



Plain Brown Rapper

THE SAA NEWSLETTER

APRIL 1996

Vol.8, No.4

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Recovery Toolbox

Resentment & Forgiveness

by Jan H.

Resentment is a major obstacle to my recovery and hampers my happiness when I harbor it. It is something that I must deal with if I am to maximize recovery, and be comfortable with myself and others.

Anger is an emotion that occurs when something happens to me that I feel is unfair. If I deserved the painful thing that happened, I usually do not get angry about it because I warranted the pain. However, if I did not deserve it, if I feel it was unfair, then I become angry. This is normal. If the anger does not abate, though, with time it grows into resentment.

I find resentment is a deep, long-term anger or bitterness. To deal with the resentment, I have to deal with the unfairness issue. Probably the best way for me to do this is to discuss the matter with the person who caused the pain. If I cannot do this, discussing it with another person is helpful. I should not complain to that person, but I can share the situation and my pain. Of course, I also need to discuss it with my Higher Power.

In prayer, I find it does help when I ask my Higher Power to bless the person I resent [see pages 551-553 in the *Big Book*—Ed.]

Wishing well for someone makes it hard to continue to hate them. I must talk out the resentment, or I will act out the emotions. The feelings come out either way.

Part of the process of healing includes grieving over the situation. What happened (or continues to happen) was bad and painful, but nothing can directly change that now. I must go through a grieving process and eventually come to accept what happened. I must forgive the person who hurt me, put it behind me, and move on. I cannot ignore or foster resentment. The feelings are very powerful and I will act out if I don't deal with them.

While forgiveness and confrontation are not easy, they can be done (and it gets easier with practice). I must not forget that I, too, have hurt others and stand in need of forgiveness. I really want to be more concerned with how I can make an amends for my hurtful actions than how others have hurt me. However, if I have resentful feelings, I must deal with them too.

I think the ability to forgive others and to forgive myself comes from the same place out of my personality. If I do not forgive others, I do not forgive myself. If I do not forgive myself, I do not forgive others. Forgiveness does

Recovery Toolbox

not come easy to me. It is something that I must learn, and so my Higher Power brings into my life opportunities to learn to forgive. As I learn, it becomes easier to walk in forgiveness of others and myself. This does take time, effort, and practice.

***If I do not forgive others,
I do not forgive myself.
If I do not forgive myself,
I do not forgive others.***

In the wintertime, my wood-burning stove constantly requires that I feed it a steady daily supply of wood. Its appetite is undying. If I neglect it, the stove produces no warmth. Eventually, however,

spring comes and the stove's demands become less important.

So it is with forgiveness. Initially, it is demanding work, requiring attention on a daily basis. With time and practice it becomes easier. The hurt and pain caused by my actions and the actions of others will always be there, but the anger and desire for revenge do eventually dissipate. God has forgiven my enemy and He has forgiven me. If I refuse to forgive, it means that I think I know it better than God. This is an arrogant position! Since God has forgiven, it means that I must learn to forgive as well. This is not an easy task, but with His help it is one that I can master.

by Jan H.

Breaking the Vicious Cycle

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that my life had become unmanageable.

That was the starting point, and today I've accepted the fact that the child I was couldn't have been responsible for the belief system handed to her, but the adult today is. I can choose to work on deprogramming myself, and I have chosen this, for it is a very necessary part of my recovery.

No one who feels their self-worth is equal to another's seeks out abuse. Nor do they continu-

ally seek out relationships that perpetuate old abusive patterns. I had no inner peace when I viewed myself as a failure. So, today's reward for me is a little of that peace that eluded me all those years—and tomorrow's reward may be a relationship truly giving on both sides, full of acceptance and wondrous discovery. It is at least possible today, whereas it used to be only a dream.

Anonymous

Features

Amazing Grace

by Mike T.

In the past, after I masturbated, I would sometimes get a feeling of sadness, of waste, and of futility. This would normally occur in connection with the sight of my semen spiraling down the drain after I jacked off in the shower, or being flushed down the toilet, or wadded up in a tissue and thrown into the waste basket. I would often briefly consider the fact that millions of tiny sperm cells, each containing the seed of life, were going pointlessly to waste. If I thought about it, it seemed to me to be a heartless, pitiful, perverted devaluation of the great miracle of life.

Yet I continued in my ways. I never stopped. I told myself (or, more accurately, my addict told me) that I was just falling prey to silly Christian moralizing. I thought I should be beyond such nonsense, that I should be rational and recognize that my semen and my sperm were nothing more than chemical compounds. Guilt would serve no purpose for me. I was a modern man, capable of living in a higher world, where such sentiments were useless and even harmful.

