

COMMENTARIES ON THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF SCA

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.”¹ 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 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 Step² work for an individual, it is important to consider discussion at SCA

¹ *Alcoholics Anonymous* – “Into Action,” page 85.

² 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.”

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.³ 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.

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

³ "Four Obstacles to Success," *SCA - A Program of Recovery* © SCA-ISO