

# SOS International Newsletter



Jim Christopher

## Special 21st Anniversary Edition

### *Reaffirming the SOS Self-Empowerment Approach to Recovery*

by Jim Christopher, SOS Founder

**H**ooray! I've recently celebrated my twenty-eighth year of freedom from alcohol/drugs *without* AA and am so looking forward to the SOS 21st Anniversary Conference (see conference ad, page 3)!

Thousands of individuals have exuberantly participated in SOS self-empowerment support groups, seminars, workshops and conferences internationally throughout these years, and I've had the honor and privilege to meet and work with many of these folks-in-recovery.

Open-minded cutting edge research scientists, treatment professionals in the addictive disorders, court systems, correctional facilities, universities, electronic and print media representatives have all embraced the SOS alternative to the 12-step religion-in-denial. Yet the majority of our nation's recovery entities continue to ignore and deliberately block all alternatives to AA, including SOS, Women for Sobriety, and SMART Recovery. Why? I've done some long-term snooping and I will share this information in my new book, *12 Steps to Murder: Why I Left AA, Got Sober on My*

*Own and Founded SOS*, to be published in 2007.

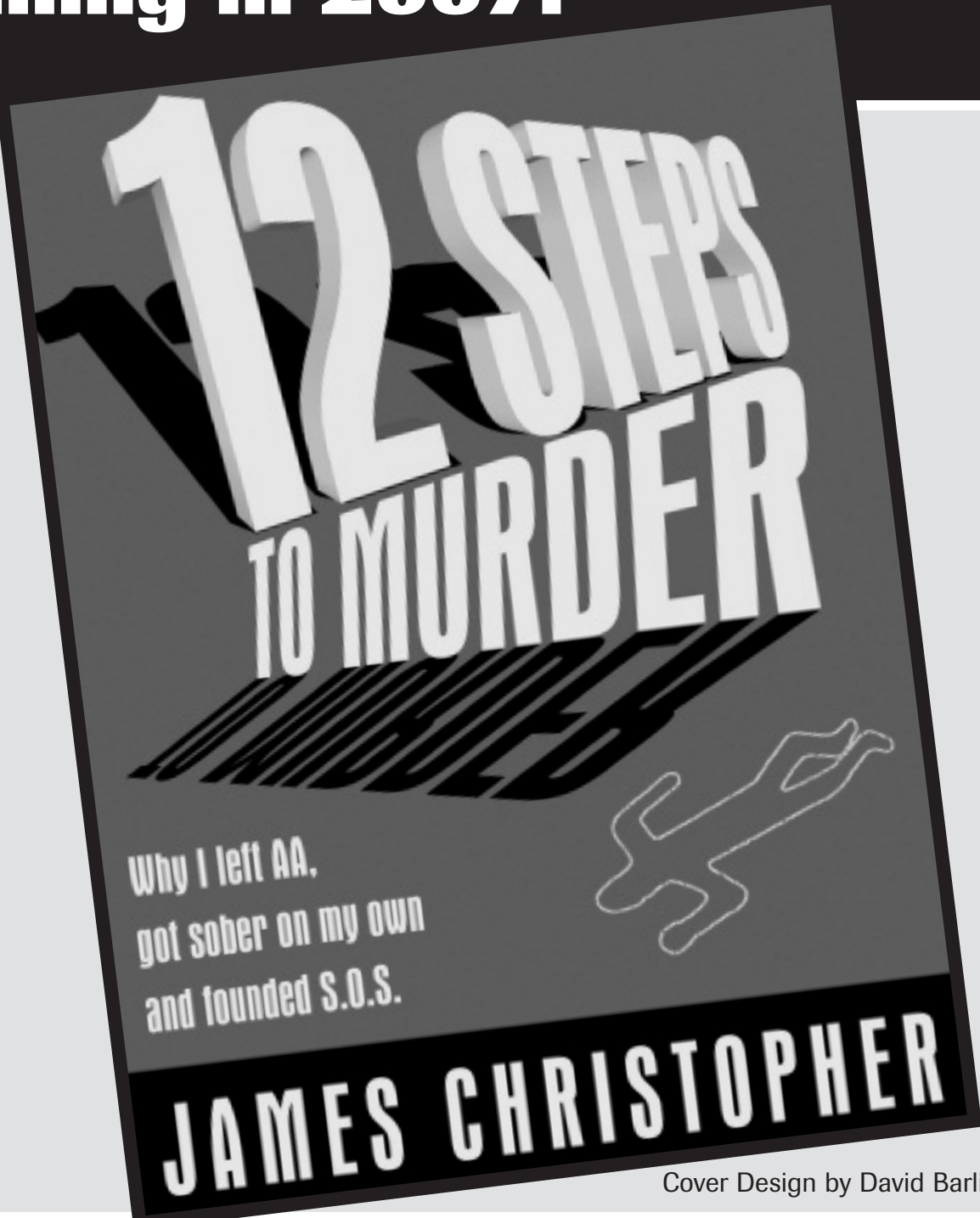
I'll be reading selected excerpts from my new book-in-progress at our aforementioned conference (see book cover design and particulars, page 2).

Courageous freethinking individuals have pioneered SOS in-person meetings—against all odds—throughout these twenty-one years and numerous SOS cyberspace / SOS e-support groups / SOS web sites have also been painstakingly constructed and maintained by caring folks who went against the heavy hand of AA entrenchment, eschewing dependency, opting for self-empowerment and human support.

Reaffirming the SOS self-empowerment approach in this special 21st Anniversary Edition of the SOS International Newsletter, I've selected and adapted excerpts from my first book, *How to Stay Sober: Recovery Without Religion* (Amherst, NY; Prometheus Books, 1988). (See page 4.)

We're in a brand new century and *real* change—in the treatment of the addictive disorders—is here!

**New Book . . . .  
Coming in 2007!**



Cover Design by David Barlia

Jim Christopher will read selected excerpts from his new book-in-progress: *12 Steps to Murder: Why I Left AA, Got Sober on My Own and Founded SOS* at the SOS 21st Anniversary Conference, Saturday November 18th, 2007.

