

## Options For Tri-State

### Stay Affiliated with National SA

Here are three alternatives under this option:

■ **Keep the Status Quo.** Tri-State could continue its affiliation with National SA and accept our outsider status. We could continue not to have our sobriety definition stated, and continue to wait for National SA to accept a broader sobriety definition, which appears unlikely. This option leaves Tri-State waiting for others to change.

■ **Go Public with Our Definition.** Tri-State could openly state and publish our sobriety definition. This could result in legal intervention from National SA as threatened in the letters quoted above.

■ **Have it National's Way.** Discard our sobriety definition and accept National SA's definition of sobriety. This might cause a significant number of members to drop out of SA in New York. Recently this occurred in Long Island, where a number of SA meetings changed program affilia-

tion to Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous.

### Start Our Own Sexual Recovery Program

This choice would allow us to openly use our sobriety definition, write our own literature, choose our own name (e.g. Sexual Sobriety Anonymous), etc. This choice (i) would give us a fresh start without fear of conflict with other regions, (ii) would allow us not to discriminate against members on the basis of sexual orientation and (iii) would let us abide by the Twelve Traditions in all our affairs. However, this choice might require a long start-up process.

### Affiliate with Another Existing Sexual Recovery Program

■ **"Sex Plan" Type Programs.** There are three existing sexual recovery programs in which the members define their own sobriety: Sexual Compulsives Anonymous, Sex Addicts Anonymous and Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous.

To varying degrees, these programs are similar to Overeaters Anonymous in that the members determine what behavior is "acting out" for themselves, then try to live within these guidelines with the help and support of their Twelve Step fellowship. Unlike our view of sobriety, theirs lacks a statement that certain behavior is clearly not sober (e.g., masturbation).

■ **Other Programs Similar to Tri-State.** We could change our affiliation to another existing program that (i) has a sobriety definition similar to our own and with which we are comfortable, (ii) would not discriminate against members on the basis of sexual orientation and (iii) would abide by the Twelve Traditions in all its affairs, including the development and use of group conscience. Such a new affiliation would end our conflict with National SA, and would keep the Tri-State fellowship intact, while avoiding disruption, dislocation and possible legal action. This choice would not require a long start-up process.

## Recommendations of Tri-State Intergroup

As we look at ourselves in light of the above and we compare ourselves to the other Twelve Step recovery programs, we have to honestly admit we are not SA, nor are we a program in which members define their own sobriety. Moreover, in examining these sexual recovery programs, their definitions of sobriety, and their spiritual points of view, it is clear we are already, in essence, Sexual Recovery Anonymous. Therefore, for the reasons that follow and in a desire to keep the Tri-State fellowship together, we recommend that the members of Tri-State change their program affiliation to Sexual Recovery Anonymous.

### Reasons for Affiliating with Sexual Recovery Anonymous

■ The Sexual Recovery Anonymous fellowship ("SRA") is the alternative to SA that matches what we are already practicing in New York.

Unlike other sexual recovery programs (Sexual Compulsives Anonymous, Sex Addicts Anonymous and Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous) in which the mem-

bers define their own sobriety, SRA has a clear sobriety definition:

"Sobriety is the release from all compulsive and destructive sexual behaviors. We have found through our experience that sobriety includes freedom from masturbation and sex outside of a mutually committed relationship."

The definition is clear and simple. It mirrors and affirms our experience and beliefs in Tri-State. First, we have chosen the path of a clear definition because we know that for us, sex with self is not optional, it is part of our compulsive and sexually destructive behavior. Second, sex between individuals in a mutually committed relationship need not lead to sexual acting out any more than sex between couples in a "legal heterosexual marriage."

Although the term "committed relationship" is not as specific as "legal heterosexual marriage," it does describe the nature of a partnership which supports healthy and sober sexuality. Married or

not, people in sexual relationships all face the same problem of staying sober while being sexual with their partner.

Marriage is no guarantee that sex in the relationship will not trigger more acting out or that the sex in a marriage will not be addictive in and of itself. The evidence is very clear that addicts in marriages have slips and act out sexually as frequently as addicts in committed relationships. It is also clear that addicts in any relationships can be in denial about their commitment and in turn be in denial about their true sobriety.