Now I see that all along God was trying to tell me something. The vision of my semen and my sperm going down the drain or

into the garbage was a very meaningful symbol. When I flushed away my life-giving fluids or put them out with the garbage, I was in fact throwing away life—my own life. Acting out with pornography and masturbation was destroying me, slowly but surely.

Several years ago, I quit trying to overcome my desires. I finally surrendered my will to my addict. I came to believe that I would never be able to stop acting out and that it was foolish to try. I capitulated and accepted my addict's contention that there was no God, no right or wrong, no meaning to life. I decided that feeling guilty was a waste of time. I was a highly sexual being, perhaps more in touch with my passions than other men, and there was nothing wrong with that. If society would not accept me as I was, that was their fault. The blame was with them. I could justify my actions. Sure, in order to appease the powers that be, I would play a role. I'd go along with the game and act like I was a good little boy, but I didn't have to believe it.

But still the image haunted me. I could not escape the knowledge that every time I ejaculated, countless cells designed expressly for the purpose of creating life

were being wasted. I discarded my miracle fluids as if they were trash or excrement. I was, in fact, throwing away my own life.

When I gave up, I died. My addict took over my life. Because my addict is so cunning, I was allowed to maintain the delusion that I could keep my sexual desires and activities under some sort of control. I was convinced by my addict that what I was doing was harmless, and that the tiny escalations in my illicit and shameful behavior would hurt no one as long as no one knew. My real life had actually ended. I was dead.

Now, in SAA, I am challenged to admit that I have lost control, that I am powerless over my compulsive sexual behavior, and that my life has become unmanageable. This is much easier to do when I realize that I never was in control. All along it has been my addict who was in control. My addict allowed me to have the illusion of control because it perpetuated the addiction. The fantasy that I was in charge of my life made it seem safe to continue acting out.

At this point, surrendering my will to God is not really giving up control, because I have never had control. In reality, I am simply transferring the responsibility for my life from my addict to God. I obviously can't do it myself. I know God can. Please, God, help me.

When I put God in charge, I find that His grace gives me strength I never would have imagined possible. I am able to step out from behind the shadow of my addict and live again. I once was lost, but now I'm found. I was dead, but now I live!

***Acting out with pornography
and masturbation was
destroying me, slowly but
surely.***

Thank you, God, for leading me to SAA. Thank you for continuing to care about me even after I had given up on you. Thank you for providing such a wonderful fellowship of men and women who understand me, who accept me, and who love me. Thank you, God, for bringing me back to life.

Mike T.



Features

Breaking the Vicious Cycle

by Anonymous

A large part of my recovery process has been (and still is) determining my own patterns of behavior in relationships. This is a real challenge, for determining these patterns requires sorting through memories another part of me would prefer to keep buried; it requires unwavering self-honesty, and a lot of willingness on my part to change the things that I can today.

After countless failed relationships and my addictions reaching full-blown proportions repeatedly, I entered SAA truly 'broken'. I was ready to accept powerlessness, God's help, and to weed through the broken shards of my life and recall what my belief system had been. Then, and only then, could I make any sense of the chaos that followed me into adulthood. I knew that in order to make any real, lasting changes in my life today, I had to look squarely at these old beliefs about myself and others—I had to challenge them, exorcise them. Only then could I truly start anew and attain any semblance of serenity, healthy intimacy, or ability to use the tools of the program to empower myself.

I began with a list of my beliefs as a child, and a list of occurrences that perpetuated those beliefs. It looked like this:

Abuse: Abuse was given because I couldn't be "perfect." It also occurred when one parent was angry with the other.

Tenderness: Only occurred (if then) after abuse, and if I tried hard to attain "perfection."

Unspoken message: No abuse would occur if/when perfection was attained, thus needs (tenderness, nurturing) would be given then. i.e., "love" was conditional, temporary, and you'd better grab it when you can.

Perfection: Keeping Peace between parents. To ask for nothing. To think/act only as others wished.

Facts I Know Today: Perfection could never be attained. Peace between parents was not my job. Power to influence peace was not real (a lie). Sex doesn't equal love/forgiveness.

In order to truly understand the patterns in my adult life, I had to look at the patterns of chaos and the feelings evoked and suppressed back then.

It was a vicious cycle: A fight between my parents fed my remorse and feeling "imperfect" due to the fight (I thought I should

have power to prevent). My Mom's anger at my Dad was projected on me in the form of physical abuse, which led to my feeling inadequate and needing nurturing. This neediness escalated my Mom's anger, which resulted in more abuse and imposed solitude. This led to my feeling unworthy of love/tenderness. Sexual abuse from Dad during my imposed solitude made me feel that I needed protection. But if I was "perfect" I believed my needs would be met, because Mom responded to 'model' behavior and gave me pseudo-nurturing to ease her guilt until the crisis passed. Then the cycle repeated.

