

COMMENTARIES ON THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF SEXUAL COMPULSIVES ANONYMOUS

Sexual Compulsives Anonymous derives from the first Twelve Step program, Alcoholics Anonymous. During its first decade, Alcoholics Anonymous accumulated substantial experience which indicated that certain group attitudes and principles were particularly valuable in ensuring the survival and welfare of the AA Fellowship. In 1946, in the Fellowship's international journal, the *AA Grapevine*, these principles were committed to writing, and became the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous. They were adopted by the AA Fellowship as a whole at the first AA International Convention in 1950.

Sexual Compulsives Anonymous has adapted and adopted the Twelve Traditions for use within the SCA Fellowship. Like AA, we have found that just as the Twelve Steps permit our individual recovery, so too do the Twelve Traditions make possible our collective recovery. By following the Twelve Traditions, our members, groups and service bodies will continue to maintain our common welfare and allow SCA to thrive in its primary purpose – of carrying the message of recovery to the sexual compulsive who still suffers. The following commentaries are intended to illustrate the Twelve Traditions as we apply them in SCA, reflecting the experience and specific circumstances of Sexual Compulsives Anonymous.

Tradition 1:

“Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon SCA unity.”

In our active compulsion and unrecovered state, we were self-centered. For the majority of sexual compulsives, it was all about “me.” Most of us come into Sexual Compulsives Anonymous obsessed with ourselves, and the unmanageability of our own lives. On joining SCA, we soon realize that our recovery from sexual compulsion depends on our membership in the Fellowship, and the survival of the group. Our experience shows that it is essential that SCA meetings be places where members feel accepted, and free to share their experiences with sexual compulsion honestly and openly, without fear of being shamed or judged. SCA unity is achieved at a primary level by making the meeting rooms safe places for sharing, and through the love and support that members give one another in their common journey toward recovery. This unity depends on tolerance of others' differences; differences in background, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, differences in approaches to working the Twelve Steps, differences in individual sexual recovery plans, and differences in the types of compulsive sexual behavior that brought us to SCA.

It is said among members that SCA is a “we” program. This emphasizes that recovery in SCA is a collective undertaking. The various formats of our meetings

reinforce this concept. We approve the meeting formats themselves as a group, by group conscience. We take turns in leading the meeting, and in reading the literature aloud. We share our experience, strength and hope with each other, relating together how we are working our program of recovery and overcoming the compulsion. Some meetings may limit the amount of time each person can speak so that as many members as possible may have the opportunity to share. Some meetings deliberately set aside specific times for newcomers to share, or use other means to ensure that sharing is open to all.

Some members may struggle longer than others with letting go of their compulsive behaviors and embracing recovery. Whatever the condition of each member's recovery, SCA unity provides each group with a powerful strength for the individual to rely on. Even if an individual is having difficulty recovering, the group as a whole remains strong. The group collectively demonstrates a higher level of recovery, and draws its members toward growth. The Fellowship as a whole engages in this process by means of its literature and service structures. Only together are we strong enough to overcome the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual afflictions of our disease.

Our experience has been that we cannot recover in isolation: that we cannot overcome sexual compulsion on our own. We have found that we need the support and collective experience of other sexual compulsives in order to recover. We rely on mutual support for our personal recovery. Therefore, the continued existence of SCA groups is essential. It is vital that unity be fostered and maintained throughout the network of SCA groups worldwide. A fundamental source of unity in the SCA Fellowship is adherence to the Twelve Traditions of SCA.

Tradition 2:

“For our group purpose there is but one authority – a loving God as may be expressed in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.”

In SCA, we recognize that the ultimate guidance for the group comes from a loving God as may be expressed through the group conscience. The group conscience is formed by careful discussion, with decisions being made by a majority vote. Decisions are taken by members with the best interests of the group at heart. The group strives for consensus where possible. The leaders chosen to serve the group are not authorities, but trusted servants. They come and go with each new election or rotation. They are entrusted by the group to take care of tasks and carry out the group conscience.

