessing; to remember the hell of addiction but to always remind myself ***that living life in recovery is a blessing filled with hope!***