

## **SUGGESTED READINGS FOR S-ANON MEETINGS**

## **SERENITY PRAYER**

God grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change,  
courage to change the things I can,  
and wisdom to know the difference.

## **THE S-ANON WELCOME**

We welcome you to the \_\_\_\_\_ S-Anon Family Group and hope that in this fellowship you will find the help and friendship that we have been privileged to enjoy. We would like you to feel that we understand as perhaps few can. We too were lonely and frustrated; but here we have found that there is no situation too difficult to be bettered and no unhappiness too great to be lessened.

The S-Anon Family Groups consist of relatives and friends of sexaholics who realize that by banding together they can better solve their common problems. We urge you to try our program. Without spiritual help, living with, or having lived with a sexaholic is too much for most of us. We become nervous, irritable, and unreasonable; our thinking becomes confused, and our perspective becomes distorted. Rarely have we seen a person who was not greatly benefited by working the S-Anon program. The Twelve Steps of S-Anon, which we try to follow, are not easy. At first we may think that some of them are unnecessary, but if we are honest, open-minded, and willing to apply the principles of the Twelve Steps to our lives, we find that the benefits can be limitless, including God's gift of serenity.

## **S-ANON PREAMBLE TO THE TWELVE STEPS**

S-Anon is a fellowship of people who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other so that they may solve their common problems and help others to recover. The only requirement for membership is that there be a problem of sexaholism in a relative or friend. There are no dues or fees for S-Anon membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. S-Anon is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization, or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to recover from the effects upon us of another person's sexaholism and to help families and friends of sexaholics.

## S-ANON TWELVE STEPS

1. We admitted we were powerless over sexaholism – that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous: 1. We admitted we were powerless of alcohol - that our lives had become unmanageable. 2. Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. 3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*. 4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. 5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs. 6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character. 7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings. 8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all. 9. Made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others. 10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it. 11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and power to carry that out. 12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Step, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

(The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions reprinted and adapted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Permission to reprint and adapt the Steps and Traditions does not mean that AA is affiliated with this program. AA is a program of recovery from alcoholism - use of this material in connection with programs which are patterned after AA, but which address other problems, does not imply otherwise.)

## S-ANON TWELVE TRADITIONS

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal progress for the greatest number depends upon unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants—they do not govern.
3. The relatives of sexaholics, when gathered together for mutual aid, may call themselves an S-Anon Family Group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation. The only requirement for membership is that there be a problem of sexaholism in a relative or friend.
4. Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting another group or S-Anon or SA as a whole.
5. Each S-Anon Family Group has but one purpose: to help families of sexaholics. We do this by practicing the Twelve Steps of S-Anon, by encouraging and understanding our sexaholic relatives, and by welcoming and giving comfort to the families of sexaholics.
6. Our S-Anon Family Groups ought never endorse, finance, or lend our name to any outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary spiritual aim. Although a separate entity, we should always cooperate with Sexaholics Anonymous.
7. Every group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. S-Anon Twelfth-Step work should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. Our groups, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. The S-Anon Family Groups have no opinion on outside issues; hence our name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV, and films. We need guard with special care the anonymity of all S-Anon and SA members.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles above personalities.

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## **S-ANON TWELVE CONCEPTS OF SERVICE**

1. The ultimate responsibility and authority for S-Anon world services belongs to the S-Anon groups.
2. The S-Anon Family Groups have delegated complete administrative and operational authority to their Conference and its service arms.
3. The Right of Decision makes effective leadership possible.
4. Participation is the key to harmony.
5. The Rights of Appeal and Petition protect minorities and assure that they be heard.
6. The Conference acknowledges the primary administrative responsibility of the Trustees.
7. The Trustees have legal rights while the rights of the Conference are traditional.
8. The Board of Trustees delegates full authority for routine management of the S-Anon headquarters to its executive committees.
9. Good personal leadership at all service levels is a necessity. In the field of world service, the Board of Trustees assumes the primary leadership.
10. Service responsibility is balanced by carefully defined service authority, and double-headed management is avoided.
11. The World Service Office is composed of an Executive Director and staff members.
12. The spiritual foundation for S-Anon's world services is contained in the General Warranties of the Conference, Article 12 of the Charter.

## **THE GENERAL WARRANTIES OF THE CONFERENCE**

In all proceedings the World Service Conference of S-Anon shall observe the spirit of the Traditions:

1. That only sufficient operating funds, including an ample reserve, be its prudent financial principle;
2. That no Conference member shall be placed in unqualified authority over other members;
3. That all decisions be reached by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, by unanimity;
4. That no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy;

5. That though the Conference serves S-Anon, it shall never perform any act of government; and like the fellowship of S-Anon which it serves, it shall always remain democratic in thought and action.

(The Twelve Concepts of Service reprinted and adapted with permission of Al-Anon World Services, Inc. Permission to reprint and adapt the Concepts does not imply that Al-Anon is affiliated with this program. Al-Anon is a program of recovery from the effects of alcoholism. Use of this material in conjunction with programs which are patterned after Al-Anon, but which address other problems, does not imply otherwise.)

