

# S - A N O N

## Twelve Steps

S - A N O N  
*International*



*Family Groups*

S-Anon Twelve Steps  
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## 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.

# INTRODUCTION



This book is a sharing of the collective experience of the S-Anon International Family Groups fellowship. It offers hope for recovery to people whose lives have been or are being affected by the sexaholism of a spouse, parent, child, other relative, friend or acquaintance. We have found that by applying the spiritual principles of the Twelve Steps to our lives, we are able to be happy and productive, whether or not the sexaholic chooses recovery. The joy we have found in our new way of life makes us want to share the experiences that have made our recovery possible.

The Twelve Steps of S-Anon, adapted from the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, are the heart of the S-Anon program. While the various tools of the program and the fellowship itself support our recovery, we have found that study of these Steps from an S-Anon perspective, aiming to incorporate their principles into our lives, is essential for recovering from the destructive effects of sexaholism. In this book we share our personal stories and suggestions, based on our experience, for putting these principles into practice. In the future we hope to add our experiences with the Twelve Traditions of S-Anon as well.

## WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THIS BOOK

First, for each Step, there is a description in general terms of the devastating impact the disease of sexaholism has had on our lives and a recounting of the events and realizations that led to a new way of approaching the problem and the solution. These descriptions were written by a small group of S-Anons when our fellowship was very new, and they were used for many years in a stapled

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booklet form called the S-Anon "Step Study Guide." We have found that these writings still hold an enormous amount of emotional truth even though years have passed.

Several member stories are also included for each Step. Most of us have found it very helpful to become aware of how others in S-Anon have applied the principles of the Steps to their lives. These stories are intended to be a sampling of S-Anon experiences. There are as many stories as there are S-Anon members, and these examples are by no means an exhaustive catalogue of our experiences with the disease of sexaholism.

Finally, having found that we all have some inner resistance to letting go of unproductive attitudes and behavior, we have included a section called "Practicing These Principles" with each Step. These sections briefly describe some of the ways we have come face to face with our resistance to change and offer ideas that have helped many of us work through our own impediments to recovery. We also present some questions suitable for individual writing, discussion with a program sponsor or friend, or discussion within the group itself. Again, these are only examples of some issues we have addressed in the course of our recovery. The issues addressed in the questions are not intended to be a complete list of all possible issues or emotions that may arise when an individual member approaches a particular Step.

### WHAT YOU WILL NOT FIND IN THIS BOOK

While S-Anon's Twelve Steps are spiritually oriented, they are not based on any specific religious discipline. The designation "God" does not refer to a particular being, force or concept, but only to "God" as each of us understands that term. When members refer to their own Higher Power in the "Member Stories," their name for God has been included out of respect for their personal understanding.

If the sexaholic behaviors mentioned in this book seem in any way vague or non-specific, let us reassure you that we are not avoiding the reality of any individual experience. No matter what manifestation of sexaholism you may have encountered in a relative

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or friend — be it sexual affairs with women or men, sex with children in or outside of the family, sex with animals, sex with prostitutes or other strangers, telephone sex or other use of the electronic media, compulsive use of pornography or masturbation, fantasy, voyeurism, exhibitionism, masochism, sadism, sexual violence, withholding sex, or something else — we assure you that you are not alone. When you talk with S-Anon members, you will find others who have lived with the same types of sexaholic behavior and have experienced similar feelings or reactions to sexaholism. Even if you feel unique in your local S-Anon group, you can be certain that someone in the S-Anon fellowship has also had similar experiences and feelings.

In S-Anon we consider sexaholic behaviors to be symptoms of a disease — unacceptable actions taken by sick people who are powerless over lust. Through working the S-Anon program, many of us have overcome powerful feelings of shame or guilt that arose out of being so closely connected to this “shameful” disease. We have come to understand and accept that we are not responsible for the actions of others and that those burdens of shame and guilt are not rightfully ours to carry. Our solution depends on keeping focused on our own personal path of recovery and allowing the sexaholic to do the same.

### TO THOSE WHO ARE AT RISK FOR SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES OR VIOLENCE

Everyone has the right to be safe from harm, no matter what the circumstances. Sexual contact with others can expose the sexaholic to diseases that are incurable and even fatal; in some cases these diseases can then be passed on to the sexaholic’s spouse or partner and even to children through pregnancy. Sometimes partners of sexaholics are coerced into participating in unwanted sexual activities, and such activities may even be part of a pattern of domestic violence that includes physical abuse.

Members of S-Anon who found themselves in a sexual situation or a life situation that felt unsafe or even life-threatening report that it was sometimes necessary to make tough choices to protect them-

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selves and their children. It requires tremendous courage, but the experience of those who faced these situations and were at risk for sexually transmitted diseases or violence suggest that those in similar circumstances consider taking some or all of the following actions: ask a doctor for tests for sexually transmitted diseases and follow the doctor's advice on self-protection in the future. Remember that a negative test result does not prevent a person from contracting a sexually transmitted disease from sexual contact after the test is done. Limit or abstain from sexual contact with the sexaholic for as long as necessary to maintain personal safety and recovery. Arrange with a friend, relative, or neighbor for a safe haven to go to on short notice. Obtain the phone number of an agency that can provide immediate assistance and a safe place to go. Leave money and an extra set of car keys in a place where they are readily available; and if necessary, call for police protection.

### USING OTHER RESOURCES

Many members, even those who have been active in other Twelve Step programs, have found that placing the focus on ourselves in S-Anon recovery can sometimes lead to crises in relationships or the surfacing of some painful personal issues. While we believe S-Anon to be invaluable and consistently helpful over time, many in our fellowship have also sought the assistance of professional helpers like therapists, clergy, or doctors to help handle crisis situations or to deal in depth with personal issues. S-Anon does not claim to be all things to all people, and we are grateful for the specialized help available from others. The S-Anon program offers a way of living based on the Twelve Steps that is applicable in all life situations, as well as the support of people who know first-hand what the newcomer is going through because we have been there, too. This is the healing power of S-Anon. You are not alone. Recovery is possible. We invite you to join us in our common cause.



## STEP ONE



*We admitted  
we were powerless  
over sexaholism—  
that our lives had  
become unmanageable.*

**W**e are concerned with two principles in Step One: that we cannot control the sexaholic or his or her sexual behavior, and that because of our attempts to do so our lives have become unmanageable.

Accepting our powerlessness is our first admission that we “give up.” This may feel defeating and very frightening at first. In the past, we depended upon ourselves to get through every crisis or difficulty. We relied on our intellects, our theologies, our past experiences, and on new schemes and strategies we developed. We felt sure that each new strategy would work, and even when it didn’t, we just bounced back with even more self-sufficiency and determination to succeed the next time. Our natural impulses were to take over, to force the issue, to make changes. We perceived ourselves to be more competent than the sexaholic and felt sure that being “strong” was the answer.

When sexaholism persisted, we began to feel that we were chasing a snowball downhill. We suffered from heartbreaks, crises, and emotional and physical ailments. Either we blamed the sexaholic for all these things or we blamed ourselves. We believed that if we were only stronger or smarter or sexier, we could somehow control the sexaholic and solve our problems.

In the meantime, those problems mounted. For many of us, unmanageability meant we were unable to adequately carry out our routine responsibilities, such as keeping the checkbook balanced,