The group conscience is taken when deciding anything from practical matters for individual meetings to fellowship-wide matters at the International Service Organization's (ISO) annual conference. For example, at the meeting level, the group conscience would elect a new group Treasurer, or decide whether or not to

time individual sharing at a meeting. At the ISO level, the group conscience would decide whether or not to approve a proposed new piece of literature for the Fellowship.

The principle of all members present having a voice and a vote in a group conscience decision, regardless of whether a member is relatively new or has many years of experience, is also an indication that we understand that no one person has it all figured out on any given issue, or a monopoly on wisdom. It may also be detrimental for groups and service bodies to become dependent on a small number of individuals who take service positions over and over again. Dominance of a meeting, intergroup or other service structure by any individual or group can soon lead to a loss of group harmony and unity,¹ as it will exclude some individuals and their experiences. Rotation of leadership chosen by group conscience has been of proven benefit to the welfare of a group.

Many of us at one time or another may have had the fear that if we did not somehow “take control” of a cherished meeting or service body, it would become unsafe or ineffective. The desire to protect our own recovery, which in many cases is vital to our own survival, may lead some of us to be tempted to try to mandate what we consider to be the “right” way to run an individual meeting or service board. Listening to others and being open-minded promotes spiritual growth in the individual and the group, and is a way of gaining access to a Higher Power. In trusting that the spiritual process of forming a group conscience will bring about a better decision or solution to a problem than we as individuals could arrive at alone, we forego seeking to impose our personal will on others.

Tradition 3:

“The only requirement for SCA membership is a desire to stop having compulsive sex.”

SCA is a 12-Step fellowship, inclusive of all sexual orientations, open to anyone with a desire to recover from sexual compulsion.² The Fellowship does not discriminate. Individual members and groups cannot determine whether another person’s desire to stop having compulsive sex is sincere or not. We do not require that anyone identify himself or herself by a particular label, or by any label at all. The group does not decide whether or not someone is to remain a member of SCA. So long as an individual has a desire to recover from sexual compulsion, they are welcome in SCA.

For some newcomers, simply attending meetings consistently seems like a Herculean effort. Others have a “revolving door” experience of coming in and out of the Fellowship until they are finally willing to admit in earnest that they have a

¹ “Four Obstacles to Success,” *SCA - A Program of Recovery* © SCA-ISO

² SCA Self-Identification Statement © SCA-ISO

desire to stop having compulsive sex. They find that involvement in SCA is an essential part of achieving that aim. Still others have deep-seated shame issues, and even if they accept that they need to attend SCA, they have difficulty believing they belong anywhere, let alone in a group of people in recovery who are healing and even thriving in their lives. A member may “visit” SCA for a while before deciding to attend regularly, or may attend and instantly feel he or she has found a new spiritual home with like-minded people. All are welcome.

The Third Tradition states that the only requirement to be a member of SCA is a desire to stop having compulsive sex. In our collective experience, this includes not only impulsive and harmful sexual behaviors, but also problems such as romantic obsession, addiction to people, love or relationships, addiction to sexual or romantic fantasy, and the constant search for intimacy. SCA is open to all those with a desire to recover from sexual compulsion in any and all of its manifold forms of expression,³ including the use of technology to avoid intimacy and the compulsive avoidance of sex, also known as sexual anorexia.

Sexual Compulsives Anonymous also accepts the Third Traditions of some other sexual recovery programs as being equal to its own. Therefore, members of SAA⁴ and SLAA⁵ may attend SCA meetings under the Third Traditions of their own programs, equally with SCA members.

We are not the arbiters of anyone else’s sex conduct. As individuals, we may feel we do not want people with certain types of sexual compulsion in our meetings, but we do not attempt to exclude, or change SCA to exclude, such individuals. We have often found that the very people around whom we felt uncomfortable, or whose presence we feared would harm SCA or our recovery, turned out instead to be people who helped us. It is not only the acceptance of others, but also self-acceptance that is a principle at work here, because welcoming others regardless of differences is an indication that we have come some way toward accepting ourselves.

It is very important to note that while some service positions within SCA may have suggested lengths of time on a sexual recovery plan, and/or a specified prior length of membership in SCA as a recommendation for the trusted servants holding these service positions, no one can lose their membership in SCA for having a slip on their sexual recovery plan, or for failing to work a “perfect” program, were such a thing even possible.