**DON'T MISS IT!**

(see SOS Conference ad on next page)

## SOS International / Secular Organizations for Sobriety / Save Our Selves

**“SOS 2006: 21 Years of Service in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century!”**

PRESENTS

# SOS INTERNET FRIENDS FACE-TO-FACE 2006 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

**Saturday, November 18 — 10 AM-4:30 PM**

Steve Allen Theater, Center for Inquiry-West  
4773 Hollywood Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90027



Hosted by **Duaine Metevia**, SOS International Webmaster ([www.sossobriety.org](http://www.sossobriety.org)) and **Jim Christopher**, Founder, SOS International; and SOS E-support Group Representatives

### REGISTRATION IS FREE!

SOS Internet Friends from around the world will meet face-to-face in Hollywood! Registration is **FREE** for this exciting conference/workshop to be held one day only in the Steve Allen Theater, Center for Inquiry-West, home of SOS International. **There is NO CHARGE for this special event, registration is FREE.**

### ALL SOS FRIENDS ARE INVITED!

SOS Internet Friends from across the globe will share from the podium, onstage, in the famed Steve Allen Theater, with folks they've conversed with online over the years and, of course, our SOS in-person group members, our friends from Women for Sobriety, SMART Recovery, and other support groups—who have a friendly working relationship with SOS International—will also actively participate. Supportive treatment professionals in the addictive disorders will attend and provide updates regarding their individual cutting-edge projects, including:

**DR. RANDOLPH ATKINS**, Ph.D., Research Scientist, The Walsh Group, Bethesda, MD  
**DR. JOHN LANGROD**, Ph.D., ACSW, Director of Admissions and Evaluation, Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University, Bronx, NY; Member, SOS International Advisory Board  
**BARRY SOLOF**, M.D., Fellow, American Society of Addiction Medicine; Regional Chief, Kaiser Permanente, Los Angeles, CA; Member, SOS International Advisory Board

#### SOS Internet Friends Face-To-Face 2006 Agenda

Registration and Mingle: 9:30 AM-10 AM • Conference/Workshops: 10 AM-12 NOON  
 (Lunch on your own at popular area restaurants.) • Conference/Workshops, Wrap-up: 1 PM-4:30 PM

### NETWORK WITH FRIENDS IN RECOVERY FROM AROUND THE WORLD!

- YES!! Sign me up for the FREE SOS INTERNET FRIENDS International Conference 2006!**  
 Check here to receive a list of area restaurants and area lodging suggestions  
 I'd like to help. Please accept my optional donation. I prefer to pay by Mastercard Visa AMEX  
 Check or money order to **SOS Conference** (payable in U.S. funds)

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Return to: **SOS Conference, 4773 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood, CA 90027**  
 Phone: **(323) 666-4295** • Fax: **(323) 666-4271** • e-mail: [sos@cfiwest.org](mailto:sos@cfiwest.org)

# How to Stay Sober: Recovery Without Religion

by Jim Christopher, SOS Founder

Selected Excerpts

## The Sobriety Priority at Close Range

I have two “programs” in my life as a sober alcoholic:

1. My sobriety priority
2. Everything else

My sobriety priority is an issue separate from all else. Drinking is no longer an option in my life. As we live day by day, many of our actions become automatic and need not be considered daily. We can try to stick to our plans, schedules, diets and commitments, but sometimes we screw up. It happens. Humans are imperfect. We pick ourselves up and go on. As a sober alcoholic I must daily recommit, reaffirm, reaccept, and reacknowledge my alcoholism and its antidote: the sobriety priority. My priority frees me up for another day of life with all its pain, sorrow, joy, fear, sickness, achievements, failures, and goals, rather than trapping me in my previous subhuman, coma-like addiction to alcohol. Sobriety is assured only by prioritizing it daily on a day-at-a-time basis. This keeps my addiction to alcohol under “house arrest” day to day, hopefully lifelong.

I have the right to fail in any other area of my life. My sobriety priority is the one exception. As long as I reassert my priority every day, no matter what, I get to keep living, experiencing my personal adventure in a state of full awareness. “Quality” of sobriety is spoken of by some as being important; that is, “white knuckle” or “struggle sobriety” is considered inferior to relaxed sobriety. Actually, all sobriety is valid and is the same color and texture. Phases come and go. Tensions come and go. As long as sobriety is maintained, it is valid. All sobriety should be celebrated. Naturally we want to lead comfortable, relaxed, productive lives, to experience less pain and more pleasure. Our best-laid plans can go awry but as long as our sobriety priority remains in place daily, the years pile up, culminating in a lifetime of sobriety. The quality of life lived during these sober years is up to the individual’s limitations, efforts, and circumstances. Again, sobriety as one’s priority must be a separate issue. How one’s life unfolds has nothing at all to do with one’s sobriety priority.

## A Secular Framework for Sobriety

As a sober alcoholic who has experienced plugged-jug living, I offer the following suggestions as secular guidelines for achieving and maintaining sobriety. Some of these strategies were passed on to me by others, some I discovered by accident — but all have been vital to my plugged-jug lifestyle.

*I am an alcoholic*

If you need to be convinced, have trouble with the *word* or concept, or cannot accept that you are an alcoholic, you’re probably trapped, experiencing denial, and there’s not a damned thing anyone can do for you at this point unless you take action by reaching out. As a sober alcoholic, I urge you to get help now. Contact your doctor or a local hospital and get an evaluation by alcoholism professionals.

*I choose sobriety one day at a time.*

I acknowledge that I am physiologically addicted to the drug, alcohol, and that my alcoholism has taken on a life of its own. I am ready to reclaim my life, to live one day at a time as a sober alcoholic. I accept that I cannot drink no matter what. As an alcohol addict, having experienced many years of problem drinking and having experienced loss of control in drinking, I choose to prioritize my sobriety one day at a time. I no longer deny my alcoholism, since it has become obvious to me. My sobriety priority is a separate issue for me. This simple strategy of placing my sobriety priority above all else allows me to reclaim my life and realize my full potential one day at a time. I never intended to become physiologically hooked on alcohol. Alcoholics and nonalcoholics alike have used and abused alcohol. Moderate drinkers, heavy drinkers, those who drink to numb their feelings, to temporarily escape conflicts and anxieties, to celebrate or brighten an already pleasurable event, become hooked on the drug if they are physiologically unable to process it safely; that is, if they are alcoholics. Having broken the cycle of denial, no longer allowing a physiological need to masquerade as me, I have the opportunity of choice available to me now. My sobriety priority is the antidote to my alcoholism. My sobriety priority is not simply abstinence. It is my positive, conscious, rational choice to stay sober one day at a time.

*As a sober alcoholic, I reach out to others.*

As a sober alcoholic, I now have the opportunity to evaluate my situation, reaching out when appropriate to the others in my life who may have suffered directly or indirectly from my behavior when I was under the influence. When did I begin drinking? When did my drinking begin to manifest itself as a problem? When did feedback from others begin regarding my drinking? Who were these people? Would it be appropriate to contact them and to inform them of my regrets, to apologize? Or would doing so cause them harm or problems? Am I relieving my own stored-up guilt at their expense? Do I owe something to someone, financially or otherwise? Are certain situations, in my judgment, best left alone? I can prepare lists, take notes, and make imperfect but sober decisions. What about my loved ones? Which of my relationships can be salvaged? It's up to me to find out in sobriety.

*As a sober alcoholic, I experience myself in real ways.*

One's undrugged feelings, thoughts, and personality can be experienced in sobriety. Probably no human being has ever been completely satisfied or comfortable on all occasions with who he perceives himself to be. We're imperfect. But we can work to change. We learn to live with some of our "warts" and to accept them as part of who we are. We can make lists of our personal assets and liabilities, our negative and positives as we perceive them, working for a blend of self-acceptance, change and growth. If we maintain our sobriety priority, we always have, as sober addicts, a built-in self-esteem. But to keep that, we must choose sobriety as number one on our value and survival scale in daily life.

