

SCA

SEXUAL COMPULSIVES ANONYMOUS

MEETINGS

"Meetings are where we share our experience, strength and hope with each other to better understand our common problem and work together towards the solution."

(From The Tools That Help Us Get Better)

THIS IS A DRAFT PIECE OF LITERATURE, FROM SEXUAL COMPULSIVES ANONYMOUS OF LOS ANGELES (SCA-LA). IT IS UNDER REVIEW AND IS NOT APPROVED FOR DISTRIBUTION TO MEETINGS AT THIS TIME.

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[1] This is a fact for us: we need meetings. And though it may not show, we in SCA want to do everything we can so meetings improve *your* opportunity to recover from sexual compulsion. Ironically, by doing so we help our own potential to recover as well. We can recover from sexual compulsion, utilizing some or all of the other *Tools That Help Us Get Better*, but the Tool of "Meetings" is where we work on recovering in the presence of other sexual compulsives, and where we are more likely to be exposed to all the other *Tools That Help Us Get Better*. We show up at the meeting site, hoping to see others, but if we wind up being alone, we do not have a meeting. We want to help ensure that those who want to stop having compulsive sex have somewhere to go. We see all stages of recovery in meetings, and get the opportunity to recognize ourselves appearing in the face of others.

[2] Sexual Compulsives Anonymous meetings utilize our literature. And literature is a way to carry our message to those who suffer in other times and places, but meetings are where we interact with those who may hear and respond to our message in the "here and now." Meetings are guided by our principles, yet have the capacity to be derailed by our personalities. You will find, unfortunately, that people in the SCA program may let you down, but we can say with all confidence that SCA itself will not let you down. We want to minimize the letdowns, all the while allowing the true character of our membership to demonstrate itself. That is the nature of meetings.

[3] No matter how long each of us has been attending meetings, almost everyone remembers their first SCA meeting, and the name of the first person to introduce themselves to us. Being in a meeting room with others who admitted being sexually compulsive, dissolved—even if only for a moment—the barriers that separated us from the rest of humanity. Though we may not have had a name for it, we felt the powerlessness, sense of loss and the bewilderment of being sexually compulsive. Still, we could sense that others were not judging us—that in some way they were just like us. We could lay down our defensive shields, and a few of us at that moment knew that we *could* recover from sexually compulsive behavior.

[4] For most SCA members who experience a measure of recovery from sexual compulsion, there is a moment in which we as individuals say, “I’m in.” This is the moment we entertain the idea that this group of people—this program—has something that may relieve us of our sexual compulsion. Maybe we are not convinced, but *willing* to go along with the program of recovery. And now the obstacles to relief have been removed, but at this moment we are also confronted with the question of our internal desire to stop having compulsive sex. Do we really want to stop? Only individuals can answer that question for themselves.

[5] For the most part in those early days, we harmonized with the group and shared a desire to stop having compulsive sex. Our differences emerged later, but many of us saw those differences right away, and only later came to see our similarities. Where the differences between members were great, we made deliberate efforts to reconcile our desire for recovery with the necessity of attendance and open-mindedness at meetings. We needed help, and made a decision to accept our group as it is.

[6] For some of us, an inability to empathize with others—to sense what another person is experiencing—is at the core of our sexual compulsion. Meetings are a way to repair, restore, reconcile or resolve this inability. Striving for the ability to empathize lets us change and grow in the presence of others.

[7] There is a saying, “*When a burden is borne alone, its weight seems doubled. When a burden is shared, its weight is halved.*” We

did not all talk freely upon entry to the SCA program, but we eventually “shared” what we had to say with the group, or individuals within it. And our burden got lighter. When we opened up it was because we either felt safe enough to do so, or had nowhere else to go. Recovery in the presence of others helps lift the shame and fear that fuel the compulsion. We have seen what a happy lot we are when we are no longer caught up in the compulsion.

[8] Sharing at meetings allows us to express ourselves. Sometimes, all one wants is to be heard. And the ability to hear ourselves speak—to hear the way our reasoning sounds to others—lets us ponder our values, reconsider our thinking and change if we want to change. That is the spirit in which we offer our experience strength and hope with regard to SCA meetings: *you can change if you want to.*

[9] We work diligently to make our meetings a safe place in which to recover. Yet many times an SCA member “*cut off their nose to spite their face.*” That is, some members avoid meetings and even leave the program when hurt, threatened or when an inflection of voice, or slight snub has caused that member to resent another. Purposely staying away from meetings puts us right where our compulsion wants us: in isolation. And when we avoid a problem, we have no way to know if it has gone away on its own.

[10] These meetings are our home, and when someone comes into our home and misbehaves, we do not leave it. But neither do we ask them to leave, because it is a home we all share. We hang in there, and get through it. If someone does not want to recover, they will simply stop coming, and the struggle will be over. The requirement is the *desire* to stop having compulsive sex. If the troublemaker wants to recover as much as the rest of us, we work it out.

[11] We feel the need to identify what *does not* work in meetings, but more importantly we would like to identify what *does* work, so we can improve meetings. We see a continuum in this matter, with hostility and isolation on one end, and a complete lack of boundaries with no individual identity at the other end of the continuum. We strive for some happy, middle ground foundation on which to flourish, away from either of those two extremes.

[12] It would be easier to identify the mistakes a group makes, if we could just drop by and see what makes them unsuccessful. But in most cases they have disbanded, and are no longer meeting. So what is our common problem? Who holds the experience, strength and hope we want, to recover? Answer: It is not necessarily the old-timers. We think the solution is in turning from a life run on self-will, to one that relies on a Higher Power for its sustenance and direction. Although we are here to maintain our own sexual sobriety, we found that the best way to do so is to help our fellows.

[13] In meetings, we can bestow esteem upon one another. Whether at work, in a family or in team sports, some of us never got enough recognition and respect for being part of the group. We all want to be part of something important, be important ourselves—valued. This is an aspect of recovery that is best given away if we want to amplify it.

[14] When we give it away, we get it back. This is not like an investment with a set rate of return, and at first our efforts to strengthen our group's cohesion may not seem to yield any results at all. Some of us are damaged, and need a lot of praise and recognition to grow even a little bit. We may experience this bliss for only a moment, but it is often enough to bring us back when we need it again; and it is here for us. Sometimes a smile that we gave away, takes months to return. But it is almost always returned at just the right moment.

[15] We want to be open and welcoming to newcomers. Just as any healthy person would expect to be able to freely associate or disassociate with social groups, newcomers expect to be able to drop by or leave an SCA meeting. We are the ones who want meetings; they—at least in early recovery—tend to see meetings as a *potential* aid in obtaining a goal: Helpful, but not essential. It is only with the passage of time that they come to value what we have in meetings.

[16] All the other *Tools* of the program help in our recovery from sexual compulsion, but none are quite like the *Tool of Meetings*. The engagement within meetings has a way of permeating our thoughts—of getting our attention. The resulting recovery seems to be a step

above that of SCA members who use all the *Tools* of the program *except Meetings*.

[17] Regarding the first women who attended our handful of SCA meetings, we are grateful for their presence. And when some men told these women that they were not wanted, we are glad the women responded by saying essentially, "*Too bad, we're not leaving.*" We needed to be reminded that recovery is a universal thing, not to be withheld. And we needed to be challenged on the tendency to isolate, which kept us from developing in recovery.

[18] From time to time, our group faces a problem. We want to avoid aggressive, confrontational arguments and yet, if problems arise despite our best efforts, we face them; we do not run away from them. We do our best to establish a climate that is conducive to communication. We are careful not to grandstand in front of an audience, but aware of potentially unequal abilities some may have expressing themselves. We want the support of a sponsor or trusted fellow in recovery, but are careful not to corner and overwhelm another SCA member. As the saying goes, "*Speak your words gently, it makes it easier to eat them later.*"

[19] When we are alone in our perception of a problem, we try not to adopt the view that everyone is against us, and we have no friends. This is black and white thinking. Aside from all the subtle shades of gray connecting black and white, we have a full spectrum of colors. Some would have us believe that all problems can be reduced to a dichotomy, but most of the time we have alternatives that become evident upon careful thought.

[20] When both parties to a conflict seek resolution, it almost always gets worked out, and both parties grow as a result. Too often, one or both parties in conflict leave. That darkens the world just a bit. Your personal conflict may not be addressed in *The Traditions*, but we assure you that wanting to stop having compulsive sex earns you the respect and support of the group.

[21] To that end, we hope to stimulate discussion on what works best to help make meetings a safe and welcoming place for all. We suggest using the *Twelve Traditions of SCA* as a starting point. Our

friends in Al-Anon tell us “*The Traditions are to the group, what the Steps are to the individual,*” meaning that when our group is experiencing a drop in attendance or vigor, the group may have deviated in some way, from *The Twelve Traditions*. If so, a group conscience may be in order, using *The Twelve Traditions* as a guide.

OUR GROUP CONSCIENCE

[22] This brings us to the matter of who is in charge at an SCA meeting. It has been said, “*This is not our program, it’s God’s program.*” In that sense, we are all caregivers of the SCA program. We take what is known as a “group conscience”. Our leaders are here to carry out our group conscience, not to impose it. They serve the group, and have no real authority. Even in this piece, we are making suggestions about meetings, not giving directives or pronouncements.

[23] Regarding our group conscience, we all want to belong to a group we trust. This is part of developing our ability to turn our will and lives over to the care of a Power greater than ourselves. And we do not want to betray the growing trust of our new members, by squandering goodwill on petty arguments between members. It is for this reason that we let the group conscience indicate what actions the group ought to take.

[24] Bearing in mind that most *unsuccessful* meetings are not around, and how easily offended we can sometimes be, our group conscience is more than a simple majority vote. We may not even need to take a vote to perceive the group conscience. And we are especially sensitive to taking an action that would exclude a member—taking an action over which a member leaves SCA. We do not want to be held hostage by threats of a member leaving because they did not get their way, but neither do we want to be cavalier about the needs of other members. By “needs,” we mean the people, places and things that make possible any member’s recovery from sexual compulsion.