In the same way that the requirement for SCA membership is minimal, the requirements for forming an SCA group are minimal. Any two or more sexual compulsives gathered together for sexual sobriety may call themselves an SCA

³ Affirming resolution passed by SCA-ISO April 26, 2015

⁴ Sex Addicts Anonymous

⁵ Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous

group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation, and meet together to work the SCA Program of Recovery.⁶

Tradition 4:

“Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups or SCA as a whole.”

An SCA group is any group that meets regularly, at a specified place and time, for the purpose of recovery from sexual compulsion, provided that it adopts the Twelve Steps and follows the Twelve Traditions of Sexual Compulsives Anonymous. Any two or more groups can form an SCA intergroup. An SCA intergroup can so designate itself provided that it agrees to adopt the Twelve Steps and follow the Twelve Traditions of Sexual Compulsives Anonymous. Likewise, the International Service Organization of SCA is organized solely to further the recovery of those who suffer from sexual compulsion, and endorses SCA's Twelve Step recovery program, adheres to its Twelve Traditions, and aims only to serve as the Trusted Servant of the SCA Fellowship. These fundamental qualifications provide the framework for the abundantly varied approach to recovery from sexual compulsion that is found within the SCA Fellowship, where groups have complete autonomy, except in matters affecting other groups, or SCA as a whole.

There is a principle of freedom at work in this Tradition, but one that is balanced against group willfulness. Autonomy means that each group is self-governing. Each group follows the Twelve Traditions, but has latitude to adapt them to its particular circumstances. The positive aspect of this Tradition is that a variety of group formats may be used in SCA, and different literature read at various meetings, all determined by group conscience. Some people may find some group formats or approaches appealing, but not others. This freedom and variety may allow SCA to reach a larger number of still-suffering sexual compulsives than it otherwise would.

In addition to its own situation, a group ought also to consider how its actions could affect other groups, or SCA as a whole. For instance, one group's bad relationship with a landlord may negatively affect the chances that other SCA groups could secure a meeting place at that location. Likewise, it is best that SCA groups maintain friendly relations with one another. One of the best ways to do this is for groups to form an intergroup to work together on projects, and for that intergroup to join SCA's International Service Organization to work together on matters affecting the Fellowship as a whole.

In a fearful attempt to guard our own recovery, as members of one group, we might have wanted to try to control the other groups in our area so that they and their meetings were run in a certain way. Such action is not in keeping with the

⁶ The SCA Program is described in *SCA - A Program of Recovery* and other conference-approved SCA literature.

principles of the Fourth Tradition, or in the spirit of individual responsibility fostered by recovery. What the Fourth Tradition tells us is that the only way for our fellowship to remain vital, secure and effective is if we trust each group to take care of itself. Unless what is happening at one group is directly affecting another group, or the Fellowship as a whole, we must stand back and let the members of that group determine what works for them, and let them respond to whatever problems arise. These are the real lessons of this Tradition: letting go of control, getting out of the way of the recovery of other addicts, and trusting in the process of the Program and its spiritual principles.

Just like individuals, groups and service bodies are also allowed to change their minds. They do this by taking another group conscience. If a different conclusion is reached, they can then take a different course of action than was previously decided. Over time, as individual members, we feel less need to control the business of a group or service body. This is because we learn that if a particular group conscience does not work out favorably, a group or service body can always change direction. In this way, we learn to trust that everyone is learning and growing spiritually from the unfolding of events.

Tradition 5:

“Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the sexual compulsive who still suffers.”

The first four Traditions give us a sense of place and belonging in the world, and within our fellowship. Together with related experience, the Fifth Tradition tells us that our hard-won independence, interdependence and sense of ourselves can only continue to be ours if we share our well-being with those within and beyond the Fellowship. We have an obligation to pass on to others what we have so freely received ourselves. The cohesion and effectiveness of our groups can only be maintained by focusing on our message of recovery.