*As a sober alcoholic, it is my responsibility to give my own life meaning.*

Although life has no meaning per se, we can stay sober even through the "meaningless" segments, simply by prioritizing sobriety, *no matter what*. Plunging into life also nets us coping skills acquired in the process of living sober. Life is, for all organisms, an ongoing process. In doing and experiencing all things sober — no matter what our reactions to life's challenges are — we become more flexible. Uncertainties are a matter of course.

Accepting — not necessarily liking — life's uncertainties allows us to grow as persons. We learn. Answers and solutions develop for us. Discomfort is a part of life for all of us. Coping skills are developed by "doing it sober," as we accumulate one sober experience after another.

In early sobriety, sharing thoughts and feelings and going into the world with another sober alcoholic benefits both participants and eventually leads to solo sober excursions into the marketplace of experiences.

Make a list of situations in which you'd like to feel more comfortable. This will weaken your alcohol associations as you do more things without the crutch that alcohol can provide.

Anxiety is normal. In any given situation, a rush of a combination of feelings may occur. This will happen less with each experience. Take a sober alcoholic "buddy" or a nonalcoholic who is a trusted friend or professional with you on these desensitization excursions. If the other person does not live up to your expectations, temporarily abandon the project and do it later with another buddy.

In my early sobriety, I went with two of my sober alcoholic friends to a loud, lively, crowded disco bar and had a great time! We ordered soft drinks (preferably in the can or bottle, not poured, to avoid busy-bartender botch-ups) and really enjoyed the experience, while desensitizing ourselves to a situation we'd previously associated with booze.

Another shy newcomer and I purposely positioned ourselves at the entrance of a large work-related convention we were both obliged to attend. After saying "Hello, hope you enjoy your evening" and handing out brochures to several thousand people, one becomes less anxious about crowded social situations. These desensitization experiences can be entered into at our own pace. As AA might say, "Easy does it, but do it." Experiencing by doing brings meaning into one's life. Sober meaning.

### **Living Well in Sobriety Is the Best Revenge**

I've never met an addict who chose to become an addict. Some of us chose to be "party animals" and use mind-altering chemicals irresponsibly. Others were quite moderate and conscientious in their consumption of these chemicals. When addiction set in, for all of us, it was the equalizer.

In our sober lives we can and should be very good to ourselves. We can pursue our dreams, work toward our goals, partake in life's numerous drug-free pleasures and experiences. We feel better now than when we were younger and active in our addictions, why not look the part as well? Lose those surplus pounds. If your hairline is receding, why not get a transplant? Buy a new wardrobe. Work out in a gym. Travel. Start a new relationship. Reasonable hedonism has its place. Why not cherish these sober years and relish the sober times of our lives?

I visited the Grand Canyon in my drinking days and also saw Hawaii through the window of my hotel room while recovering from hangovers. My sober years are so much fuller for me, even in hard times. A walk in the park is lovely, and feeding the squirrels beats falling to my hands and knees, throwing up in some strange toilet bowl.

Enjoying a Sunday ride in the country rivals being

laid up for days from and alcohol-related car accident. Why not try the things in sobriety that you postponed when you were chemically detained?

As you gain time in sobriety, you will find problems and challenges in day-to-day living, as does every other human being, alcoholic and nonalcoholic alike. And since drinking is no longer an option for you, your problems and challenges will no longer be simply with staying sober.

At times we will experience “white-knuckle living” — not “white-knuckle sobriety” — since sobriety is separate, a daily point of reference from which you proceed *no matter what*. Stress and anxiety plague us on occasion and it is, by and large, a myth that we can experience zombie-like serenity on an ongoing basis in real life. Don't feel bad! No one is perfect; that's not the nature of things. Glassy-eyed serenity can be found in religious cult groups but the reality of life has a way of seeping into one's consciousness. We humans have this newer mental equipment, bequeathed by evolution, to contend with. We can't throw it off when we experience “frontal-lobe blues.” Magical thinking only goes so far and is, in the long run, potentially dangerous for an alcoholic.

So, pure serenity — feeling that all is well with the world on an ongoing basis — is, for most of the human race, elusive and inconsistent.

We all have imperfections. We all have troubles. Things often go smoothly but life circumstances can change. We can adapt to these changes. We don't always have to be thrilled with these changes or to pretend that we are serene “no matter what.”

When drinking is no longer an option for us, the protected, separate issue of our sobriety priority allows us to go on with our day, come what may, doing our best. At times we don't do our best, don't really try to do much of anything. This has nothing whatsoever to do with our sobriety priority.

It hurts to try hard and still experience failures, losses, and injustices. We feel bad. We feel good. We feel anxiety. We feel strength, weakness, fear, and joy. These feelings have nothing at all to do with the prioritized separate daily issue of our sobriety.

Religions and movements that demand unthinking adherence also make false promises. One's environmentally protected bubble can burst. Hot-air balloons are only temporary. The sobriety priority makes no promises and guarantees nothing. How can it? It is simply a strategy, a construct, a technique that, when applied daily, frees us to live our lives, wherever they may lead us.

The sobriety priority is a crisp, honest concept, free from religion and false promises regarding reaching certain plateaus, levitating, avoiding taxes, or living forever in a disembodied aftermath, floating perhaps in and out of black holes.

No one has really ever escaped living life on life's terms, unless one considers living a comatose existence via drugs or religion or thoughtless adherence to a cause. Those of us who do not try to throw off our rational human mental equipment learn to appreciate, accept, yes, even run with life on life's terms. But certainly, we cannot pretend our primitive limbic systems, our cellular, needy, emotional selves are not equally important.

We've got all this going for us. Yes, it's complex. It's challenging. It's downright exciting, being a human being participating in this very real adventure of life.

That's right. The glass is half full, not half empty; but the sobriety priority doesn't demand any certain attitude toward a quality of life.

Actually, the sobriety priority can be activated by anyone choosing to stay sober one day at a time. What one does with life during sober days is obviously an individual choice, to the extent that one can make a choice regarding growth, action and achievement, not using other human beings to measure oneself against. Other human beings are human beings, not yardsticks.

Do any of us really know if we're doing our best? Somewhat, but my best is not your best. So living and rising to some of life's challenges is generally thought to be the right course.

Each sober alcoholic is responsible for his own sobriety. Human support makes us feel good. No one can reach into our innards to keep us sober, although some people I've encountered have been so caring that they would have done so had it been humanly possible.

You have the right to do what you will with your sober time. And although what goes around does not necessarily come around, we all must pay the price for our choices.

Opting for a life of involvement, productive activity, reasonable risk-taking, and active participation in the adventure is an option for us.

The adventure of life for alcoholics in sobriety is multi-faceted. It is full of fun, challenges, and choices. Even when we fall on our faces (as I often do) we can choose to do it sober. No longer sleeping in one's own vomit (as I often did) can be refreshing in itself. Even experiencing pain and anxiety is at least ours; it's real, not chemically induced. We're alive! We leave the subhuman status of active alcoholism behind and progress daily in sobriety.

The first year in sobriety is best reserved for reentry, avoiding major decisions whenever possible, allowing time for mental cobwebs to clear away. Sobriety offers no guarantees of growth, fortune, or true love; but without sobriety, as alcoholics, we will never achieve any of these.