Generally, unless one is being disruptive to the operation of the meeting, all SCAs are welcome.

[25] Nevertheless, investigating the group conscience can take many forms: A simple majority vote, to see who “wins,” is one way to perceive the group’s conscience. For many, if not most of the matters to be decided by a group, this method is sufficient. But for emotionally laden matters, a simple majority vote may not settle it.

[26] One member may feel that the vote was taken when sympathetic members were absent, and that the vote would be in *their* favor on another night. The result is that those in the minority may not accept the group conscience, and feel as though they have been made to submit to the present majority. And indeed, if those absent were in attendance, the vote may have gone another way.

[27] To resolve such issues, we often ask for a super majority, or two-thirds (2/3) vote, so the group conscience is clear and there is no doubt about the group’s conscience. Still the matter may not be settled: Some in the group may feel that the majority does not understand their trouble, and they struggle on. When this happens, for those in the minority, it is like submitting in a contest, to a stronger adversary. This is similar to a sexual compulsive’s reluctance to admit powerlessness and unmanageability in his or her life. The thought is that “*There’ll come a day when I can have my way!*”

[28] A suggested solution is surrender: We admit that this is the group conscience, and we accept it. We lay down our *weapons* in the war on sexual compulsion, and pick up the *Tools That Help Us Get Better*. Destroying things is easy, compared to building. But building is the sane, rational thing to do. And so much can be accomplished in an atmosphere of trust.

[29] If an SCA member wants to ask the group to address an issue, such as make a change in the meeting format, the time to do so is during the secretary’s report and announcements portion of the meeting. We allow more time for those who feel strongly about the issue, to convince us. We do this by scheduling a time to discuss the group conscience. Depending upon how much time it may take to resolve the issue, the group may address the member’s request with

a “**Business Meeting**” before or after the regular meeting time, or even at a different time and location from the regular meeting. This may happen immediately, but if the issue is potentially controversial, we set a time two weeks in future, so that interested members may show up and express their feelings.

[30] Business meetings are important to the long-term health of a meeting, but we feel that *regular* meeting time is ultimately the reason we go to meetings, and what helps us in our sexual compulsion. The group determines which time is best. The goal is not necessarily to reach unanimous decisions, but to sense what our Higher Power wants. Forcing a *unanimous* vote can be its own form of cruelty. As a group, we have the opportunity with each business meeting, to choose a way to carry the message to the sexual compulsive who still suffers.

[31] Another resolution is forming a committee to resolve the issue, at the time most convenient for those on the committee. The committee dissolves when the issue is resolved. Higher on some people’s list of resolutions, is leaving to start another SCA meeting. The saying is, “*All you need is a coffee pot and a resentment.*” Very successful meetings have resulted from this way of thinking, but we think there are better reasons to start a new meeting.

[32] Our leadership is shared and alternated, to prevent any one person from dominating the meeting. What effect does this have? Other SCA members have the opportunity to step into leadership roles—to grow and experience another way that they can participate in recovery from their sexual compulsion. The group is free to innovate and change the meeting structure or officers when our spirit seems dark. No one member bears the weight of running a meeting alone. And we get to see how others do things.

[33] Some groups have a sobriety requirement for particular service positions within the group. For example, we do not hand our group treasury over to someone who just started attending the meeting, about whom we know little. We will talk more about that later.

THE GROUP

[34] Who attends SCA meetings? Anyone who has the desire to stop having compulsive sex has a place in our meetings. There is no other requirement. Some groups elect a “greeter” to arrive early and make sure that *all* who enter are welcomed. Some members volunteer to be the greeter, or are self-appointed. This person can also act as the de-facto sergeant-at-arms, determining before the start of the meeting, if someone is in the wrong place, or has questions to be answered. The greeters may refer any newcomers to the group’s newcomer liaison—if there is one—or act in that capacity themselves, and show them the literature table.

[35] Groups often ask newcomers, visitors or others attending that meeting for the first time, to identify themselves. As we often state, “*It is not to embarrass you, but to get to know you better.*” Among other things, this lets the regular attendees make the most of the meeting experience for newcomers. When SCA members, visiting from out-of-town identify where they are from, others in the group may be familiar with, or want to know about recovery resources there. This also gives the home group the opportunity to be hospitable to their visitor, as travel can sometimes be an upsetting experience—even for an old-timer.

[36] When it comes to newcomers we encourage them to work Step One, and then decide for themselves whether or not they belong in SCA—to take stock of how their sexual behavior has affected their lives—but it is never mandatory. This First Step inventory is not to convince or reassure *us* that they are in the right place, but to help them arrive at their own conclusion that *they* are in the right place. We can facilitate this process, but it is up to the individual to admit powerlessness and unmanageability over sexual compulsion. We are here to offer a safe place in which to recover. We cannot do that if we impede access to recovery with intimidation of any kind.

[37] SCA has many meeting types. In an area with numerous meetings, we find it helpful to provide a choice of meeting types for our members to attend. We have open or closed meetings: An “**Open**” meeting is open to all who have the desire to stop having

compulsive sex. Attendees do not have to identify themselves as sexually compulsive. They can investigate whether they belong, without divulging personal information. Visitors, friends and relatives of sexual compulsives, or students studying us for college credit, are asked to identify themselves, so the group can determine how to act in response.

[38] A “**Closed**” meeting may require attendees to identify themselves as either sexually compulsive, sexually addicted or love addicted. The exact wording may vary by group, but is determined by group conscience. Those who do not identify themselves in this way may be asked to leave, and are referred to an open meeting in the area. Perhaps two of the group’s more experienced members meet outside with those being separated from the larger group, to verify that we have not turned away someone in need of recovery.

[39] Although we are never forced to share, attendees can be more specific about how sexual compulsion has affected their lives, in the company of others like themselves. Members in a closed meeting often feel freer to talk openly. Newcomers may be more likely to ask questions in closed meetings.

[40] Single-gender meetings are often referred to as “**Stag**” **Meetings**. These exist for many reasons, subject again, to the group conscience. Some meetings may also have special focuses, such as on recovery issues encountered by lesbians and gay men, or on recovery in committed relationships, or on the Tools of Socializing or Dating. The special focus and attendance boundaries of the meeting should be clearly indicated in the area's meeting list.

[41] In the meetings with a special focus, we eliminate a perceived need to continually explain ourselves to others. From time to time, an SCA member who does not conform to the demographic being served shows up at the group’s door. A group may have a predetermined response, or it may respond on a case-by-case basis. We ask those groups to please have compassion for all SCA members and any others with the desire to stop having compulsive sex.

[42] The founders of SCA felt they had no place to recover. We know what it takes just to *get* to an SCA meeting, and see that internalized oppression may encourage continued isolation or rejection of divergent points of view. By “internalized oppression,” we mean that the attitudes and beliefs of the society in which we live, may be so pervasive and endured for so long that we begin to believe them about ourselves and act upon them, as if true. While we all need a safe place to recover, we also want to continue to grow.

[43] In the larger society, we see the staking-out of a territory as an effort to control an unmanageable life. In our local SCA group, this may take the form of staying within, or nurturing only our own race, ethnicity, gender, class, etc., even though sexual compulsion affects every caste of society. We acknowledge that we all need to feel safe in a meeting, and balance that with helpful stretching to get out of “the same old thing” we have always done. From time to time, we challenge ourselves by going to other SCA meetings that will foster growth. This is an investment in recovery from sexual compulsion, and the harvest is reaped by all of us.

WHAT KIND OF GROUP?

[44] *“Is it better for the SCA groups in an area to support those who have a specific identity, or to provide a uniform experience for cultural, ethnic, linguistic or racial minorities in SCA?”* To this question we say that recovery is the rare and valuable resource, and that *anything* we can do to promote recovery from sexual compulsion is a good thing. And we would ask questions in return, *“Is there a need, what is it and if so, are you committed to filling it?”* We examine with an objective eye, the driving force, motivation or morals of persons within SCA who separate themselves from the mainstream. An effort of self-will often maintains a cause for as long as we are willing to support it, but it sometimes falls apart the moment we cease our efforts.

[45] The meeting format is subject to variation, depending on the group. Our most common format is that of a general sharing meeting, or **Discussion Meeting**. It is opened and closed with *The Serenity*

Prayer. We read our Statement of Purpose, These Are The Characteristics Most Of Us Seem To Have In Common, The Twelve Steps, The Twelve Traditions, The Tools That Help Us Get Better and Closing Statement. This is of course subject to variations, due to the group conscience and what the group feels is important. We have other common readings in addition to those listed above. (See sample meeting formats in the SCA Blue Book, starting on page 89.)

[46] The meeting's routines can be reassuring, but it is important to know how ritualistic to be: Too much routine breaks no new ground in the meeting; and not enough routine can be somewhat bewildering or even threatening. We seek a middle ground, where each meeting is predictably safe, but maintains its members' interest.

[47] In discussion meetings, we are able to hear the current state of recovery in others and ourselves. Some of us are not as articulate as we would like to be, and criticism or laughter at how we communicate can stifle and frustrate. Part of the spiritual awakening is recognition of an inherent value in our fellows. This is often the result of others recognizing our inherent value and then of finding our own inherent value, and realizing our common humanity. It is only another small step to reintegrating with society. We want for others, what we have gotten from recovery. For this reason, we first commit to improve *our* abilities, before we ask another to change.

[48] Members share their experience, strength and hope after raising their hand and being called upon by the meeting's leader. Some groups have no shortage of members who want to share; some groups ask the person who just shared, to call upon the next person to share; others assign a number to everyone in attendance, and put matching numbers for each in a basket, to be randomly drawn out by the meeting's leader. Those whose numbers are drawn are asked if they want to share.