What is our message, and how do we carry it? In attending meetings and working the SCA Program, we become familiar with its message of recovery: that by acknowledging our powerlessness and living by a set of spiritual principles, we can be free of sexually compulsive behavior. Our recovery offers hope that others can find relief from the chaos of addiction as we have. Our collective experience holds out the prospect of peace and serenity. Once we have a grasp on sobriety, and once we have dismantled the compartmentalization that governed our lives before finding recovery, we are encouraged to let others know of our newfound freedom, and the way we have attained it. We carry the message of recovery, both as individuals and as members of a group, by sharing the results of taking the Twelve Steps and using *The Tools That Help Us Get Better*, working with other members of Sexual Compulsives Anonymous. This maintains our sobriety and helps others to find the same freedom, thereby fulfilling the group’s primary purpose. Our group

purpose as suggested by Tradition Five is to help others to recover from sexual compulsion.

By listening to one another in meetings, sharing our own struggles with recovery at meetings (which can sometimes be difficult), and welcoming newcomers at meetings, individuals as part of the group are practicing the Fifth Tradition. Continuing to tell our stories, continuing to remind ourselves and others where we have been and how far we have come, keeps us recovering, and helps others.

Who is “the sexual compulsive who still suffers”? Traditionally, this has been interpreted to mean the newcomer in the room, or those who are not aware that there is such a thing as recovery from sexual compulsion. The Fifth Tradition asks us always to keep these individuals in mind as we go about our life as a group. We would also be dishonest if we did not admit that we all remain, to some degree, “sexual compulsives who still suffer.” As the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* tells us, “What we really have is a daily reprieve, contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition.”⁷ No one achieves perfection, and all are in need of support. The group tries to carry its message to all who suffer from sexual compulsion, both present at a meeting, in the local community, and elsewhere.

Groups collectively carry the message of recovery by doing such things as holding regular recovery meetings, putting on service meetings, taking meetings to hospitals and institutions, and maintaining and providing meeting lists. They fulfill their primary purpose by providing a framework for sponsorship; obtaining, distributing and selling SCA literature; hosting and supporting service board and committee activities; performing outreach to therapists, institutions and the public at large; and responding to inquiries about the SCA Program. Groups also carry the message by publicizing the Fellowship in printed form and via the internet, arranging Twelfth Step calls for interested individuals, putting on Step Study groups, and hosting social events, workshops and spiritual retreats for members. They also do so by corresponding and communicating with loners and prisoners, and supporting those in treatment centers, rehabilitation facilities, hospitals and nursing homes. Indirectly, the message can be carried by groups demonstrating the principles of recovery in their everyday dealings with their landlords, local businesses and suppliers. These third parties may inform others of the SCA Fellowship’s work and be a source of positive comment and referrals.

Technology has enabled Twelve Step programs to carry the message of recovery to people in distant places in ways their founders could not have imagined. Not only do we have face-to-face meetings, but telephone and online meetings as well. Sponsorship can take place by telephone, email, internet conferencing and other electronic means. Recovery literature and information can be shared electronically worldwide at the touch of a button. Websites can reach untold numbers of people

⁷ *Alcoholics Anonymous* – “Into Action,” page 85.

who may need to hear the SCA message of recovery, learn of the hope it provides, and find the solution it offers.

The larger message of SCA is that there is recovery from sexual compulsion, and that it is spiritual in nature. Individual members of SCA may have their own interpretations of the Steps, Traditions and other literature. How then do we carry a group message? It has been SCA's experience that so long as we keep the focus on our primary purpose, open and honest sharing allows our underlying spiritual message to be carried by the group, despite individual interpretations of the Program.

Because this Tradition is primarily concerned with the group's focus on carrying the message of recovery from sexual compulsion to those who still suffer, comparable to Twelfth Step⁸ work for an individual, it is important to consider discussion at SCA meetings of issues that are related to other aspects of compulsive illness, or that are unrelated to sexual compulsion. Many of us are cross-addicted, or have concurrent disorders, and while some of us may at times also need to share about other problems that may be affecting our sexual sobriety or well-being, we do well always to remember that our primary purpose in SCA is to stay sexually sober and to help others to achieve sexual sobriety. Accordingly, some groups have suggested sharing guidelines, reminding members of our primary purpose, while others specifically permit sharing on cross-addiction or similar topics. Some groups have cross talk guidelines encouraging members to share for themselves and not comment on what others have said during their sharing. These and other group guidelines are designed to ensure that SCA meetings are safe and healing places for all who wish to recover from sexual compulsion.