We can learn to laugh, cry, and feel again, to know who we are, to celebrate our sobriety in the recovery process. Self-actualization is now possible. So obey the laws of the land, beware the emptiness of the long-distance hedonist, be well, and enjoy.

As a sober alcoholic, you can now do the everyday things taken for granted by so many: shower, shave, wear clean clothing, wash your hair, brush your teeth, eat well, speak clearly, sleep soundly.

You will begin to feel better about yourself and more attractive to others if you take the time to pamper yourself. Buy new clothing visit a beautician or barber; wear makeup, perfume, or aftershave; get a facial or massage; wear expensive or formal clothing occasionally; work on your suntan; join a health club; visit a sauna; get your teeth cleaned or fixed; buy new glasses; improve your diet.

You may find conversation difficult in your early days of sobriety but the topics available are virtually limitless: sports, philosophy, your health, your children or grandchildren, sex, politics, current events religion, people, your job or schoolwork. Don't be afraid to ask for advice or help, to argue, or to be assertive or stubborn. You may even begin to like talking to others so much that you will decide to take up public speaking or lecturing.

There are many activities and events you can enjoy sober. They include attending concerts, operas, ballets, plays, weddings, graduations, bar mitzvahs, social or civic club meetings, government meetings, court sessions, lectures, banquets, luncheons, school reunions, and alumni meetings. You can go to a fair, carnival, circus, amusement park, zoo, park, picnic, barbeque, museum, or exhibit, a movie or drive-in, and the library; attend auctions and garage sales; go shopping; just go downtown and mingle. Many events are free and you can learn while being entertained.

Be creative! At one time you may have been interested in pursuing the arts and have subsequently let your talents fall by the wayside. Or you have always wanted to try your hand at painting, drawing, sculpture, acting, movie-making, composing or arranging music, creative writing, singing, or playing a musical instrument. Now is the time!

Take up a sport: softball, baseball, basketball, football, boating, tennis, water-skiing, bowling, wrestling, boxing, fishing, horseback riding, badminton, shuffleboard, croquet, horseshoes, ping-pong, snowmobiling, swimming, running, jogging, gymnastics, aerobics, Frisbee, catch, soccer, rugby, skiing, lacrosse, hockey, bicycling, handball, paddleball, squash, surfing, and scuba diving are just a few of the sports available. If you do not think you are physically capable of one of these, try cards, chess, checkers, board games, or party games; or just attend a sporting event. Cheering your team as a spectator is often as much fun as active participation.

If all the activity becomes too much for you, there are many ways to rediscover nature. Go for a ride in the country, a hike in the mountains, or a stroll on the beach; watch wild animals; listen to the sounds of nature; look at the stars, sky, clouds, or a storm; smell a flower; walk barefoot; go bird watching, beachcombing, or mountain-climbing; gather natural objects such as rocks, driftwood, or wild food; take a field trip. If you live in a metropolitan area and cannot get away, become an "urban explorer": take a walk in the city and notice the unexpected oases of nature there; make a snowman; hang a bird-feeder in you backyard; buy an aquarium. Observing nature can be a peaceful experience in even the most crowded environments.

You will find that as a sober alcoholic, you have more spare time to spend on things you enjoy doing. Learn a new craft or skill; restore antiques; refinish furniture; take up woodworking or carpentry; hone your mechanical skills; learn a foreign language or American Sign Language; make food or crafts to sell or give away; invent something; take up gardening, landscaping, or yard work; learn photography; try your hand at writing articles, essays, reports or scholarly papers; become a gourmet cook; can, freeze, or preserve foods; rearrange or redecorate your room, house, or apartment; work with beads, leather, or fabrics; make pottery or jewelry; take up knitting, crocheting, sewing, or needlework; do a scientific experiment; repair something.

Spend time alone: write in a diary; stay up late; meditate or do yoga; read the newspaper, stories, poems, novels, plays, "how-to-do-it books" or articles, essays, comic books, academic or professional literature, or magazines; people watch; write letters, cards, and notes; care for houseplants; spend time with your pet; collect things; take a walk; sleep late or get up early; listen to music; visit a cemetery and remember a departed friend or relative; watch television; cry; do odd jobs around the house; enjoy the peace and quiet; think positively about the future; talk to yourself; solve a puzzle; think about someone you like; daydream; sing to yourself; listen to the radio; scream out your frustrations or anger; work on your finances; think about your problems.

Perhaps the most fulfilling thing a newly sober alcoholic can do is spend time with other people. This may be difficult at first, but going out of your way will be worth the effort. Make a new friend; travel in a group; become acquainted with a neighbor; visit old friends and reminisce; teach or coach someone; give a massage or backrub; do someone a favor; help with someone's problems; tell a joke to lift someone's spirits (and your own); confess or apologize to someone you may have hurt; smile at people; express your love to someone; have tea, coffee, or soft drinks with friends; be with children; give or attend a party; go to a family reunion; have lunch or dinner with friends or associates; have a frank and open conversation; try to be outgoing at a gathering; go dancing; congratulate someone; go on a date; join an encounter or ther-

apy group; enjoy physical contact with someone; introduce people to each other; give gifts, send letters, make telephone calls; buy something for someone; meet someone of the opposite sex; loan something; counsel someone; compliment someone; join a fraternity or sorority; play a harmless practical joke; tell someone you need him or her.

Once you have taken the first steps toward becoming more outgoing in your personal life, you may be comfortable branching out into the public sphere. You can do volunteer work; visit the sick, shut-ins or people in trouble; work on a political campaign; protest something; join a neighborhood group; defend or protect someone; help stop fraud or abuse. Become more involved with your work: attend a business meeting, luncheon, or convention; give a speech or lecture; pay more attention to details; and when you are offered that raise or promotion, accept it with pride!

### The SOS Alternative

To illustrate what an SOS group meeting is like, in contrast to the more traditional AA meeting, I offer two hypothetical scenarios:

#### *Believer's Version, Including Higher Power*

"Hi, I'm Sally and I'm an alcoholic."

Group responds: "Hi Sally!"

Sally continues: "I really didn't want to come here tonight, but I guess my Higher Power felt I needed a meeting, so here I am. I had a really big fight with my boss today. I feel bad about it but I guess I've got to turn it over to my Higher Power. I've been sober for a little over six months now."

The group applauds and encourages her to continue with "Atta girl, Sally," Ha! That's it Sally!" etc.

Sally goes on: "You people have really made me realize what love and caring can be. I've been trying to work the steps and haven't got very far yet, but I keep trying. If it weren't for you people and my Higher Power, I know I'd be right back out there again on my face in some bar. I don't have the strength to do it on my own. My Higher Power must be taking care of me, holding me close. Sometimes when I'm alone at night my Higher Power calms me down. It works. These steps and these principles work. I told my AA sponsor yesterday that sometimes I doubt — maybe that's not the right word — sometimes I want things too fast, things that my Higher Power feels are not for my own good. I listen to my sponsor, most times. Sometimes I think she's full of it and I want to rebel, go my own way, but I know I need this. I need her help. She's been sober for a

long time and I know she knows what she's talking about. I've started gong back to my old church. When I was drinking I used to curse God. Now I'm willing to surrender.