[49] Another meeting format is that of a "**Round Robin Meeting**," in which the sharing is started at one point, and proceeds around the room. We may take turns, going in the clockwise or counterclockwise directions. Or we may start sharing from the front of the room one week, and from the back the next week. Everyone is asked to share, and members who choose not to share are asked to at least give

their first name. There are no second-class SCA members. If there is adequate time, everyone who wants to share, does so.

[50] Ironically, some members who *do not* want to share are sometimes asked to do so, and those who *want* to share are sometimes not permitted, due to time constraints. We want to make sure there is time for newcomers, or for those who have what we call “a burning desire to share.” To accommodate this some groups set aside a few minutes before the end of the sharing portion of the meeting. This is especially important in large groups. As ever, we want to balance order and freedom, to maximize our common experience. Any group’s custom ought to foster recovery, not stifle it.

[51] Sometimes we cannot hear what anyone else has to say until we have said *our* peace. Feeling free and able to share in a meeting increases the sharing person’s chance of hearing the meeting’s message, because they have invested something in its success. This is somewhat like a potluck meal, in which each attendee brings nourishment to the event. Newcomers often want to talk, but want to appear composed too. When a group clearly wants everyone to share, it encourages people who are a bit shy about talking in front of others.

[52] Just so you know, when we talk about carrying the message to the sexual compulsive who still suffers, the message is simply this: If you want to stop having compulsive sex, you can; we are doing so, one day at a time. We will talk more about this later.

[53] Sharing lets us know who needs help. It lets us hear ourselves speak, and perhaps most importantly, lets us identify what we have in common with those who share. Many of us hear “our story” being told by another. In other words, we share similar experiences and can therefore share in recovery as well. We can lose the guilt and shame that holds us back, and move forward in our recovery from compulsive sex.

[54] Some groups ask the meeting’s leader to share first, or ask someone to suggest a topic on which to share. Certain topics can be upsetting, such as anger, rage, romantic obsession, shame, and incest. They can stir up feelings. Working through these feelings in

the company of our fellows, presents a growth opportunity. But it can also wear down an already damaged SCA member. We want to sense our Higher Power's will, as to how to proceed in precarious situations.

[55] Still other SCA groups discourage comment on what another member has shared. The SCA meeting is a fine place to talk about feelings, without stifling what others have to say. Experience tells us that feelings do not always need a good reason to exist; they are simply there. They are our most personal possession. The feelings themselves are not what hurt us; it is our reaction to having feelings.

[56] **Speaker Meetings**, involve someone—usually a member who has been in SCA for a time—sharing their experience, strength and hope, with an emphasis on “what it was like, what happened, and what it is like now.” (AA Big Book, Ch. 5) Some groups establish a length of time this speaker is to be sexually sober, according to the speaker's written sexual recovery plan (SRP). Another speaker may be asked to share how they worked one of the 12 Steps. These meetings may have one or a number of speakers, at times followed by general sharing, at other times followed by a question-and-answer period.

[57] In well-attended meetings, speakers can be chosen from among those present. Or an officer of the meeting, called the “speaker seeker,” will spend time investigating and asking SCA members from the area to speak to the group. It is a good idea for the speaker seeker to attend the meeting they serve, as we cannot appoint another to recover for us.

[58] If a speaker is busy or lives far away, the group may have more success in obtaining a commitment from its speaker, if the speaking engagement is at the beginning, during or end of a weekend. This is because speakers may want to combine other activities with their agreement to speak. Scheduling this way gives them an easier choice, than speaking in the middle of a workweek.

[59] Speaker meetings allow us as a fellowship, to develop speakers to carry the message to the sexually compulsive person who still suffers. In meetings and at fellowship afterwards, we hone our

communication skills. We hear the ways in which others have stated their needs, and can borrow these terms to better communicate our own needs to other people in our lives. And at the least, we learn appropriate ways in which to express ourselves and share our recovery stories. Good communication skills are the foundation of strong relationships.

[60] A variation on the Speaker Meeting is the **Panel Discussion Meeting**. These are often held in hospitals or institutions, and are composed of a number of more experienced members of SCA, who form a panel of speakers. They often share their story, and then field questions from the audience.

[61] When held in institutions, those institutions may have rules to follow. We arrive at the meeting's requirements through discussion with the facility's operators. For example, panelists may have to adhere to a dress code, chemical sobriety or undergo a background check. This may already be spelled out; due to other Twelve-Step programs meeting there.

[62] A number of groups in a given the area may come together to form an "**Intergroup**." These Intergroups may have a Hospitals, Institutions and Professionals (HIP) Committee, a committee to receive and respond to inquiries from their community, about recovery from sexual compulsion. The committee often acts as a reservoir of experience, strength and hope, when it comes to carrying the SCA message to the general public.

[63] By attending an SCA meeting, you can often find a way to contact your nearest Intergroup or the International Service Organization of SCA. If your group does not list other meetings, we can then help you find more SCA meetings or start a new one. We can help you find literature and information about recovery from sexual compulsion, and we can very probably help in some way, with the challenges of sexual compulsion. You are not alone; we are right here with you.

[64] Another meeting format is the **Step Study**, or **Book Study**. These groups usually read from some agreed-upon literature, passing it from member to member, and then discussing it.

Discussion may be restricted to the reading, and when no one else wants to share on the reading—if time allows—open sharing on any topic follows. Here is an opportunity to go further than our one-on-one experience working the Twelve Steps with our sponsors, and we can see in one meeting, how many other SCA members work their Steps, or program in general.

[65] Early SCA members in one city decided that they wanted to recognize their time in sexual sobriety by handing out tokens or chips, as other 12-Step Fellowships do. They found a need to clarify sexual sobriety, given the great variety of ways to act out one's sexual and romantic fantasies. They resolved this issue by forming a group whose format concentrated on writing sexual recovery plans on a weekly basis. Five to ten minutes of the **Sexual Recovery Plan Meeting** time was set aside for writing, and then they discussed what they found.

[66] Shock waves reverberated throughout the SCA fellowship in that city, as this group's members proceeded to be recognized and take chips for 30 days, 60 days, 90 days, 6 months, 9 months, a year, and then eighteen months of abiding by their sexual recovery plans. Many of these members were the first ones locally, to achieve these milestones in recovery.

[67] There is a saying: "*What gets measured gets managed.*" This was the guiding principle when, according to page 19, of the SCA Blue Book, the Los Angeles Intergroup defined an individual's sexual sobriety as abiding by their sexual recovery plan, which is written, shared with their Higher Power, and someone else in the SCA Program—preferably a sponsor—and is measurable one day at a time. During the meeting a group may ask for a show of hands, saying, "*Who is working on 24 hours, 30 days, 60 days,*" etc.

[68] Sometimes members are intimidated by stating how much time they have abided by their sexual recovery plan, or by acknowledging *any* SCA member's sexual sobriety. The thinking is that abstention from sexually compulsive behavior is different from sexual sobriety, although in some cases they are the same. Abstention is a *Tool*, not the goal. The purpose of recognizing abstention *or* sobriety is to show that we can achieve *either* of them, or that we can achieve them

again; to cultivate hope, not to compare ourselves and produce shame. It means we accept where we are at this point in our recovery, and continue working with what we have—no judgment, as judgment is the opposite of Step One.

[69] Some groups have an opening statement of feelings: “...*The purpose of this thirty second to two minute statement of feelings is to allow those present, the opportunity to get in touch with their inner feeling state ‘here & now’. Anyone not wishing to share at this time may pass.*” Some members’ feelings are not easily accessible or were not safe to share in the past, and a *requirement* to find and state one’s feelings may appear threatening. Merely practicing awareness of our feelings allows us to decide to continue as we are, or to work on changing the way we feel. It is the *lack* of awareness of our current feeling state that leaves us vulnerable to going wherever those feelings carry us.

[70] In our First Step, we recognized the unpredictability of compulsive sex. Many of us remember particular times we were more likely to act out our sexual or romantic fantasies. Those times often included attempts to avoid feelings. The opening statement of feelings above provides an opportunity to practice acknowledging our feelings and working on our relationship with our Higher Power and the inner self, by taking a moment to listen to it and to give it a voice. We can visualize an “inner child” or “inner sexual compulsive” if it helps, to see where we are, and what we are doing; to ease communication with our innermost selves.

[71] SCA members sometimes have trouble identifying their feelings. Perhaps this is due to childhood suppression of feelings, as a way to cope with difficulties. If you have ever heard someone yell, “*I’m not angry!*” then you know what we mean. Practice at knowing our inner feeling state can help us recognize when we may be about to enter a stage of acting out our sexual or romantic fantasies.

[72] If we have grave secrets, we may not feel safe enough to share them in a meeting. This is when our listening skills will help. We may not find someone with the exact same story as ours, but if we are diligent we will find a resolution. We often find those who will become our sponsor at a meeting.

[73] Secrets are said to have power. It can take enormous amounts of our energy to keep a secret. They can distract us or derail our efforts to rejoin the community from which we have been estranged. They can even set us up for abuse. We want to break the cycle of abuse, and urge you to remember that we are here to recover from sexual compulsion. Please find some way to ease this burden. Meetings are the first place to search, and if you cannot find help in meetings, perhaps you can look to clergy or other helping professionals.

OTHER KINDS OF MEETINGS

[74] Less often, SCA has **Workshops**. Workshops address a specific facet of recovery, such as working *The Steps*, *The Traditions*, *The Characteristics*, using *The Tools That Help Us Get Better* or any other issue our fellowship wants to address. Workshops can be on any area of help to SCA members. They usually entail a more in-depth focus than a weekly meeting can provide. They may be sponsored by the area's Intergroup, since the workshop may involve renting a location, and providing handouts or writing materials for the attendees. Workshops occurring on an ongoing basis are expected to be self-supporting, though their initial seed money may come from the Intergroup or a single prosperous group. We keep them apart from the entity that provided the seed money, so they may be freely discarded if they no longer provide the service they were intended to provide.