All SCA meetings are intended to be constructive, helpful, loving and understanding. In striving toward those ideals, we avoid matters that can distract us from our goals and that can cause dissension.⁹ These can include discussion of religion and politics, gossip among members, member dominance and the gratuitous use of triggering or sensational language. Focusing on our primary purpose keeps a group from getting distracted, and helps provide the maximum possibility for recovery from sexual compulsion to all in attendance. Having new members to sponsor and work with helps those of us who have been in the Program for any length of time to keep the Program fresh and vital for ourselves.

⁸ Step Twelve: "Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to sexually compulsive people and to practice these principles in all our affairs."

⁹ "Four Obstacles to Success," *SCA - A Program of Recovery* © SCA-ISO

Tradition 6:

“An SCA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the SCA name to any outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.”

If an SCA group were to affiliate with related facilities, we would mix our message of recovery with that enterprise’s ideology or mission. This could create conflict and dissension among the membership, divert time and energy away from helping the newcomer, and distract us from our primary purpose of carrying the message of our spiritual solution to other sexual compulsives.

An SCA group’s use of routine commercial services, such as banking or printing services, does not constitute an endorsement of a service or a particular vendor, and SCA may use such services to assist its work in carrying its message.

It is often difficult to determine where cooperation with outside enterprises ends and endorsement begins. This is probably best determined on a case by case basis through the group conscience. For instance, many SCA intergroups invite outside speakers to events. If handled correctly, this can be a humble admission that we do not have all the answers to the problem of sexual compulsion, and that we remain open, as a fellowship, to listening to new ideas.

Several guidelines can be offered for cooperation with outside enterprises. Care should be taken to state explicitly to the enterprise and to the intended audience that such cooperation does not constitute an endorsement. Other suggestions are to monitor publicity around the cooperation and to ensure that we enter into no permanent relationships with outside entities.

SCA also has a long history of cooperation with other Twelve Step fellowships that carry the message of recovery to the sexual compulsive who still suffers. For example, SCA intergroups may cooperate with other fellowships’ intergroups in producing common meeting lists, thus carrying the SCA message of hope even further. As part of the same spiritual family, SCA also cooperates as may be appropriate with other Twelve Step fellowships that address areas other than sexual recovery.

Cooperation with outside enterprises should be reviewed on a regular basis. The following questions might be asked: has the outside enterprise changed its focus or methods since we began cooperating with it? Has it gotten into controversies, which might damage SCA’s reputation? Has the enterprise publicly misrepresented its relationship to SCA? Has the cooperation in fact been beneficial to our fellowship?

We should also be on the lookout that our motives do not revolve around “money, property and prestige.” Acting on such motives, grounded in fear and pride, is not conducive in the long run to the spiritual recovery of SCA members. In all our

actions, we are careful not to act when motivated by fear and pride, making sure that all our decisions are conducive to the spiritual recovery of SCA members.

Tradition 7:

“Every SCA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.”

The Seventh Tradition is about responsibility. Specifically, it is about financial responsibility. Part of addiction is an unwillingness to accept responsibility for one’s actions, to accept that there is a cause and effect relationship between acting out sexually and a multitude of negative consequences. It is as if—as active addicts—we wanted to live in a fantasy world: one in which the principle of reality has no effect. Recovery, by contrast, requires us as individuals, and as members of the group, to engage with reality. As part of taking responsibility for ourselves and our lives, Tradition Seven asks us, as individuals and as groups, to explore how we support ourselves, including our relationship to money. Moreover, it asks us to take responsibility for our financial independence. This involves the practical need to pay the rent, and other expenses for the group. Here we realize that the spirituality talked about in the Program is not a fantasy world in which we merely wish for a desired outcome, but that it actually involves planning, determined action and monetary support on our part.