"My best thinking got me here. I try not to let my crazy head tell me what to do. I just put one foot in front of the other and take one step at a time, one day at a time. My boyfriend is getting along better now with my little girl. God is disclosing more and more to me each day. It's a relief to just 'let go and let God.' I called my mom two days ago. We cried. She's so pleased that I'm going to church again and that I'm sober now. I wasn't going to share this tonight, but Paul (my boyfriend) keeps insisting that I pack up and move in with him. I don't feel ready for that just yet. I need more time in sobriety. Paul's a nonalcoholic. He says he loves me but when we talk I get confused. He screws around with my thinking. He respects my AA program and all, but he's not a believer. My sponsor said I should picture God as I understand him, not punishing and harsh, like I was taught, but caring and loving and powerful. Somehow Paul may come to believe. I know I can't change him, but I think I really love him. Anyway, thank you all for being here and keep coming back." The group responds with applause and cheerful hoots.

#### *Heretical Version, Free from Higher Power*

"Hi, I'm Sally and I'm an alcoholic."

Group responds: "Hi Sally!"

Sally continues: "I really didn't want to come here tonight, but I felt I needed a meeting, so here I am. I had a really big fight with my boss today. I feel bad about it. I guess I've got a right to my feelings, but I don't have to dwell on them.

"I've been sober for a little over six months now."

The group applauds and encourages her to continue with "Atta girl, Sally," Ha! That's it Sally!" etc.

Sally goes on: "You people have really made me realize what love and caring can be. If it weren't for my choosing each day to prioritize my sobriety no matter what and the encouragement of you people I know I'd be right back out there again on my face in some bar. Now I'm willing to surrender to the fact that I am an alcoholic and each day I feel a little bit better, and a little bit stronger.

"My boyfriend is getting along better now with my little girl. I called my mom two days ago. We cried. She's proud of me. I feel better about myself, too. I wasn't going to share this tonight,

but Paul (my boyfriend) keeps insisting that I pack up and move in with him. I don't feel ready for that just yet. I need more time in sobriety.

"Paul's a nonalcoholic. He says he loves me but I want to really be sure of my feelings and more secure in myself before making a commitment. I think I really love him. Anyway, thanks for listening."

The group responds with applause and cheerful hoots.

Please note that the second version gets to the heart of the matter without being couched in religious rhetoric. Heretical Sally has problems in living, newly sober, as does Believer Sally; but if something unusually stress-producing is introduced into the lives of both Sallys, Believer Sally may call her AA sponsor — and may well find her drunk or out of town. Believer Sally will pray to God and, for whatever reasons, may not feel God respond. She is in the muddled mental territory of religion plus trauma minus rationality. Believer Sally, who never stated her priority of sobriety no matter what, might be more likely to revert back to drinking than Heretical Sally, who, at very

least, tends to have some perspective on real life without gods and goblins. Heretical Sally, newly sober, is as subject to overreaction to stress as is Believer Sally, but is clear on the fact that when all else goes bananas she still has her sobriety priority, one day at a time. Religion does not get in the way or cloud the issue of her priority. Her Secular Sobriety Group may individually or collectively disappoint her — they might even for some strange reason board a bus for Toledo, leaving no forwarding address. A hurricane may destroy her home, her mother may suddenly go insane, her boyfriend might introduce her to his new boyfriend, but she still has her sobriety, *if* she continues to prioritize it daily. And as time passes, with reasonable effort, she'll develop new coping skills in living sober, unhampered by religious dogma. Believer Sally could come out of the aforementioned events sober also if, in that crisis moment, she puts her sobriety before the whims of her God.

Which Sally would you lay odds on?

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Excerpted and adapted from James R. Christopher, *How to Stay Sober: Recovery without Religion* (Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1988).

# SOS MARKETPLACE

## Merchandise Order Form

- |                                                                              |                         |                                                                   |                                |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> "Avoiding the Relapse Mode"                         | audiotape <b>\$7.95</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> "Your Sobriety Toolkit"                  |                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> "Empowerment Sobriety"                              | audiotape <b>\$7.95</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish | brochure <b>\$5.00</b> per 50  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SOS Group Leader's Guide                            | video <b>\$39.95</b>    | <input type="checkbox"/> "Family and Friends"                     |                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The Sobriety Priority                               | video <b>\$24.95</b>    | <input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish | brochure <b>\$5.00</b> per 50  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>SOS Sobriety</i>                                 | <b>\$15.95</b>          | <input type="checkbox"/> "An Overview of SOS"                     |                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>How to Stay Sober</i>                            | <b>\$15.95</b>          | <input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish | brochure <b>\$5.00</b> per 50  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Unhooked</i>                                     | <b>\$15.95</b>          | <input type="checkbox"/> "Your First 30 Days"                     |                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Escape from Nicotine Country</i>                 | <b>\$16.95</b>          | <input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish | brochure <b>\$5.00</b> per 50  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SOS Group Leader's Guidebook                        |                         | <input type="checkbox"/> "Sobriety Priority"                      |                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish            | <b>\$2.95</b>           | <input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish | brochure <b>\$5.00</b> per 50  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Seeds of Sobriety: Daily Secular Reflections</i> | <b>\$17.50</b>          | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>SOS Newsletter</i> back issues        | <b>\$5.00</b> each             |
|                                                                              |                         | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>SOS Newsletter</i> back issues        | photocopies <b>\$4.00</b> each |

*Items with unchecked language boxes will be sent in English.*

Add \$2.00 per item for postage and handling (except audiotapes and brochures). All brochures sold in bulk only. Minimum order: 50 copies.

Check or money order (payable to SOS/CSH in U.S. funds) TOTAL \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Charge my  MasterCard  Visa  AMEX

# \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Daytime phone number \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State/Country \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP/Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

**Return to: SOS, Box 5, Buffalo, NY 14215-0005**  
**See SOS Marketplace: Tools for Recovery, page 15.**



Valerie White, Esq.

# Wind Beneath My Wings

by Valerie White, Esq.

**T**hey say it takes a village to raise a child. Well, for twins it takes a small metropolitan area.

Whenever the twins are being especially obstreperous, and we are at our wits' end, we console ourselves with the idea that they are probably about to enter a new developmental stage. All this screaming and contention is going to disappear shortly as the new plateau is reached. I don't know whether that notion has any validity, but it is often bruited about on various childrearing email lists I'm on.

It occurs to me to wonder whether that theory holds for adults as well! Perhaps the Sturm und Drang of the last decade or more of my private life has simply presaged a new developmental stage of a serene and energetic middle age!

What storms am I talking about? Well, there was that divorce, and that time I lost my job and couldn't find another one. Then there was my father's threat to disinherit me, and his final illness and death. Then there was that period of time when I was sure there would be no love for me. Then, well . . . there were some relationship issues. And a spate of physical ills: I hurt my knee--tore my anterior cruciate ligament (a heck of a ligament for a humanist to have) and my medial meniscus, just like any jock. I tore my Achilles tendon. I sprained my other knee skiing. And I severed my

ulnar nerve in a freak sailing accident. And then there's the chronic depression . . .