[75] A workshop may have a format and readings similar to that of a regular meeting. We recommend that it have at least the following readings: *Statement of Purpose*; *Steps*; *Traditions* and *Closing Statement*. Before getting to the topic, we may state our name, time in SCA, time abiding by our sexual recovery plan, and what we hope to get *from* or bring *to* the day's workshop. Then the facilitators share and give information about what to expect or what will be covered in the workshop, setting the tone for the workshop.

[76] It is fine to have workshop facilitators with oppositional views on the workshop topic, as long as they refrain from hostile arguments

and hair pulling during the workshop. We remember that we are on the same side: We all want to stop having compulsive sex. The presence of widely varying views on a topic, allows workshop participants to see a full range of approaches to an issue, and to experience the full dimensions of recovery—to make a choice.

[77] The main part of the workshop can be, but is not limited to one or more of the following: Readings; a questionnaire followed by sharing; numerous exercises for implementing the experience, strength and hope gained at the workshop; or open sharing on the workshop's topic by participants.

[78] We recommend at least ninety minutes to explore a workshop topic, and allow enough time for participants to process what they learn. A three-hour workshop very thoroughly explores a topic. A day-long workshop becomes a symposium, and may be better with multiple sessions and facilitators. Day-long symposia verge on becoming **Conventions**, which can be held over two or more days. **Conferences** are more formal gatherings of SCA members and delegates from far-flung SCA groups, to present and ratify International Service Organization (ISO) business.

[79] Some regions or Intergroups are able to arrange for SCA **Retreats**. Retreats last from a day to a long weekend, and are often located away from the bustle of daily life. Though started by a collection of groups, we suggest that if they continue, they soon become self-supporting. And continue under the direction of an independent committee, responsible to those being served. This committee would be responsible for finding a safe and restorative place, renting it, promoting and managing the retreat.

[80] Similarly, some regions have yearly conventions, to observe their state of recovery. Conventions may involve many meeting types over their course, which is usually a long weekend. Additionally, they may have workshops, a banquet, talent show or other way of expressing the benefits and joy of recovery.

[81] Some special interest meetings concentrate on newcomers or beginners. These **Newcomer Meetings** often take time to emphasize how to get started in recovery, and provide resources for doing so

that may not be present at other meetings. Oddly, newcomers are sometimes more willing to listen to other newcomers, than to old-timers. Do they think we are weird?

[82] SCA meetings are usually sixty to ninety minutes in length. Ninety-minute meetings allow more time to fully explore topics and the group's state of recovery. They also usually take a break halfway through. The break offers an opportunity to find out what brings our members to the meeting. But the break can be the scariest part of a meeting for those lacking in social skills, because for some it is the only time they speak informally with other SCAs.

[83] Some members object strenuously to the longer meeting length, stating they have no time for it. When there is no break during the meeting, members who show up late and leave early may never interact with another recovering SCA member on a more personal level. On the other hand, when the readings are all at the beginning or end of the meeting, shy members or those with short attention spans tend to skip that part of the meeting. The group deals with these issues as they appear.

[84] When we stop acting out our sexual or romantic fantasies, some of us have a lot of unstructured time on our hands. That is a problem for a number of us, and fellowship at a nearby coffee house can help offset a shorter meeting duration. Recovery is here for those who want it.

[85] We do not read minds, but tardiness to meetings is sometimes a control issue. The latecomer *may* think the meeting cannot start until they get there. And think that while we wait, we are under *their* control. Furthermore, the latecomer does not even have to be present to deal with any anger aroused by their tardiness. *If* this is happening, we encourage the group to have a backup plan, and to proceed with their recovery. Meetings are no place for power struggles—not for those in recovery.

[86] Our Fourth Step revealed to many of us that we fall into thinking that we are alone against the world. Once this *belief* takes hold—that we must become completely self-reliant because we are alone against the world—we engage in a self-enforcing cycle that leads us

to *being* isolated. Meetings present an opportunity to practice becoming part of a recovery network. For some, meeting attendance is our first recovery experience of developing resources provided by our Higher Power.

[87] We feel that promising a meeting and not having one causes unpredictability. We call it a “dark night” when the group is shut out of its meeting space. Few groups can endure the damage caused by recurring dark nights and unpredictability. We want the decision to attend our meetings to be based upon the desire to stop having compulsive sex, not on whether to take a chance that there is a meeting that night. We want our meetings—like recovery—to be dependable.

[88] Regarding the time of day to have an SCA meeting, they can take place at any time convenient for its members. When an Intergroup makes an effort to encourage meetings at various times of day, we carry the message to a whole range of potential members. Aside from convenience, we also consider safety issues posed at certain times of day, in some places.

[89] Nothing attracts a crowd, like a crowd. It has not escaped our notice that many of our most successful meetings occur close to acting-out places. But location can be a double-edged sword. Members on their way to an acting-out location may divert themselves into a meeting. On the other hand, members on their way to a meeting may be diverted into an acting-out place. The key is having a choice.

[90] We hear people ask if they have to physically *be* at a meeting. We tell them “no”, and that the important thing is to make a connection with recovering sexual compulsives. We can do that by mail, over the telephone or Internet, but our best connection will be in person. There we will see facial expressions and body language. We hear subtleties that are less obvious in remote communication. We want to enhance the *level* of communication most.

[91] For those who have no SCA meetings available, we say, “*Any port in a storm.*” We will never say SCA is the only help available, and if there is no SCA meeting and another Twelve Step program is

available, feel free to investigate it. If that will not do, we have meetings with a tele-presence: Attendees call in, or log on at the appointed time, and have a meeting. In the past, some posted written comments at a website. Your ISO Representative can direct you to the proper source for help. The important thing is to utilize these resources on a regular basis, to ensure that they become an asset to your recovery—on which you can call when in need, and they *will* deliver help. If you would like to start an SCA meeting in your area, we have information on that below.

CARRYING THE MESSAGE TO THOSE WHOM OTHERS SAY ARE SUFFERING

[92] Some SCA members found us as a result of being ordered to attend by the judicial system, or to satisfy conditions of living in an institution or outside group's home. This is understandable, given the nature of sexual compulsion: First, we hurt ourselves; then we hurt others; and if we persist in our acting out behaviors, we eventually break the law. And health issues are involved at any stage of the addictive process.

[93] From the beginning of SCA, members have had a relationship with the legal system. Many of our early members were motivated to find or start a group because of trouble with the law. Not all SCA groups will verify attendance for these members, but almost always allow them to stay, as long as they meet any other condition for attendance, as set forth by that individual SCA group. Outreach to the court system is usually initiated on the Intergroup level.

[94] Starting an outreach program to legal and health care facilities is not to be taken lightly. The Intergroup, with the consent of its constituent groups, must weigh the pros and cons. Once started, the outreach program can take on a life of its own. As stated above, groups are not required to verify the meeting attendance of court appointees or group home residents, and some choose not to do so. Those meetings that do sign may add their own suggestions to be followed, before giving verification of attendance. This does not

always sit well with the court appointees or group home residents, already at a low point in their lives.

[95] To handle verification of attendance at SCA meetings, we suggest that groups minimize any additional procedures for the court or house-mandated attendees to perform. The individual group decides the best way it can carry the message. We want members to think of being sexually sober as a good thing, and not to think of SCA with a sense of loss or of frustration. Recovery is a fine and precious phenomenon. We want to eliminate *any* obstacles to a member's decision to stay sexually sober. Resentment is such an obstacle.

[96] The spirit in which SCA offers the hand of recovery to the sexual compulsive who still suffers, is the spirit of attraction, rather than promotion. We think it is better to let others promote SCA; our offer of recovery is to reach out the hand of recovery to those who want it. We are not here to provide a service to the judicial or health care systems; we are here to provide a spiritual adjunctive—something to be added—to legal and medical remedies for sexual compulsion. The court appointee or group home resident may have some learning to do, but we stand to learn so much more from them.

[97] Outreach to the courts or other helping professionals for the purpose of optional extra assistance to those they serve, is a constant reminder of how we were, are or could be, if our sexual compulsion is left untreated. We are the ones to learn from them. That they may stick around for recovery is because we have it to pass on to them.

[98] There are those who disagree, but the meeting attendees sent to us by the courts or professional recovery centers, are already inclined to become SCA members: Out of the general population, they are more likely *ready* to stop having compulsive sex. This includes people of diverse racial, ethnic, age, class, gender or sexual orientation categories. Our task then, is to let them know help is available.

[99] Perhaps we will always see sexual compulsives whose lives have gotten so far beyond their control, that the legal or medical systems have had to take action on their behalf. Our hope in SCA is to “raise the bottom” from a seemingly hopeless situation, to one in

which the SCA prospect may recognize and avoid sinking to the depths of sexually compulsive behavior—the bottom-line behaviors—to which some of *us* have sunk. This is most likely to occur if we do outreach to the communities in which we live, and we present an example of how our prospects' lives could be, in recovery. Just knowing help is available is putting our fellow sexual compulsives so much further ahead than others. And those of us who struggled alone with the stigma of being sexually compulsive in the past, appreciate fellowship.

[100] As with any group finding itself at a crossroad, we urge you to look down each potential direction before you choose. We all struggle to balance order with freedom. Our friends in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) have a saying: "*Don't leave before the miracle happens.*" We trust your group conscience to make the right decision.

[101] If there is a local SCA meeting schedule, check it to see which groups will sign court cards or house slips and verify attendance, and see if they set forth any conditions. We can verify attendance but we do not write letters on behalf of, nor report on the progress of such attendees. There are no SCA police, as we have only one class of member and wish to avoid power struggles. Some groups make a one-time exception to their policy, without compromising their guiding principle. We let court ordered attendees decide for themselves whether ours is a safe place to talk about why they are here.

[102] SCA does not, cannot and will not discipline errant members. We do not need to do so. Even as newcomers, most of us could tell whom to listen to and whom to ignore. When we stray from being of service to our fellow sexual compulsives, and fall into the trap of hate and fear, we primarily hurt ourselves.