## **THE S-ANON PROBLEM (Short Version)**

S-Anon members have much in common with the friends and relatives of other addicted people. Most of us grew up in families with secrets, and we were not taught to think about our own needs and take positive action to meet them. We chose friends and partners who could not or would not love and support us in a healthy way. We lived life from the standpoint of victims and perceived any personal criticism as a threat. For most of us, anger, fear, and depression were nearly constant. We acquired some unhealthy beliefs about ourselves very early in our lives – that we were not worthwhile and lovable, that we were able to control other people's behavior, and that sex was the most important sign of love.

We have also felt the shame of thinking we were responsible for the sexaholic behavior of a family member or friend. Our self-esteem dropped to low levels, and we doubted our attractiveness, our emotions, and our sanity. We have felt betrayed by those we loved the most. Many of us were sexually abused, exposed to diseases, and otherwise placed in physical danger. We were often too ashamed to ask for help.

Some of us minimized the importance of the sexaholic behavior or denied it until we felt emotionally numb. Others focused on the sexaholic and the sexual behavior to the point of obsession and tried every known method to control it. Some of us participated in sexual behavior that made us ashamed of ourselves or used sex to manipulate the sexaholic. Some of us misused drugs, alcohol, or food, and others kept so busy that we didn't have time to feel our emotions. We often neglected our health, our jobs, and our children. No matter how we tried to struggle against it, deny it, or minimize its effects, the failure of our efforts to cope with sexaholism brought us to the point of despair. This is what we mean when we say in the First Step, "Our lives had become unmanageable."

## THE S-ANON PROBLEM (Long Version)

S-Anon members have much in common with the friends and family members of other addicted people. Most of us grew up in families with secrets, and we were not taught to think about our own needs and take positive action to meet them. As we grew up we felt more and more lonely and isolated as we chose friends and partners who could not or would not love and support us in a healthy way. We lived life from the standpoint of victims and perceived any personal criticism as a threat. For most of us, anger and depression were a way of life. We were so afraid of being left alone that anxiety and frustration were nearly constant. Whether or not we were exposed to sexaholism as children, most of us think that we acquired some unhealthy beliefs about ourselves very early in our lives – that we were not worthwhile and loveable, that we were able to control other people's behavior, and that sex was the most important sign of love.

What is different is that we have felt the additional shame of being involved with the sexaholism of a family member or friend. It does not matter a great deal whether that person was a member of our birth family, a partner, spouse, child, or someone outside the family like a friend, teacher, or boss. It does not matter whether we were willing, unwilling, or unknowing participants in the relationship—sexaholism deeply affected our lives. Our self-esteem dropped to lower and lower levels and we doubted our attractiveness, our emotions, our sanity, and our human worth. We have felt betrayed by those we loved the most, and those of us who didn't know about the sexaholic behavior felt even more humiliated and stupid for not knowing. Many of us were sexually abused, exposed to sexually transmitted diseases, and otherwise placed in physical danger. We were often afraid to trust others and reach out for help because we were afraid of what they would think of us or of the sexaholic.

Some of us reacted to sexaholism by denying its existence or minimizing its importance. We stuffed our feelings of anger and abandonment to the point that we felt emotionally numb. We told ourselves things like "Everybody does this," "This shouldn't bother me," or even "It can't be true—he would never do that." Others focused on the sexaholic and the sexual behavior to the point of obsession. We tried every known method to control it. We lied and covered up, spied at doorways, listened to private conversations, checked up on the sexaholic's whereabouts, read through journals and personal papers, begged, pleaded, and threatened. Some of us participated in sexual behavior that we did not enjoy or that made us ashamed of ourselves. Many of us tried to use sex to manipulate the sexaholic, thinking that being part of the acting out would give us a little bit more control over our lives. Most of us felt that we must have done something to deserve this kind of treatment and that happiness was for others, not for us. Some of us misused drugs, alcohol, or food to numb the pain; others used activities, such as shopping, exercising, or working to keep from feeling our emotions. We

often neglected our health, our jobs, and our children. No matter how we tried to struggle against it, deny it, or minimize its effects, the failure of our efforts to cope with sexaholism brought us to the point of despair. This is what we mean when we say in the First Step, "our lives had become unmanageable."

## KEYS TO S-ANON RECOVERY (Short Version)

Over time, S-Anon members learn to accept a number of new ideas:

1. Sexaholism is a disease very similar to alcoholism. At first many of us could not accept this idea. For S-Anon members, it means that we see sexaholics as sick people, not bad people. They are powerless over lust.
2. The actions of the sexaholic are not a result of something we did or did not do, and we do not have the power to control their behavior.
3. Our *attempts* to control or ignore sexual addiction led to a decline in our emotional health and may have enabled the sexaholic to continue to practice his or her disease.
4. When we first come to S-Anon, we, too, are spiritually and emotionally ill.

As we work toward full acceptance of these ideas, we begin to see our problems in a new light, and the awareness dawns that we do have choices concerning our own actions. This is the beginning of our recovery.