SRA states the following about sexuality, addiction and committed relationships:

"Is there any sex which is not addictive? We believe that spirituality is an antidote to the addiction. Sex which expresses mutual love between people is the beginning of healthy sexuality. Scrupulous honesty is needed to assure that the addictive process does not enter the relationship, because addicts can rationalize anything to avoid feelings."

"In keeping with the spirituality of Twelve Step programs, we do not feel we have the right to tell you what a mutually committed relationship is. If your choice is not right, you will soon find that out. With the knowledge of what is not healthy for you, you can make the changes necessary."

**SRA is committed to being a spiritual program and not a moralistic program**

The following quote is from the SRA Welcoming Pamphlet:

"'Mutually committed relationship' is all inclusive regardless of sexual orientation. We are working toward the formation of a spiritual program rather than a moralistic one. We are walking towards a healthy sexuality."

When a definition of sexual sobriety re-

quires marriage it makes a moral judgment on those in committed relationships who have not chosen to marry or are unable to do so legally. In the spirit of the Twelve Traditions, moral judgments are best left to the individual's conscience and omitted from the precepts of the program.

There are those who say "we are only following our experience about marriage being necessary for sobriety." In response, we say that they are ignoring the experience in Tri-State. Being in a committed relationship and being sober is possible. It exists today in our fellowship. Conversely, legal marriage is absolutely no guarantee of sexual sobriety.

**SRA is Open to Group Conscience**

Tri-State members will have a full say in the SRA fellowship. Members and

groups of SRA are committed to creating a General Service Board to address the needs of the membership. A General Service Board ensures that "there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience." This ensures that principles remain before personalities.

■ SRA describes our addiction (disease) without using the word "lust." It describes our disease with terms such as sexual compulsivity and sexual obsession. These terms are devoid of moral judgment. This program encourages us to take moral responsibility for our actions—consistent with other Twelve Step programs—without promoting moral judgments.

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## Conclusion

Tri-State Intergroup has sought to evaluate the continuing rift with National SA, the options for its resolution and the needs of the Tri-State fellowship. Obviously, no single solution will satisfy everyone and the final choice must be left to the individual meetings and ultimately to the conscience of each individual member. We feel that one option best serves the needs of the Tri-State fellowship and best resolves our conflict. We

recommend a new affiliation with SRA and a severance of ties to National SA, whose narrow sobriety definition restricts our membership and encourages discrimination.

SRA promotes a sobriety definition which emphasizes the spiritual commitment in a relationship rather than the legal commitment. SRA would embrace our members whose partnerships fall outside

of a legal marriage. While National SA has no mechanism to take a nationwide group conscience on this subject, SRA is eager to employ group conscience on all matters of importance.

Finally, a new affiliation with SRA can resolve our conflicts peacefully and provide us with the least disturbance to the continuing recovery of those in our fellowship.

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## Fellowship-Wide Examination and Discussion

**Tri-State SA Fellowship-Wide Meetings and Group Census**

According to the Twelve Traditions, the issue of affiliation must be decided on a meeting-by-meeting basis. SA Tri-State Intergroup cannot dictate to the meetings; it can only recommend. It is important for everyone to have all of the information about Tri-State's situation in order to make an informed decision.

■ **Distribution of this report.** In an effort to eliminate rumors, Tri-State Intergroup recommends that copies of this report be distributed to all SA meetings immediately.

■ **Fellowship-Wide Meeting.** After this report has been available to the fellow-

ship for a minimum of two (2) weeks, the first of two (2) fellowship-wide meetings would be held to formally present and discuss the issues raised in this report. A brief presentation will be made, followed by a fellowship-wide discussion. No action will be taken at this first meeting. Its purpose is strictly informational.

■ **The Second Fellowship-Wide Meeting and the Group Census.** The second meeting should be held at least two weeks later to allow members time to consider the issues raised by the first meeting. After a period of discussion, this second meeting would take a non-binding "sense of the fellowship" vote. The purpose of a "sense of the fellowship vote" is to help us, as a fellowship, proceed with the least

amount of disruption. The outcome of this group conscience would give everyone a sense of where we are going. Should we keep our affiliation with National SA? Should we charter our own fellowship? Should we affiliate with SRA?

■ **Group Conscience.** After the second meeting, each individual meeting would be asked to vote on the issues. This vote would be the final decision. Once the individual meeting had decided, that meeting's Intergroup representative would report the group conscience at the next Intergroup meeting. Tri-State Intergroup could then implement the group consciences of the meetings, e.g., form a transition committee, etc.