[103] For wayward groups, the most we can do at the Intergroup level is cease to list a group in our directories. The thinking is that we do not have to do anything—a group that strays from the Twelve Traditions usually does not continue to exist for very long. In these cases, when people do not, or no longer get what drew them to our meetings, then the "pull" is not there. The "push" of sexual compulsion propels them elsewhere. And we will never say that ours is the *only* way to recover from sexual compulsion. If you do not find

what you need to stay sexually sober, by all means go to where you find it, because recovery is there for those who want it. If you do not recover in our meetings, we will get over it. The important thing is for you to recover from your sexual compulsion.

MANNERS DURING MEETINGS

[104] Whenever a prospective employee is interviewed, the first question is, "Can you carry out your responsibilities?" This question almost goes without saying, as most prospects are assumed to be qualified. The second most important question is, "Can you get along with others?" This is because even the best candidate in the world is no help if they are hired and then proceed to drive away all that company's current employees. The same is true of meeting attendees and officers. In this sense, our meetings are a kind of practice workplace. But for all our technical advances, our society can at times appear primitive.

[105] A group can determine for itself, how to deal with member(s) whose sarcasm or cynicism may inhibit sharing or wither attendance. Some groups encourage their members to raise their hand when another's sharing is objectionable, whether by being sensational or shame inducing. Generally, we feel better after a meeting in which we have shared. As ever, we consider the source before acting upon what is said.

[106] We have all met at some time or other, people who feel they have the privilege of commenting on everything they see and hear. And we have also met people who are just as happy to have everyone keep their thoughts to themselves. We learn to strike a balance between the two, in meetings.

[107] We will meet people in meetings who will tell us or demonstrate that they are not going to act responsibly. Remember that we do not usually come into the program because our lives are going well. While we want to give troubled individuals the benefit of the doubt, we also want to protect ourselves from having the resources we all depend upon depleted. We want the hand of recovery to always be

there for the sexual compulsive in need of help. And to do so, we make sure we are taking care of the SCA group and ourselves. If we get so caught up in helping others, that we neglect our own welfare, we become part of the problem and require help ourselves. Getting overly involved is not in the spirit of recovery from sexual compulsion.

[108] Members sometimes cry while they or someone else is sharing. It is up to the group, as to whether it wants to make a box of tissues available for these times. Please take care to respect the boundaries of others in making this offer of tissues, as this action can be taken different ways: The person offering the tissues may think, "*Don't worry about crying in front of us, go ahead and express yourself.*" Yet the person crying may perceive the offer of tissues as saying, "*Stop crying and expressing all this emotion!*" The key is communication. If we could read minds, we would have no need to share in meetings; so talk.

[109] Meetings are an element of regularity in a sometimes-chaotic life. Each group sets its own general guidelines for the meeting's conduct. This is to make it a safe place in which to recover from sexual compulsion, and not to exclude people. As we create our guidelines, we want to remember how fragile recovery is at times. It is important to balance safety for those in pain, with the freedom to say and do what we need to say and do.

[110] When we make our meetings a source of pleasant memories, we counteract the painful feelings associated with acting out. And we foster a safe place to feel and express our feelings. Our meetings and we benefit as a result.

[111] We think it is better for one person at a time to talk in meetings. "Cross-talk" is defined as comments on, or interruption of another person's sharing. An identifying feature of cross-talk is that it changes the conversation from one person speaking to the group, which includes *all* SCA members present, to a side conversation between only a few of the members present, excluding the rest. It is sometimes better for the group to designate one person—the leader or possibly the secretary—to speak for the group and restore harmony in these instances, so disruptions are minimized.

[112] Sharing our most personal thoughts in a meeting is difficult enough, and when someone comments on what we share, it may intimidate or stifle further discussion. Therefore, regarding comments on what is shared, when a group decides to allow it, we usually continue to share one at a time. If the meeting devolves into an informal, open discussion it often leads to topics that can lead a newcomer to think that SCA endorses one member's opinion on an outside issue. And if no one contests what is shared, a newcomer may think no one cares about their *differing* opinion. But there are many factors in the decision *not* to pursue a train of thought, and most have to do with the group's unity.

[113] Sexual compulsion is a disease—a sickness, and its resolution does not call for a value judgment as to whether the sexual compulsive is a good or bad person. Wealth and power does not help our sexual compulsion, but love and reassurance does. Members occasionally summon enormous courage to share a breakthrough or breakdown, and an interruption can cause them to lose concentration. This could be an action as slight as rolling our eyes, inappropriate laughter, a sigh, or a “tisk tisk.” But if it inhibits the free expression of our thoughts, it is cross-talk, and we discourage it.

[114] A few of us were abused, and adapted by becoming competitive or perfectionists. We seem to clash with our fellow SCAs at the slightest provocation. It takes time, but eventually we realize that most of our fellows are here to help us, or in need of help themselves. Humiliating them and being humiliated in turn has to be dealt with quickly, especially in meetings. Bickering isolates us from those who can help us, and it is counter-productive.

[115] We are careful to avoid letting the group fall into black and white thinking, where life is a series of dichotomies: That people are either friend or enemy. In that setting disruption, fear and hate are predictable. So too is escalation. But the beneficial effect of mercy, love and reassurance is also predictable. We are a spiritual fellowship, and we have a Higher Power that is caring for us.

[116] If a member shares their sexual recovery plan, we refrain from judgment. We understand that anyone can carry out an information dump on the group, and refuse to hear feedback. We do not pass

judgment collectively or individually, on another's sexual recovery plan. We trust that *they* will eventually hear themselves, work out any irrationality with their sponsor or on their own. For the strength and nurturance we need to recover, we depend upon a Higher Power of our own understanding. We are here to help and get help, not to edify others.

[117] Some groups allow feedback on another person's sharing, provided that the person receiving the feedback either requests it, or is asked first. And they are *always* free to decline another's feedback. When there is a time limit on sharing, the additional time for subsequent feedback is handled by the group. Such groups are encouraged to take periodic group consciences, to determine that the group *still* benefits from feedback. Again, we rely on the group to understand the difference between feedback, a disruption of the meeting and an interruption for the group's well being.

[118] Some groups have other requests, to reduce distractions, and list them in the area's meeting directory. As with any autonomous group, when our actions vary from those of most of the other SCA meetings, we encourage periodic group inventories, to assess the group's direction, and to assess if and how this affects SCA as a whole.

[119] Electronic devices can be another source of distraction for a meeting. Taking calls, texting, etc., during a meeting is rude. It is reasonable for the group to ask its members to silence or turn off their electronic devices. Additionally, having our voices or images recorded, whether knowingly or not, can compromise our privacy and anonymity. This breach affects the Fellowship of SCA as a whole.

[120] If a group records its members voices intentionally, this is always done with the group's *prior* knowledge and consent, and is subject to guidelines set forth by The Twelve Traditions. Group members who attend, but do not wish to be recorded may submit written questions or comments, to be read aloud by the leader.

[121] Very few people are in SCA meetings by accident, and sometimes an attendee's sexual compulsion is triggered before, during or after a meeting. This is a matter to be handled very

delicately by the group, so as to avoid equating the problem with the person, thus producing shame. If the “slipper’s” sponsor is available, the member is encouraged to get in contact.

[122] Each group must have safe conditions for its members, or it cannot endure for long. For this reason, a group must be trusted to respond appropriately, bearing in mind that our primary purpose for existing is to carry the message to the sexual compulsive who suffers. We trust the group to perceive *who* is suffering.

[123] Because sexual compulsion affects all, regardless of race, class, age or gender identity, we encourage everyone to be prepared to meet people who are different from themselves. Many of us see this as an affirmation that our differences are superficial. In any group of members like ourselves, we will meet people who have been singled out as undesirable by the society in which we find ourselves. We are free to discard these labels and our differences—to concentrate on our common humanity. The key is to identify what separates us from others, and then to work on dissolving that difference. We find that an open mind is helpful.

[124] Shame—the belief that we not only *did* a bad thing, but that we *are* a bad thing—keeps unknown numbers of potential members from ever attending their first SCA meeting. Physical and mental disabilities often deepen and reinforce low self-esteem, and some believe that we are so flawed that our Higher Power *cannot* help us, even if it wanted to.

[125] Compounding a shame-based belief system with a physical barrier to the meeting is too much. We know what it takes just to make the *decision* to go to an SCA meeting. And when someone gets all the way to our doorstep, only to be stopped by a physical stair step or by doorways that are too narrow for a wheelchair, we think it is a terrible thing. So we urge you to consider choosing meeting locations that are accessible to persons with disabilities.

[126] Our recovery is ultimately to reintegrate us into society, whereas our sexual compulsion separated us from society. By adding “ism” to any of a broad range of ideologies we hold one above another. For example, the advocates of classism believe that one

class is better. We want to discourage this form of compartmentalization within meetings.

[127] Additionally, we want to avoid “hiding out” in meetings. That is, attending SCA meetings to the exclusion of our other responsibilities. We may need to increase our frequency of attendance at meetings, but meetings are not intended to substitute for a useful and productive life outside the group.

[128] If anyone is turned away from, or asked to leave a meeting, whether for being disruptive, or for not conforming to the group’s identifying feature, the group can: Designate two of its more experienced members, to meet with the individual outside the meeting room, or; take a group conscience to determine a course of action. SCAs are never asked to endanger ourselves. If appropriate, we may call the police. If disruptive, that person is often welcomed back the next week, as long as they respect the group’s boundaries. We rely on the group to know the difference between a boundary and a wall.

ORGANIZING A NEW MEETING

[129] We exist as the Fellowship of SCA, because two or more people formed a meeting. Sometimes a group grows too large for its meeting space, we see a need for more meetings, or we feel a conflict within the group. Bear in mind that problems for sexual compulsives often stem from: a) our relationships with our Higher Power or authority figures; b) with self-worth and with each other and c) we have problems with society at large. As with any relationship, the key is to know when to put forth a greater effort to heal the rift, or to know that we have done all we can to repair it and it is time to move on. And then there is rule #62: “*Don’t take yourself too damn seriously.*” (AA 12 & 12, Tradition Four, p. 149)

[130] When considering whether it is time to start another meeting, we ask ourselves two questions: “*Is there a need?*”, and “*Am I committed?*” If the answer is yes to both questions, then we can usually proceed, and the outcome is beneficial to all. We define what

we mean by “committed,” in terms of time, money and effort. This is usually at least a six-week commitment to announce, attend and financially support the new meeting.