My belief that I was to blame for those crises, and that the abuse was my fault, created a person who "jumped through hoops" to please others. My self-imposed list of responsibilities was enormous and included the emotional conditions and actions of others. My mind fled into fantasies to escape my burdens as a child—fantasies that dealt with my being abused, and then "forgiven." Forgiveness was never free in my world.

Unwittingly, I continued these patterns in adult life, and I began to force the fantasies into reality. My relationships with men were all with addicts, many of whom were abusive. My belief system was still the same: abuse occurred because I couldn't attain

perfection. Sex afterwards was the price tag for "forgiveness." Perfection meant to keep the peace, ask for nothing, and think/act only as he wished. And finally, I was really unworthy of love and tenderness because I kept 'failing.'

I had no inner peace when I viewed myself as a failure.

Because I gave others such power, and because I kept 'failing' (which could be anything—a fight, an unpaid bill, an unspoken word, some need I didn't provide), I continuously felt this unconscious need of forgiveness. Since forgiveness wasn't free (sex was the price), my life was a series of crisis, arguments, abuse, and sex. Then I learned that there were men whose sexual fantasies were like mine—they were turned on by abusing me and then having sex. So, I could cut out the arguments with partners—I didn't even need partners anymore. There were men all over the country who would pay me to endure less than what I'd endured at home.

So, my addiction of pain and pleasure became full-blown, and my true inner need for spiritual healing and unconditional love fell by the wayside. When I walked into SAA, broken by years of this lifestyle, I was weary of the lies and finally able to concede

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Features

Living A Graceful Life by Rich W.

I've tried shame and found it wanting,
for a life unaware of grace,
is a life out of touch with hope.

Are there then alternatives?

What of a love unearned,
unconditional, undeserved,
given without expected return?

By the grace of God,
there can be a lack of harsh judgement,
forgiveness may distinguish a person from a behavior.

Through the experience of this grace,
I can allow God to work within me,
knowing my imperfections are accepted.

When I receive God's grace,
strength and integrity grow within me,
my actions become more fluid,
like those of a cloud dancer.

Faith cleans the dirty window,
releasing bright light,
illuminating the present,
presenting me with a clearer view.

I can live more in line with God's will for me.

As I read God's instructions,
already written on my heart,
promises are fulfilled.

January 26, 1996

Plain Brown Rapper
Fellowship Forum
PBR Editor,
c/o NSO of SAA
P.O. Box 70949
Houston, TX 77270

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Sex Addiction:

Hello, my name is Glenn and I am a sex addict. I am writing somewhat out of desperation and also with a desire to try something new.

First the desperation: I first began to attend SAA meetings over two years ago. There were anywhere from four to seven members meeting once a week, and the meetings were very meaningful. Now there is only me, showing up once a week, only to be greeted by the empty parking lot. Since joining the group, I have probably answered over 25 inquiries about the group. Of these, I talked to maybe four on the phone and actually met three. Of the three I met, they attended only one to five meetings. So, does anyone have any suggestions on how to answer initial inquiries so as to draw the inquirers to a meeting?

Second, something new: My bottom line behavior is exhibitionism. I am interested in corresponding with other exhibitionists. It does not matter to me if you have experienced a prolonged period of sobriety or if you suffer with slips on a regular basis. I envision five to ten of us sharing correspondence, getting to know each other, and possibly within a year actually getting together for a weekend. I know that we are to view all sexual addiction in the same light, but I admit to feeling a little more shame in the group when admitting to a slip with regards to exhibitionism, versus pornography, mental fantasy, etc.

I hope to hear from someone soon with regards to either of the two topics.

Your brother in recovery,

Glenn SAA
P.O. Box 10453
Blacksburg, VA 24062

Forum

Our fellowship is growing, but should it grow younger?

By Mark N./Outreach Trustee

S.A.A is growing. This is evident in the reality of our new South American Region, in the new meetings that are beginning all over Europe, by new meetings in our home states, and by the many changes we have observed in the way we conduct fellowship business, particularly at the 1995 National Convention. We are able today to address the issues that concern us without any large amount of in-fighting and hostility; we are able to invoke the twelfth tradition and "Place principles above personalities." All of these are signs of growth, and are positive signs for our continued growth as we "Carry the Message."