We remind ourselves that we are powerless over the behavior caused by sexaholism. We ask a Higher Power to help us to stop blaming and trying to control the sexaholic; the sobriety of the sexaholic is not our responsibility. We realize we cannot find serenity for ourselves if we continue to focus on someone else's recovery, so we commit ourselves to our *own* recovery. With the loving help of other S-Anon members and the God of our understanding, we take positive action to make our lives more serene and fulfilling. We attend as many meetings as we can, get a sponsor, if possible, and begin to apply the principles of the Twelve Steps to our lives. We use the telephone, the S-Anon literature, and the S-Anon slogans. Eventually we reach out to help others and try to carry the message of our own recovery. We do these things in our own way, one day at a time—striving for progress, not perfection. This is what is meant by “working the program.”

## KEYS TO S-ANON RECOVERY (Long Version)

We accept sexaholism as a disease very similar to alcoholism. This means that we see sexaholics as sick people, not bad people. They are powerless over lust. At first many of us could not accept this idea. We thought it meant that sexaholics were somehow not responsible for their behavior, or that we were not entitled to our feelings of anger and hurt. But it does not mean either of those things. For S-Anons, it means that the actions of the sexaholic are not a result of something we did or did not do. We did not cause the sexaholic behavior by being stupid, weak, or unattractive, and we do not have the power to control it. However, as we tried to control or ignore the sexaholism in our lives, we often unknowingly acted in ways that led to a further decline in our emotional health and enabled the sexaholic to continue to practice his or her disease. Over a period of time, many of us took on the shame, guilt, and fear that characterize the disease of sexaholism, even though we may not have acted out sexually. We, too, became spiritually and emotionally ill. Once we begin to see our problems in this light, we can also see that we do have choices concerning our own behavior. This is the beginning of our recovery.

We remind ourselves as often as necessary that we are powerless over the behavior caused by sexaholism and all actions and reactions of other adults. We know we must stop blaming and trying to control the sexaholic and the acting out behavior. Just as we did not cause the sexaholic's acting out, we cannot 'cure' it. The sexual sobriety of the sexaholic is not our responsibility. While our encouragement and cooperation can be helpful to the sexaholic seeking recovery, real peace of mind for us depends upon changing our attitudes and eliminating our self-defeating behaviors. As the recovering alcoholics put it, "Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas, but the results were nil until we let go absolutely."

We commit ourselves to our own recovery, taking full responsibility for our actions and reactions. With the loving help of other S-Anon members and the God of our understanding, we focus on taking positive action to make our lives more serene and fulfilling, regardless of whether or not the sexaholic chooses sobriety. We attend as many meetings as we can, get a sponsor, if possible, and begin to apply the principles of the Twelve Steps to our lives. We use the telephone, the S-Anon literature and the S-Anon slogans. Eventually we reach out to help others and try to carry the message of our own recovery. We do these things in our own way, one day at a time—but we do them, striving for progress, not perfection. This is what is meant by "working the program."

## OBSTACLES TO RECOVERY

To ensure the success of our meetings in solving our common problems, we must recognize and overcome three obstacles to recovery that can destroy the group. The first is the discussion of any religious denomination. Compulsive lusting respects no particular religion; therefore, our program is designed to help us regardless of our various beliefs. Let us not defeat our purpose by discussing any particular denomination.

The second is gossip. We are here to help ourselves and other group members. A belittling discussion of others, including the sexaholic, or a discussion of personal affairs other than those concerning ourselves, will eventually eliminate the group.

The third is dictatorship. We have no dominating authorities or self-appointed leaders. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern. We do not give advice; we suggest by telling how we solved similar problems through our experiences. The very essence of S-Anon is that the whole program is "suggested."

We have no creed, charges, obligations, or anything that would tend to hinder you. Your progress can be made in your own time and in your own way. We merely invite your attendance in a common cause.

(Reprinted and adapted from "Alcoholism the Family Disease," page 35, Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc., Virginia Beach, VA.)

## GIFTS OF THE S-ANON PROGRAM

When we approach the process of recovery with honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness to apply the principles of the Twelve Steps to our lives, we will soon begin to see the rewards. We will become able to surrender our self-defeating behavior. We will find that we have the strength and insight to make good choices for ourselves. Our ability to act positively on behalf of our health, families, jobs, and bank accounts will amaze us. We will find that others are doing things for themselves, which we thought we had to do *for* them. Our ability to give and receive love will expand tremendously, and we will become increasingly available for loving relationships with others. We will recover the feeling of joy. We will become more honest with ourselves and experience a new comfort in our intimate relationships. We will feel the security that arises from true fellowship with others in the program, knowing that we are loved and accepted just as we are. Feelings of failure and inadequacy will be replaced by self-confidence and independence of spirit. We will no longer expect other people to provide us with an identity or a sense of self-worth. We will find the courage to be true to ourselves. We will know peace of mind and feel a stronger connection with the Higher Power of our understanding, and our hope will turn to faith that God is really working in our lives, as we explore the wonders of serenity, dignity, and emotional growth.