[131] If the answer as to whether to start a new meeting is “They *need to be taught a lesson,*” we may want to examine how thoroughly we have communicated our needs to the existing group. Sometimes we find that we are the ones who get edified in this process. New meetings that are started out of boredom or anger, run the risk of having those emotions as part of their character.

[132] When our meetings continue to exist for any length of time, they develop their own character. We can even think of this as the spirit of recovery within that meeting. The meeting’s character grows and changes, but a continual message of recovery is essential if we want our meetings to sustain us and to draw others. When the spirit of recovery is found at our meetings, we are able to go there ourselves, in times of need, and hear the message.

[133] Is it the echo of a sponsor or other member who is no longer with us, that draws us close to SCA when we are in trouble? In rare circumstances, the spouse, relative or friend of a loved one has shown up at a meeting. We cannot fully explain it, but think this may be because the departed one’s spirit was, so strongly connected to the spirit of that SCA meeting. Perhaps they hoped to experience one more time, their loved one’s presence or spirit.

[134] Sometimes one member of our group will exert a strong influence on the rest of us. When that member leaves for whatever reason, the group may struggle. The question to ask is whether the group relied too heavily on this one individual. In any case, it is certainly time for the group to pull together in unison and find its message.

[135] It is best to hold SCA meetings in places anyone will consider safe, neutral places, where they can feel comfortable talking about sexual compulsion. We urge you to start or move an existing meeting to a private residence or business office as a last resort. Moving a meeting’s location too often, affects attendance. No matter what the reason for starting a new meeting, when it seems to materialize out of

nowhere, this is an indication of fulfilling a need within the community. And SCA is now part of that community.

[136] Meetings comprise our highest profile presence in a community. There are times when it is appropriate to break our anonymity with a trustworthy individual. One of these times is in the course of finding a place to hold a meeting. Potential members find us by contacting the International Service Organization of SCA (ISO), a local SCA Intergroup or helping professionals, such as therapists, clergy or hotlines. Alano clubs are sometimes a source of referrals to our meetings, as well as sometimes a renter of meeting space to SCA meetings.¹

[137] When we do outreach, some groups use only the minimum information necessary to identify the meeting place in public. This helps reduce any backlash from outside groups or individuals who use the same facility. We are not ashamed of who we are, but outsiders are sometimes mistaken about who attends SCA meetings, or may react to what we have done in our active sexual compulsion. To get new meeting locations and members, we count clergy, psychological therapists and even legal counsel among our resources.

[138] Each group decides how they can best carry the message. As stated earlier, the message is no secret. It is this: *"If you want to stop having compulsive sex, you can stop. We are doing it one day at a time."* Carrying the message is our primary purpose. The message often includes how to integrate sex into our lives as a healthy element, as well as other motives set out in our *Statement of Purpose*.

[139] SCA members find it helpful to have a "Home Group." Candidates are any group where we attend and participate on a regular basis. Our home group knows us, and we know its regular attendees too. We consider it to be like a home. We establish a base line of behavior in their presence, so they may be able to recognize when we need help. We sometimes choose our home group based

¹ Alano clubs are Twelve Step-oriented venues, most often set up to aid in recovery from alcohol abuse and its effects.

upon its attendance by members with the experience, strength and hope we think is helpful to our recovery. Home groups are where we often find our sponsors.

[140] The frequency of attendance at meetings is up to the individual, but some suggestions are: a) To attend an individual meeting at least six times before deciding whether that group or SCA as a whole is for you; b) To attend "ninety meetings in ninety days" or c) A daily meeting for a set period of time, as a way to deal with a particularly strong urge to act out our sexual compulsion. The daily meeting is somewhat like abstaining from our usual behavior temporarily, to let us decide whether it belongs in our lives.

[141] Two favorite sayings of Jim M., from St. Louis are: "*People who stop going to meetings don't get to hear what happens to people who stop going to meetings,*" and "*SLIP = Sobriety lost its priority*" (SCAnner Online). And from Randy P., in New York: "*There are only two times when you should go to a meeting, when you want to and when you don't*" (SCAnner Online).

[142] Our guidelines for sharing are fairly simple: "*What it was like, what happened, and what it is like now.*" (AA Big Book, Ch. 5) We speak from our own experience. We talk about our feelings, and try to use "I" statements, rather than tell "you" what to do. If one is at a loss for sharing, they are encouraged to share why they are attending.

[143] See the *Four Obstacles To Success In SCA*, as adapted from Al-Anon literature, for additional guidelines. Briefly, the obstacles are: *Discussion of Religion, Gossip, Dominance and Sensational Language*. The sensational language obstacle was added to the original obstacles, because we wanted to distinguish between dwelling on our problems and working on solutions to those problems. Some people lost the ability to say "no" to sex. For this reason we suggest that sex between members not be treated lightly. We discourage sex between people new to the fellowship and other SCA members.

[144] From time to time, we may be attracted to people in the meeting to the extent that we become obsessed. We know it helps to share our problems with others, but we ought to be careful in this situation.

We *do not* share with the person about whom we are obsessing, that we are obsessing about *them*. This cedes our power. More than once, gossip of this type of obsession has gotten back to the person involved, to the detriment of all parties involved, including the meeting itself.

[145] When one SCA member stands and everyone else sits, this facilitates the ability of one person to dominate the meeting. Similarly, when a single dominant member runs the group, that group risks losing its way, should that dominant member depart. When discussion lags, we have the option of reading from literature approved by the group, to encourage discussion. This could be daily meditations, poetry or brief SCA handouts, such as the *Twenty Questions, Characteristics* or *Tools*, etc. There are other groups that read literature, *this* variation within the discussion group format is meant to enhance discussion, not to impose upon it.

[146] If we have no particular breakthrough or breakdown to share, we share “the message.” Remember that sharing is also to help the newcomer. For members still shy about sharing during the meeting, Fellowship often continues after the meeting, over coffee. We try always to invite the newer members, and make an effort to welcome them when they join us. Sharing in a meeting is balanced by listening in a meeting, and vice-versa. In time, we develop an almost intuitive knowledge of when to listen and when to speak up.

THE TRUSTED SERVANTS

[147] *Tradition Two* reads in part, “Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.” SCA meetings usually elect or have members who volunteer to conduct the group’s activities. Service is the guiding spirit; we are not here to wield authority. This is especially true in light of the way some of us acted out or were abused. We ask our groups to help *all* who suffer from sexual compulsion.

[148] The group sometimes establishes suggestions for lengths of time abiding by one’s sexual recovery plan, for its officers to have, to be secretary, treasurer, literature person, etc. We want to offer

opportunities for newer members to participate in recovery, and to take responsibility for it. The suggestion is most often to help ensure stability in the meeting, and often calls on those who have established regular attendance at the meeting. If the abstention or sobriety suggestion winds up eliminating those who could help and be helped by using the Tool of *Service*, we can ask another SCA member to act as a mentor for the less experienced member who is being of service.

[149] Here are some of the positions a group may have: Secretary, treasurer, literature person, refreshments, greeter, newcomer liaison, timer, speaker seeker, Intergroup representative, set up committee, clean up committee or _____. In small groups, all of these positions may be held by as few as one person. But as soon as possible, we encourage others to join in service. The group sets aside time for each of these officers to carry out their duties or give reports, bearing in mind, our primary purpose is to carry the message, not to get caught up in formal procedure.

[150] The group secretary may: select each meeting's leader; pass out the literature handouts for reading during the meeting, or let the meeting leader choose; conduct the group's business meetings and be the group's correspondent.

[151] The group's treasurer passes the donation basket; accounts for the donated funds, disburses money for renting the meeting space, purchasing literature and any refreshments or other expenditures. The group and treasurer are to be carefully judicious with these "other expenditures," because money, property and prestige pose threats to the harmony of the group.

[152] The literature person for the group sets up the literature table, and keeps track of what is on it. When literature supplies are low, the literature person restocks them. The funds for restocking literature come from the group's treasury. When newcomers show up, the group may designate a pre-selected set of materials to give them. This may include a "*For The Newcomer*" pamphlet, which is passed around for the regular attendees to voluntarily write their phone numbers on it.

[153] The table holds books and pamphlets approved by the group. Some groups stock only SCA or other 12-Step groups' "conference approved" literature. This is literature approved by the ISO, or the equivalent. Other groups stock literature from various sources, sometimes non-SCA literature. The table also holds fliers and meeting schedules, as well as other information useful to the group.

[154] A simple guide for literature purchases is to be careful with "authored" pieces of literature from the recovering community. When a piece of literature is purchased and offered for the group's use, anonymous pieces are often selected, because the non-profit groups that publish them are often less controversial. But this is in no way a foolproof way of selecting literature purchases. The group conscience, or one of the "elder statespersons" in the group may be able to provide guidance. Authors are not saints, and their deeds may not live up to their writing.

[155] The group usually establishes a policy for getting literature to those who cannot afford it. One member tells us about collecting lots of SCA literature in early recovery, but only reading the literature for which a donation was made. Even a small, token donation is an investment in recovery. But this is not to say that we ever charge a fee for our work in recovery from sexual compulsion. We want the hand of recovery to be there for any who want it.

[156] The Intergroup representative attends the periodic meetings of the area Intergroup, expressing the group's wishes and providing the group with news of recovery and events in the larger community. We try to rotate group leadership among our members, to avoid dominance, to diversify the service experience and avoid depending too much upon one officer of the meeting. This also helps us avoid practicing a program of recovery like fire, because fires burn out. We want to let recovery permeate every part of our lives, like water. Water moves around and through obstacles to reach its destination, and water nurtures our endeavors.