At any SCA meeting in the world, including those hosted by electronic means, at some point in the meeting there will be an announcement or indication that we have a Seventh Tradition, as a call for contributions from members. When the basket, or hat, or envelope, or bag, or collection box comes around, or a contribution link or notice is displayed, members can contribute towards the group’s expenses. These can include not only group rent and refreshments, but also literature expenses, the funding of telephone lines, websites, social and recovery events, and paying contributions on to service bodies. Many group and service body websites will also have online contribution features. As members, the cost of our compulsion has often been great, including in monetary terms, and the financial cost of our Twelve Step recovery by comparison is minimal.

Tradition Seven also involves supporting SCA’s service bodies, which perform the work of the Fellowship beyond the levels of the individual and the group. When an SCA service body such as a local intergroup, a convention committee, or ISO needs funding, or contributions to them are being considered, it is important to note that they are not self-supporting groups within themselves. They are service bodies consisting of trusted servants, funded by and directly accountable to those they serve. Service bodies may accept direct contributions from SCA members, but will ideally establish an annual cap on individual donations and a maximum amount for one-time bequests in wills, so as to encourage broad support and avoid undue influence.

Sexual Compulsives Anonymous has a history of groups, intergroups, or ISO supporting newly- formed meetings. This is a way of carrying the message. Such meetings must, if they are to be healthy, duly progress to supporting themselves. Self-support, at a minimum, means paying rent and covering other group expenses out of group funds.

Part of being self-supporting includes being good stewards of the funds in our possession; therefore care ought to be taken when electing a Treasurer, or serving as Treasurer of a group, meeting, or service body. Our servants are trusted, but it is prudent for SCA groups at all levels to establish simple checks and balances to ensure program funds and property are well-maintained and accounted for.

The simplest interpretation of this Tradition is that groups cannot rely on any entity or individuals outside of SCA for monetary support. Contributions from outside the SCA Fellowship—of any size, but especially large ones—could entangle Sexual Compulsives Anonymous with other organizations that ask something in return for their money. By following this Tradition and being self-funding, as in all matters, SCA stays with its primary purpose – it does not have to be distracted by serving the goals of other organizations, or being subject to their influence.

Tradition Seven points us to the idea that “self-supporting” can also be taken to refer to our service needs, and the responsibility of filling service positions. SCA depends on service by individuals at all levels – personal, meeting, group, intergroup and ISO. If SCA is to thrive, members must of necessity step up to provide this support. Beyond service positions, support can be given to the group in other ways, for example, even by setting up chairs before a meeting. Attending meetings, honest sharing, and assisting other members in their recovery are also important forms of individual support for the group.

Regardless of these considerations, membership in SCA never depends on the amount of money a member can give to the group. If members are not in a position to make a financial contribution, it is important for them and others to remember that their presence at meetings is what matters. There are no dues or fees for membership; the only requirement for SCA membership is a desire to stop having compulsive sex.

Tradition 8:

“Sexual Compulsives Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.”

The SCA Statement of Purpose sets out that “Sexual Compulsives Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other, that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from sexual compulsion.” We are a spiritual recovery program, not a commercial enterprise or business. As such, our members are not professionals, but individuals

with the same problem helping each other to work the SCA Program on a voluntary basis. We carry the message of a spiritual awakening and a spiritual solution to each other, and others like us, free of charge, based on our experiences within SCA, and Twelve Step recovery.

Tradition Eight means that SCA's sponsorship and the rotating positions in the SCA service structures are not paid, or professional positions. Such positions do not require special education or highly specialized skills. Anyone who meets the requirements set by group conscience can hold these positions. Holding temporary offices does not elevate individuals to a special "professional" class within SCA.

Sponsorship is a tool of the Program, and it is not a professional relationship. We do not charge someone to sponsor them, nor do we pay someone to be our sponsor.

Sexual Compulsives Anonymous, although relying on volunteers for much of its service work, can employ special workers. It can do this when particular knowledge or skills are required, or when no volunteers exist to do work that is not covered by the rotating service structure. For instance, a group might pay a lawyer to look into insurance issues, an intergroup might employ an answering service, or ISO might hire a computer consultant or a translator. If members are asked to perform special jobs in SCA, it is permitted to pay them as we would non-members.