I sense that I am sailing into calmer waters now. The sun is coming out. The waves have lessened. The thunder has stopped. There's just a nice breeze keeping my boat moving at a nice clip.

I hope so. I would like to be able to say to myself, "I am happy." I don't trust the feeling yet. I keep thinking this state is fragile and might change as quickly as the wind.

So, what has all this sweetness and light got to do with sobriety?

The point is, no matter what turmoil might be going on in your life, no matter how steep the waves or how strong the wind, not drinking is better than drinking. Dealing with any life crisis is easier sober than drunk--that's the truth. Perhaps having your leg amputated without modern anesthesia would be more tolerable if you were blotto . . . but that's about the only situation I can think of that would be improved by alcohol.

And one more thing: the better state of mind, the joy of children, the improved relationship dynamics are all more easily enjoyed, and much more likely to continue if the alcohol stays in the bottle and the bottle stays at the store.



## CAR or VAN

**Contribution Urgently Needed!!**

The New SOS Clearinghouse in Los Angeles has need of a car, station wagon, and/or van in great working condition. If you can help meet this need by making a **tax-deductible donation** of a vehicle to SOS, please contact:

**Jim Christopher • 4773 Hollywood Blvd. • Hollywood, CA 90027**

**Phone: (323) 666-4295 • Fax: (323) 666-4271**

**e-mail: [sos@cfiwest.org](mailto:sos@cfiwest.org)**

SOS will arrange for a pick-up of your donated vehicle from anywhere in the contiguous United States.

# A 'Net Note' from Duaine

## Web Notes The Internet

The Internet has become an important part of the SOS recovery movement.

The Internet is here to stay. So we (SOS) had better use it or be left behind. Members, who have no contact with the Internet and no interest in learning how to use it, still are able to have a friend or family member locate SOS Web sites, print out articles written by Jim Christopher or SOS members, find meetings in their area, and keep up to date, etc.

SOS groups that want to promote their recovery groups, post times, dates and where a meeting is being held, can do it with a Web site. You can do this on your own if you know how or you can send the info to [SaveOurSelves@msn.com](mailto:SaveOurSelves@msn.com) and request a Web Site be put up for you—there are still good free Web Sites out there. Before it's promoted you will have a chance to check it out -make changes. It's your Web Site if you put it up yourself or have SOS do it. It's also easy for you to take over the Web Site at any time if SOS puts it up for you.

## Real Time SOS Chat Meetings

**Meetings at this time** are on an as needed basis. We need volunteers to make this work. Join the SOS International E-Support list to help make this work.

## A Heading to Promote Local SOS Groups on the SOS Links Page

### SOS Groups E-Lists.

For the use of promoting the Group and giving Info to the local members. The idea being: The group can post meeting times and places. The group can post changes. The group members can post discussions of whatever the groups needs are at the time. The group members who couldn't make it to a meeting can still stay in contact with the group by posting. The group can send out reminders of meetings automatically. The E-Lists is easy to set up and will be promoted on the SOS Links

page with the SOS family of Web sites.

### SOS Australia E-support E-Group

[au.groups.yahoo.com/group/secular\\_sobriety\\_sos\\_au/](http://au.groups.yahoo.com/group/secular_sobriety_sos_au/)

### SOS Netherlands E-Support Group

[groups.yahoo.com/group/sossaveourselves\\_Netherlands/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sossaveourselves_Netherlands/)

### SOS Chicago E-Support Group

[groups.yahoo.com/group/SOSChicago](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SOSChicago)

### SOS Western New York E-Support Group

[groups.yahoo.com/group/soswny](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/soswny)

### SOS Central Texas Temple E-Support Group

[groups.yahoo.com/group/cen\\_tex\\_SOS](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/cen_tex_SOS)

### SOS Dallas E-support Group

[groups.yahoo.com/group/sosdallas](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sosdallas)

### SOS Austin E-Support Group

[groups.yahoo.com/group/sossaveourselves](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sossaveourselves)

### NYS-wide SOS E-Support Group

[health.groups.yahoo.com/group/SOSNYS/](http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/SOSNYS/)

Your group or group in the making can be added to this list easily, just go into Yahoo and set up an E-Support Group, let me know at [SaveOurSelves@msn.com](mailto:SaveOurSelves@msn.com) and it will be promoted worldwide.

## New Group

**SOS Friends and Families** —Set up to meet the needs of friends and families of those who are or have been addicted.

[groups.yahoo.com/group/SOS\\_Friends\\_and\\_Families](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SOS_Friends_and_Families)

SOS Friends and Families is a welcome addition to the SOS Family of support.

It is held by some very caring people.

## The Place to be on the Web?

Where do I go to get the most from SOS on the web?

A place where I can benefit the most as far as getting info and support from SOS?

A place where SOS members from around the world meet?

A place where new ideas are being tried?

A place where I can be heard?

A place where people will listen to what I have to say?

The answer?

**SOS Save Our Selves E-Support Group.**



Duaine Metevia

[groups.yahoo.com/group/sossaveourselves](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sossaveourselves)

This is an important part of SOS on the web. This is the place where a lot of new ideas are tried and members give feed back. Become a part of the movement that never stands still, SOS. You may have something that works for you and want a place to share it. Here is that place.

This is a place to come for support in your recovery. It's also a place to give back or make the journey a little easier for the next person. New to SOS — Long Time Sober — Promoting an SOS Meeting — Thinking of Starting a Meeting — Looking for On-Line Support — Promoting a Web Site.

### Also

#### SOS Women

[groups.yahoo.com/group/soswomen](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/soswomen)

This SOS E-support group is set up to meet the needs of women in SOS with lots of support.

### And

#### SOS Friends and Families –

[groups.yahoo.com/group/SOS\\_Friends\\_and\\_Families](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SOS_Friends_and_Families)

This E-support group is set up to meet the needs of friends and families of those who are or have been addicted.

#### Recovery Connections

[www.sossobriety.org/meetings](http://www.sossobriety.org/meetings)

Find a meeting in your area.

Looking at the Web site isn't enough. The Web site only tells part of the story. It lists meetings and gives contacts. The rest of the story is behind the scenes. It's the people who want to be a part of SOS but don't want to start a meeting at this time, people who don't want to have there contact info on the web page or just want to be there for local people, people in the area to give a supportive ear. Maybe they will meet you for coffee. They could be waiting for one more person in their area to start a meeting. Help or a friend in recovery could be a phone call away. If you don't leave your contact info you could miss out.

The way "Recovery Connections" works:  
[SOS@CFIWest.org](mailto:SOS@CFIWest.org)

You leave your contact info with Jim Christopher. If there is someone in your area, Jim will link you up with him or her. If there is no one in your area today, someone could do what you have just done and tomorrow they will be linked up with you. It works if you become a part of it and make it work. To make it work you need to give Jim Christopher your contact info.

Watch our Face to Face meetings grow!  
[SOS@CFIWest.org](mailto:SOS@CFIWest.org)

#### Green Wall of Growth

[www.sossobriety.org/greenwall.htm](http://www.sossobriety.org/greenwall.htm)

A place where SOS Members can sign in using their first name and initial or full name, country, state or province and date of their discussion to live their life alcohol/drug free. Check it out and see how much it has grown. Thanks Norm for the great idea of the Green Wall of Growth.