SETTING UP THE MEETING

[157] An SCA group let us in, we joined them in recovery and have become part of the group. Though it was difficult at first, we embraced the idea of being sexually compulsive ourselves. Now, when others cross our threshold, we can ask how this group of ours presents itself to others; what is our character?

[158] The room setup is an important way to present ourselves and get the most out of attendance at a meeting. Remember that most of our communication is non-verbal, and that healthy relationships begin with effective communication. We encourage groups to experiment with different setups as a way of experiencing how we can make the most of our meetings. Actually varying the way chairs are set up lets us *feel* how our sharing is affected.

[159] When chairs are set up in a circle, it is more likely that attendees will feel equal, be seen as equals and feel involved. There are no back seats in a circle. Meetings may also be more memorable when we can see and hear all the other SCA members. To see what we mean, try setting up a circle of chairs, with one chair left outside the circle. Now let members take turns sitting in the lone, outside chair. How does this feel from the perspective of those inside the circle? How about from the perspective of the one person outside the circle?

[160] Sitting in a circle, we are literally more exposed, and likely to pay attention, than when seated around a table, or slouched in overstuffed chairs or sofas. A square or perfect circle may *feel* more crowded than an oval or rectangular setup, to those individuals who experience anxiety in a crowd. Early arrival may help, so the anxious may see people arrive one at a time. Try these different setups, to see which is best.

[161] As we set up the meeting chairs, we want to be aware of how much personal space each member wants, honor their requests and leave enough room for them to concentrate on recovery from sexual compulsion. Some members want to have human contact, and are fine with benches or couches instead of chairs. Tactile expression is

an important part of some members' recovery. They may also be fine with squeezing chairs together as closely as possible. But other SCA members struggling with abstinence or having been abused in the past, will have set boundaries and be uncomfortable in such close proximity to others. We ask that all groups pay attention to these concerns and be careful with their actions.

[162] Crowding in our meetings is a contentious issue. For some, being in close proximity to potential acting-out partners triggers their sexual compulsion. If not acting-out in the meeting, they experience *feelings*, which increase vulnerability to acting-out on the way home. For those whose life seems to have been an endless series of struggles with fellow humans, being in close proximity to others feels like they are being propelled into yet another struggle to survive. They want space to maneuver if or as necessary. Some may see a room full of potential victims, survivors or a room full of perpetrators. All we can say is that we are a diverse lot, and that anyone who wants to recover from sexual compulsion may do so. There is no other requirement.

[163] For writing meetings, tables or some writing surface is useful. Tables are sometimes comforting to be behind, and sometimes empowering. In speaker meetings, or large meetings, chairs in rows may be the formation to set up, because this allows the maximum number of people in a space. This set up places one or more people in a somewhat hierarchical position, facing the group. If there is a podium, members may be asked to face the group and share from the podium. Voice amplification may sometimes be employed. If members are to share from their seats, those in front may have to turn around. And members in back may not know who is sharing, not see facial expressions nor hear what is being said.

[164] In any meeting, it is a good idea to set up at least one *extra* chair, so that latecomers will have a place to sit, and feel welcomed. Some of us see this empty chair as symbolizing "the sexual compulsive who still suffers." This extra chair is an indication of welcome. Someone sitting next to this empty chair may raise their hand to identify a place for the latecomer. We avoid haste and even slight disruptions in this way.

[165] Sometimes, an officer of the group, or a dominant member may occupy a “power seat.” There is almost always a power seat in a room. This is occupation of a seat or place in the room, from which the occupant’s status in the group can be maximized. Sitting in it, one can see the door, the clock, the parking lot, etc. The important aspect is that the power seat confers a sense of power on its occupant, because everyone entering the space sees the occupant of the power seat first, based upon their position in the room. Locate the power seat in the room you are currently sitting in, and take turns sitting in it. How does it *feel*?

[166] Additionally, a member may spread out their presence over several chairs or the table. They use notebooks, coats, backpack, purse or food to insulate themselves from the others in the room. This person may feel the need to do this, and stripping away this protection may only trigger the need to have it back. We mention this to promote awareness. Then we can work on turning our welfare over to our Higher Power’s care. Try spreading out insulating objects around one seat in the room, take turns sitting there and seeing how it feels.

[167] It is natural to desire control over a situation, however; we can perceive more from the point of view of the *least* powerful seat within the group. Where is that? Additionally, some of us make an effort to avoid sitting in the same seat each meeting, as a physical way to remind us to avoid complacency.

[168] The literature table is sometimes set up between the seating area and the room entrance. This is never to block the exit, but to provide every opportunity for members to look over our literature offering on their way into and out of the meeting. Sometimes we are only willing to read literature when there is a problem. Having literature near where we are discussing problems then, is convenient.

[169] One gauge of a meeting’s health is to see how long its members stick around after the meeting’s conclusion. Do the members file out silently, in a line, or does an outsider have to open the door to see when the meeting is over?

[170] An SCA group may establish a sobriety suggestion for sharing. It may be twenty-four hours, one week or thirty days of sexual sobriety. This is less common, and is up to the group. We caution such groups about the stifling effect this may have on some attendees, especially newer members, and the opportunity for the meeting to be dominated by a select few. Remember, we find out who needs help through communication. And we can learn from people whom we do not consider intelligent.

[171] In all the actions a group can take, participation empowers the attendees with a vested interest in the group's success. We recognize the effort it takes for any member to get to a meeting, and try to accommodate our differences by emphasizing our similarities. We are careful when informing members about other SCA meetings or other Twelve Step programs associated with recovery from sexual compulsion, so as to avoid giving the impression that they are not welcome in the meeting they are presently attending.

[172] While we do not endorse or affiliate with other S-Programs² and helping professionals, we will never say that SCA is the *only* way to recover from sexual compulsion. If someone does not find what they need to recover in our meeting, we suggest other SCA meetings. If they have given up on SCA, we encourage them not to give up on recovery, for we know it is there for anyone who wants it. We will get over being left behind, because we want them to recover, whatever it takes.

[173] Each group usually has a time set aside for SCA and non-SCA related announcements. We recognize that SCA is but one of many organizations in this modern world. In addition to the general sharing portion of the meeting, we take care during the announcements portion, to avoid giving the impression that a single member's opinion on an outside issue, is that of the SCA group or of SCA as a whole. We stick to what we know best: recovery from sexually compulsive behavior. For example, a member may have an opinion on the latest therapy or sexual dalliance by a public figure. But at no time is that member to speak *for* SCA in discussing them.

² Twelve Step Programs that also deal with sex, love and romantic compulsions.

[174] Our meetings are often held in religious and public or corporate facilities, and SCA members may want to support that facility. It may happen that they heard about SCA because they already attend a facility where meetings are held. We are not adverse to someone within the group announcing the outside events taking place at these facilities, as long as it is done during the non-SCA related portion of the announcements. Other organizations may endorse SCA, but we do not endorse or lend our name to any other organization. In this way, we clearly delineate the two organizations, and prevent members of either group from confusing our purposes.

[175] Although we collect donations to cover group expenses, we never extract dues for attendance or literature. We pass the hat at meetings in order to meet our expenses, not to make a profit. We support ourselves because we believe in the fellowship of SCA. Most groups struggle to meet their expenses, and so must prioritize their expenditures.

[176] Generally, rent is the number one expenditure, followed by literature and chips or cards to mark milestones in recovery. Many groups set aside one or two month's expenses, to cover unexpected events. After that, a group may want to provide other amenities, to make its attendees' recovery more enjoyable.

[177] We remember that our primary purpose is to carry the message to the sexual compulsive who still suffers, and we strive to fulfill that effort. The local Intergroup and the ISO are often in *need* of assistance, and can reach potentially more people than a single group or individual. Groups at each level of service are responsible to their constituents for the funds they spend and the way they spend them.

[178] From time to time, a member may want to donate for another member's need, and they are free to do so, but we feel that group funds go further when used for the *group's* expenses, than for a single member. Bigheartedness with group funds may be an ego-feeding objective. When such causes are taken up, instead of a percentage of the group's treasury, we suggest that the collection basket be passed a second time, specifically for the special cause.

[179] Too much money in our treasuries is often a bigger problem for the group than not enough money. If we accumulate funds beyond our immediate needs, the purpose is clearly defined. An example of a cause for which a group may collect funds is to start another group in the area. That new group is encouraged to be self-supporting as soon as possible. The new meeting's treasurer is responsible for an accounting of all these funds, to the new group. Another example may be to have the group pay a delegate's expenses to attend an Intergroup or ISO meeting. The donating group takes a group conscience on these matters, and their treasurer is responsible for an accounting of all these funds.

[180] SCA members attend meetings for many reasons. We can expect to be safe and have our confidentiality respected, but we cannot demand that others *make* us recover, as if we have paid and can therefore expect results. While we want to be of service to others, we SCA members are the ones doing the work, no one else. We do the footwork, and leave the outcome to our Higher Power. Any member can expect to hear about recovery, and when they do not hear it, they are encouraged to be the one to bring it to the meeting themselves. Recovery is never withheld for lack of funds. This reinforces the message that we want nothing but recovery for each other.

[181] Some members claim a period of sexual sobriety for complying with a sexual recovery plan that another may consider lenient. Recovery for each of us is different. Continued attendance at meetings usually works out this disruption in one's serenity. An early member of SCA suggested daily praying or meditating on the perceived abrasion for a period of two weeks. After that the offended person was free to share with the person who offended them, about how *they*—the second person—grew in those two weeks, as a result of something the first person had shared.

[182] When a sponsor helps us construct a sexual recovery plan, hears our Fifth Step or gives guidance, they are not required by anything other than a desire to recover themselves. We are not paid professionals here. They can discharge *us*, just as we can release *them* from the relationship, if it is no longer beneficial.

[183] The leader of the meeting is not necessarily the local leader of SCA. Some of us are bossier than others—no it's true—and can give the impression that we are in charge of everything. The meeting leader is often different with each meeting, volunteering or being chosen by the meeting's secretary. The group officers volunteer or are elected by the group. We call them "trusted servants," because they carry out the group's wishes.