Some members of SCA come from or have gone into professional fields. These fields draw on knowledge from sources outside our program. To maintain clear boundaries, it is probably best for such individuals, especially in the areas of therapy, medicine and the law, if they wish to give professional advice to SCA members, to do so only within the confines of a professional consultation.

As SCA depends upon the rotation of volunteer service of its members to carry its message, when one's term of service is complete, every effort is made to train the person following in the position. Service positions may evolve over time, but we seek to ensure that transitions are as seamless as feasible. In this way, SCA is not disrupted in carrying its message to the sexual compulsive who still suffers.

Tradition 9:

"SCA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve."

SCA is not organized in the sense of a top-down structure. Instead, only necessary service structures are created, and they do not give directions to members of SCA. Service boards and committees exist to serve SCA, not to govern it. Intergroups are voluntary associations of local SCA meetings that work together on common projects. Each intergroup is directly responsible to the groups that it serves. Representatives from the groups guide intergroups -- not the other way around.

Likewise, any service committees formed by an intergroup are directly responsible to that intergroup.

In time, after SCA had grown to include meetings in several locations, the need arose for an umbrella service board to coordinate between the SCA groups and intergroups and be responsible for such things as maintaining a uniform, fellowship-wide body of approved literature. SCA's International Service Organization was therefore created. The International Service Organization of SCA is a service body intended to further the recovery of those who suffer from sexual compulsion, and aims to serve as the Trusted Servant of the SCA Fellowship. ISO is directly responsible to the intergroups and groups that belong to and support it.

SCA members serving in intergroups and in ISO should be viewed as "trusted servants." This means they should be trusted to make decisions without constantly consulting the groups. Like the groups, intergroups and ISO use their own group conscience process in making decisions. Ultimate authority in SCA lies in a loving God as may be expressed in our group conscience. Groups should use this authority prudently and with restraint.

Tradition 10:

"SCA has no opinion on outside issues; hence the SCA name ought never be drawn into public controversy."

No part of the SCA service structure should make public statements other than to describe our program of recovery. We should restrict ourselves to simple statements outlining the basics of SCA. We are especially careful, as a fellowship, not to express opinions on politics, social reform, laws regarding sexual offenses, religion, medicine, or specific therapeutic approaches. To express such opinions would inevitably bring us into public controversies that would divide our membership, divert us from our primary purpose, and perhaps alienate those seeking recovery from sexual compulsion.

Individual members are free to hold their own opinions on such matters, and to participate in public issues as they wish. They should be careful, though, not to involve SCA in any way. When members choose to share about such matters in meetings, we have only one suggestion. We suggest that they ask themselves what their motives are. If it is for a motive other than furthering their recovery, or if they are unsure of their motives, it may be best to talk with other members privately.

Tradition 11:

“Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, television and films.”

Under all circumstances, we maintain our anonymity at the level of the mass media. New types of media have been created since this Tradition was first written, and more may yet be invented. It has become necessary to define the term “mass media” in the most general sense. One definition is any form of communication that reaches a large, and indeterminate, group of people. At this level, it is important that we maintain personal anonymity. This is mainly because each individual member does not represent SCA as a whole. Our individual actions are not to be seen as to represent the whole message of the Program. Otherwise, this may affect the ability of SCA to carry its message. We also maintain anonymity to keep our humility – that is, we see ourselves as equal to other members of SCA, neither better nor worse.

In Sexual Compulsives Anonymous, we maintain “personal anonymity,” not “program anonymity.” We reach out to the general public and to specific organizations to ensure that people know about our program of recovery. If we are approached for information from the mass media, we provide it. We can even publish advertisements in places appropriate for Twelve Step programs. When we do this, our message is descriptive and educational. We do not make overblown claims or use celebrity endorsements. We trust that some people will find SCA attractive and contact us, or seek out a meeting.

Tradition 12:

“Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.”