#### CFI-West

[www.cfiwest.org/sos](http://www.cfiwest.org/sos)

CFI-West, the home site of Jim Christopher; it's always up to date. It's a great place to start your search to find what's going on with SOS.

#### SOS International

[www.sossobriety.org](http://www.sossobriety.org)

This Web site is filled with diversity. It has some writings by James Christopher and some by SOS Members from around the world. You will find lots of information on SOS and you will also find, printed thoughts of SOS Members. Many SOS Web sites have contributed to its making. By going through it you will find links to many of the SOS Web Family and get a flavor of other SOS Web sites. I encourage you visit all of the SOS Web Family.

#### Secular Sobriety

[www.secularsobriety.org](http://www.secularsobriety.org)

Filled with info on SOS, up to date web links, lots to read.

#### SOS Behind Bars

[www.sosbehindbars.org](http://www.sosbehindbars.org)

With over 150 SOS Behind Bars meetings in Texas.

SOS Behind Bars was set up to meet the needs of SOS Members behind bars holding SOS Meetings and to help jail an prison staff better understand SOS. There are posts by SOS members. Print outs of suggestions on How to Hold an SOS Meeting Behind Bars. Lots of SOS info!

### **Recovery Happens On Line**

Recovery is valid wherever it comes from; on line, as well as face to face or alone. Recovery is valid no matter where it happens.

### **SOS Save Our Selves E-Support Group** groups.yahoo.com/group/sossaveourselves

This was built as a safe place to come and share. This is the Home Group of SOS E-Support Groups.

### **SOS Women E-Support Group** groups.yahoo.com/group/soswomen

This group is set up to meet the needs of women in SOS. It was set up to have a safe place to share. To give and get support. To talk about the special needs of women in recovery.

### **SOS Friends and Families –** groups.yahoo.com/group/SOS\_Friends\_and\_Families

This E-support group is set up to meet the needs of friends and families of those who are or have been addicted.

### **One Person**

One person can build a meeting. Give your contact info to Jim Christopher at SOS@CFIWest.org. Become a contact person for your area. Become a group in the making. Build a Web site. Build it yourself or have Duaine M help at SaveOurSelves@msn.com Promote your group or group-in-the-making with a Web page. Promote your group or group-in-the-making at

### **SOS Save Our Selves E-Support Group** groups.yahoo.com/group/sossaveourselves

Share what you're doing in SOS or want to do. You can make a change. You can make a difference. I'm looking forward to getting to know you.

### **New to Recovery? Some Thoughts from SOS Members**

[www.sossobriety.org/easy.htm](http://www.sossobriety.org/easy.htm)

I found that early in my recovery I was missing lots of information. I went to a detox treatment center where I assumed I would be given all the info I needed. I found it difficult to sleep and went several nights with very little sleep. I thought there was something wrong with me. There was I was going through a very natural process of relearning how to sleep.

So why wasn't I told about it sooner? Why did I have to go through it and then find out it was a natural part of the recovery process? So I decided to put together a web page to address things that most of us already know or should know. This web page is still under construction. We are getting lots of input from SOS members but need lots more. Your input is welcome. Please check it out and send your thoughts to SaveOurSelves@msn.com Duaine Metevia

### **New Up to date Search for SOS Meetings** [www.sossobriety.org/meetings](http://www.sossobriety.org/meetings)

A new Search page for finding SOS Meetings and SOS Contacts is the most up to date meeting and contact finder of any recovery support group on the Internet.

Up Dates are posted as they happen.  
[www.sossobriety.org/meetings](http://www.sossobriety.org/meetings)

### **SOS Web Sites**

**SOS Clearing House**  
[www.cfiwest.org/sos](http://www.cfiwest.org/sos)  
**SOS International**  
[www.sossobriety.com](http://www.sossobriety.com)  
**SOS Secular Sobriety**  
[www.secularsobriety.org](http://www.secularsobriety.org)  
**SOS Behind Bars**  
[www.sosbehindbars.org](http://www.sosbehindbars.org)  
**SOS Women**  
[www.sos-women.org](http://www.sos-women.org)  
**SOS Dallas**  
[www.sosdallas.org](http://www.sosdallas.org)  
**SOS Rochester-NY**  
[www.sos-rochester.org](http://www.sos-rochester.org)  
**SOS Western New York**  
[soscanada.org/soswny/](http://soscanada.org/soswny/)  
**Madtown Secular Recovery**  
[madtownsecular.tripod.com](http://madtownsecular.tripod.com)

**SOS Sarasota - Florida**

sossarasota.tripod.com

**SOS Tulsa**[www.sostulsa.org](http://www.sostulsa.org)**SOS Belgium**[www.SOSNuchterheid.org](http://www.SOSNuchterheid.org)**SOS Austin**

sosaustin.tripod.com

**SOS Belgium**[www.soszelfhulpgroepen.be/](http://www.soszelfhulpgroepen.be/)**SOS London**

sos\_london.tripod.com

**Brighton SOS**[www.brightonsos.org/](http://www.brightonsos.org/)**SOS Norway**[www.sossobriety.org/SOSNorway](http://www.sossobriety.org/SOSNorway)**SOS Australia**

sosaustralia.tripod.com/index.htm

**SOS Iceland E-mail only**

Petur-tyrf@isholf.is

**SOS E-Groups****Home E-Group of SOS****SOS Save Our Selves E-Support Group** — Support and Information:[groups.yahoo.com/group/sossaveourselves](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sossaveourselves)**SOS Women E-Support Group** — Set up to meet the needs of women in SOS.[groups.yahoo.com/group/SOSWomen](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SOSWomen)**SOS Friends and Families** –[groups.yahoo.com/group/SOS\\_Friends\\_and\\_Families](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SOS_Friends_and_Families)

This E-support group is set up to meet the needs of friends and families of those who are or have been addicted.

**SOS International Journal E-group**[health.groups.yahoo.com/group/sosjournal](http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/sosjournal)

The purpose of this site is not to obtain feedback from others. It is, rather, a forum where people can write their thoughts and feelings as an alternative to pen and paper, can share their writing with others for the purpose of assisting those who are still struggling, or just to vent feeling around urges, possibly preventing slips and relapses.

**SOS Posting Board**[forums.delphiforums.com/sosdiscussion](http://forums.delphiforums.com/sosdiscussion)

SOS Posting Board – Discussion Board allows us to open a topic & follow it through in some detail.

**SOS Groups E-Lists for Face to Face meetings.**

For promoting an SOS Face to Face Group or Group in the making and giving Info to the local SOS members.