In December of '95, I received a call from Jerry B., the N.S.O. Office Manager, regarding an inquiry from an S.A.A member from California, Debra F., who had received a request from an adolescent female to attend meetings. This young lady, approximately fifteen years of age, had a history of anonymous sexual contacts in public parks. The possibility of victimization of a minor became an immediate concern. Equally alarming was the thought that perhaps if minors did attend S.A.A. meetings, perhaps group members who could be triggered by young people might

stop attending if they no longer felt safe.

There are other possible ramifications as well. One is that if a victimization of a minor after a meeting did take place, then perhaps a lawsuit against the fellowship as a whole could happen. I had a conversation with the Prosecuting Attorney for the Juvenile Court in Grand Rapids during which he told me that such a lawsuit could be a distinct possibility. It would not be illegal for juveniles to attend meetings, but in the event that any victimization took place we could have a problem. I believe we should seek legal counsel in this matter.

Perhaps an age requirement should be adopted. If it were adopted, then 18 would be the minimum age requirement that we could establish to eliminate any legal repercussions should a young person be victimized. Such an age requirement would of course be a violation of our third tradition as it now stands.

I also wonder how many people in our fellowship have wished what I have wished: if only I could have found recovery sooner, then my life might have been different. I can't go back in time—no one can—but a youngster doesn't have to. Should we decide to allow young people to

attend our meetings, why then perhaps they could avoid the many years of fear and self-hatred and isolation that so many of us have suffered. This is, I believe, worthy of our careful consideration.

In the state of Michigan, our fellowship does conduct meetings at the W.J. Maxey school for Boys. This is not a prison, as it is run by the Department of Social Services, but the boys are all committed there by the Juvenile Court system in Michigan. It was my privilege to facilitate the start of the meeting at Maxey, and to take part in the presentations of our fellowship to the young men and to the staff that got us accepted to their facility. The meetings at Maxey have been taking place for over a year now. The volunteers who are currently active at Maxey include: Dan D., Alan C., Steve T., all of Ann Arbor S.A.A., and Dave T. and Den M. of Brighton S.A.A.

We were told by some people that young people would have very little comprehension of the issues of sex addiction, and would have very poor attention spans. We found out different at our very first presentation. This presentation took about two hours, as we first talked about sexual addiction and recovery from sexual addiction, followed by the personal stories of two S.A.A. members, and a question-and-answer period. The young men, some forty in number, gave us their full

attention. For most of them, this was the first time that anybody had ever talked *with* them, and not at them, about "The Problem." The group members at Maxey continue to impress us with their honesty and their understanding of the tools of the program. It should be stressed, though, that this is a controlled group where the volunteers are screened by the facility. It is not an open meeting.

The N.S.O. Board of Trustees has created a committee to research the question of minors attending meetings. Any information from your local groups regarding any experiences with minors in the fellowship would be greatly appreciated. Any thoughts or feelings that you as fellowship members would care to share with the Board would be appreciated as well. Please send any information to the N.S.O.

If you wish to speak to me personally, my telephone number can be obtained from the N.S.O. I will return all calls. I believe that the greater the amount of input we receive about this, the more enlightened will be our solution.

God Bless You All.
Mark N.

Announcements

FRIENDS OF THE LITERATURE COMMITTEE (FOLC)

The Literature Committee is made up of elected representatives, an alternate from each region, up to three at-large representatives, and the Editor of the *PBR*. We want to involve more SAA members in literature-related work. Connect to the network of people helping to create and distribute recovery literature. Fill out the form below and send it to:

Friends of the Literature Committee,
c/o NSO of SAA, P.O. Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270.

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone: (____) _____ - _____ FAX: (____) _____ - _____
E-Mail Address: _____
Intergroup: _____
Do you have a computer? <input type="checkbox"/> MAC <input type="checkbox"/> PC <input type="checkbox"/> Modem?
Friends of the Literature Committee (FOLC)

Some projects we're working on:

- *Plain Brown Rapper*—increase the distribution of the *PBR* in local areas and intergroups, and finding local group or intergroup news contacts
- A booklet on sponsorship
- A short guide to working the 12 Steps
- A book on the 12 Steps (to be published in 1997)
- Translations of our literature into Spanish and French (we are looking for translators as well as reviewers of material already translated)
- Do you have any ideas for new literature?

Send us your ideas or literature you have published for use by your meeting or intergroup.

SUBSCRIBE TO THE *PLAIN BROWN RAPPER*

The *PBR* includes news of the worldwide fellowship of Sex Addicts Anonymous, stories of recovery, the experience of the fellowship in working the 12 Steps, outreach, service work, and more. The *PBR* is our journal and a vehicle for communication. In its pages, through the shared experience, strength, and hope of our fellowship, we aim to provide gifts for your recovery and serenity. \$12/year (\$18/year outside the U.S.)

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