Tradition Twelve is the “spiritual foundation of all our traditions” perhaps because, like other spiritual principles, it takes practice to uphold. Moreover, what we have come to practice in recovery is humility. This is humility in the sense of seeing ourselves as we truly are. We are able to do this because we have, by means of the Twelve Steps, worked in partnership with a Higher Power to uncover a self that is distinct from our character defects. Once we have worked the Steps, we are able to view others and ourselves with proper perspective, and compassion. We become “right-sized,” recognizing unhealthy ego for the spiritual trap it is.

What we want to try to avoid is acting out on our character defects in meetings and in relation to the Fellowship. Frequently, this acting out is caused by deep-seated shame that leads to either perfectionism or grandiosity or, alternatively, to overdependence on others. Many of us also have a ferocious appetite for attention, or a powerful drive for recognition or status. All of these character defects can

produce conflict within the groups. None of us is totally free from our defects, so the potential for conflict is always present. This Tradition is a gentle reminder of this fact, and a suggestion that we become aware of the principles behind the Traditions so that we act counter to our defects as they may manifest themselves in the group. We want to avoid letting our personalities get in the way of the principles of recovery that we and others need for our survival.

In a spiritual sense, anonymity means that the whole of the Program is even greater than the sum of its parts. This is significant for us in SCA because it guarantees the survival of the groups, and the Fellowship as an entity. We are reminded that no one individual, and no one group, is more important than SCA as a whole.

Anonymity means we generally do not identify ourselves as members of SCA by name publicly to people outside of the Fellowship. This certainly needs to be categorical at the level of mass media, but most often members will keep their anonymity in public in general. Within the Fellowship, there is no need to maintain personal anonymity, but if a member wishes to do so, we respect their choice. If we encounter public figures at meetings, we are especially careful to preserve their anonymity.

In doing service for a group or service board, individual members necessarily deal with the everyday world, and will sometimes likely need to disclose their identity and provide their full names on behalf of the group. We may have to disclose our membership in SCA in situations such as when making arrangements to rent space to hold a meeting, dealing with financial institutions, or doing specific outreach work to carry the SCA message. This is in keeping with Traditions Eleven and Twelve: maintaining anonymity here is a question of personal comfort for the individual member.

The same applies to certification of attendance at SCA meetings for court-ordered attendees. It is a group conscience decision for a particular group whether or not to accommodate such requests from members, and each group and individual member is free to decide whether or not to sign certificates of attendance, thereby disclosing their identity.

Regardless of what we choose to do with our own anonymity, we do not identify who we see in meetings, or those we know to attend SCA meetings, to people outside of the Fellowship. This keeps the program safe for members and prospective members to attend.

Anonymity also protects us from gossip and criticism. Mutual respect is fundamental to our shared recovery. The SCA Closing Statement reminds us that what is said by individuals at a particular meeting should be treated as confidential. This maintains the integrity and safety of intimate self-disclosure.

Anonymity is the mechanism which maximizes our focus and minimizes issues of "money, property or prestige" and anything else which would endanger "our primary purpose." Sometimes we are selective about who and what we listen to, and tend to judge the rest. However, following the Twelfth Tradition as the very foundation of our Fellowship's existence ensures the continuation of that existence. The benefit reaped from this is a deepening sense of humility, inevitable when we truly view each other as equal in recovery.

Speakers at SCA meetings sometimes ask the group to listen to the message rather than focus on the messenger. Others ask that the group identify with the feelings rather than the facts, or that they "take what they need and leave the rest." These examples of anonymity help to foster an atmosphere of openness, mutual support and community. Members can both share freely and identify with what is shared.

Indeed, anonymity is a powerful vehicle of transformation that allows the members of a group to experience healing through a collective consciousness. Some of us have harbored intense rage, fear and sadness in our compulsion, and the opportunity finally to express and release these feelings in a meeting is the relief of a lifetime. Through the anonymity offered at meetings, we find a refuge where we are neither judged nor shamed.

"Principles before personalities" allows members to strongly disagree at a business meeting, and support each other in recovery afterward. When the principles of the Program are valued above all else, SCA thrives. This preserves "our common welfare" and helps the Fellowship to grow. This brings us around full circle to our First Tradition: "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon SCA unity."

(Extract from "The Twelve Traditions of Sexual Compulsives Anonymous" © SCA-ISO)