[184] The phrase "attraction rather than promotion" in our Eleventh Tradition means that we distinguish between leading by having so much fun that others want to join us, and leading by being bossy and controlling. This is not because we want reassurance that we are popular, but because the continued presence of SCA in our communities is important.

[185] If or when we see a need, we can volunteer, elect an SCA member or form a committee to take care of the need. Sometimes we need some social activity: a group picnic or trip to a museum. If you do not find what you need to stay sexually sober in an SCA meeting, again, we encourage you to be the one to bring what you need to the meeting and share it with others.

[186] Sometimes two or more members are nominated for an elected position in the group. We ask them to leave the room, so they are not subjected to the potential humiliation of the tally. If we only do this in "special cases", we are not fooling anyone. Those who made the nominations may be asked for their reasoning. Alternatively, two or more members can serve the group in one office at the same time.

[187] We do not provide referral services for helping professionals as a group. But individuals are free to do so, as long as it is clear that the group is not endorsing anyone. If an SCA member does business in an area of the group's need, and if the goods or services provided are equitable, the group does business with them. As the *Twelve Traditions of SCA* imply, this is more desirable than employing non-SCA personnel for SCA business affairs.

[188] When an individual group takes on an obligation, it is that group's responsibility, and should not involve groups that had no part of the initial decision. In this way, if a group's venture fails, SCA itself survives.

ANONYMITY

[189] As SCA members, we may occasionally find ourselves being called upon to provide information for helping professionals or the local media. In the area of recovery from compulsive sexual behavior, we have considerable experience; therefore, we can be of some help. We are not a secret society. We are free to provide information to helping professionals or the local media, as long as we do not speak *for* SCA, but as a singular member, characteristic of SCA membership. Our personal voice and other identifying features are not to be made public. We looked to the long form of the Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Traditions for guidance in dealing with the public media. Our local Intergroup or the ISO may have more experience in these matters, and can advise us.

[190] Anonymity equals *humility* in this instance. And humility, for the original Twelve Step AA, program has “an immense spiritual significance.” We do not single ourselves out as having exceptional recovery, but as members of a Twelve-Step Program who is typical of recovery. Sexual sobriety is sometimes a fragile thing, and subject to our daily “spiritual fitness” (Alcoholics Anonymous Big Book). Celebrities attending SCA meetings and seeking recovery are not to be used by the group for publicity. We all deserve happiness, and this does not help them. All the fame, wealth and power in the world did not help us, but love and reassurance did.

[191] Our emphasis is on the SCA Program of recovery and the spiritual principles upon which we rely for our recovery, not the strength of our personality and will. We have no opinion whatsoever, regarding legislation, judicial rulings or police work. These are matters that can divide us. If one feels strongly enough about an issue, they are advised to form an SCA group with that focus or to take it up with an outside group. SCA’s focus is on recovery from sexual compulsion.

[192] When we were acting out, we used anonymity as a shield, to do what we wanted and then retreat into the background. We avoided accountability by blending in with the crowd. But we were not really part of the general population; we crafted our anonymity like

camouflage. This is exactly the opposite of the spirit of anonymity in SCA. Our meetings grant neither amnesty nor immunity from the consequences of our actions. We are not to be shamed for our shortcomings, but those who would help us cannot know that we are in trouble if we do not acknowledge our shortcomings. Being accountable within the SCA program counteracts our old behaviors. And having people in our lives who know all about us yet love and accept us as we are is precious.

[193] As for our privacy, many of us lost our privacy by acting out. Gossip about what goes on in meetings, especially identifying an SCA member by name is harmful to our sense of safety. Our identity within the fellowship is no secret, but we maintain the confidentiality of our members. When we are out in the community, and see another SCA member, we respect that they may not be alone, and that their companions may be unaware that their friend attends SCA meetings. Just by saying "hello" without using their name, we can usually tell if the other would rather not talk to us at this time. We are not insulted. We treat them in this case, like any other acquaintance we see on the street. We give *them* the choice of talking to us or not.

IN CONCLUSION

[194] "*Keep coming back, it works!*" This is the last thing we hear in meetings and it is the most difficult thing to do: The reason is because this phrase calls on us to be consistent in our recovery; To keep attending SCA meetings through our successes and failures; To continue facing our sexual compulsion on a regular basis and thinking about opportunities to recover. The saying goes, "*There are no guarantees, only insurance.*" No one can guarantee that we will be sexually sober in future; that is up to our spiritual fitness. We can, however, take out a form of insurance, by staying close to our program of recovery through regular attendance at meetings. The significance of this is that the people with continuous long-term sexual sobriety have probably made room in their schedule; they make sure they support, know the location of, or go to meetings.

[195] Having had our own spiritual awakening, many of us want to make sure the meetings continue to exist. By supporting meetings with our presence and participation, we are carrying the message to the newcomer and other SCAs who suffer. And some days we are the SCA members who suffer.

[196] At meetings, our own recovery from sexual compulsion is sustained. We see in others, where we once were, are reminded about what happened, and find an ongoing appreciation for what we are like now—an appreciation for our progress. In this light, attendance at meetings is a small expenditure to keep our sexual compulsion at bay. If we have gained some measure of order in our lives, we merely reserve a space in our schedule for meetings. It is when our lives verge on unmanageable that we have trouble making room in the schedule for meetings. This may be just the time to go to a meeting.

[197] There is a saying, “When you stop needing SCA, SCA needs you.” Continued attendance at meetings gives us a forward-looking approach to recovery. We are most likely to hear of new breakthroughs in the field of recovery from sexual compulsion. Some of us remark jokingly about how we benefit from our fellows’ psychological therapy.

[198] After a period of sexual sobriety, it is natural to think that we no longer benefit from attendance at meetings. We do not ask our membership to deny reality, but to make sure we perceive reality and act on it appropriately. Attendance and support for meetings helps build, reinforce and maintain the life we want to live, and it welcomes others to that same life.

[199] When successful, we maintain our sexual sobriety, and we are better people for the effort. Whether or not others stay sexually sober, we do. If or when we have a slip or setback in recovery, that is the time to get close and stay close to our home group and equals, not to withdraw from them. This helps to keep a slip from turning into a relapse. Just by being around the Program, our lives are vastly improved over where they could be.

[200] As we work together toward the solution to our sexually compulsive life, our isolation is minimized, if not outright ended. We may not become friends with those whom we find in meetings, but active sexual compulsion reminds us that we could do much worse. Seeing the results of isolation reminds us about how it sets us up to act out. We need not ask for or heed the suggestions we hear at meetings, but at the very least we know we are not alone. Others are right there with us.

[201] Fear, hate and disruption of the meeting follows a predictable pattern: escalation. These are often the result of bullying and power struggles. What is also predictable is the beneficial effect of love and reassurance. We are a spiritual fellowship, and have a Higher Power caring for us. Again, we avoid needless confrontation, but when it is unavoidable, there is another saying, "*Confrontation with love is an act of mercy. Confrontation without love is a merciless act.*"

[202] While we are in a safe environment, and free to express ourselves, the best events can happen. But when we are in conflict and do not feel safe, we retreat to our defenses and the worst is brought out in our fellows and in us. However, it is also a time when our courage in the face of fear can have the biggest return. When we state who we are, what we feel and what we advocate, our understanding of love and reassurance is deepened; either by being supported or unsupported by our group.

[203] If we must criticize the *group*, criticizing a large group is often less harmful than criticizing a small group. Larger groups have a way of absorbing the pain and fear associated with sexual compulsion. In meetings we learn that if someone has a better way of doing what we just did, they show us. They do not add remarks as to how bad a person we are. If they do so in the company of our peers, it usually becomes wordlessly clear what is wrong. For group decisions, we learn to set aside emotional pleas, and to trust in the judgment of others—we have a Higher Power that is restoring us to sanity.

[204] Besides carrying the message, each group is to provide an opportunity to hear the message when we need help. In meetings, it is easy to be strong—to make commitments. But adhering to our sexual recovery plan even when alone, afraid or guilty is when we

have the most effect on our sexual compulsion. It is when we are alone and afraid that our spiritual fitness is tested. Meetings are a place to *become* spiritually fit and to maintain that spiritual fitness.

[205] We want our meetings to be the opposite of the sexual compulsion. The sexual compulsion has a “pull and a push,” and we can use that too. The sexual compulsion’s pull is the initial feeling of pleasure, or its absence of feelings. Its push is in the isolation that is fostered by acting out our sexual fantasies, and the sexual compulsion’s push is its shame that we are not like others. But we *are* like others: We want to be loved and accepted as we are. And that is our pull in SCA: That we want nothing more from the sexual compulsive who suffers than recovery for them. Recovery is the pull—a better life. The push is the life condition we brought with us upon arrival in SCA.

[206] By having the desire to stop having compulsive sex, our first meeting set into motion, a fellowship that continues to this day. Even though our motive may have been to stay out of jail, to save a relationship, to avoid sexually transmitted infections, to address our financial concerns, or any number of other motives; our recovery has assumed a spiritual significance. Where we once reacted to the identity society pushed us toward, we found out who we were and grew into our new identity as fully empowered members of society.

[207] Meetings represent continuity between the past and future of our fellowship, and they provide the opportunity for us to link the two. We are promised, “*No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others.*” (AA Big Book p. 83) Our home group can become our “family of choice,” contrasting with our “family of origin.” We face the future together, and have a place to return—a place we belong—should the world become cold and lonely.

Here is our contact information:

- International Service Organization of Sexual Compulsives Anonymous website: www.sca-recovery.org
- SCAnner's website: <http://www.scanneronline.org/>
- Sexual Compulsives Anonymous Los Angeles website: <http://www.scalosangeles.org/>

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Please address comments and suggestions to improve this draft piece on the Tool of "Meetings" to: SCAworkshops@ymail.com. We want to hear them.

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DRAFT

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