**SOS Australia E-support E-Group**[au.groups.yahoo.com/group/secular\\_sobriety\\_sos\\_au/](http://au.groups.yahoo.com/group/secular_sobriety_sos_au/)**SOS Netherlands E-Support Group**[groups.yahoo.com/group/sossaveourselves\\_Netherlands/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sossaveourselves_Netherlands/)**SOS Chicago E-Support Group**[groups.yahoo.com/group/SOSChicago](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SOSChicago)**SOS Western New York E-Support Group**[groups.yahoo.com/group/soswny](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/soswny)**SOS Central Texas Temple E-Support Group**[groups.yahoo.com/group/cen\\_tex\\_SOS](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/cen_tex_SOS)**SOS Dallas E-support Group**[groups.yahoo.com/group/sosdallas](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sosdallas)**SOS Austin E-Support Group**[groups.yahoo.com/group/sossaveourselves](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sossaveourselves)**NYS-wide SOS E-Support Group**[health.groups.yahoo.com/group/SOSNYS/](http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/SOSNYS/)**SOS Meetings and contacts to start a meeting.**[www.sossobriety.org/meetings](http://www.sossobriety.org/meetings)

If there isn't a meeting in your area leave your contact info with James Christopher. This is how many of our meetings start. It's hard to start a meeting if no one knows you're out there. Not all cities have an SOS Meeting. Some have phone contacts, where you can talk with an SOS member over the phone in your area. In some cities SOS members meet as needed for coffee. This is why it's so important that you leave contact information with James Christopher. There may be some one in your area who wants to lend an ear and a voice, a caring person who cares and wants to help . . . a meeting being formed. Please don't miss out.

[www.sossobriety.org/meetings](http://www.sossobriety.org/meetings)**Contact Jim Christopher**

Jim Christopher (323) 666-4295

Save Our Selves (SOS)

4773 Hollywood Blvd

Hollywood, CA 90027

E-mail: [SOS@CFIWest.org](mailto:SOS@CFIWest.org) Att: Jim Christopher

Let Jim know you are out there. This is how we grow.

# The SOS Marketplace: Tools for Recovery

## Brochures

*New Expanded and Revised Editions*



### “An Overview of SOS”

The basic overview brochure of the SOS movement. Includes the principles and the history of the Secular Organizations for Sobriety.

### “The Sobriety Priority”

Excerpted from *How to Stay Sober*, this brochure explains the “Sobriety Priority” of the SOS program.

### “Your First Thirty Days”

Information and advice for the newly sober alcoholic or addict. Includes list of suggested books to read.

### “Your Sobriety Toolkit”

Based on Larry B.’s presentations at the SOS National Workshop series in San Diego and Los Angeles in 1992.

### “Family and Friends Recovery”

A brochure offering recovery guidelines for families and friends of alcoholics and addicts.

**All Brochures—50 copies for \$5.00**

## Books

*New Expanded and Revised Edition!*

### SOS Group Leader’s Guidebook

All the information you need to start an SOS group in your community—all in one little booklet. Ideas on how to get started, where to meet, and how to promote your group. Plus tips on how to deal with problem people, a complete suggested meeting format, and much, much more. — \$2.95

### How To Stay Sober: Recovery without Religion

The book that started an international grassroots movement! SOS founder James Christopher describes his own “recovery without religion,” focuses on the practical aspects of his triumph over alcoholism, and includes guidelines for the formation of secular support groups. — 191 pages, paper, \$15.95

### Unhooked: Staying Sober and Drug Free

James Christopher recounts the evolution of SOS and details cases of recovery through the program. He invites the reader to sit in on a fictionalized SOS meeting and offers further strategies for achieving and maintaining sobriety and self-respect. — 184 pages, paper, \$15.95

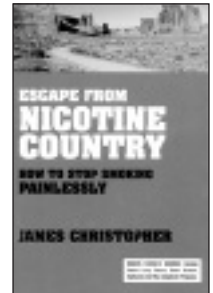
### SOS Sobriety: The Proven Alternative to 12-Step Programs

Sure to be controversial, SOS Sobriety lays bare the limitations of Alcoholics Anonymous while describing the proven methods of alcohol and drug abstinence advocated by James Christopher, founder of Secular Organizations for Sobriety (or “Save Our Selves”), the world’s largest non-12-step addiction recovery program. After answering basic questions about the nature and purpose of SOS, the success of the “sobriety priority” approach is documented through two scientific studies. Included are moving in-depth individual recovery stories, interviews

with addiction experts and legal professionals as well as a critique of “controlled drinking” programs and the insistence by AA and the liquor industry that alcoholism is a problem of behavior rather than one rooted in physiology and genetics. — 240 pages, paper, \$15.95

### Escape from Nicotine Country: How to Stop Smoking Painlessly by James Christopher

“The prospect of stopping smoking is scary as hell. I know — I’ve been there.” So opens *Escape from Nicotine Country*, James Christopher’s unique and uplifting guide to quitting smoking without pain or weight gain. A thirty-year smoker, Christopher gave up cigarettes in 1993, after a gradual period of individual withdrawal, exercise, and proper diet. Now he offers his remarkable and simple self-help program to all those who want to kick the habit.



While not weighed down with “just say no” rhetoric, overused shock statistics, or religious undertones, *Escape from Nicotine Country* goes against the grain of stop-smoking polemics by empowering the individual through motivational chapters. Christopher tells his own story of addiction and success in quitting. At the same time he promotes understanding of nicotine addiction and offers a simple solution to breaking the habit through reduction.

Christopher’s program addresses many different types of nicotine addiction, the hunger that haunts those trying to quit, and the need for a healthy routine of exercise. The latter half of the book is an encouraging diary, which allows the reader to record the progress that will lead to a healthier, smoke-free life. — 360 pages, paper, \$16.95

## Audiotapes

### “Avoiding the Relapse Mode”

Powerful strategies are offered in this straightforward life saving approach to staying clean and sober “no matter what.” Jim Christopher shares his own recovery/relapse prevention techniques and relates anonymous case histories of triumph over potential relapse and achievement of a comfortable sobriety. — (30 min.) \$7.95, including postage and handling.

### “Empowerment Sobriety”

A candid, in-depth look at the Sobriety Priority/Separate Issue method in action. SOS founder Jim Christopher offers powerful strategies for achieving and maintaining ones sobriety through self-empowerment. Christopher relates his own recovery in this dynamic presentation. — (30 min.) \$7.95, including postage and handling.

## Videotapes

### SOS Group Leader’s Guide—The Video

The video based on our popular guidebook for new convertors. How to launch an SOS group, where to meet, how to promote your meetings, how to poise your group for growth. Plus complete suggested meeting format and special techniques for handling problem people, structuring group leadership, and more. Demonstrated on camera by experienced SOS convertors, role-playing a typical meeting for you! — (45 min.) \$39.95

### The Sobriety Priority

This fast-moving, professionally produced video gives newcomers, outsiders, and professionals their first compelling look at SOS. Ideal for presentation to the general public or cable TV. The Sobriety Priority presents the purpose and methods of dynamic, fast-growing SOS. Includes simulated meeting footage and interviews with group leaders, SOS board member William London, and founder Jim Christopher. — (14 min.) \$24.95

See *SOS MARKETPLACE ORDER FORM*, page 9.

The SOS International Newsletter is published by Secular Organizations for Sobriety/Save Our Selves (SOS), a nonprofit, educational organization.

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**Paul E. Loynes**, managing editor.

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JN1149

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